

**DEADLY MASCULINITIES:
TOWARDS A THEATRICAL TOOLBOX FOR EXPLORING
IDENTITY AND HIV WITH YOUNG MALAWIAN MEN**

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To George Phangazindaba Simon (GPS) and Nyokase F. Madise, my maternal grandparents.

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

My thesis examines the effectiveness of a range of participatory theatre-based methodologies as tools for enabling young men to examine and interrogate dangerous formulations of masculinity. My hypothesis was that current applications of Theatre for Development in Malawi are woefully inadequate for the purpose of meaningfully engaging with young men in order to help them stay sexually safe and to examine their understandings of Malawian masculinities. Therefore, my study primarily set out to investigate what theatre forms can be impactful for engaging with young men to explore these masculinities that increase their, and their partners, HIV risk and to enable them to define themselves as male in alternative ways that mitigate high-risk sexual behaviours and violence against women.

In chapter one, I discuss the history of popular theatre in Malawi. Chapter two analyses the existing problems with the teaching of TfD at Chancellor College and NGO TfD methodologies in contemporary Malawi. In chapter three, I discuss my practical theatre-based experiments on masculinity and HIV with groups of male students from two secondary schools (Mulunguzi and Dzenza) and one university campus (Chancellor), before concluding with the findings of my research.

I argue that in Malawi young men are under social pressure to perform masculinities that increase their HIV risk, and that of their partners, in order to affirm themselves as men. They do this by taking on high-risk sexual practices such as not using condoms, having multiple sex partners and being violent towards women. It is my contention that unless young men are engaged to challenge and change these 'deadly' constructions of masculine gender identity the disease will continue to spread. My findings show that the methodology I experimented with impacted some participants; however, in order for meaningful change to occur this work needs to be further developed and boys and girls have to be engaged using creative and critical thinking to discuss sexuality, gender and HIV.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CRECCOM	Centre for Community Mobilisation
DIE	Drama in Education
DramAidE	Drama in AIDS Education
HIV	Human Immune Deficiency Virus
LSE	Life Skills Education
MARPR	Malawi AIDS Response Progress Report
MCP	Malawi Congress Party
MfD	Media for Development
NAC	National Aids Commission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PHCU	Primary Health Care Unit
SWET	Story Workshop Educational Trust
TfD	Theatre for Development
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections
HTC	HIV Testing and Counselling
VMMC	Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNAIDS	The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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Film 2: Chancellor College workshops

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Film 4: *Status*, a forum theatre play by Chancellor College participants

Film 5: *Pawiri pawiri sipauzilika* (You Cannot Serve Two Masters At Once) by Dzenza Secondary School participants

Thesis Reading and Film Watching Guide

1. Read Chapter 1 and 2

Read Chapter 1 and 2 first in order to understand the context. Chapter 1 offers a history of the development of TfD in Malawi. Chapter 2 looks at the existing problems with Malawian TfD methods. It illustrates how pseudo-participatory and message focused TfD practices are inadequate to enable men to analyse masculinity and HIV. In order to overcome these problems I set out to develop a fully participatory approach that allows men to analyse masculinity and to consider positive masculinities.

2. Watch Films

Watch films 1, 2 & 4 and then 3 & 5 to see an illustration of the approach I developed with a group of young Malawian men between February 2015 and June 2016.

3. Read Chapter 3 and 4

Read Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of the approach I experimented with. Finally, read Chapter 4 for a discussion of the lessons learned from practice, the impact of the research on participants, its implication for HIV prevention and where the research points going forward.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This study set out to examine the effectiveness of a toolbox model of Theatre for Development practice, which integrates a range of participatory theatre-based methods (Playback Theatre, Image Theatre, Forum Theatre, Drama in Education and local art forms) as dialogic tools for enabling young men to examine and interrogate dangerous forms of masculinity that increase young men's — and their partner's — HIV risk and to explore strategies for young men to re-define themselves positively as men. I use the term 'positively' to refer to masculine gender identities devoid of risky behaviours (having multiple sexual partners and not using condoms), gender-based violence and controlling behaviour.

Research Questions

This study set out to answer the following questions:

1. In what ways do socioeconomic, ethnic, cultural and religious factors shape young men's ideas about masculinity in Malawi?
2. To what extent do these masculinities inform male youths' attitudes towards sex practices, sexual consent, condom use, intimacy and violence against women?
3. Can a range of participatory theatre-based methods be effective in engaging young men to examine how dangerous forms of masculinity increase their HIV risk and what approaches seem to be particularly useful and why?
4. Can participatory theatre-based forms enable young men to consider strategies for change?

Secondary objectives

1. To examine teaching of TfD at Chancellor College in order to ascertain if the form has undergone any innovation since it first emerged in 1981.
2. To investigate existing TfD methodologies among local Malawian NGOs in order to understand the strengths and limitations of existing TfD methodologies in Malawi.
3. To investigate the development of TfD in Malawi and its current iteration in order to examine if it could fit for the purpose of meaningfully engaging with young men in order to help them stay sexually safe and to examine their understandings of Malawian masculinities.

Rationale

It is estimated that in Malawi 10.6% of the population are living with HIV (MDHS 2017). According to the Malawi AIDS Response Progress Report 2014 (MARPR 2015), HIV prevalence among people aged 15-49 has significantly decreased from 16.4% in 1999 to 12.0% in 2004 and 10.6% in 2010. Today, half of new infections are occurring among people aged 15-24, a group that was previously at low risk (NAC 2014: 1). In 2014, it was estimated that HIV prevalence across this age range was at 2.5% for males and 3.6% for females (MARPR 2015: 6). The literature on HIV and AIDS in Malawi reveals that transmission among heterosexual couples is encouraged by men's sexual behaviours, gender inequalities and cultural practices that enhance men's dominance over women in sexual matters (NAC 2014).

In recognising the gendered nature of AIDS the National AIDS Commission, through its HIV Prevention Strategy 2015-2020, seeks to prevent new infections by promoting gender transformative interventions (NAC 2015: 8). Current behavioural interventions for men include life skills, alcohol reduction campaigns, promotion of condoms, awareness of harmful cultural practices, delayed sexual debut and gender-based violence elimination programmes (NAC 2015: 81). There is little evidence to show the kind of impact these campaigns are having as there is no current data on them (MARPR 2014: 28). Although the 2015 Malawi AIDS Response Progress Report reported there has been slight increases in comprehensive knowledge of HIV, though only among males, and the number of unmarried people using condoms (males: 24% to 35.4% and female: 27.3% to 35.4%), the government admits that these findings are inconclusive and do not really show evidence of impact (MARPR 2015: 30-31). Generally the sort of communication-based behaviour change campaigns that are run include mass media communication; performance-based interactive sessions; sensitisation meetings; market campaigns; video shows, and drama performances conducted in schools and communities (MARPR 2014: 27).

Anti-HIV campaigns in Malawi that target men do not, explicitly, tackle how certain conceptions of masculinity put men (and their partners) at risk of infection. In their recent studies on young Malawian men Izugbara and Okal (2011) and Kaler (2003) found that men are at risk of HIV infection because of pressure to enact high-risk sexual behaviours such as not using condoms, having multiple sexual partners, and controlling the terms under which sex occurs in order to affirm what they and society consider a real man. Izugbara and Okal (2011)

argue that HIV interventions for men in Malawi seek to promote “sexual abstinence, partner reduction, faithfulness and condom use.” They further argue that these campaigns are ineffective because for many male youths taking on risky sexual practices is part of a strategy for becoming what they and society see as a ‘real’ man. Although HIV education is a public health necessity, there is a need for approaches that target men with the aim of helping them to unpack how certain conceptions of masculinity inform risky behaviours and how changed might be negotiated in order to mitigate risk. It is my contention that the failure to engage men in challenging and changing dangerous constructions of manliness will have disastrous social and health consequences for the next generations of Malawians. Therefore, this study examines ways in which young men can be engaged to challenge and change deadly masculinities that continue to fuel the spread of HIV.

Masculinity and HIV

Leading scholars (Baker and Ricardo 2005, Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, Chitando and Chirongoma 2012, Jewkes and Morrell 2012, Morrell 1998, Klinken 2013, Wyrob 2011) agree that masculinity refers to socially constructed patterns of behaviour performed by most men, which are fluid and changing, plural and differ according to social settings. Writing about African youth masculinities Baker and Ricardo offer the following explanation:

There is no typical African young man in Sub-Saharan African and there is no one African version of manhood. There are numerous African masculinities, urban and rural and changing historically. There are indigenous definitions and versions of manhood, defined by tribal and ethnic group practices, and newer versions of manhood shaped by Islam and Christianity, and by Western influences, including the global media.

(2005: 4)

This then implies that there are various masculinities that co-exist shaped by class, economic, educational and ethnic and cultural differences. It is generally accepted that those versions of masculinity that are popular and widely seen as desirable are known as hegemonic masculinities. In this research participants expressed a range of masculine gender identities, but the dominant positions emphasised the embodiment of hegemonic forms of masculinity. Robert Morrell (1998: 608), defines hegemonic masculinity as ‘the form of masculinity which is dominant in society’. He further explains: ‘it presents its own version of masculinity, of how men should behave and how putative ‘real men’ do behave, as the cultural ideal’ (ibid: 608). According to Rachel Jewkes and Robert Morrell (2012: 3-4), within heterosexual relationships

this form of masculinity ‘mobilises and legitimates the subordination and control of women by men. Hegemonic masculinity is a necessary and integral element of patriarchy, a social organisation that allocates, distributes and secures the power of men over women’. For Robert Wyrod (2011: 445) the enactment of hegemonic forms of masculinity ‘requires men to deny weakness and vulnerability’. It is generally accepted among these scholars that not all men will enact this form of masculinity; though most will benefit from it. The literature on hegemonic masculinities suggests that men’s risky sexual practices, having multiple sexual partners and the use of force and violence against women, constitute an itinerary of behaviours in the practice of this gender identity (Jewkes and Morrell 2012, Jewkes et al. 2015, Macphail and Campbell 2001, Richter and Morrell 2006).

While my study focuses on hegemonic ideals of masculinity, I am aware that men in Malawi, or any part of the world, are not homogenous. I raise this point because there is the danger of implicitly reinforcing monolithic representations of African masculinity. This kind of analysis is problematic because it perpetuates colonial myths about the nature of African men as ‘more driven by sexual desire than white men and that black men are especially prone to promiscuity’ (Lewis 2005: 205). On the contrary, research shows that not all men have power, not all men will enact hegemonic masculinities and that there are various masculine gender identities that might co-exist in a given context determined by social, economic and cultural factors (see, for example, Klinken 2013, Morrell 1998, Wyrod 2011). Relatedly, the homosocial nature of this study also has to be acknowledged as a possible contributing factor in the ways the young men spoke about masculinity. Hammarén and Johansson (2014:1) define ‘homosociality as social bonds between persons of the same sex’. For Bird (1996: 120-121) male homosociality is the mechanism that upholds hegemonic ideals of masculinity by encouraging ‘emotional detachment, competition, and the sexual objectification of women’; however, ‘individual conceptualisations vary in the extent to which these meanings characterise one’s masculinity’ (ibid: 123). This then implies that in homosocial contexts men are likely to feel under pressure to talk about masculinity in ways that perpetuate hegemonic versions of masculinity in order to ‘improve their ranking among masculine social scale (Hammarén and Johansson 2014).

Methodology

Literature and document review: I conducted literature research and document reviews on African Masculinities and HIV and AIDS in Africa — and more especially Malawi; on gender politics in colonial and post-colonial Malawi, and on ideologies and applications of Theatre for Development.

Practice as Research (PAR) in performance: I used PAR as my main tool of investigation. Using a range of participatory theatre techniques alongside dialogic discussions as research methods, I investigated how male youth masculinities shape sexuality, sexual practices and gender relations among young people. I worked with male students from two secondary schools (Mulunguzi and Dzenza) and one university campus, University of Malawi, Chancellor College. Through theatre-based methods I examined how young men define themselves as males and the personal health risks and oppression of women that emerge from these definitions.

Video recordings of practice: The written part of this study has an accompanying USB flash drive, which contains short films (workshop exercises and performances) on the work I conducted in Malawi with male youths from Chancellor College, Mulunguzi and Dzenza secondary schools between 2015 and 2016. The films compliment the written part of the thesis by showing evidence of the practice-based component of this study, its progress and how the methodologies I used worked.

Key Informant Interviews: I also conducted key informant interviews with male students, TfD practitioners, academic staff and students from Chancellor College and staff of three local Non-Governmental Organisations.

Case Study Research: I interviewed staff from Chancellor College, Story Workshop Educational Trust, Pakachere Institute for Health and Development Education and the Centre for Community Mobilisation in order to get an understanding of the TfD practices currently existing in Malawi.

Definitions

Popular theatre: Leading scholars agree that the earliest form of this mode of theatre was the university travelling theatre tradition which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, with its aim of ‘taking theatre to the people’ using local languages and indigenous art forms as sources for plays (Kidd 1985, Kerr 1991a, Mloma 1991). Penina Mloma (1991:63) says that this form was encouraged by the need for newly independent African states to ‘reassert their cultural identity which the colonial rulers had tried to eradicate’. A second iteration, closely linked to socialist ideas, emerged in the early 1970s inspired by the *Laedza Batanai* work (1974) pioneered by adult educators Ross Kidd and Martin Byram in northern Botswana (Kerr 1991a, Kidd 1985, Kamlongera 1984, Mloma 1991, Mda 1993). Ross Kidd (1984: 266) defines this mode as ‘drama, dance and puppetry aimed at or involving the popular masses and performed in the language and idiom of the people’. Kidd (ibid: 180) admits that although ‘the process worked well as a means of putting across information and development messages...it left the villagers out of the key stages of the process...and forced the villagers into the relatively passive role of being objects of an externally controlled research process, and an audience for messages and analyses produced by outsiders’.

Propaganda theatre: This refers to modes of theatre used to ‘persuade people to adopt the new practice or participate in a certain programme...audience members are treated as passive recipients of the messages’ (Kidd 1984: 270-271).

Theatre for Development: TFD is practical term for theatre practices across the political south that trace their origin to the *Laedza Batani* (Kerr 1991a, Mloma 1991, Mda 1993, Ross 1984, Plastow 2014a). There is agreement among scholars that TFD’s role is to encourage critical thinking, debate and encourage people towards action, in which the people set the agenda, decide on the issues and how they are presented. Steve Oga Abah defines TFD as ‘people’s theatre addressing community issues and problems, using people’s languages and art forms’ (2007: 436). While Penina Mloma (1991: 65-66), describes TFD as ‘the employment of a variety of theatrical expressions at grassroots level to research and analyse development programmes and to create a critical awareness and potential for action to solve those problems’.

Zakes Mda explains that TfD can take on two forms: theatre for promoting developmental messages or theatre ‘to conscientise communities about their objective social, political and economic situation’ (1993: 48). He further says that for TfD to be effective it must seek to conscientise — which means knowledge, consciousness, and action — ordinary people.

Freirian Pedagogy and Theatre for Development

The TfD programmes that emerged in the 1970s and early 1980s across the African context were pioneered by a group of socialist oriented local and expatriate academics such as Ross Kidd and Martin Byram (Botswana), Ngugi wa Thing’o (Kenya), Michael Etherton and Steve Abah (Nigeria), Penina Mlama (Tanzania) and Chris Kamlongera and David Kerr (Malawi) who sought to use theatre as a strategy to help marginalised people to analyse their problems and to stimulate community action (Abah 1996, Kerr 1995, Kidd and Byram 1982). From the mid-1980s funding for socially committed theatre programmes in many African universities stopped due of the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) by the International Monetary Fund to cut African debt (Plastow 2014a). In its place came donor-funded TfD in which donors began to use theatre makers to create work that served the objectives of development agencies and government departments (Mlama 2002, Obagbu 1998, Plastow 2014a). Since then, the dominant practice has been to use the form as an instrumentalist tool in service to NGOs and government agencies (Kerr 2009, Okagbu 1998). While I appreciate that this is the most favoured practice, I do not subscribe to it. This is because it relegates communities to passive recipients of donor and NGO messages. Writing on the problem of message-based TfD in Malawi David Kerr (2009: 101) writes: ‘the briefs that NGOs give to African theatre groups for creating plays are usually restricted to the issue that the NGO has at its ‘portfolio. In real life the causes of illiteracy or HIV infection are not restricted to the obvious’. Essentially, this practice of TfD perpetuates a top-down development approach in which local people are not involved in setting the agenda, deciding on the issues and how they are acted upon.

My understanding and application of TfD is influenced by Paulo Freire’s dialogical pedagogy or problem-posing education. In his seminal text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) Freire criticises the banking model of education, which, he argues, involves students learning by rote. In this model the teacher deposits information into the students who

passively receive it. Contrastingly, he proposes a liberating form of education based on dialogue between teacher and students known as problem-posing education. In problem-posing education, the teacher and student dichotomy is removed. He writes:

The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. In this process, arguments based on "authority" are no longer valid; in order to function, authority must be *on the side of freedom*, not *against* it.

(1970: 80)

In Freire's model education is a participatory process in which teacher and student engage as equals in a shared process of exploration. The aim of this participatory education model is to stimulate students' critical thinking. He argues that his model 'strives for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality' (ibid: 81). Problem-posing education does not stop at the critical thinking level. The aspiration in Freire's model is for people to take action in order to change their world. He writes:

Problem-posing education is this effort to present significant dimensions of an individual's contextual reality, the analysis of which will make it possible for him to recognise the interaction of the various components.

(1970: 104)

According to Freire the methodology for raising people's critical awareness and their capacity to change their world is conscientization which refers to 'learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality' (ibid: 36). While action is the ultimate goal, in other instances the action of critical reflection alone constitutes a form of action. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* he writes: 'Those who through reflection perceive the infeasibility of one or another form of action cannot thereby be accused of inaction. Critical reflection is action.' It would appear here that the hope in problem-posing pedagogy is to turn students; marginalised communities in our case, into critical thinkers who can examine their social, political and economic problems and who can take appropriate action to overcome them.

Successful examples of theatre-based practices that have been inspired by Freire's dialogical pedagogy and that show that problem-posing theatre practice can be empowering for ordinary people include the TUSEME model in Tanzania and the work of Jana Sanskriti (JS) in India. The TUSEME (Let Us Speak Out) model was initiated in 1996 by the Department of Fine and Performing in the University of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) as a secondary school girls' empowerment program, under the patronage of the Forum for

African Women Educationists (FAWE) Tanzania chapter (www.fawetz.or.tz). It uses participatory theatre-based techniques to actively engage girls, and boys, to interrogate gender barriers to academic and social development and to find solutions for overcoming them (FAWE 2005). In 2004, the programme became more widely practiced when it was adopted by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (ibid). Since then, it has been implemented in 17,600 secondary schools in Tanzania and across thirteen Sub-Saharan African countries including Malawi (FAWE 2005).

Jana Sanskriti was established in 1985 by Sanjoy Ganguly, with the aim of using theatre-based activism to address marginalised people's issues in West Bengal, India (Gangulu 2010). The company uses Brazilian Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed techniques alongside Indian local art forms as its methodological approach. It has about 40,000 members (local and international) and 30 rural-based theatre teams (Mohan 2004). Since its inception the company has sought to address several local problems such as alcoholism, domestic violence, land rights and gender inequality and to empower marginalised communities to take action in order to find solutions to these social oppressions (Mohan 2004, Dutta 2007, Ganguly 2010). For instance, between 2006-2007 Jana Sanskriti theatre teams successfully protested what would have been a 99 year lease on 997 acres of agricultural land to the Indian conglomerate Tata to establish a car assembly plant in Singur township (Da Costa 2007). Writing the impact of Jana Sanskriti on women's empowerment Madhura Dutta (2007: 69) explains that the company has sought to capacitate women through theatre-based activism by 'breaking their silence and building their capacity for rational thinking and independent action...to fight oppression in rural areas' (ibid: 69). Jane Plastow, who is a member of the company, told me that to show its commitment to change its members have all agreed to not pay dowry, not commit any act of domestic violence and to abstain from alcohol (Personal communication, 2017).

1 THE HISTORY OF POPULAR THEATRE IN MALAWI¹

The focus of this chapter is popular theatre in Malawi. My analysis takes an historical approach that begins with a discussion of the Malawi Writers Group, moving on to the Schools Drama Festival and the University of Malawi Travelling Theatre. I conclude with the emergence of Theatre for Development (TfD) in the 1980s.

Soon after independence, Malawi came under authoritarian rule. The first president, Kamuzu Banda (1964-1994), began censoring literature that promoted critical thinking and suppressed freedom of expression (Kerr and Mapanje 2002). In the 1970s literary drama, which had been introduced by missionary educators in 1880s (Gibbs 1982), was popularised by the University Travelling Theatre, but in order to evade censorship artists used covert means such as allusion and adaptations of folktales to offer criticism (Magalasi 2012). I argue that due to the political atmosphere the first iteration of ‘popular’ theatre (taking theatre to the people) was propaganda theatre promoting state endorsed messages and in the 1980s it began to be more participatory.

The Malawi Writers Group

In many places in Africa during the early years of independence, newly independent states came under totalitarian rule (Englund 2001, Kerr and Mapanje 2002, Mphande 1996, Plastow 2014a). From the 1960s and 1970s there emerged a group of academic theatre practitioners, poets and writers such as Wole Soyinka (Nigeria), Ngugi wa Thiong’o (Kenya), and Jack Mapanje (Malawi) in universities across the African continent who began to produce work that criticised these authoritarian regimes — though in many of these totalitarian states this had to be done covertly for fear of reprisals (Vail and White 1991, Kerr 1995, Magalasi 2012). In Malawi, the University of Malawi’s Writers Group was at the forefront of this movement.

The University of Malawi opened In 1965. Immediately after its establishment Banda placed it under heavy state surveillance (Jones and Manda 2006). According to Kerr and Mapanje (2002: 77-78), the state’s negativity towards the university stemmed from the fact that it was the only institution that could produce a group of individuals who could have challenged Banda’s authority. At independence very few Malawians had university level education whereas Banda was a UK trained doctor (Kerr and Mapanje 2002). Vail and White (1990: 33) explain

that in 1971, after rumours had spread that Dr. Peter Mwanza, who was the Principal of Chancellor College, one of the five campuses of the University of Malawi, was planning to stand as a parliamentary candidate, Banda stated that he did not want graduates in the national assembly. Subsequently, Banda began to control what students were taught at the university in an effort to consolidate his power and prevent young Malawian intellectuals from challenging his authority (Jones and Manda 2006). Disciplines like political science were not taught and sociology was heavily monitored — any materials that dealt with socialism were banned (Gibbs 1987, Kerr and Mapanje 2002, Mphande 1996). Academic staff members were not allowed to conduct research with community groups without the approval of Banda and anyone wanting to go into the villages had to be approved by the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) (Gibbs, Personal communication, 2015).

Censorship at the university was not limited to the curriculum, but included students' creative and intellectual activities. According to James Gibbs, during his time as the director of the University of Malawi Travelling Theatre (1972-1978), a play could not be staged without permission from the Censorship Board (Gibbs, Personal communication, 2015).² In some instances, he further explains, plays were rejected because they contained alleged inappropriate political content; indecency; obscenity; showed disrespect for elders or violence, or were otherwise seen as unMalawian (see, for example, Gibbs 1985). Also, the state did not tolerate university students meddling in state politics. In 1988, the University of Malawi student newspaper, *Chirunga Newsletter*, published an article that criticised the government's decision to admit students based on region of origin rather than on merit (Africa Watch 1990: 69). In retaliation, the editor of the magazine, George Chatama, and three of his reporters were expelled from the university (ibid). Through the 1970s and 1980s, the government detained several students and local lecturers and deported expatriates on the basis that they had spoken, written or done something that it was thought would undermine Banda's authority (Kerr and Mapanje 2002: 79, Jones and Manda 2006: 205). During this period, lecturers, students, administrators, cleaners and secretaries were recruited as state spies to report on anyone who opposed Banda (Kerr and Mapanje 2002: 80).

The Malawi Writers Group was formed in 1970 in the Department of English at the University of Malawi by two lecturers (David Kerr and Landeg White) and six students, Jack Mapanje, Lupenga Mphande, James N'gombe, Guard M Gomezulu, Frank Chipasula and Scopas

Gorinmwa (Mapanje, Personal communication, 2015). Other prominent members were Felix Mnthali, who joined Chancellor College in 1969 as a lecturer in English, Christopher Kamlongera, Steve Chimombo and Anthony Nazombe (Gibbs 1988: 38, Nazombe 1990, Mphande 1996). The Writers Group was established with the desire to put 'Malawi on the literary map of the world' (Gibbs 1988: 39) and to create a forum for discussing poems and short stories by its members (Mphande 1996, Calder 1979). It produced notable poets like Jack Mapanje, Frank Chipasula, Felix Mnthali, Zondiwe Mbano and Anthony Nazombe, and playwrights such as James N'gombe, Christopher Kamlongera, Steve Chimombo and Lance Ngulube (Nazombe 1990, Magalasi 2012).

The formation of the Malawi Writers Group was influenced by several factors. In Nyasaland, the colonial name for Malawi, during the period of British colonial rule, mission schools were the only places where Malawians could acquire a formal education (McCracken 2012). In many African countries, missionary education did not aim to stimulate the development of local literary traditions (Mphande 1996, Kerr 1995). Although in the 1950s Malawian writers like E.W Chafulumira and Jacob Zulu did emerge, their work tended to be in service to the ideas of missionaries and colonialists whose aim was to Christianise and modernise the African (Mphande 1996: 92). After independence, the promotion of the European canon did not change (Chirwa 2001, Vail and White 1990). In fact, Banda perpetuated it through the promotion of British literature and language (Kerr and Mapanje 2002, Chirwa 2001, Mphande 1996). For instance, at Kamuzu academy, Banda's personally owned secondary school, only white European teachers were employed and the students were taught English, Greek and Latin. However, they were not allowed to speak in their ethnic languages (Kerr and Mapanje *ibid*). After independence the secondary school syllabus did not really change from that developed by the colonialists. Therefore, British films and plays were ubiquitous in university and school entertainment halls (Mphande 1996: 79), while there was little effort to promote local literature (*ibid*). In response, the Writers Group began to nurture a specifically Malawian literary tradition which was designed to counter the established Western canon (Mphande 1996: 91-92, Vail and White 1990).

Culturally the Writers Group pursued a Malawian multi-ethnic identity in their work, which was at odds with Banda's vision of Malawi (Mapanje Personal communication. 2015). Scholars (Chirwa 2001, Mkandawire 2010) agree that Banda imposed Chewa culture on the

nation on the basis that this would create unity. Malawi has twelve ethnic groups; Chewa, Lomwe, Lambya, Mang'anja, Ngonde, Ngoni (northern, southern and central), Nyiha, Tumbuka, Tonga, Sukwa, Sena and Yao.³ During the parliamentary meeting of 1964, a member of Parliament from Lilongwe (Central Region), Hon. Richard Chidzanja, proclaimed that Chewa people were behind Banda and that the North and South regions hated the culture of Chewa people (Mkandawire 2010). A few months after independence, Banda had a fallout with three of his ministers (Kanyama Chiume, Henry Bwanausi, and Orton Chirwa), in what is commonly referred to as the 1964 cabinet crisis. Afterwards, the president fired, exiled and detained only chiefs, ministers and district councillors from the Northern and Southern (non-Chewa) regions of Malawi (Kerr and Mapanje 2002, Mphande 1996). Another outcome of the Cabinet crisis was that Banda began to promote Chewa traditions, language and culture (Mkandawire 2010). Under this cultural policy, *Gule wa Mkulu* (Big dance) Masquerades (found in the Central Region, which was Banda's ethnic home), which had been oppressed by the Dutch Reformed Church, gained prominence and were promoted as national dances (Mkandawire 2010: 34). In 1968, at the MCP convention, the Banda government adopted Chichewa and English as national languages (Kerr and Mapanje 2002). As a result, all programs on the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation were in English and Chichewa only and all public schools had to adopt Chichewa as a language of instruction even in areas where other local languages had been used (Africa Watch 1990: 55-58). Against this backdrop, the Malawi Writers Group sought to challenge Banda's narrow concept of Malawian identity by promoting ethnic diversity and multilingualism (Mphande 1996: 90). Members of the group belonged to the Yao, Tumbuka, Chewa, and Tonga ethnic groups and it also had members from Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Sudan and England (Gibbs 1988). In addition, through its expatriate academic members, the group was able to develop networks with international writers like the Nigerian playwright Wole Soyinka, the South African poet Dennis Brutus and others, which helped to bring international recognition and gave it a pan-Africanist orientation (Mphande 1996).

After it launched in 1970 the weekly gathering attracted a diverse membership that included staff and students from the Department of English and other departments, alongside businessmen and journalists from the nearby town of Blantyre (Kerr and Mapanje 2002, Vail and White 1990). When the Writers Group was formed the Censorship Board was in operation;

so to sidestep the censor and avoid reprisals the members developed a style of writing that borrowed from local Malawian traditions of ‘veiling criticism in a manner that allows the problem to be resolved without loss of face’ (Jones 2001: 1535). Scholars (Chirambo 2004, Mphande 1996, Gibbs 1987) explain that this was a technique of using coded language and deployment of allegory and symbolism to disguise critique of the Banda regime. For example, Vail and White (1990: 29) explain that in the work of Jack Mapanje, recurrent metaphors included: dawn or cockcrow (insignia of the MCP) and Chingwe’s hole — a natural deep pit on Zomba plateau, which is believed to have been used to hurl the enemies of chief Chingwe to their deaths in precolonial Malawi — that came to represent the MCP regime and Banda’s detention laws respectively. The group’s playwrights used similar techniques — though poems and short stories were more popular at the weekly meetings because their length meant they could be discussed fairly quickly (Gibbs 1987). The weekly gatherings that began as a creative writing platform evolved into a space where the affairs of Malawi could be freely deliberated (Vail and White 1990: 28-29). Driven largely by the pursuit of literary freedom in a totalitarian regime, the Writers Group became the channel through which a counter narrative to the Banda ideology emerged. The group is still ongoing as a forum for student writers.

Schools Drama, University Travelling Theatre and Popular Theatre

Schools Drama

In Malawi, as in many African countries, literary drama was introduced in schools by missionary educators and, later on, was spread by mission trained African teachers (Kerr 1987, 1995, Kamlongera 1984, Gibbs 1980). After their arrival in the late 1880s, Scottish and Dutch missionaries established schools across Malawi (McCracken 2012). It was in these schools that children were introduced to Western literary drama and performance traditions (Kerr 1995, Kamlongera 1984). Patience Gibbs (1980: 30) tells us that students participated in variety shows, poetry recitals, end of year and nativity plays from as early as the 1930s. At the Livingstonia Mission, drama and theatre were used during the celebration of Memorial Days, club activities, drama in education, community development and end of year ceremonies (ibid: 26). According to Chris Kamlongera (1984), the early expatriate educators also used drama as a teaching aid for subjects like English and History. After the end of the missionary monopoly of

the education system in 1924, the schools' drama tradition was spread to public schools by both expatriate and local teachers, the latter having received training in missionary schools (Gibbs 1980, Kamlongera 1984). One commentator observed that a common feature of these early dramatic traditions was the tendency to promote Eurocentric views about Africans and their cultures. In his analysis of the 1957 production of *Macbeth* by David Rubadiri, who was a teacher at Dedza Secondary School, Kamlongera (1984: 50) asserts that Rubadiri's production did not help to challenge the prevailing Eurocentric views about Africans because all the major roles were played by expatriates, with only the witches and the doctor acted by Africans. Despite the shortfalls of Rubadiri's *Macbeth*, it was an important moment for Malawian drama because it marked one of the earliest attempts by a Malawian to stage a full length theatrical production.⁴

The Association of Teaching of English in Malawi (ATEM) was formed in the 1960s to assist with the teaching of English in secondary schools and in teacher training colleges, with the aim of organising workshops on teaching methods and conferences (Kamlongera 1984: 128). Later on, students were included in the Association's work (Bahman 1994). It organised the National Oral Schools competition for poetry and prose reading (ibid). By 1969, the Oral Competition was dropped, and with the support of the British Council a schools drama festival was adopted in its place, which has since survived (Gibbs 1985, Gibbs 1980, Chimwenje 2003). It also established a set of rules for the competition, but it seems their sole purpose was aimed at improving spoken English (Banham et al. 1994: 54). Today, English continues to be used as the official language for the festival. Schools participating in the Schools Drama Festival compete, first, at regional level (north, central and south), before the top three regional winners go into the finals and compete for the best play. Initially, the thinking behind the adoption of the drama festival was to improve spoken English in schools, however, the competition was also instrumental in spreading Western style drama (Gibbs 1985, Gibbs 1980). From the 1970s and 1980s the Schools Drama Festivals grew in popularity and began to attract an audience other than secondary school students (Banham et al. 1994).

The University of Malawi Travelling Theatre

In the 1960s and 1970s university travelling theatre emerged in a number of anglophone universities on the African continent (Kerr 1991a; 1995, Kamlongera 2002; 1984, Mlama 1991, Chimwenje 2003). Inspired by the indigenous travelling theatre traditions of West Africa, this theatre movement was pioneered by African dramatists and theatre practitioners whose aim was to develop the broken alliances between university going elites and the ordinary masses of people (Breitinger and Mbowa 1996, Kerr 1991a; 1995). In 1961, the first academic travelling theatre was formed at Ibadan's University College and influenced by the popular Yoruba artist, Kola Ogunmola, who introduced travelling theatre techniques from the Yoruba Opera and the group's management skills (see Kerr 1991a: 58).⁵ The success of Ibadan's travelling theatre inspired numerous academic travelling theatre groups at universities in Uganda, Kenya, Zambia, Ghana and, later on, Malawi (Kerr 1991: 58). It seems the university travelling theatre was spread across the African continent by a group of anglophone expatriates and African university graduates, who were moving from one university to another and who had been exposed to this concept (for examples, see Kamlongera 1984, Kerr 1995, Banham et al. 1994, Chimwenje 2003, Mlama 1991).⁶

Theatre in the University of Malawi developed separately in the constituent colleges of the University (Gibbs 1980, Kamlongera 1984, Magalasi 2012). However, it was the theatre activities at Chancellor College that shaped the development of theatre in Malawi (Magalasi 2012). Drama at Chancellor was initiated by the academic staff in the Department of English (Gibbs 1980: 67). Before the establishment of the Department of Fine and Performing Arts at Chancellor College in 1981, the teaching of theatre was the responsibility of the English department, where the focus was on drama as literature rather than performance (Kamlongera 1984: 137). From 1967 to 1981, performance was taught as a two hour class under the Practical Drama and Film course (Banham et al. 1994: 55). In 1967, the first play to be staged was Wole Soyinka's *The Trial of Brother Jero* directed by Trevor Whittock and followed by Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* in the same year (Gibbs 1985). After the departure of Whittock in 1969, John Linstrum, who was a British actor and teacher, joined the university and staged *The Chalk Circle* (based on Bertolt Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*) and Obatudun Ijimere's *Everyman* (Kamlongera 1980: 138-139). In 1969, he was joined by Mupa Shumba, a Malawian

graduate of Makerere University in Uganda, who had been an active member of the first Makerere University Travelling Theatre (Roscoe 1977).

In 1970 John Linsturm and Mupa Shumba teamed up to form the first academic traveling theatre in the country (Roscoe 1977: 271, Chimwenje 2003: 11). The newly formed Chancellor College Travelling Theatre toured *The Chalk Circle* and *Everyman* in schools and community halls within the southern region of Malawi (Gibbs 1985). Critics argue that the travelling theatre under Shumba and Linsturm flew in the face of the ideology of taking theatre to the people because the performance of English language, literary drama and the presentation of plays in Western theatrical modes made this theatre accessible only to educated Malawians. From 1972, there was a push towards developing a new kind of popular travelling theatre movement at Chancellor College. In that year James Gibbs arrived to take up a teaching post as a drama instructor in the Department of English, following the departure of Linsturm and Shumba (Gibbs 1985, 1987).⁷ Gibbs told me that when he arrived in Malawi there was no active traveling theatre (Gibbs, Personal communication, 2016).

Literature on theatre in Malawi suggests that the travelling theatre that emerged under James Gibbs (1972-1978) focused more on creating 'popular' literary drama. In the early 1970s the Department of English had begun to include works by African writers and Malawian Oral Traditions into the curriculum (Kamlongera 1984, Chimwenje 2003). The thinking in the Department of English reflected a general cultural shift that began in the 1960s and through 1970s throughout Africa. During this time, African intellectuals called for the use of African languages, cultures and traditions as the basis of African artistic expression (see Thiong'o 1986). At about the same time, students and lecturers in the Malawi Writers Group were beginning to experiment with local myths, folktales and legends (see, for example, Mphande 1996, Vail and White 1996). The Writers Group was also instrumental in facilitating the interaction of students and staff members like David Kerr, Landeg White, Adrian Roscoe and James Gibbs, who encouraged student writers to tap into local sources for inspiration.

In 1976, an anthology of plays written by university graduates, edited by James Gibbs, *Nine Malawian Plays*, was published. It is worth noting that one of the plays included in the collection, James Ngombe's *The Banana Tree*, was one of the earliest attempts at using theatre-in-the-round, perhaps a nod to the indigenous performance aesthetics of Africa (Chimwenje 2003: 13). During a conference on Drama in Malawi held in 1974, Dr. Matthew Schoffeleers, an

authority on Malawian indigenous religions, called on playwrights to tap the Nyau Cult and its dramatic features as the basis for Malawian drama (Roscoe 1977: 271). Steve Chimombo's *The Rainmaker* was a response to Schoffeleers' call (Chimombo 2011). The play was about the death of *Mboni*, the precolonial founder of the rainmaking cult in southern Malawi (Kerr 1987).

Before 1974, theatre at Chancellor had been hampered by the lack of a performance space (Kamlongera 1984). To encourage theatre activities on the campus, Gibbs and Shumba, with funding from the Schimmelpennick-Campbell Fund, organised the construction of an Open Air Theatre (Gibbs 1985, Roscoe 1977, Chimwenje 2003). The thinking behind the Open Air Theatre was to break away from the 'artificiality of the proscenium stage' (Kerr 1987: 120). The availability of a performance space encouraged students and staff to try their hand at play writing, acting and directing (Gibbs 1985, Kerr 1985, Kamlongera 1984). It also made it easier to invite other drama groups to perform at Chancellor (Gibbs 1980). Under the auspices of the Travelling Theatre, a number of drama festivals were held between 1974-1976 when school and amateur drama groups were invited to perform (Gibbs 1980: 79-80). During the 1975 drama festival a vernacular Chichewa play, *Kambale, The Famous Boy*, was performed by Zomba Police Camp Primary School (Gibbs 1980: 80, Chimwenje 2003: 14). Though the play was well received it did not mark the beginning of a vernacular popular theatre movement. However, it did spark the interest of theatre enthusiasts at the university. The following year, Peter Chiwona's *Chirunga Opera Extravaganza* was staged with parts of its dialogue in Chichewa (Chimwenje 2003: 12, Kamlongera 1984).

On the question of vernacular drama at Chancellor, James Gibbs told me that the issue of language never came up because putting up a play in those days was an arduous process, and writers were often worried that they would get into trouble if they did not use the politically approved Chichewa (a local language of the Chewa of central Malawi) dialect from the Banda's home district, Kasungu (Gibbs, Personal communication, 2016). Other people I interviewed disagreed with Gibbs and said that the academic atmosphere did not encourage local language writing. For instance, Jubilee Tizifa said that in the 1970s creative writing and drama courses at Chancellor were in English and taught by anglophone expatriates, while Chichewa was only for education students training to be teachers (Tizifa, Personal communication, 2016). Malawian author James Ngombe explained that the reason university writers of this period wrote only in English was because they got involved in playwriting through the English language Schools

Drama Festival, which did not encourage writing in vernaculars (Ngombe, Personal communication, 2016). Malawian poet, Zondiwe Mbanu, offered a different perspective when he said that the imposition of English and Chichewa as national languages in 1968 meant that writers had to either use English or Chichewa, but to reach a wider readership they wrote in English because there were low levels of literacy in Chichewa among non-native Chichewa speakers (Mbanu, Personal communication, 2015).

From the mid-1960s the political atmosphere in Malawi became increasingly repressive. In his article, 'Experiences of Censorship (in Publications) and Theatre in Malawi', Gibbs (1985) says that the Censorship Board used its powers to ban many works that were critical of Banda or would undermine his authority.⁸ Jack Mapanje told me that the state could ban a text, informally, simply by having it removed from all bookshops in Malawi. To sidestep censorship many university writers adopted the cryptic writing style of the Writers Group. Historical myths and folktales were used by playwrights as a covert means of offering political commentary (Kerr and Chinfunyise 2004). Steve Chimombo's *The Rain Maker*, which uses a precolonial Malawi rainmaking cult as its source material to provide political commentary on Banda's regime is a case in point (Kerr *ibid*: 289). Other plays like Lance Ngulube's *Phuma Uhambe* and Zangaphe Chizeze's *Tears of Blood* used rural settings as a way of concealing their political themes (Magalasi 2012). Unfortunately, this writing style made the literary drama accessible only to educated Malawians (Kerr 1987: 121). Of course, not all theatre makers deployed this same tactic. James Gibbs (Personal communication 2015) said that it was easy for plays such as *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth* or *Antigone* to get approval from the Censorship Board because the assumption appears to have been that canonical texts could not be seen as subversive, when in fact many theatre groups across Africa have borrowed these plays precisely to make political points about their governments.

Under Gibbs's leadership the Chancellor College Travelling Theatre toured the country extensively (Roscoe 1977, Gibbs 1980, Kamlongera 1984, Chimwenje 2003). They took plays to secondary schools, community halls and entertainment centres in nearly every district of Malawi, and performances and workshops were done at the Schools Drama Festivals (Gibbs 1980: 78, Chimwenje 2003). It is generally accepted that university travelling theatre shaped the School Drama Festivals in Malawi. During the 1970s, the group started touring popular literary drama in secondary schools across the country and conducting acting and play writing

workshops (Chimwenje 2003: 13). At these workshops, teachers and students were exposed to new trends in Malawian literary drama and before long, some of these patterns began appearing in the Schools Drama Festival (Kamlongera 1984). One common technique that spread to the schools drama festivals from the university literary drama movement was the incorporation of indigenous art forms (Kerr 1987: 120). Literature on theatre in Malawi suggests that the establishment of the ATEM drama festival was important to the development of Malawian theatre (Gibbs 1980, Gibbs 1985, Kamlongera 1984, Chimwenje 2003, Kerr and Chinfunyise 2004). Through the schools drama festivals new Malawian playwrights were created, literary drama was popularised and the general public was exposed to western style drama (albeit only the educated class of Malawians). From the 1970s up to the early 1990s, several prominent Malawian playwrights and actors emerged out of the schools drama, including Joe Mosiwa, Issac Chirwa, Edge Kanyongolo, Viphya Harawa, Owen Mbilizi, Du Chisiza Jnr, Frank Mwase, Sunduzwayo and Dingiswayo Madise and Smith Likongwe (Gibbs, Personal communication, 2015, Kerr and Chinfunyise 2004, Magalasi 2012). In 1978, James Gibbs left the university and the mantle of the travelling theatre was taken up by Christopher Kamlongera, now a lecturer in the Department of Fine and Performing Arts (Kamlongera 1984). Until 1981, the repertoire of plays produced by the Travelling Theatre remained entirely in English (Kerr 1987).

The development of Theatre for Development in Malawi

The emergence of popular theatre in Malawi dates back to July 1981 when the Chancellor College Travelling Theatre created improvised vernacular plays about health, adult literacy and agriculture at Mbalachanda, which is situated in the Northern region of Malawi (Kamlongera 1982, Kerr 1987; 1995). A few months before the workshop at Mbalachanda a Chichewa play, *The Eviction*, was staged by a group of third year drama students under the direction of David Kerr (Kamlongera 1984: 287). According to Patience Gibbs (1980: 85), the first vernacular play had been staged in 1973 when a group of drama students created an improvised Chichewa play based on Chaucer's *Pardoner's Tale* entitled *Msaka imfa* (Encounter with Death). It appears here that popular theatre at Chancellor was dormant until Kerr revived it in 1981. Before returning to Malawi in 1981, Kerr had taught at the University of Zambia from 1974. While there he was part of the University of Zambia's extremely radical left wing Chikwakwa Travelling Theatre (Kerr 1995: 156). During that time he had been involved in 'taking groups of

dramatically experienced University students to rural areas of Zambia and training local students (Secondary Schools and Teacher Colleges) to create plays in local languages, through improvisation...adapting local folk stories as drama, and incorporating songs and dances known by the community into the structure of the play' (Kerr 1991b: 53). It was this experience that he brought to Malawi.

Mbalachanda Rural Growth Centre Popular Theatre Workshop (1981)

In July 1981, the Office of President and Cabinet invited the Travelling Theatre, which was now headed by Chris Kamlongera, to go and perform at the newly established Mbalachanda Rural Growth Centre. The thinking of the government was that the Travelling Theatre could 'provide a forum of entertainment, of cultural exchange, of education and of team spirit at the centre among the extension workers and also the local people' (Kamlongera 1982: 220). Apart from fulfilling this obligation, the Travelling Travel decided it would conduct popular theatre workshops for eight days with a group of participants from Mbalachanda. Prior to their departure, the team had identified key challenges faced by extension workers in rural areas, through the central office of Rural Growth Centres in Malawi. The issues identified were poor attendance at adult literacy classes and a reluctance by villagers to use facilities available at the Growth Centre like health clinics, post office, and small business advice (ibid 381-82). The team that travelled consisted of seven students and two lecturers (Chris Kamlongera and David Kerr). The team was led by Kamlongera.

At the first workshop they were joined by a group of primary school teachers and extension workers who made up the local participants. The workshop process involved first, groups identifying key themes; and then developing sketches from these; followed by rehearsals and performance. The themes identified were health and general hygiene (digging pit latrines), modern farming methods and adult literacy. A local dance was identified and it was agreed that it would be performed before the play. Using the themes that came up from the discussions three sketches were devised. This process was led by three members of the Travelling Theatre. After two days of rehearsal it was agreed that the two plays on adult literacy and health would be performed.⁹ For purposes of analysis a brief synopsis of these two sketches has been provided. The sketch on health and hygiene, *Kumanya Mbwananga* (Knowledge is Freedom), was about a Chief who was reluctant to dig a latrine at his house. Following an incident where he is almost

beaten up when attempting to relieve himself in someone's field, he returns home disgraced. When his wife learns of this; she turns to the audience and begins asking rhetorical questions; at that point she is interrupted by the chief, who agrees to dig a pit latrine. The second sketch *Kufunika Kwa Ukhondo* (The Need For Cleanliness), depicted the benefits of adult literacy. It pits Mr Phiri (who has numeracy skills) against the illiterate Mr Mkandawire. After enrolling into a literacy program in the village, Mkandawire acquires literacy and numeracy skills, which enable him to triple his harvest. When asked by his friend what his secret is; he tells him that it's because of the literacy classes he was attending that he can now follow the instructions on correct crop fertiliser application. Impressed, Mr Phiri decides to join the literacy programme, though grudgingly.

There are several factors that made this first attempt at popular theatre highly problematic. Although commentators tend to suggest the workshop at Mbalachanda was Theatre for Development, in the final analysis, it was and by Kamlongera's admission propaganda theatre (see Kamlongera 1982, 1984). The Mbalachanda workshop came about as a result of the government's invitation to the Travelling Theatre, who then decided to conduct a popular theatre workshop. From the outset, the workshop at Mbalachanda did not seek to foster inclusivity and true community participation. Apart from using local languages and one indigenous dance, the dramatic form was an imported model; characteristic of the 1970s literary drama of Travelling Theatre. The team did not explore or adapt any the local performance traditions. The absence of ordinary community members and inclusion of teachers and extension workers instead — who were arguably community leaders — meant the interests of ordinary people were not represented. Another problem with the sketches at Mbalachanda was the use of characterisation that drew on stereotypes; the modern villager and the illiterate villager, who could only be saved by the extension worker or teacher, which reduced the play into a kind of didactic top down message-based theatre. This format is characteristic of the colonial didactic media and was patronising to ordinary people (Kerr 1991a: 63).

Another problem was that participation was limited to rhetorical questions. There is little evidence that pathways for meaningful discussion and critical thinking were created. It is said that when discussions took place they were controlled by local community leaders and MCP party officials whose comments tended to reinforce the messages in the plays (Kamlongera 1984: 392). For example, when the play about adult literacy was performed at

Jeremiya village, the village headman endorsed the educative messages in the play, while the Health Extension worker, who had accompanied the team, emphasised the importance of general hygiene. At Yoram Ng'ambi the discussion was dominated by the headman, who was also the village chairman of the MCP, and the Health Extension worker, whose comments emphasised the need for pit latrines. There is evidence that the content of the plays did not always reflect the true needs or perspectives of the community. During a performance of the adult literacy play at the tobacco estate, one community member was surprised to find that there was a literacy centre in the village. The estate manager admitted that the centre had not existed until a few weeks before the theatre workshop (Kamlongera 1984: 394).

In the final analysis, the Mbalachanda workshop was a success in demonstrating the use of popular theatre in community development, but it failed to foster pathways for critical thinking and true community participation. However, it is understandable that for theatre practitioners like Chris Kamlongera and David Kerr making truly socially committed and inclusive theatre in a totalitarian state would have been dangerous. From the outset, the workshop had been compromised, with the scope of exploration and the community participants determined by government officers. Although the theatrical model that was used was not participatory in nature, the community itself also exercised a kind of self-censorship. Kerr (1989: 484-485) tells us that making popular theatre in rural Malawi under a one party hegemony was problematic, because too often community leaders were also party loyalists who functioned as gate keepers and imposed a localised form of censorship. By Kamlongera's admission the workshop ended up being propaganda theatre in service to the extension workers and government officials.¹⁰ Even with its failures, it is important to recognise the role played by the theatre workshop at Mbalachanda in pioneering popular theatre in Malawi.

Liwonde Primary Health Care Unit Theatre Project 1985-1987

In the mid-1980s, there emerged a new form of popular theatre practice in Malawi, through the patronage of the Health Care Unit (PHCU) project of the Liwonde Agricultural Development Division (ADD). Learning from the mistakes of Mbalachanda, the team of Chris Kamlongera and David Kerr set out to make their practice more participatory. A year before, Kamlongera had returned from the University of Leeds where he had attained his PhD, with a focus on popular theatre in Zambia and Malawi. Kerr (2007: 38) tells us that 'Chris, was knowledgeable

in the participatory traditions of the community (Liwonde) and also aware of Boal's Forum Theatre'.¹¹ In 1985 the Chancellor College Theatre for Development team was invited by the Liwonde PHCU to help in developing a communication campaign for a German Technical Aid (GTZ) funded primary health care programme targeting a group of ten villages in Mwima, Mbela and Chisi Island (Kerr and Chinfunyise 2004, Kalipeni and Kamlongera 1996). The team led by Chris Kamlongera consisted of two lecturers (Kamlongera and David Kerr) and three drama students.

At that time, the nearest general hospital (Zomba) to Liwonde was twenty kilometres away. This meant that people had to travel long distances to get medical attention. In 1985, the Government of Malawi established a Primary Health Care Unit within the Liwonde ADD to provide primary health services for Liwonde District (Kalipeni and Kamlongera 1996).¹² It had been observed by the PHCU that there was a tendency in many primary health care projects to sideline rural communities in the planning of primary health care activities. This resulted in top-down campaigns that did not represent the interests of the community (Kalipeni and Kamlongera 1996). Initially, the PHCU team encouraged the villages to form Village Health Committees whose role was to ensure that pit latrines were dug with concrete covers and wells had cement aprons. However, they learned that the problem was not materials, but community consciousness (Kerr 1989: 470-471). Bearing that in mind, the PHCU decided to collaborate with the Theatre for Development (TfD) team so that drama could be used to explore the primary health problems of the community (Kerr 2007, Kalipeni and Kamlongera 1996).

The initial PHC TfD experiments followed these key steps: (a) quantitative research done by PHCU outlined general health needs and challenges; (b) the TfD team carried out community analysis (diagnosis) to ascertain the major health problems of the community; (c) a participatory play was created by the Chancellor team using these findings; (d) the play was performed at the *bwalo* (village square) and used cut-off points or character dilemmas as pathways for initiating audience participation through direct questions addressed to the audience, and (e) at the end a community plan of action was mapped out with technical support provided by the PHCU (Kalipeni and Kamlongera 1996). Later on the approach began to incorporate village actors (VHC members) in the plays. For purposes of analysis I will discuss the process at Mwima and Chisi Island (Mulangali Primary School Workshop).

TfD experiments in Mwima began in December 1985. The area had high incident rates of malaria, diarrhoea, cholera and typhoid (Kalipeni and Kamlongera 1996). In December, the TfD team went into the villages to conduct research or a ‘community diagnosis’ of health problems through discussions at the *bwalo* (village square) (Kerr 2002: 56). During the discussion it was discovered that some of the main health problems were water sanitation and access to potable water (Kerr 2002). Back at their base, the PHCU and TfD team discussed the findings and the team from Chancellor created an improvised play. The play, *Chitsime* (The Well), was about the location of wells in the village. It had also been established by the PHCU team that the wells were possible sites of disease because they did not have cement aprons and were not cleaned, which allowed dirt to get into them. In the play, the main role of the chief was played by Chris Kamlongera, with other roles played by the drama students and a nurse from PHCU. The intention was to tease out where a new well should be put and who would be responsible for its maintenance. Audience participation during performance was elicited through ‘open ups’ — a technique of directly addressing the audience and asking them for solutions. From the discussions it emerged that there were two unhygienic wells in the village; a shallow one near the village headman’s house and another at the trading centre (Kerr 2002: 315). Other techniques that were used in the play included arguments between characters and character dilemmas, which allowed the actors to throw questions to the audience and elicit solutions from them (Kerr 1995). At the end, the TfD team asked the community members to remake the play. Kerr (2002) explains that this was an adapted form of Boal’s Forum Theatre technique and it appears it was used only at Mwima. During the community’s performance it became clear that the well located at the trading centre was owned by the shopkeeper, who only allowed regular customers to draw water from it and refused to put a cement apron around the well or let the women clean it. At the end of the play the community actors decided that they wanted to perform the play at the trading centre. During that performance the owner of the well agreed to let the villagers maintain it (ibid: 317).

A few weeks later, two more plays were performed, namely *Chipatala* (The Hospital) and *Chimbuzi* (The Lavatory). They followed the same play creation process as *Chitsime*. During the performance of *Chipatala* it emerged that the district hospital at Liwonde was too far away, and was understaffed and overcrowded, which dissuaded community members from seeking medical assistance there. Through with the PHCU, Village Health Committees were

formed whose job was to ‘report on infectious diseases, organise people for health campaigns and health education meetings and to identify health problems in the village (Kalipeni and Kamlongera 1996: 61). The VHCs received a two day training on health matters and were responsible for administering medical care for diseases such as diarrhoea, malaria and conjunctivitis. Their work was on a volunteer basis and they included herbalists and traditional birth attendants.

There was in 1987 a feeling among the Tfd team that the dialogue driven sketches that had been performed at Mwima and Mbela were not close to any indigenous art forms of the communities they were working in. It was at this point that they adopted a different approach; the incorporation of cultural forms into the structure of plays, similar to the work of the Chikwakwa Travelling Theatre. The thinking was that if local cultural forms (proverbs, riddles, folklore, dance and songs) were used it would help in encouraging audiences to actively participate (Kerr 1989). In July 1987, a folklore workshop was conducted at Mulangali Primary School in Zomba, near Lake Chirwa — also the location of Chisi Island. The workshop at Mulangali began with research on health problems in the area as had been done at Mwima and Mbela. Afterwards, participants were introduced to improvised drama. On the second day, the participants shared — through performance — their folk art among each other and with the Tfd team. From there, an improved play was created using the research findings and incorporating the collected folklore into the play. For example, local songs were used for scene transitions and for the beginning and the ending of the play (Kerr 1991b: 57). The play also borrowed structural motifs common in local proverbs and folktales like ‘the trickster hare, who is reluctant to work, the newly married husband who breaks the mother-law avoidance taboo’ (ibid). The play was presented in the villages and at Mulangali Primary School. Kerr says the incorporation of local cultural forms in the Tfd plays made the audience response to the questions that were posed by the actors. In Malawian *nthano* (fables) the narrator begins by inviting the audience, saying *panangotelo* (once upon a time), to which the audience response *tilitonse* (we are listening). Employing these folk markers allowed the audience to easily respond because they were familiar with their own indigenous forms (Kerr 1989). During one of these performances the traditional authorities (village headmen and local party chairmen) were openly criticised for their failure to ensure that people accessed clean water and that the local clinics were well

staffed. In a sense, these performances had restored, temporarily, a form of democratic deliberation, which had been repressed under the Banda regime (Kerr 1991b: 58).

In many ways the PHC plays were a considerable success in their effort to establish a truly participatory popular theatre approach in Malawi. What made the Liwonde PHC plays different from the Mbalachanda workshop was that there was room to foster inclusivity, community participation and collaboration in an ongoing process. From the outset, the decision to use community diagnosis (research) to solicit issues from the community made the approach more participatory. The creation of the plays reflected the issues as they came from the people and made the plays relevant to the communities. At the same time the incorporation of local indigenous cultural forms in the structures of the play made the work truly popular and invested in the ideals of collaboration between communities and facilitators. Another achievement of the PHC plays was their ability to use theatre as a channel for democratic debates at the community level in a country where spaces for deliberation were non-existent. An important feature of the PHC project that made these plays a success was the fact that it was ongoing. The Tfd programme ran from 1985 to 1987. This allowed the Tfd team to go into the villages on a regular basis and in doing so they were able to form close links with the communities (Kerr 1991a: 65). Visits to the village lasted close to a month. However, despite its successes, the PHC Tfd process was not without problems.

From the beginning the creative process during the PHC play remained largely in the hands of the team from Chancellor. For instance, at Mwima, Mbela and Mulangali the plays came about after a basic sketch had been prepared by the team and was taken to the community. Later on the VHCS at Liwonde made a play. Chris Kamlongera told me that the Tfd team did not establish any theatre groups and that the play at Liwonde was the group's own creation (Kamlongera, Personal communication 2016). He further said: 'any groups created were done so solely by the communities from being inspired by the PHC and the travelling theatre experience'. According to Kerr (2002), when the village drama groups began performing it was noted that the 'Mr Wise and Mr Foolish' formulae started appearing in their plays. Again this would have been familiar from colonial propaganda. He further explains that some of the VHC members were party loyalists and used the plays as a tool for pushing MCP ideology (ibid: 66).

Another problem that I observed in the Liwonde Tfd campaign was the framing of community participation in and through performance. It is said that participation was elicited

through use of ‘open ups’ and cut-off points or dilemmas. Kerr (2002) acknowledges that this technique led to communities responding in chorus, with a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ often coming from the women and children. In my observation, such methods of community engagement and participation do not give practitioners complex narratives of the real problems in the community. At the same time, its use to elicit answers or a discussion can be problematic. Within those communities where class, gender and social differences are obvious in everyday life; it is often those members who occupy higher social status who tend to dominate group discussions (Chisiza 2012). Neither Kerr (1991a, 2011; 2002) nor Kalipeni and Kamlongera (1996) give an indication of which gender or age or social status group dominated the discussions. Finally, the work at Liwonde was marred by the focus on micro issues or symptoms of structural problems and political ineptness by government officials, even when the process had been handed over to village VHCs. In his article ‘Community Theatre and Public Health Malawi’, Kerr (1989) argues that although the PHC process attempted to raise the consciousness of the villagers it was often compromised by the presence of the one party ideology at grassroots level. He further asserts that while the plays had revolutionary potential, the MCP regime made it impossible ‘for any non-violent, but combative countervailing movements to take root’ (ibid: 484). The villagers’ discussions did not address the issue of state power or the link between government and the causes of local underdevelopment the plays exposed; unless they were pointed out by the Tfd team (ibid). In the end, the PHC plays managed to create a form of participatory popular theatre and led to some changes — establishment of VDC and maintenance of village wells — in the communities. However, they failed to enable communities to examine their condition beyond the scope of primary health care because of the repressive political atmosphere the Tfd team were operating in.

Notes to Chapter 1

¹ A shortened version of this chapter appears as 'In Search of Theatre for Development in Malawi: A Modern History' in Femi Osofisan and Dr Tejumola Olaniyan (eds) *Critical Stages: The International Association of Theatre Critics web-journal*, 15 (Forthcoming).

² The Censorship Board was formed in 1968 under the Censorship and Control Entertainment Act. Its sole purpose was to determine whether a publication (including visual and performing arts) was acceptable or had to be banned. The Act also empowered the public to report any material that had caused offence. In a period of seven years the Censorship Board banned over 840 books, more than 100 periodicals and 16 films (Africa Watch 1991).

³ The Chewa people are from the central region of Malawi and make up the second largest ethnic group in the country.

⁴ The first Malawian involvement in European style drama occurred in 1951 when the African Players, which was led by Mr. Charles Matinga, staged a play at the Sunnyside Football Club in Blantyre (Gibbs 1981).

⁵ Other examples of university troupes inspired by Ibadan College's Travelling Theatre include Makerere Free Travelling Theatre (Uganda), The University of Nairobi Travelling Theatre (Kenya), The Legon Road Theatre (Ghana), the Zambian Chikwawa Travelling Theatre (Zambia) and the Chancellor College Travelling Theatre (Malawi) (Kerr 1991).

⁶ Literature on theatre in Malawi suggests that the travelling theatre concept was brought to Malawi by Mupa Shumba (1969-78) who had been involved with first the travelling theatre at Makerere.

⁷ James Gibbs brought with him expertise and scholarship on Africa drama. Gibbs told me that before coming to Malawi he had worked at the University of Ghana from 1968 and helped establish the Legon 7, a student drama group.

⁸ The plays James Gibbs directed at Chancellor College include *The Trial of Lucullus* (1973); a shortened version of Brecht's radio opera, *Cow into Pony, Mr. Hare and Mr Tortoise* and *Tortoise Triumphant* (1973) and dramatised poems by Soyinka (*Okonjo*) and Okot p'Bitek (*Returned the Bride-wealth*) (1973).

⁹ The third sketch, *Nzeru Zayekha* (Mr Know it all), was about modern farming methods. It focused on the superstitious Mr Chakufwa, who believed in using charms for his crops. Following a visit by the agricultural instructors, his friends adopt modern farming methods and produce good crops. Chakufwa's garden fails and he accuses his friends of casting an evil spell on his crops (Kamlongera 1984).

¹⁰ At Mbalachanda, Timpunza Mvula's *The Lizard's Tail* was adapted into the vernacular and became an instant hit in urban areas (Kamlongera 1984). Due to its success several commercial drama groups in the 1980s like Kwathu Arts, Umodzi, Lonjezo Black Lass and Force Theatre began making Chichewa drama in the urban towns of Blantyre and Lilongwe (Kerr 1987).

¹¹ Chris Mphande, a former drama graduate, who participated in the 1987 Liwonde Tfd experiment told me that Augusto Boal and Paulo Freire were not taught on the course.

¹² The project consisted of two three teams: the health management team (a medical doctor, a senior clinical officer, a public health nurse and a senior health assistant), the Tfd team and the Village Health Committees (VHC).

2 THEATRE FOR DEVELOPMENT IN CONTEMPORARY MALAWI¹

This chapter examines Theatre for Development in contemporary Malawi. I begin with a discussion of the context in which contemporary Tfd has emerged. This is followed by an examination of the teaching of the form at Chancellor College from the 1980s to the present day. I then examine how Tfd has been used by three local NGOs: the Centre for Community Mobilisation, Story Workshop Educational Trust and Pakachere Institute of Health and Development Communication, before concluding with a discussion of the problems with existing methodologies in Malawi.

In this chapter I argue that the current teaching of Malawian Tfd at Chancellor leads to students working with NGOs without adequate training and even less a foundation in critical pedagogy cannot enable them to make Tfd that is dialogical, participatory and empowering for ordinary people. I also argue that contemporary Tfd aims to promote donor messages and NGO's agendas. This is further compounded by the sharing of practices that focus more on message giving from one organisation to another, through the movement of agency staff and sharing of manuals. I illustrate my argument with a look at three local Malawian NGOs.

The background to Theatre for Development in post-1994 Malawi

In Africa, Theatre for Development traces its origins to the pioneering work of *Laedza Batanani* (Community Awakening) developed by expatriate adult educators Ross Kidd and Martin Byram in the rural areas of northern Botswana (Mlama 1991, Kerr 1995). In 1974, under the University of Botswana's adult literacy programme, Kidd and Byram began making theatre with rural farmers exploring obstacles to development in their communities (Kidd & Byram 1982, Kerr 1995, Byam 1999). *Laedza Batanani* emerged as a response to low community participation in government development schemes, which had relied on long-established agricultural extension communication methods like lectures, posters and pamphlets (Kerr 1995: 151). The use of message-based theatre in Africa dates back to the 1940s and 1950s when colonial agricultural extension officers used didactic theatre — drama, puppetry, music and dance — to transmit modern agricultural methods to locals (see, for example, Kamlongera 1984, Mlama 1991, Kerr 1995). However, this theatre was patronising and portrayed rural Africans as backward, people who could only be saved by the teacher or extension worker 'trained in the ideology of

modernisation' (Kerr 1991: 63). Although in the 1950s and 1960s, there came early forms of African popular theatre — theatre for liberation struggles, literary drama and university travelling theatre — according to Jane Plastow (2014a), the importance of *Laedza Batanani* is that it marked the start of a practice of popular theatre made with rather than for marginalised groups, although at the beginning the process was controlled by outsiders.

A brief historical context is necessary here. In the 1970s, many anglophone universities in Africa were influenced by a socialist-oriented ideology of 'power of the people and power to the people' and by the peasant movements in Latin and Central America (Abah 2007: 445). Consequently, there emerged in the universities in Botswana, Zambia and Nairobi groups of theatre makers and playwrights who were politically engaged and sought to make theatre that was socially relevant (Macmillan 2014, Kerr 1995, Epskamp 1991). For example, in 1970 the University of Zambia's Chikwakwa Travelling Theatre staged an adapted version of Mario Farariti's *Che!* as an act of solidarity with groups fighting for liberation in Southern Africa (Macmillan 2014: 949);² while at the University of Nairobi, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, wrote and staged *The Trials of Dedan Kimathi* (1977), which dealt with the Mau Mau liberation struggle (Plastow 2014b). Shortly afterwards, in conjunction with Ngugi wa Mirii and the community members from Kamiriithu Community Education and Cultural Centre, *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (I Will Marry When I Want) was produced (Byram 1991:88). The play was about land problems in Kenya created by capitalism and neo-colonialism (Plastow 2014b). What is remarkable about the Kamiriithu work is that the plays were created and performed by community members using their own languages and performance forms (see, for example, Kerr 1991, Plastow 2014b, Thiong'o 1986). In addition, the people were responsible for the centre's funding and operations (Kerr 1991: 64-65).

It is against this backdrop that the first iteration of TfD emerged. Success at *Laedza Batanani* inspired several imitators at the universities of Zambia, Swaziland, Lesotho, Malawi, Nigeria (Ahmadu Bello University), Sierra Leone and Tanzania (Mlama 1991, Mda 1993, Kerr 1995). However, early TfD experiments in the 1970s were criticised for being pseudo-participatory and largely controlled by outsiders (see Kerr 1995, Mlama 1991; 2002). In the early 1980s, practitioners in Nigeria (Ahmadu Bello University Collective) and, later on, in Lesotho (Maratholi Travelling Theatre) began to adopt more progressive approaches, which sought to empower rural communities (Mlama 1991, Kerr 1995). For example, between 1981

and 1982 the Ahmadu Bello University Collective (ABU) Collective in collaboration with the Benue State Arts Council conducted TfD workshops with community members in Bomo and created unfinished sketches, which were later on performed for the larger community (Kerr 1995). The ABU TfD team adapted Augusto Boal's Forum Theatre — stopping the action and asking the audience what should happen next or inviting the audience to try out an alternative action — as a strategy for enabling community participation and critical thinking about the issues raised in the plays (Mlama 1991, Byam 1999, Abah 1996). In Tanzania, under the title of Theatre for Social Development (1982-83) Penina Mlama, Eberhard Chambulikazi and Amadina Lihamba from the University of Dar es Salaam developed another important approach at Malya in northern Tanzania (Kerr 1995, Mlama 1991). The aim of the project was to initiate a process where marginalised groups could 'reassert their role as subjects rather than objects of development' (Mlama 1991: 109). This was to be achieved through the use of the local people's performance traditions. The project was remarkable because the community were responsible for setting the agenda, selecting issues, and creating and performing in the plays. During the first workshop the TfD team facilitated the play creation process, but later on the village core group took over and began making plays on their own. Another difference from earlier versions of TfD is that the Malya project was ongoing — lasting for eight months — during which time the university team made five visits to the village. This enabled them to enter into a relationship seeking to work as equals with the people (Kerr 1995: 158). More importantly, its use of local art forms, namely storytelling traditions, songs, local Sukuma dances, and mime traditions to address issues of teenage girl pregnancies by older men and of youth unemployment, followed by a meaningful debate, enabled the local people to critically explore and take action in relation to their problems (Mlama 1991; 2002, Kerr 1995).

In the mid-1980s, TfD practitioners began to be used by government and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) across the African continent (Kerr 1995, Plastow 2014a, Osita 1998, Eskamp 1992, Kerr 1995, Kamlongera 2005). One of the major contributing factors behind the formation of these alliances was the imposition of Structural Adjustment Programmes to cut African debt by the International Monetary Fund in the 1980s, which involved 'reducing public spending, liberalising trade, devaluing currencies, restricting credit and promoting free enterprise' (Therein 2002: 456). Jane Plastow (2014a: 111) tells us that the imposition of Structural Adjustments resulted in the withdrawal of funding from educational

and cultural programmes, which had adverse effects on African theatre. She further explains that due to these reforms state support for theatre groups, university theatre programmes and commercial theatre stopped in many places. In its place, donor and limited state-funded Tfd began to emerge, with money offered to theatre-makers to produce ‘theatre peddling state endorsed messages’ (Plastow 2014a: 110). Another critical turn in these alliances came in the late 1980s and 1990s, during the early years of the AIDS pandemic (Johnson 2011, Kerr 2013). During that time government and international NGOs turned to Tfd — offering relatively large sums of money to practitioners and therefore leading to many who did the work just for money — as a tool for raising awareness (Johansson 2011: 45-46). The emergence of donor funded Tfd essentially commercialised the practice in many places. Osita Okagbue (1998: 25) tells us that once Tfd practitioners began taking the money of government agencies and NGOs there was an expectation that theatre would ‘be a mouthpiece or a medium for the donors’. Similarly, Plastow (2014a) asserts that the alliance between Tfd practitioners and NGOs turned Tfd into a service industry, in which cash-strapped African performers became more interested in making theatre that served the agenda of their paymasters than those of their people.

In Malawi, these alliances can be traced back to the 1980s when Tfd first emerged. A change in these partnerships came after the introduction of multiparty politics in 1994 (Kerr quoted in Magalasi 2012: xvi). The establishment of democracy resulted in the removal of constraints placed upon NGOs by Banda’s government, which had made working with rural communities difficult (Luwanda 2003). Another contributing factor was the AIDS pandemic. When the first cases of HIV were reported in the late 1980s, the Banda government responded poorly and information about HIV was often censored for moralistic and religious reasons (Lwanda 2001, 151-161). After 1994 the situation did not really change and was made worse by the Muluzi government’s inability to allocate adequate resources for combating the disease (ibid, 161). Consequently, the fight against HIV became the responsibility of international and local NGOs (ibid: 161).³ To mitigate the spread of the pandemic these organisations turned to Tfd, popular theatre, radio and print media to sensitise people about the dangers (Kerr 2013).⁴

The GABLE Tfd Project

One of the earliest examples of an NGO-arts alliance came in 1994 when the Tfd team from Chancellor College collaborated with the Girls Attainment of Basic Literacy and Education (GABLE) Social Mobilisation Campaign (SMC). In 1992 the GABLE project, with funding from USAID, was launched with the aim of raising the number of girls in schools by providing fee waivers to all non-repeating girls from standard 2-8 (Kadzamira and Chibwana 2000: 195). Two years later the UDF Government made primary education free for all (Chimombo 2009). In July of that year, the GABLE Social Mobilisation Campaign was launched in fifteen villages in Machinga District in southern Malawi (Kamlongera 2005). The campaign sought to change attitudes and mobilise communities and parents to support the education of girls through the use of mass media, weekly radio programmes and drama (Kadzamira and Chimombo 2000). The project was contracted to an international NGO called Creative Associates International (Kamlongera 2005).⁵ Against this backdrop GABLE SMC worked with the Chancellor Tfd team with the aim of using drama as a tool for identifying challenges to girls' education and for raising awareness of the benefits of sending girls to school. In the pilot stage the campaign targeted rural communities in Machinga District (Kamlongera 2005). A group of fifty students from Chancellor were recruited and formed part of the research and performance troupes. They were joined by a group of twenty-five men and twenty-five women who were Community Development Assistants and Primary Education Advisers from the ministries of Women and Children's Affairs and Education respectively (Kamlongera 2005).

Before the troupes left for the villages they received training in the GABLE SMC methodology. According to Kamlongera (2005: 450) the curriculum focused on participatory methods and communication skills. The content of training, which was conducted by Kamlongera, included action research (interviews and observation), participatory theatre, storyline development, and performing for research verification (USAID GABLE SMC Report (No date): 5, Kamlongera 2005). The Tfd troupes stayed in the villages for 5 to 10 days. During this time, they conducted community diagnosis and collected information about issues concerning girls' education by interviewing community members in their homes (Kamlongera 2005). The research process involved partaking in the daily routines of the villagers. At the end of every day the information gathered was discussed by the team members, enabling them to

understand community perspectives. This was followed by creating a village profile — a record of their findings that detailed the cultural practices; school enrolment and selection; distances to schools and other service facilities, and prevailing attitudes among parents and children (USAID GABLE SMC Report (No date): 10). After the data had been collected and a village profile had been created a participatory play was made which was performed on the last day of their stay. During the performance the actors engaged in dialogue with the audience using ‘open ups’, with the aim of ‘helping the community members accept ownership of their condition, attitudes and behaviour’ (ibid: 12). It is said that between 1994 and 1997 at least 300 dramas were performed in about 190 villages throughout Malawi (USAID GABLE SMC Report (No date): 11). In 1998, the GABLE pilot project came to an end and was replaced by GABLE 2. The following year, the team that made up the first GABLE SMC registered an independent local NGO known as Creative Centre for Community Mobilisation (CRECCOM).⁶

Although these GABLE TfD troupes were operating under a democratic dispensation the TfD approach did not really seek to make theatre that was enable the active participation of communities and to stimulate the critical thinking of local communities in order for them to analyse why girls had the same right as boys to attain an education. In fact, one of the major stepping stones of the Mulangali workshop — cultural exchange — was simplified to merely adapting local songs and dances to advance the agenda of the project. At no point did the troupes work with the communities to create the plays and engage in a two way flow of cultural and knowledge exchange. In the GABLE reports that I have examined it appears that TfD was understand as a tool for disseminating messages by the SMC personnel (UNESCO GABLE Report 1997: 20). This suggests that theatre was not used to create spaces for meaningful discussion about the constraints on girls’ education. While there was an emphasis on using focus group discussions (FDGs) for getting communities to come up with action plans, it seems TfD was used primarily to transmit donor messages. What has happened since the GABLE SMC project, which popularised TfD among Malawian NGOs, according to my understanding, is that practitioners in Malawi have understood this model as constituting TfD in its entirety and not as a single approach in a toolkit of possible theatre-based practices.

The teaching of TfD at Chancellor College from the 1980s to the present day

TfD was introduced at Chancellor in the 1980s by Chris Kamlongera and David Kerr following the workshop at Mbalachanda. According to a former student, Chrispin Mphande, during that time the course ran for a term and only focused on practice (Mphande, Personal communication 2015).⁷ A theoretical component was introduced in the early 1990s. At that time, the model that was being taught was the one developed by the Liwonde TfD project. A former student, Smith Likongwe, told me that in the theoretical component of this course Freire's ideas about conscientisation and Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed were discussed (Likongwe, Personal communication 2015). However, he further explained that Boal's work was used to only draw comparisons with the Malawian model — developed at Mulangali in 1987 — but his techniques were not taught. The thinking was apparently that 'what Boal was doing was relevant to his country and time' (Likongwe *ibid*), but not to the Malawian context.

Currently, TfD is offered as a term one course in the second year drama programme.⁸ It consists of theoretical and practical components. A drama lecturer, Lusizi Kambalame, claimed that students are instructed in the development of the practice in Africa from *Laedza Batanani* to the work of Kamlongera and Kerr in Malawi (Kambalame, Personal communication, 2015). She also explained that students are introduced to Paulo Freire and, later on, Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed. Another lecturer, Mufunanji Magalasi, told me that Boal's role in the development of TfD in Africa is discussed (Magalasi, Personal communication, 2015). In 2015, I accessed a copy of the syllabus which did not have Freire's important book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In addition, Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* was not there; the only text of his prescribed was *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*.⁹ In early 2016, I received a copy of the TfD course description, which now shows that Freire and Boal have been added. It is surprising to note the syllabus and the course description do not have any materials on important TfD programmes in Africa developed by Ross Kidd and Martin Byram at Laedza Batanai in Botswana, by Ngugi wa Thiong'o at Kamirithu (Kenya), by Micheal Etherton at Ahmadu Bello University (Nigeria), or by Penina Mlama and Amandina Lihamba in Tanzania — and these are old — or any recent texts on TfD, considering that there are so many available now. Although staff state that students are taught about these pioneering TfD programmes one wonders which texts students are reading? In fact, David Kerr's important book *Popular Theatre in Africa*, which must be considered a key text on TfD in Africa, is missing. Presently, the course has a list of twelve

books with the only notable authors being Kamlongera, Boal, Kees Eskamp, Paulo Freire and Zakes Mda.

There are major theoretical problems with the syllabus at Chancellor. The lack of engagement with various applications and ideologies of TfD reveals a concerning lack of intellectual curiosity and interest on the part of the academics. Secondly, there is a narrow understanding of TfD as constituting the Kerr and Kamlongera model. 98% of my respondents thought TfD was this model rather than a catchall term for a range of theatre techniques that seek to empower ordinary people towards examining their problems and finding community-based solutions for change. In term one students are taught TfD and in term two Drama in Education (DIE). While DIE can be practiced as a form on its own, it is possible to incorporate it as a technique within TfD. For example, my TfD work on masculinity and HIV with young men in Malawi included DIE as a methodological approach. Where does the problem really begin? I discovered that many of the junior staff members had been taught by the senior staff. The staff members admitted that they had not been sufficiently exposed to any other TfD techniques apart from the Kamlongera and Kerr model. For instance, Kambalame stated that during the times she has taught the course she has kept teaching the same old model because that is what she knows. Sharifa Abdulla said that although during her MA studies in South Africa she had been made aware of other practices what she has been teaching students was the Kamlongera and Kerr model because even during her postgraduate studies this was what had been understood as TfD.¹⁰ Smith Likongwe said: ‘our TfD model has survived because unlike Boal’s work it is culturally relevant to our context’ (Likongwe, Personal communication, 2015).

In the 1970s, iterations of TfD in Africa borrowed the format developed at *Laedza Batanani*; as was the case with Malawi. The format involved training of catalysts in local performance traditions, information gathering (homesteading), scenario creation and rehearsal, performance, and evaluation and follow-up. At Chancellor students are taught this format. The process begins with entering in a rural community, in which students are told that they must first use the local leadership structures to inform the community leaders that they are in the village to conduct research. When permission is granted the TfD team conduct research, through interviews and homesteading, to identify the problems. Thereafter, a play is created based on the issues identified. During the play, ‘open ups’ and character dilemmas are used to elicit solutions from the audience. This is followed by a post-performance discussion, in which the community

is engaged to discuss the issues raised in the play. Finally, students write a reflective essay on the process. No follow-up is done. The practice part of the course runs for 3-5 days.

The structure of the course is also problematic. Students take the course merely as part of an academic course and what they expect at the end is a good grade. From the outset, there is no real commitment from students to engage with ordinary people in a process of critical thinking about problems and their structural causes. Lusizi Kambalame admitted that the practical part of the course is short due to time and resource constraints (Personal communication, 2015). This means there is no time for students to fully grasp techniques and experiment with methods. Inadequate time for critical practice of TfD, according to Jane Plastow (2015), fuels the problem of copycats, who go out replicating TfD methods according to the set guidelines passed on by their teachers. This also means that there is no opportunity for students to fully develop a relationship as equals within the communities. One of the strategies that the Ahmadu Bello University developed from the 1980s was getting students to engage with communities within the vicinity of the campus for prolonged periods of time (Abah & Etherton 1980). They did this by instituting a programme that runs for years, with 1st year students doing an introductory component and in-depth practices being taught in the subsequent years (ibid). A staff member at Chancellor admitted that there is a narrow understanding of the community as being rural-based and that perhaps it is time we expand our understanding of the community to include urban communities, which would not require a lot money and would enable ongoing practical work. While this is true, the real problem is that there is no real commitment from the staff to implement ongoing theatre-based projects even with surrounding communities, which could function as learning and experimentation hubs for students. I am personally aware that some of the staff members are, currently, involved in projects where groups of rural farmers in Dedza and Mzimba, and urban drama groups in Blantyre district have been trained in message-based TfD techniques. While these projects have been financially beneficial to the staff — they get paid to facilitate these TfD trainings — according to my observations they have had no impact at all in reshaping the practice of TfD at Chancellor.

This raises the question of the key principles and ideologies informing TfD. Scholars (Kidd and Byram 1982, Abah 2007 and Mlama 2002) agree that the best practices of TfD aim for inclusivity and meaningful participation. One of the ways in which this is done is by empowering ordinary people to dictate the issues that plays address and enabling them to create

the play using their art forms (Abah 1996, 2004, Kerr 1991, 1995). In 1987, Kerr and Kamlongera sought to develop this approach with the PHC plays. Today, students do not have the opportunity to develop an appreciation of community inclusion and participation because of time constraints. As a result local culture in TfD has been oversimplified to mean only inclusion of indigenous songs and dances. A former student, Charles Nkhalamba, explained that in 2011 his class did not use any local songs or dances, instead they used songs and dances that they already knew (Personal communication, 2015). The staff at Chancellor have a responsibility to ensure that students understand that participation is more than singing, dancing and taking part in a discussion at the end of a play. It is deeply problematic that students graduate thinking that TfD means imposing their viewpoints on marginalised groups; but then there is little evidence that the staff themselves think any differently. It is worrying that despite the many iterations of and explorations with TfD in Africa in the last forty years, the understanding of TfD at Chancellor remains extremely narrow.

For thirty years the model taught at Chancellor has been that developed by Kamlongera and Kerr. In 2011 Forum Theatre was introduced by an American Fulbright scholar, Galia Boneh, who was attached to the department and taught the TfD course (Abdulla, Personal communication, 2015). At about the same time, DIE was introduced by Mufunanji Magalasi as term two course in the second year. The introduction of these models have been steps forward in the teaching of TfD at Chancellor. However, their introduction has been piecemeal and unbacked up by substantive practice. For example, a group of students I interviewed explained that during the 2013/14 academic year forum theatre did not involve any practical exercises in the community. One student admitted that although she understands the theory she did not fully appreciate how forum theatre works due to a lack of practical experience (Drama Students, Personal communication, 2016). Another group of students reported that in 2014 the DIE course did not involve any practicals — apart from classroom based demonstrations (Drama Students, Personal communication, 2015).

From the 1960s to the late 1980s, the University of Malawi was able to attract a range of expatriate scholars. However, as Banda's regime became increasingly repressive many expatriates and local scholars were reluctant to work in the country. Nowhere has this been more evident than in the drama department. Apart from James Gibbs, David Kerr and Chris Kamlongera, the department has failed to recruit notable academics, which has deprived it of

much needed intellectual stimulation. Consequently, the country has been substantively cut off from a range of cutting edge theory and practice. This has meant that Tfd in Malawi is extremely limited in its thinking and application and this is impacting down the line on all related work in the country.

NGO Tfd Methodologies in Malawi: SWET, CRECCOM and Pakachere

In 2015, I travelled to Malawi to conduct the fieldwork for my doctoral research. One of my secondary objectives was to research the kinds of Tfd practice happening in Malawi. Initially, my research methods were to include accessing reports on Tfd programmes and observing Tfd performances by three local NGOs; namely the Centre for Creative Community Mobilisation, Story Workshop Educational Trust and Pakachere Institute for Health and Development Communication. However, throughout the research I encountered a number of challenges, which have limited how I can discuss these NGOs. For instance, it took four months for one NGO to authorise their staff to speak to me. When they finally did the person responsible for Tfd outreach activities was on leave and attempts to set up an interview with him proved futile. This particular NGO failed to give me copies of reports or their Tfd training manual(s). Another NGO at the time of my fieldwork was not doing any Tfd activities. Consequently, I have had to rely on first-hand accounts, in-depth interviews, email discussions, Tfd manuals and project activity reports — where they have been available — as my primary sources. These examples have been used to illustrate the kinds of Tfd practices currently taking place in Malawi.

In this section, I draw also on the research and viewpoints of Patrick Mangeni, whose article ‘Negotiating the Space: Challenges for applied theatre praxis with local Non-Government/community-based organisations in HIV/AIDS contexts in Uganda’ (Mangeni 2013), raises many of the questions I engage with here.

Creative Centre for Community Mobilisation

The Creative Centre for Community Mobilisation (CRECCOM) is the leading community mobilisation and sensitisation organisation in Malawi (Chimombo and Kadzamira 2002). The organisation came about after GABLE gave a grant to Creative Associates International in 1998 to establish a local NGO (USAID GABLE report, 2002: 19). Between 1998-1999 a pilot project was carried out and the Malawian staff who had implemented the GABLE SMC were employed

as the technical staff for the project (ibid). CRECCOM was officially launched in 1999. The implementation methods of GABLE SMC were adopted as its methodological approach; research and problem identification, field worker training in SMC methodology, community sensitisation and village based initiatives. Today, its methods include Tfd, focus group discussion and community workshops (community mobilisation), village radio listening clubs and micro loans (village saving and loans). CRECCOM's ongoing projects include literacy, girls' education, women's and youth empowerment and HIV and AIDS. Their funders are the Swedish Organisation for Independent Relief, the Royal Norwegian Embassy, Oxfam, Japan Tobacco International, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Save the Children (www.creccom.org).

In 1994 the GABLE SMC's developed, with the aid of Chris Kamlongera, a model where students from Chancellor were recruited to make up part of the Tfd troupes. In 1999 this was adopted as the organisation's model of recruitment for Tfd practitioners. Today, all of CRECCOM's Tfd travelling troupe members are still recruited from Chancellor. Agency staff told me that each year the organisation sends out a call for applicants which is open to all students. Each year at least 150 people apply and an approximately thirty actors are employed. Two active troupe members said that many of the students who apply are motivated by the money that the organisation offers (Personal communication, 2015). They reported that sometimes troupes go in to the community for several weeks and the daily allowances range from \$20 to \$30 per day, which is a lot of money for many students. Applicants must choose between three roles: (a) a wife, (b) a husband and (c) child. The interviews take the form of auditions designed to assess the applicants acting and traditional dance skills. I was told applicants undergo three auditions. The last part of auditions involves applicants performing a traditional dance of their choice. Agency staff said that those applicants who cannot perform any traditional dances are not picked because the Tfd troupe use traditional dances as an integral part of their performances. The selection process takes about three weeks.

Once the new members are recruited they receive training in CRECCOM's Tfd methodology (CRECCOM, Personal communication, 2015). The training is conducted by senior agency staff. The two main trainers received their Tfd training from Chancellor (www.creccom.org). The training begins by defining Tfd, which, according to two troupe members is 'theatre for the people, by the people and with the people' (Personal

communication, 2015). Participants are trained in action research, participatory theatre, storyline development, and performance skills (ibid). They learn how to conduct research through informal conversations and observation. This is followed by play creation using the data the group has collected. Afterwards, they are trained in participatory theatre. Although CRECCOM claims that this is participatory theatre the only pathways for audience participation are through open ups and the court scene at the end. Finally, CRECCOM's teams are taught how to facilitate community discussions. According to the training manager, this is done through the use of a court scene that comes at the end of the play (CRECCOM, Personal communication, 2015). She further explained that the court scene mimics how a traditional court works, resolving disputes and community problems. During the court scene a facilitator will ask the community the problems they saw in the play and how they might be resolved. It is important that local leaders and other government stakeholders are there so that once communities come up with solutions these are endorsed (ibid).

The training of community drama clubs takes place under donor funded projects. Each project starts with the travelling troupes carrying out performances in communities (Former Troupe Member, Personal communication, 2015). This is followed by the establishment of community drama groups who are trained in TfD by CRECCOM. Agency staff explained that community drama groups receive the same training as student travelling troupes, with the notable exception that they do not conduct research. Unlike TfD troupes, community drama groups are given project themes and key messages to use for creating plays. I was curious about why community drama groups are not trained in 'action research'. Agency staff stated that the thinking is that the groups already know the community issues and can verify the donor identified problems outlined in the communication briefs and surveys conducted by project donors (CRECCOM, Personal communication, 2015). After a play has been created in the training workshop it becomes the template that the group will use to sensitise communities.

Story Workshop Educational Trust

Story Workshop Educational Trust (SWET) was founded in 1997 by an American educator, Pamela Brooke (www.storyworkshopmw.org). Prior to establishing SWET, Brooke had worked as part of the management team of the GABLE SMC (1994-1997) (Director SWET, Personal communication, 2015). SWET was formed with the aim of using entertainment, particularly radio drama for community development. It was originally led by a ‘Malawian radio dramatist and producer Marvin Hanke and supported by a team of musicians, actors, scholars and researchers’ (Braun et al. 2001: 77). In 1997, the first radio programme created by SWET was *Zimachitika* (Such is Life), a Chichewa radio drama, which has run to the present day (Director SWET, Personal communication, 2015). Today, SWET’s methods include Tfd, community cinema, radio drama and village radio listening clubs (www.storyworkshopmw.org). Their focus areas include HIV and AIDS, agricultural, gender-based violence, and governance programmes. They are funded by international organisations like the European Union, USAID, UNDP, GTZ, DFID, UNICEF, CORD Aid and UNFPA among others (www.storyworkshopmw.org).

Tfd at Story Workshop was introduced when the organisation was formed in 1997. According to Smith Likongwe, the model that was introduced was based on the CRECCOM approach brought over by Pamela Brooke (Likongwe, Personal communication, 2015). Between 1997 and 2002, the organisation concentrated more on radio drama programmes (ibid). In 2002, there came a change when Likongwe joined SWET and became the head of its Tfd practice. At about that time, there was a drive to develop a method that would be unique to the organisation. SWET adopted a model that emphasised training local community drama groups — known as SWET drama clubs — to do Tfd work. Initially, the groups were trained by a team of 2-3 SWET agency staff who went into the communities conducting training for 4-5 days (Likongwe, Personal communication 2015). The training consisted of research (through interviews and observation), issue and problem identification, play creation, performance and post-performance discussion.¹¹

Today SWET still uses this model. Drama club members are selected by the community; though in some instances, the members volunteer to be part of the clubs during a community meeting (SWET report 2013). The criteria for selecting members is based solely on interest in or previous theatre experience (SWET report 2012). Agency staff reported that in some instances they can use already existing community drama groups (SWET, Personal

communication, 2015). In 2015, SWET had two trainers, one university trained and another who came to learn about TfD at SWET since joining the organisation in 2015.

SWET's TfD training runs for five days, with a performance on day six. The training focuses on drama skills (by this they mean acting, stage management and voice projection), research and audience participation through performance (SWET TfD trainer, Personal communication, 2015). Agency staff explained to me that the training begins by equipping the drama groups with knowledge about the project's aims, objectives and messages. This is followed by technical TfD training. Currently, trainers at SWET use a TfD manual that was developed by CRECCOM in 2013 (SWET TfD trainer, Personal communication, 2015). An examination of the manual shows that during the five days participants are taught the following: (a) how to identify a problem in the community that fits with the NGO communication brief; (b) how to come up with a story that fits with project messages; (c) how to develop a storyline and create a play, and (d) how to act for a TfD play (SWET TfD Manual). After the play has been created the participants rehearse for two days. During the rehearsal period they are taught how to facilitate post-performance discussions with the aim of asking the audience what lessons or issues they have seen in the play. The facilitator's role is to guide the discussions so that the audience comes up with strategies for how the problem can be resolved in the community. On day six the participants perform the play to the community. A former employee of SWET told me that there is no follow up.

Pakachere Institute for Health and Development Communication

In 2002, Pakachere was established as a brand and project within Population Services International (PSI) Malawi (Pakachere, General Organisation Information, 2015). At about that time the South Africa based Soul City Institute: Health and Development Communication had initiated a regional programme that was to partner with local and international NGOs or create independent NGOs in ten Southern African nations (ibid). The aim of the programme was to build local capacity in health and development communication NGOs in each of these countries. In Malawi, Soul City partnered with PSI Malawi to establish Pakachere. In 2008 Pakachere was launched as an independent local NGO (www.pakachere.org). From its inception the organisation has used mass media like print media, television talk shows, radio drama, phone in programmes and community mobilisation through community meetings, dialogue sessions,

radio listening sessions and, most recently TfD (Programme Manger, Personal communication, 2016). Its areas of concentration are HIV and AIDS, sexual and reproductive health rights, gender-based violence and girl's education and nutrition (www.pakachere.org). Their funders include USAID, UNICEF, UNFPA, the Swedish Organisation for Individual Relief, Aids Fonds, the Malawi National Aids Commission and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (www.pakachere.org).

TfD was introduced at Pakachere in 2013 under the USAID funded project, Feed the Future: Integrated Nutrition in Value Chains (INVC) project. This is a five year project and is being implemented in the rural areas of Lilongwe and Mchinji in central Malawi and Mangochi, Machinga and Balaka in southern Malawi (Project Manager, Personal communication, 2015). It aims at 'improving nutrition desired behaviours for pregnant, lactating and breastfeeding mothers (www.pakachere.org). Under the patronage of this project a TfD travelling troupe was established which consists of 'six famous Malawian actors who have worked with Story Workshop as radio actors as well as TfD actors' (Project Manager, Personal communication, 2015). Agency staff stated that the recruitment of the team was based on their TfD experience, on recommendations from their partner NGOs and, more importantly, the popularity of the actors because they wanted actors who could have a crowd pulling effect. Since its formation the travelling group has given performances in selected Extension Planning Areas (EPAs) under the INVC project and also to mentor community drama groups. In 2013, seventeen community drama groups were established in the seventeen EPAs and it seems all still exist (Quarterly Report, INVC Project 2014). In 2016, I interviewed drama groups working in Chileka EPA (Lilongwe) who told me that there were not doing any theatre as the funding for the nutrition project had ended. Before the project the group were making theatre, but since the coming in of the project they have stopped and now only work if they get money.

The travelling troupe and community drama groups received training in TfD conducted by three senior managers, all of whom were initially trained in TfD at Chancellor. Later on, two attended the Drama for Life MA programme at Witwatersrand University. The other had previously worked at SWET as a trainer and head of TfD (Programme Manager, Personal communication, 2015). The training runs for five days, followed every year by a one and a half day refresher course (Project Manager, Personal communication, 2015). The aim of the refresher training is to 'ascertain whether community drama groups are communicating project

key messages' (Programme Manager, Personal communication, 2015). The training has two main components; malnutrition and Tfd. The first part of the training introduces participants to the importance of good nutrition and key project messages. An examination of the training manual reveals that participants were instructed on the causes and effects of under nutrition and stunting (Pakachere Tfd Manual 2013).

The practical part of the training focused on storyline and message development, performance preparations and facilitating post-performance discussions. We are told that participants were trained in a 'magnetic theatre performance structure' (Pakachere Tfd Manual 2013: 13). Under this system participants learned techniques such as crowd pulling, the use of songs and dances to draw audience attention, ice breaking, and the use of comedic performances to create audience rapport. This was followed by learning the joker technique in Forum theatre for creating pathways for participation (Pakachere Tfd Manual 2013). I was told that the joker technique is not the only way that audiences are engaged, but that groups can also solicit solutions by asking questions (Project Manager Pakachere, Personal communication, 2015). The final part of the training included teaching participants how to conduct post-performance discussion facilitation. Participants were told that after a performance had finished it is possible that audience members might have questions, which can then be discussed in detail or in some instances a community health worker can provide more information.

Finally, participants had to create a play. During the play creation process participants were given steps for coming up with a good Tfd play; these were: 'identifying a health problem within the project's theme, its causes and effects, understanding what attitudes you want changed and what knowledge you want the audience to acquire and how to incorporate key messages that would result in attitude and behaviour change' (Pakachere Tfd Manual 2013: 15-17).

Problems with Existing Tfd Methodologies in Malawi

In the 1970s, Tfd applications in Africa were criticised for being pseudo-participatory and largely controlled by outsiders, which was not empowering for ordinary people (Abah and Etherton 1982, Mda 1991, Mlama 1991, Plastow 2014a). By the mid-1980s, practitioners had begun adapting participatory techniques that would enable communities to interrogate their own problems and find strategies for change, notable among these was Augusto Boal's Forum theatre

(Mlama 1991, Kerr 1995, Abah 1996, Byam 1999, Plastow 2009). In his book, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Augusto Boal (1979: 119) claims that forum theatre is a practice through which ordinary people can engage in a process of exploring their conditions of oppression and practice strategies for revolution. Challenging his claim, Jane Plastow (2014a: 113) argues that forum theatre is not inherently revolutionary, but its ability to be transformative depends on how it is used. She notes that during the 1980s when forum theatre became popular in Africa it was co-opted by neoliberal groups and its socialist orientation was lost. Consequently, what ended up happening was that funders, rather than marginalised people, began to decide the topics of theatre.

Forum theatre and approaches such as those developed by the Nigerian Popular Theatre Alliance/Theatre for Development Centre (TFDC) led by Professor Steve Oga Abah and DramAidE represent progressive steps for the practice of TfD in Africa today.¹² For the purpose of analysis I will briefly discuss the TFDC. The TFDC was formed in 1989 with the aim of ‘promoting participatory development ... through popular theatre strategies and exchange of knowledge on development’ (Abah 2004). Since then it has developed an integrated approach that brings together a range of techniques that include Focus Group Discussions, participant observation, community maps, simultaneous dramaturgy, forum theatre, participatory media and indigenous performing arts (Abah 2002: 74). A key feature of their practice is the use of a process-based TfD approach, in which community members (referred to as change agents), chosen from local CBOs, collaborate with ordinary community members to identify issues and problems, followed by scenario creation and rehearsal, participatory performance and strategising community action plans. What is impressive about the TfDC approach is that during dramatisation and improvisation pathways for ‘discovering possibilities of, and constraints to action’ development are tested (Abah 1996: 251). Later on, the plays created by the community members and change agents are presented to the larger community. Using simultaneous dramaturgy and forum theatre community members are engaged in critical reflection on strategies for action which are ‘tested through argument, dramatisation and intervention’ (Abah 2002: 251).¹³ To offer a practical example of this work in 2001 the TFDC together with the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex conducted a project in the oil-rich part of Nigeria, the Niger Delta, about citizenship, participation and accountability (Abah 2007: 440). The project lasted six years. For two years the TFDC team together with groups of youths

and women from local COBs engaged in a process of issue and problems identification. It emerged that one of biggest complaints by community members was how revenues from oil drilling were used and shared. It became apparent that local leaders and governments collected money from trans-national oil companies on behalf of the people, but it was never invested back in the communities. Through Tfd performances marginalised villagers were empowered to engage in a meaningful debate about the management of oil resources, to criticise the greed of trans-national oil companies and local government institutions, and created a platform for planning future action concerning the issues raised in the dramas (see Abah 2007).

Tfd methodologies

In Malawi, the only application of Tfd is message-based theatre, promoting donor and NGO messages. Although Pakachere has adapted a form of forum theatre it is clear that its application ignores the fact that the oppressed should decide the topics of theatre and actively participate in making it. A respondent from Pakachere told me that under their Emergency Communication in flood affected areas of Phalombe and Zomba Districts (2014) project Tfd teams had dialogue sessions with the communities in order to identify issues. CRECCOM and SWET respondents explained that formative research, baseline surveys and homesteading interviews are used to determine the issues Tfd plays address. However, I am arguing that this is not enough as the key issues are decided by donors and discussion is limited to finding out how these issues are perceived by the target communities. It is obvious there is a misconception of Tfd's true purpose among these NGOs, or perhaps these NGOs are primarily interested in donor money. It is my contention that the fact that communities do not decide the agenda and are not in control of the process means that Malawian Tfd has been reduced to a tool for transmitting messages as opposed to a tool for real empowerment. The Malawian NGOs I investigated assume that if plays address problems of bad roads or poor health conditions and communities are mobilised to come up with short-term solutions then their work is successful. Dale Byam (1999: 31) explains that this kind of Tfd work often deals with such problems but evades discussion of the wider sociopolitical structures that encourage such problems in the first instance. According to Jane Plastow many organisations doing Tfd in Africa today tend to sidestep the issue of ideology and claim that their programmes are non-partisan when, in actual fact, they seek to promote 'social control or western views of what is good for the world' (2014a: 115). Zakes Mda warns that the

problem with this kind of theatre is that it tends to focus on solving problems donors have identified as important, but ‘leaves aside the structural causes of these problems’ (1993: 19). So, how can these NGOs, that rely on donor funding, make theatre that is meaningful to ordinary people? Steve Abah (1996) explains that Tfd can only be truly transformative if it is made by marginalised groups dealing with their own problems, in their languages, using their local artistic forms, and created and performed by them. Although Malawian NGOs work with community drama groups it is obvious that they are acting primarily as agents for their donors and not for the communities with which they interact.

Related to this challenge is the quality of training programmes and the limited time participants have to test methods. I observed that organisations have the impression that their version of Tfd actually works, based on community discussions, community actions plans and proposed community solutions, so there is no need to change or include other techniques. The fact of that matter is that trainers themselves do not know of any other techniques or are not competent to use any others. In Lilongwe, I interviewed Umodzi Drama Group who work with Pakachere on the Nutrition Project. The group told me that they were only trained for two days. A year later, Pakachere did a refresher course for a day. In her article, ‘The Faithful Copyist or the Good Thief’, Jane Plastow (2015) argues that many Tfd training programmes in anglophone Africa often prescribe set rules for Tfd making; as is the case in Malawi, which then produce copyists, participants who go out faithfully reproducing the methods they have learned. Patrick Mangeni (2013) observes that there is a tendency among practitioners who have participated in Tfd workshops and recent Tfd graduates to pose as experts. The result, he further explains, is a ‘downgrade of the applied theatre process to messaging and poorly facilitated improvisation’. This creates a scenario where TFD is misunderstood to be ‘creating a play showing your problem and then identifying the solutions’ (Mangeni 2013: 27). This seems to be the case across Malawi. There is little evidence that after attending these training programmes participants do more than promote donor and NGO messages.

Secondly, the time dedicated to training is too short for participants to experiment with techniques. In Zimbabwe arts NGO Amakhosi Theatre have developed improved training programmes. Participants undergo auditions in indigenous art forms and narrative performance, and selected youth undergo an intensive training programme for four weeks in scriptwriting, facilitation, acting, stage management, videography and documentation (Chinyowa 2011: 349).

Afterwards, the group's skills are monitored for over a year (ibid). In Malawi, participants attend workshops that run for 3-5 days and learn one particular method. The problem of training participants for 5 to 10 days, according to Jane Plastow (2014a: 112), is that there is little room to test methods and when participants go into communities and meet new challenges they do not know what to do due to a limited toolbox of techniques. According to my understanding, the best application of Tfd is when it stimulates meaningful debate and engages communities in a process of critical reflection on their problems and they themselves decide to take action (Abah 1996; 2004, Kerr 1995, Kidd & Byram 1982, Mda 1993). For this to happen participants need to be exposed to more than one method and given enough time to learn and experiment with various techniques; but how can this happen when the field is filled with unqualified facilitators?

In Malawi, the situation is worsened by the fact that a Tfd play will be performed only once in a community. Agency staff admitted that there are no cases of plays being repeated because there are no funds to support repetitions. Baz Kershaw (1991) argues that the efficacy of theatre to effect change is not based on one singular performance event, but on a 'collection of practices'. That is to say, not just performance related, but linkage of activities to achieve an efficacious result. In the absence of long-term engagement with communities it is naive for practitioners of Tfd in Malawi to think that community transformation can occur from a single performance. Although some agency staff admitted that this is a problem, the lack of ongoing performances was justified by financial constraints.

Motivations for working in TFD

Another problem affecting Malawian Tfd is that economic survival rather than a motivation to empower marginalised groups is the main reason practitioners get into the work. The problem begins right at the recruitment stage. The selection criteria used by NGOs do not aim to ascertain if facilitators or participants' reasons for doing Tfd align with the ethos of critical pedagogy and participatory development. Answers from respondents showed that they were motivated to go into Tfd for the money or because it was part of their job. For instance, Umodzi Drama told me that one of the benefits of doing Tfd work with Pakachere is that they get paid a performance fee. Similarly, CRECCOM troupe members said that money was one of the major motivating factors for doing the work. Noting similar trends in Kenya, Chris Odhiambo (2006:

192-193) says that many practitioners have got involved in Tfd because it offered them an employment opportunity and for ‘personal survival rather than a commitment to transform the disadvantaged communities’. If agency staff are not motivated to make meaningful Tfd work that empowers communities then what is the point of the work?

This problem results from how arts-based NGOs are set up in Malawi. In other places, professional companies like the TFDC, Amakosi Theatre and DramAidE have been set up based on seeing that there is a need and to empower disadvantaged groups (see, for examples, Abah 1996; 2004, Baxter 2013, Byam 1999, Dalrymple 2006). In Malawi, the situation is that arts NGOs are formed often to fill a gap in behaviour change communication initiatives with an emphasis on mass education or message dissemination when an obvious funding opportunity becomes available. Against this backdrop, how can these organisations be expected to make work that is truly empowering? The philosophical basis of dialogical pedagogy is the missing link. In his seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire (1970: 79) argues that ‘authentic liberation — the process of humanisation — is not another deposit to be made in men. Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it’. This can only be achieved through, according to Freire (ibid), a problem-posing education — a process in which oppressed groups engage in critical reflection of problems and the sociopolitical structures that lead to them. Unless facilitators, change agents and NGOs in Malawi are motivated to use TFD for problem-posing education rather than as a message dissemination tool there is little hope that the situation will change.

Survival interests and impact assessment

Scholars (Marsh & Gould 2003, Mangeni 2013) agree that there is a tendency among NGOs that conduct creative projects to give accounts of success and impact which is often unbacked by evidence. Of the fifteen project and performance reports that I accessed narratives of success and requests for continued support from donors seem to dominate. Patrick Mangeni (2013) tells us that this is a syndrome of survival interests, whereby Tfd practitioners give accounts of success to ensure their paymasters do not shut the funding taps. The reports of these NGOs spell out how performances were done, how many people attended and how the audience was given information they did not previously know. In the reports I accessed audience testimonials of change and impact are vaguely reported. For instance, there are claims by these NGOs that their

arts work had resulted in increased awareness, knowledge and behaviour. However, there are no hard facts that give any indication or prove that change has happened. It is obvious that these reports have been created to ensure that funders continue to finance NGOs. What is worrying is that none of them provide us with any accounts of challenges they encounter when doing TfD work. It is as if TfD is a panacea for all community problems.

The current quality of reporting on TfD in Malawi makes it difficult to assess the impact of NGO arts work. None of the NGOs I researched have video archives of training workshops or performances; apart from occasional pictures. The challenge of poor record keeping and reporting is not unique to Malawi, but reflects many African contexts (Marsh and Gould 2003, Mangeni 2013, Odhiambo 2006). According to Patrick Mangeni (2013: 13), the reason why practitioners are, unnecessarily, protective of their work, is because they are afraid of being exposed as ineffective.

In their report, Marsh and Gould (2003) recommend that there is a need to develop systems for assessing the impact of cultural or creative projects through research. During my interviews with agency staff, I asked my respondents to explain what systems were in place to measure impact. Respondents from SWET told me that performance forms are used to monitor drama groups and that projects are reviewed periodically by internal and external evaluators. Although I had access to project reports, I did not get to see any evidence of performance forms by drama groups. An examination of project reports shows that project successes and impact are vaguely measured. For instance, at SWET, we are told that TfD performances were successful because ‘they were attended by almost all of the important people in the community’, and that there was an increase in knowledge of HIV and AIDS prevention and willingness to disclose HIV status (*Mwana Alirenji?* Project Report, SWET 2011). The work of the Pakachere community drama groups are considered effective because communities keep asking when the next performance will be and that they have led to ‘an improved understanding of nutrition requirements and effects of undernutrition during pregnancy and after birth’ (Pakachere, Quarterly Report for Nutrition Project, 2013). In the reports I accessed it is clear that NGOs use large audience attendance at TfD performances as an indicator of success. While it is understandable that measuring behavioural change is difficult, it is important for NGOs to develop tools for assessing the impact of their work. Since there are no systems to ascertain if

donor funded arts work in Malawi is being effective or not, there is little hope that the methodologies local NGOs are using will change.

Does a one-size Tfd model fit all?

The perception among Malawian Tfd practitioners is that a whole community approach, with no consideration of community differences, will result in community change. I observed that this came from, firstly, a misunderstanding of the nuances possible in thinking about ‘the community’, and secondly the assumption that participation during post-performance discussions and forum theatre sessions — in the case of Pakachere — is sufficient for transformation. This is problematic considering that inequalities of gender, age, economic status and class are evident in everyday life. Frances Cleaver notes that there is a tendency among participatory development practitioners to view ‘communities as capable of anything, that all that is required is sufficient mobilisation and the latent and unlimited capacities of the community will be unleashed in the interest of development’ (1999: 604). This thinking is often informed by the assumption that ‘the community’ is a homogenous group, which produces homogenous local viewpoints (Cleaver 1999, Mohan and Stoke 2000). Unfortunately, what ends up happening is that those members who occupy a higher social status tend to dominate discussions and those with opposing views are often suppressed. It is important to recognise that ‘community participation may be negotiated and mediated at the household and community and shaped by prevailing social norms and structures’ (Cleaver 1999: 607-608). In this case it would be more effective to use Tfd to engage men on their own to explore how masculine identity scripts inform men’s sexual practices. Another way of resolving this is to create theatre for different groups, for example, a young people’s theatre or a women’s performance to explore their perspective on particular issues. Micheal Etherton’s work with children and young people in Asia is a good example of how Tfd can overcome the challenges of inequalities in communities. Using Tfd techniques children explored the challenges that infringed their rights and the plays they made were presented to adults to stimulate discussion (see Etherton 2004). This kind of work is necessary because a community is a ‘site of both solidarity and conflict, shifting alliances, power and social structures’ (Cleaver 1999: 604).

Another challenge relates to the unrealistic expectations on the part of agency staff that Tfd alone can be effective. Marsh and Gould (2003: 16) explain that it would be unrealistic to

think that a play about HIV prevention will lead to an increase in condom use. Instead, they propose the use of drama as a tool to inform wider project strategies (ibid). The current methods being used in Malawian Tfd do not provide room for community feedback, which could potentially shape wider projects aims and objective. Agency staff at SWET and Pakachere admitted that there are no other feedback channels apart from in and post-performance discussions. Considering the poor quality of reporting, it is obvious that documentation of what communities think about this work is never undertaken.

Who pays the piper calls the tune?

In Malawi, as in many African countries, there is the problem of donors influencing how local NGOs do arts work. Steve Oga Abah (2007) explains that in Africa local NGOs, unlike INGOs, have less financial muscle to dictate the terms of how they will operate in rural communities. Although agency staff in the NGOs I investigated claimed that they were using Tfd because it ‘allows for people to realise the problem at hand and to offer their own possible solution to ending it’ (Project Manager Pakachere, Personal communication, 2016), it is obvious that Malawian Tfd is being used as a tool for transmitting donor and NGO agenda. There are two main reasons why this is happening, firstly, donor money often comes with preset agenda and, secondly, local NGOs take the money because they are engaged in a struggle for survival. A respondent from Pakachere claimed that ‘there is no funder who will give an organisation funds without providing an agenda and so from the word go, as an organisation, we do not use TFD for TFD’s sake, we do not go to a community without an agenda, we use TFD as a means to achieving certain goals within a specified timeframe’ (Senior Programme Manager, Personal communication, 2016). I think the problem is that there is no real commitment from Malawian NGOs to state their case with donors so that the agenda and issues are determined by local communities. I was told that each project begins after a donor has identified a problem and asks the NGO to implement it. At the end of the project, donors will come in to evaluate whether the NGO has achieved its goals based on indicators that correlate with the issues identified by the donor. The director of SWET said that ‘local NGOs are competing for donor money and if we start arguing with them they will give funding to our competitors, but because one has to think of staff salaries we take the money and impose our ideas on people not because we want to do that but because donors want us to do that’ (Director SWET, Personal communication, 2015).

This has created a crisis for local NGOs doing arts work in Malawi. Do they stop taking donor money and demand that donors give them more funding for projects that will be long-term and owned by the communities or continue to make work that is always compromised?

This challenge fuels the superiority complex problem among practitioners. The tendency is that practitioners often go into communities as experts with ‘preconceived notions of the nature of rural people and their problems’ (Abah 2004: 46). In his study on TfD among NGOs in Kenya, Chris Odhiambo (2006: 195) notes that practitioners assume that communities are ‘empty vessels to be filled with knowledge by the teacher’; what Freire calls the banking model of education (Freire 1970). In their report on INGOs engaged in culture and development programmes, Mary Mash and Helen Gould (2003: 15) noted that culture — or TfD in our case — took on two forms, (a) culture as a tool, in which it is message-based and the outputs are determined by agency staff and (b) culture as a process, in which it is ‘explicitly about shifting power and strengthening people’s control over the development process ... it starts from people’s own experience and involves a creative process, the output of which is not pre-determined’. Among the NGOs I investigated, I discovered that each NGO implements a project after they conduct research — baseline, content and formative — by themselves or in collaboration with their donors. A senior project manager at Pakachere stated that ‘it is important for us to use formative research because it is critical for us to know whether we are addressing real issues in the community’ (Senior Programme Manager, Personal communication, 2015). However, this thinking is informed by an attitude which assumes that communities are incapable of examining their own situation and finding solutions. Agency staff told me that communities were being engaged through dialogue sessions as a way of identifying the problems in the community, but outsiders or NGO agents remained in control of the process, which was backed up by communication briefs or formative research. In my view, this shows a superiority complex that stems from a belief that solutions have to be imposed on rural communities. In my observation, many TfD performances use a technique where actors solicit answers from the audience through leading questions like ‘Does this happen here?’, which is often met with a ‘Yes’ in a chorus. However, this does not give room for any meaningful debate. The fact that performances are reliant on problems determined by agency staff and donors; though in some cases verified by communities members, makes this work patronising and

simplistic. Often it is assumed that once a solution has been provided during a Tfd play then change will happen.

In Malawi Tfd has never been either taught or practiced for empowerment, and no one even knows it might be that way. What has ended up happening is that practitioners and donors simply carry on message-based top-down practices; hence a huge need for change and I would argue that that change needs to begin from courses offered at Chancellor College as the place that has provided primary training for nearly all of those leading Tfd work in contemporary Malawi.

Notes to Chapter 2

¹ A shortened version of this chapter appears as 'The Problem with Theatre for Development in Contemporary Malawi' in the *Leeds African Studies Bulletin*, 78, pp. 61-78.

² From its independence (1965) Zambia was a safe haven for guerrilla groups belonging to the Africa National Congress and Zimbabwean African National Union (Kerr 1995).

³ By 1997 there were at least 73 NGOs were involved in the mitigation of the HIV and AIDS in Malawi (Luwanda 2003).

⁴ Commentators acknowledge that in many places in Africa during the early years of the AIDS epidemic message-based theatre was necessary because of the lack of information and misconceptions of the disease that prevailed at the time. Later on, it was discovered there was a lot of misinformation that was being spread in rural areas.

⁵ In October 1995 the GABLE SMC was launched as a nation-wide programme (Kamlongera 2005).

⁶ In 2000, CRECCOM was the sole Tfd practitioner in the GABLE 2, which was now supported by other NGOS like Action Aid, Concern Universal, World Vision and Save the Children.

⁷ Chris Mphande attended Chancellor College from 1985-89 and was part the Tfd team that carried out the Liwonde Tfd project.

⁸ Currently, the drama section operates under the ambit of the Department of Fine and Performing Arts. There are seven staff members and of the seven I managed to interview four members as two were out of the country. I am the seventh.

⁹ The only other notable texts were by Kess Eskamp's *Theatre for Development: An introduction to context, application and training*, and Zakes Mda's *When People Play People*.

¹⁰ An examination of the Drama for Life Masters programme shows that students are taught a range of applied theatre practices that include drama therapy and applied theatre in education and social context (www.dramaforlife.co.za)

¹¹ Smith Likongwe told me that he left SWET in 2008 and, currently, works as a drama lecturer in the Department of Fine and Performing Arts at Chancellor College. He is also the artist-director of Chancellor College Travelling Theatre.

¹² Drama in AIDS Education (DramAidE) is a South African NGO attached to the University of Kwazulu Natal. It was established in 1992 with the aim of using drama and participatory methodologies for AIDS education in South African schools (Dalrymple 2006).

3 USING THEATRE TO EXPLORE IDENTITY AND HIV WITH YOUNG MALAWIAN MEN¹

This chapter is about a series of participatory theatre workshops carried out between February 2015 and June 2016 involving male students from two secondary schools and one university campus in Malawi. It focuses on how a toolbox of theatre methods — playback theatre, image theatre, forum theatre, Drama in Education, and local art forms — were used as tools to examine gender identity construction and HIV with male youths. The workshops were facilitated by me and explored how certain constructions of masculinity make young men susceptible to acquiring HIV and how theatre can create pathways for change. I was also interested in finding out the most impactful theatre techniques for engaging with young men to explore how they can stay sexually safe and to construct alternative masculinities that mitigate HIV risk, gender based violence and controlling behaviour.

I begin with a discussion of the conceptions of manliness that emerged from workshop exercises. Using vignettes of workshops I then illustrate how these methods facilitated the exploration of gender identity and HIV. I conclude with an analysis of two plays created by the participants, *Status* at Chancellor College and *Pawiri pawiri sipauzilika* (You Cannot Serve Two Masters At Once) at Dzenza Secondary School. Ultimately, I demonstrate how participatory theatre methodologies engaged young people in critically interrogating identity, sexuality and HIV risk.

Research background

In February 2015, I travelled to Malawi to conduct research on how a range of theatre-based techniques could be used to engage young men in thinking about how some conceptualisations of manliness can put them and their partners at increased risk of HIV. I was also interested in finding out if theatre could create spaces where these young men could be engaged in constructing ‘positive’ identities. I use the term ‘positive’ to describe masculine gender identities that are not based on high-risk sexual behaviour, multiple sexual partners, violence against women and controlling behaviour (Chitando 2012, Jewkes and Morrell 2010). I worked in Malawi for an initial period of seven months with male students from the University of

Malawi's Chancellor College campus and Mulunguzi Secondary School, which are situated in the southern region of Malawi. I returned to Malawi in June of 2016 and conducted a series of theatre workshops for eight days with a group of male students from Dzenza Secondary School in Lilongwe, Central Malawi. At the outset, I had planned to work with three different groups of young men in 2015; however, due to circumstances beyond my control this did not happen, hence returning the following year. In hindsight, this worked to my advantage because it allowed me to reflect on the initial workshops and to rethink my ideas. I will discuss this in greater detail below.

Researcher positionality

My own position in this research as a situated researcher needs to be acknowledged. Brian Bourke (2014) explains that the research process is shaped by both the identities of the researcher and the researched. I am a Malawian, heterosexual, male and I have lived in the urban areas of Malawi for most of my life. I am way older than the participants in this study. Lastly, I also am a lecturer in Drama in the Department of Fine and Performing Arts at Chancellor College. These identities meant that I had to negotiate an insider and outsider binary in conducting participatory research.

Being a Malawian with knowledge of the local languages meant that the participants could express themselves and engage with me in a language they were comfortable in. Moreover, being a heterosexual male allowed the young men to talk to me about sexual issues. However, it is important to acknowledge that the homosocial relationships that the research environment created could account for the discussion of masculinity in ways that resembled hegemonic ideals of masculinity. Conversely, this context could have suppressed the discussion of subordinate masculinities. By these I mean masculine gender identities that differ significantly from the dominant ideas about masculinity. My role as a researcher and co-investigator also had to be negotiated. For instance, I found myself debating or intervening when participants told each other things that were potentially harmful and at times I allowed discussions to go on for the benefit of my academic agenda; gathering 'good' data for the PhD as opposed to prioritising participants' needs.

The differences in age, socio-economic status and class made me somewhat of an outsider. In the three sites the young men were aged between 18-24 whereas I was 31. Research

by Underwood et al. 2010 shows that differences in age between researcher and research participants can influence what topics are considered important and limit the depth of discussion. In line with this thinking, it is a possibility that as an older researcher-facilitator I could have prioritised topics that were not necessarily relevant or important to the young men. Moreover, my age could have prevented the young men from openly expressing themselves. Prior to conducting the research I worked as a lecturer in Drama at Chancellor College. As a result, I knew some of the participants personally. These personal relationships could have influenced the participants' decision to volunteer in the research and their overall attitudes, behaviour and participation in the research process. Generally, I was aware of these multiple positionalities before conducting the study. Therefore, in order to mitigate some of these challenges I sought to build relationships with my participants based on honesty, mutual trust and respect. While my multiple identities might have prevented me from being an equal with them, I sought not to exploit my power and status. I would argue that my role in my study was a researcher as supplicant. Kim England (1994: 82), defines researcher as supplicant as one who accepts that 'the knowledge of the person being researched (at least regarding the particular questions being asked) is greater than that of the researcher'.

The participants and sites of study

I was particularly interested in working with male participants because I thought it would enable me to collect data that could show how young Malawian men define themselves as male and how they perform these constructions of masculinity. Participants volunteered to take part and recruitment involved: a briefing session where participants were told about the aims of the research and given the opportunity to ask questions. Later on, they were asked to fill in consent forms. Participants were free to drop out of the research at any point.

The first site was Chancellor College, a constituent campus of the University of Malawi. At Chancellor I worked with a group of students from a range of disciplines (Law, Drama, Media for Development [MfD] and Philosophy). The participants' ages ranged from 19-24. I chose Chancellor as a research site for a number of reasons. Being university students I knew that the group would be likely to be relatively articulate about the issues we were discussing. In addition, I teach drama at Chancellor and this gave me access to the students because some of them know me personally. More importantly, I was aware that the college

would be supportive of the research since it aimed to impact students' sexual lifestyles. During the briefing session, there were nineteen participants, fifteen consented to participate in the research and on the first day thirteen turned up. Three weeks later four more dropped out and nine remained until the end.

Mulunguzi Secondary School, my second site, is located adjacent to Chancellor. I decided to use Mulunguzi as a research site for logistical reasons and because in the past the school had been supportive of projects from the university. The third site was Dzenza Secondary School, which is situated in Area 25, a peri-urban location on the outskirts of Lilongwe. The idea to work with students from Dzenza was proposed by my mother-in-law, who works as a teacher there. Both Dzenza and Mulunguzi were established to provide education for students from Lilongwe and Zomba rural areas and provide mixed-sex education. The schools also admit a limited number of urban pupils. At Mulunguzi, there were initially fifteen participants. A number which later reduced to ten. At Dzenza the initial number was eleven, but after the briefing session one participant opted out. In both sites, the participants were aged between 18-22. The relatively high age is accounted for as most pupils start school late or repeat years they have failed.

The groups of young men that I worked with in all three research sites came from a range of socio-economic, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Malawi has three main regions: Northern, Central and Southern. There are two kinship systems: patrilineal and matrilineal. The North is patrilineal while the centre and the southern regions are matrilineal, with the exception of the patrilineal practising Sena. Participants from Chancellor were from urban areas of Lilongwe, Blantyre and Zomba. In addition, the participants at Chancellor came from matrilineal backgrounds, with one exception. At Mulunguzi and Dzenza, the participants came from rural areas and matrilineal backgrounds. The participants' families were predominantly subsistence farmers. Some of the young men from Mulunguzi told me that during the holidays they worked to earn some money.

Constructions of Masculinity Among Young Malawian Men

This section discusses the themes of masculinity that emerged in theatre workshops, informal conversations and interviews with three groups of young Malawian men. It attempts to demonstrate how socio-economic and cultural factors shape gender identity construction among urban and rural male youth. This list is not exhaustive; however, it highlights some of the gender identities and sexual scripting that shape youth masculinities in Malawi.

Sexuality and the performance of manliness

For the young men at Chancellor, Mulunguzi and Dzenza ideas of being a man revolved around sex, penis size and sexual stamina. The participants' viewed sexual activity as the central feature that marked real manliness. According to participants from Mulunguzi being a man was performing the sexual act; being on top during intercourse, initiating sex and having control over a woman's body. One student stated: 'A man is the one who initiates sex and has the power to do what he likes to a woman, sexually'. When asked why they thought of manliness in this particular way, one of the respondents said: 'Once you have a girlfriend there is peer pressure from your friends and the girl to sleep together to prove your manhood'. The group agreed and explained that if a bo does not have sex with his girlfriend then he is considered to be a boy. Perhaps what was also interesting was that the Mulunguzi students also used sex as a tool for retaining girlfriends in relationships. One participant offered this view: 'When you sleep with your girl it is like a form of security since she cannot leave you because if she does then she will feel used'. This confirms the observation made by Baker and Ricardo (2005) concerning young men's sexuality where they argue that sexual experiences often function as displays of sexual competence or achievement, rather than acts of intimacy.

For the university students, sexual activity was also a central theme, although for them sex was not the only marker of masculinity. The respondents argued that having a big penis and superior sexual stamina was important in their conception of what constituted a real man. One final year student asserted: 'A bigger penis is better because you can easily satisfy a woman without doing too much work'. For these young men the size of your penis was also used as a tool for marking their sexual territory and gaining peer respect on campus. One participant said: 'If you have a big penis and you have a girl, it is some kind of security because people will keep away from her knowing that they cannot compete with you. A big penis makes you an alpha

male'. For these participants, the penis was not just a physical object but also a powerful tool in the construction and performance of a particular dominant masculine identity. They told me that young men often turn to local oral drugs to increase penis size to boost sexual performance — the most common being *mnvuguti* (sausage tree: *kigelia Africana*). One MfD student argued that women desire men with bigger penises. He further explained that he once overheard some female students talking about how they would like to sleep with a certain male student who is rumoured to have a big penis.

Sensual Western films and pornographic materials were revealed to be a source of sexual information through which participants at Chancellor learned new skills; by emulating what they saw. A final year student explained that he learned about sex by watching pornography. The other participants admitted to having watched pornographic films in order to learn new sex positions and said they had tried some of them out. I observed that the young men at Chancellor often had unrealistic sexual expectations and aimed to attain masculinities depicted in pornographic films. For instance, one participant said: 'When I watch porn I ask myself am I a real man because I cannot achieve what that man is doing?'

At Chancellor, ideal manliness was also linked to sexual stamina, which gave one sexual endurance for multiple sexual sessions in one day. According to these participants, this kind of stamina was essential in order for a girl to climax. When asked how they train to achieve this kind of sexual prowess, the participants claimed that one needed to have multiple partners and to use local aphrodisiacs. Some respondents admitted to having used *gondolosi* (*mondia whitei*). A final year Philosophy student offered a different perspective, he said: 'Most boys do not dedicate enough time to foreplay hence believe that they must go two to three rounds for the girl to climax'. An analysis of their responses revealed that sexual prowess had little to do with satisfying their partners, but was rather concerned with affirming manliness to the girl. Participants told me that if you are not able to satisfy your woman then she will cheat on you. When asked if it would be acceptable for women to be similarly promiscuous, participants at both Chancellor and Mulunguzi objected to the idea on the basis that no one wants a girl who has been with multiple partners.

Forced sex and coercion in young people's sexual relationships

Forced sex and coercion in the sexual relationships of the participants were revealed to have been influenced by myths about female sexuality. For instance, participants argued that in their relationships girls did not give verbal sexual consent, but that it was embodied. The use of force and coercion to obtain sex came up both at Chancellor and Mulunguzi. At Chancellor, for example, a third-year MfD student explained: 'When you are in a relationship the ultimate goal is sex'. The group from Mulunguzi told me that girls do not willingly give into sex and that force or coercion was needed. The university and secondary participants all shared the belief that when it comes to sex girls said, 'no' when they meant 'yes'. A final year drama student offered this explanation:

A good percentage of Malawian relationships are rape cases, but people do not know. In most instances, when you get a girlfriend it is very difficult for Malawian ladies to agree to have sex without a struggle, hence most boys force themselves on the girls.

The assumption was that if a girl gave consent too easily then she was of easy virtue.

One participant asserted: 'Usually their refusal is not rejection, rather it is tactical. Girls do not want you to see them as cheap. So they refuse while they want'. I observed that the use of force or coercion had huge negative implications on safe sex practices of participants. At Chancellor and Mulunguzi it was revealed that sex attained under these conditions is often risky because most men are afraid the girl will change her mind. During the discussion, participants at both sites told me that girls will agree to sex after a long struggle, as a result, putting on a condom is considered giving her a chance to change her mind. When I asked why verbal consent is not clearly sought, both groups explained that most girls would find it odd for a guy to do that and girls never say 'yes' to sex because they do not want to be labelled promiscuous. Participants at Chancellor and Mulunguzi said that culturally women do not give into sex easily as such behaviour is believed to be typical of sex workers. Moreover, the Mulunguzi group claimed that a real man has to assert himself by getting what he wants sexually. Unfortunately, these beliefs place young men and their partners at increased risk of acquiring HIV. My findings are confirmed by other research; for example, in their study on masculinity among Malawian male youths, Izugbara and Undie (2008: 284) observed that traditional masculine scripts dictate sexual exploration, activity and assertiveness as features of masculinity.

Trophy hunting scripts

Muparamoto (2012: 322) refers to trophy hunting scripts as those in which men brag about the number of female partners slept with. Among the students at Chancellor, the concept of trophy hunting emerged in which the group agreed that there is a trend among male students to have more sexual partners as a way of gaining respect among their peers. In the words of a second-year MfD student, 'Once you have slept with a girl you feel a sense of accomplishment, especially when the girl had made you wait for a long time; however, after a while that feeling disappears'. Hunting for girls who were virgins was another prominent theme that came up at Chancellor. The participants strongly believed that sleeping with a virgin was more of an accomplishment because the girl would always remember you. One drama student stated: 'Boys celebrate when they are responsible for taking away a girl's virginity because she will always remember them and it is an ego boost'. Another concurred, 'One's sense of accomplishment was also determined by the status of girl. For instance, how beautiful she is and how many boys are also interested in her'. Surprisingly, the participants said they did not feel a sense of shame or being conquered by the girls that they lost their virginities to. At Mulunguzi respondents agreed with this assertion. Nevertheless, one student from Mulunguzi offered a different view on multiple sexual partners, he said: 'Boys tend to have more than one girlfriend either because one of them cannot sexually satisfy the other and also multiple sexual partners are used to prevent being heart-broken (a backup plan)'.

Fatherhood as a feature of real manhood

According to the participants from Dzenza, masculinity was strongly associated with male fertility. For this group being able to produce children was essential to one's sense of manliness. At Mulunguzi, the respondents explained that traditionally men, once married, face a lot of pressure to conceive children. Both the Dzenza and Mulunguzi participants viewed fathering children as a marker of manhood. They said that many extramarital affairs are caused by men who accuse their wives of infertility, though in some cases the men have the problem. A little context is needed here. Historically, in matrilineal societies, the role of the man was to provide children for the woman's *nkhoswe*, who was the guardian/advocate of the *mbumba*, a sorority of women and related females from the same matriarch (Phiri 1983). Moreover, when a young man married a girl he was expected to provide *chikamwini* (bride service) and children for the

woman's family. Chanock (1998: 15-16) argues that the elders in matrilineal societies used *chikamwini* as a 'means to control access to wives and also the labour of younger men'. In the 1880s the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa founded the Nkhoma Mission; the present day Nkhoma Synod, and began to promote monogamous unions that placed emphasis on the nuclear family (Phiri 2007, Baker 1975).² It appears here that despite more than a century of Christianity traditional ideas of manliness are still active in contemporary Malawi and that the young men are happy to ignore their supposed religion.

At Chancellor, the theme of fatherhood as a form of masculinity also emerged. Perhaps what was particularly interesting with this group was that fatherhood and marriage were interconnected. It was interesting that no one wanted children out of wedlock. For this group, marriage and childbirth came after a man had established a career and attained some financial independence. These scripts of successful masculinity can be traced to colonial Malawi. The introduction of a monetary economy by the colonial government in the late 1880s forced men to migrate from rural to colonial towns for paid work (Phiri 1983). One of the contributing factors was the introduction of a hut tax in 1893 and 1902 that compelled men to find waged labour to meet tax obligations (ibid). As men migrated they took their wives and children with them, thereby changing traditional extended families into nuclear families, in which men were the sole providers as women were not allowed formal employment (Power 1995, Chanock 1998). According to Joey Power (1995: 86-88), men's economic responsibilities in urban areas helped to reinforce their status as heads of households and increased the economic dependence of women and children. After independence President Banda's government embarked on improving the condition of women through schemes that encouraged women's use of modern practices of home-crafts, handicrafts and agriculture (Semu 2002, Gilman 2004). Segal (2008: 15-16) found that the content of the women's classes centred on six topics; cookery and home improvement, laundry, needlework and handicraft, child care and family health education and finally agriculture. While Banda's government claimed to have improved the condition of women, the content of this education restricted women to what Nagat El-Sanabary terms the 'cult of domesticity' (cf Davidson and Kanyuka 1994: 455).

Economic independence as a form masculine identity

The participants at Chancellor said being a real man centred on financial independence and wealth. Baker and Ricardo (2005) refer to this kind of masculine scripting as the ‘big man’ identity. They argue that in most African societies chiefs, elders and fathers were perceived as the definition of manhood. In rural areas these men had rights over land, access to women and occupied the top positions in the social order. The introduction of a colonial monetary economy led to young men entering waged employment in order to generate wealth to buy land and pay for brideprice or bride-service (Chanock 1998). Colonialism facilitated the construction of new ‘big man’ identities whose wealth came from the colonial economy. It is clear that for the participants at Chancellor the wealth and material trappings are attributes of a ‘real man’ — owning a house, a car, being successful and getting married were all seen as important features of masculinity. Being a successful man had a lot of benefits. In the words of a final year drama student; ‘Once you are successful women actually chase after you’. Among the secondary school students, wealth and gender identity only came up at Mulunguzi. Here participants asserted that once a boy became a man then he could have more than one woman and a lot of children. For instance, a respondent told me: ‘After I finish school and I have money I will have a lot of children (even outside wedlock) to carry on my legacy’. Interestingly, the group from Chancellor also made the same association — money and infidelity. For these young men material trappings were a necessary conduit for accessing multiple partners.

For the Mulunguzi participants coming from a well-off family had immediate value insofar as performing masculinity on campus was concerned. One participant gave an example of how ‘rich’ male students have access to girls because girls want boys who can buy them meals. It also came up that for this group money was something that men gave women in exchange for sex. I noticed that there is a confusion for these men about what love means in a relationship. One from three student explained: ‘Nowadays, if you have money then girls will love you, but without money, no girl can do that’. I asked the group what they meant by love and this was the explanation they gave: petting and sexual intercourse. For these young men, money or favours were given to girls in exchange for sex.

Using Theatre to Examine Masculinities and HIV with Young Men in Malawi

Towards a theatrical toolbox: A personal journey

The idea of using a toolbox of theatre methods as an approach came about in 2014 after I began my PhD at Leeds. Prior to 2014 I had started having serious doubts about Malawian TfD practice. In 2010 I was awarded an Erasmus Mundus scholarship to study for a Master of Arts degree in International Performance Research at the Universities of Warwick and Amsterdam. For my MA research I looked at how communities use performance-based strategies to resist message-based TfD in Malawi. It was during this time that I discovered that ordinary people resist TfD interventions because they do not set the agenda or decide on the issues the plays address and because such performances do not really aim to empower them. In November 2011 I visited Professor Jane Plastow at the University of Leeds to discuss the possibility of a PhD under her supervision. I wanted to come to Leeds in order to explore ways in which TfD could be participatory, relevant and impactful for ordinary people.

A little context is needed here. I was first introduced to TfD in 2006 when I was a second-year drama student at Chancellor. At that time, I learned the method developed by Kerr and Kamlongera (1985-1987) as Malawian TfD, although neither was in the country at the time. The ideas of others such as Ross Kidd, Augusto Boal, Zakes Mda and Penina Mlamba were taught in class but never practised. My situation was little changed when I went for my MA in Europe as the focus of the programme was performance, rather than TfD methods. In 2012 I joined Chancellor as a lecturer in Drama; however, I did not teach the TfD course, but did piecemeal consultancies for local NGOs, offering TfD training and developing manuals. I must admit that at the time my understanding of practices and ideologies of TfD was rather narrow. Between 2012-2013 I had made socially committed theatre with students about community development and human trafficking, but I was left frustrated whenever we, the academic staff, went into communities to train rural people in TfD because what we ended up doing was teaching them how to use TfD to promote donor development messages. It was at this point that I decided that I needed to go elsewhere to learn about other techniques and practices of TfD.

In 2014 I was awarded the Dorothea Hewlett Doctoral Scholarship by the University of Leeds to undertake PhD studies. Initially my doctoral research aimed to examine how women use theatre to challenge gender inequalities in the context of HIV as I was aware that women

were at increased risk of acquiring the virus. In my first year, I began researching on gender politics in HIV discourses within Sub-Saharan Africa. During this period I came across studies on African masculinities and how they impact men's sexual practices and influence the spread of HIV in Africa. Literature revealed that women's vulnerabilities were encouraged by dangerous masculinities. I then decided to change the topic of my study to focus on masculinities and HIV among young Malawian men. In the fall of 2014, as part of my PhD training plan, I enrolled on the MA course, Uses of Theatre, which is taught by Jane Plastow. The programme ran for a whole term. During the course, I became aware of a range of methods, forms, processes and applications of participatory theatre, through workshops and readings. I also learned how theatre methods could be used in a way that was participatory and empowering for ordinary people.

An important change was when I came across the concept of a toolbox of techniques in Jane Plastow's article 'Practising for the revolution? The influence of Augusto Boal in Brazil and Africa' (Plastow 2009). Plastow talks about how she does not rely on one method but uses aspects of different techniques in her own practice. The idea stuck. I borrowed Plastow's idea of a toolbox of methods and started thinking of forms, methods and processes that could be useful for my own research. In January 2015, I set out to examine how a toolbox of TfD practice could engage young men in exploring identity and HIV. The thinking behind the use of a toolbox was that practitioners could always turn to another method if one failed. More importantly, my own practice was not about finding answers, but about finding the most impactful forms of practice. I also wanted to find out how male youths were constructing ideas about masculinity and if theatre could help them to construct of positive masculine gender identities in order to mitigate HIV risk and violence against women.

Games, drawing and playback theatre

At Chancellor College the workshops were held in the Little Theatre or in seminar rooms housed in the Department of Fine and Performing Arts. On 22 February we began with relaxation games. I introduced the participants to an exercise I adapted from an intergenerational workshop I attended in 2014 at the University of Leeds conducted by Sue Mayo. On the floor were placed 10 stickers. Each sticker represented a five year age gap from 0 to 50. The participants were asked to explain what happens to a man in each age range. At first

the group was shy until one participant mustered the courage to speak up. The exercise enabled the group to share personal experiences in a manner that was not embarrassing. For instance, when one participant declared that he lost his virginity in the age period of 10-15 he was applauded by his peers. It was as though he was being accepted into a group of men. The exercise showed that between the ages of 10-15 most young men experimented with alcohol, while between 15-25 the focus was more on sexual activity and love. What was particularly striking was that most of the participants shared similar aspirations between the ages of 25 to 35, which had to do with acquiring wealth, getting married and fatherhood. The next exercise was a question the participants had to answer. They were asked to think what happened to them that day that had made them realise they were men? I had come across this in *Theatre and Empowerment* (2004) in a chapter by Micheal Macmillan on his work with young men in the UK. Borrowing from this work, I invited the participants to reflect on the question. The question sought to engage the participants in thinking about events, choices and actions that shape manliness. Many of the responses focused on decision making and taking on responsibilities as things that mark masculinity. For the final exercise, the participants were asked to draw a poster that described their life; the type of man they were and what they aspired to be in future. They were given pens and flip-board charts and asked to draw for 20 minutes. An analysis of the posters revealed that the enjoyment of drink, having girlfriends and sex were recurrent masculine themes; though for two members of the group being a Christian and going to church were markers of identity. For future aspirations all the participants stated that they wanted to be married, have children, own property (car and house) and live in a big house in an urban area.

Drawing

Day two continued with drawing. The participants were asked to make a drawing that showed how they learned to be a man, what being a real man meant and what the privileges of a man were? There were only seven participants because the rest said they had academic commitments. After 20 minutes, each participant presented his drawing and the group made comments. The posters revealed that the most had learned about being a man from their fathers or a father figure and through gender role assignment in their home. For some, ideal manliness was being physically and emotionally strong. For instance, men were depicted as extremely

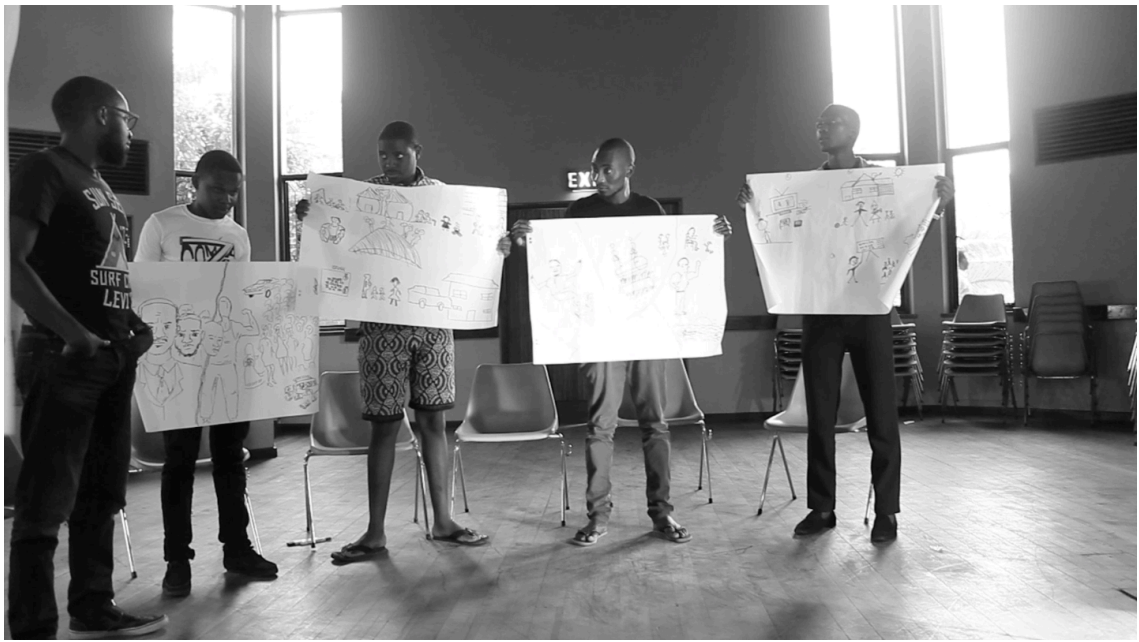


Figure 1: Participants at Chancellor present their autobiographical posters.

muscular or leading women and children. During the discussion two issues we extensively explored were male-female gender differences and sexuality. The debate started when a final year drama student argued that being a man made him physically stronger than any woman. He asserted that if a female soldier, with a black belt in karate, challenged him to a fight, he would defeat her. His peers challenged him arguing that being male did not translate to necessarily being stronger than a woman.

During the poster presentation male sexuality also came up. In his presentation one of the participants stated that a man had to procreate and know how to sexually satisfy his partner. The majority of the participants agreed that this was essential because failure to do so resulted in a woman leaving or cheating. The group claimed that a man had to learn new sexual techniques and be skilful in bed by having multiple sexual partners. According to a third-year drama student, the necessary skills included performing cunnilingus. I was curious about what safe sex practices the young men used when engaging in these practices. Those who were sexually active explained that condoms were for penetrative sex and not for oral sex even if the girl was not a regular sexual partner. During the debate, it emerged that the group was not aware that some sexually transmitted infections (STIs) can be transmitted orally. The exercise was a useful generative tool and created pathways for meaningful debate.

masculinity was caused by having an unwanted pregnancy and entering fatherhood while financially dependent on parents. The owner of the story said: 'If I could change something I would not have forgotten to use protection [condoms]'. When asked why they stopped using condoms in the first instance, he said: 'I felt in love, we felt that we could trust each other and we were committed to each other'. I then asked why he thought not using condoms was an expression of love and he offered the following explanation:

When you are feeling so committed to a person, you use condoms, but at some point, you stop because you have sex a lot [...] then you feel like you can trust each other and you do away with the condom. The problem is that I was scared of getting STIs or HIV/AIDS, but after going for testing I knew I could trust her.

At this point I asked the other participants what would lead them to stop using condoms? One participant said that trust and commitment often led to irregular condom use or none at all. A final year Philosophy student offered a different perspective when he argued: 'It is beyond commitment, I think it is the sweetness of plain sex,' which drew laughter and applause from the group. An MfD student concurred with him by comparing safe sex to having a conversation with your partner while she is inside a house and you are outside. Asked if the issue of HIV and STI risk ever comes up they claimed that condoms are not needed after an HIV negative result. At the end of the session I wondered how I could engage the participants in thinking critically about safe sexual practices. It became clear to me that using Playback might not be enough because asking the participants to comment and offer solutions for past events; though remarkably useful as a generative tool, did little to empower them for the future.

We had missed two sessions and the attendance at the previous session had been low. I was extremely worried and I decided to meet the group so as to ascertain who was still interested in the research. We met on 17 March. At the meeting, participants said that the sessions were becoming monotonous due to the use of the same method, Playback. Therefore, we agreed that should change. One participant dropped out of the research. The group also disclosed that they needed some form of incentive to attend workshops. It was agreed that tea and biscuits would be provided at sessions. As a researcher dealing with this was difficult as I did not want to 'bribe' my participants for research data.

Image theatre at Chancellor and Mulunguzi

Chancellor College

I introduced image theatre, as developed by Augusto Boal (1979), at Chancellor on day five. The session began with relaxation games. Then participants were asked to make images of something that oppressed their masculinity. Initially the group had problems understanding the question. I therefore made some demonstrative images. The participants were then divided into three groups. The images produced revealed that young men felt oppressed by peer pressure to cheat on girlfriends so as to prove manliness, by inability to find a girlfriend because of financial constraints and by being denied sex by a girlfriend for failing to provide financially. The next step required participants to change the image in order to remove the oppression. I illustrate how these worked with an example below.

One of the groups created an image of a man and woman, with his pockets out, signalling his wife to come towards him, while the woman shrugged her shoulders. The interpretation by the group watching was that the man was being denied sex because he could not provide for his wife financially. When asked what strategies the man could use to overcome the problem participants suggested that he could find another woman. I asked the group if they had experienced this problem and most said, 'Yes'. When the image was changed the man was seen carrying bags of groceries. The participants said that without providing for the home the man will not have access to the woman. In my observation, the root problem was that sex was being seen as a financial transaction or the problem of poverty. I therefore set up a final stage involving creating an alternative image to show the ways in which a man without money can claim his manliness. The images produced showed men as protectors and caretakers of girlfriends.

Some of the most important image theatre work happened on days six and seven. Here I was interested in the group exploring alternative forms of manhood within a relationship context. The participants had to make an image that showed ways in which men could enact masculinity in relationships without money. The first image showed a man standing behind a woman with his hands on her shoulders. According to the group, the interpretation was that a man is a pillar — financially, physically and emotionally — and the leader of the woman. As we changed the image to deepen the theme, I asked the group to examine the power dynamics



Figure 3: Participants at Chancellor enact a caring and protective masculinity using image theatre.

of the couple in order to see if there was equality. An analysis of the images confirmed that men drew their power from financial wealth. The group was then asked how a poor man portrays manliness. In response, an image of a nuclear family was created. The meaning, according to the maker of the image, was 'After a kid, comes the wife who acts as a mirror of the man, who initiates sex or related things'. One of the images examining alternative masculinity showed a man and woman looking at each other with their arms across each others' shoulders. One participant stated that the image suggested that the man and woman were willing to compromise on things, despite having different views. The image was then changed and this time, the man's hand was placed on the left rib cage of the woman. The interpretations included 'The man wanted to show the woman that he will always be there for the woman'. Another suggested that: 'The man is trying to show affection to the woman'. The participants were then told to make images showing gender power dynamics within sexual relationships. Initially the image work produced represented men as initiators and women as passive participators. At about this time, one participant created an image that had a man and woman standing close to each other, with



Figure 4: Chancellor. Participants exploring sexual consent using image theatre.

the one of the man's hands on the woman's chest and the other lifting her blouse. I then asked the group to examine the power dynamics in the image. The exchange went as follows:

- Facilitator:* Can we take a look at this image. What does it say?
- Participant 1:* She is saying calm down and he is insisting that he wants to have sex with her.
- Facilitator:* Anyone else with a different idea?
- Participant 2:* I do not think there is a consensus here. The man wants sex and the woman is not ready.
- Facilitator:* Does a conversation about condom use start here?
- Participant 3:* No, I do not think so. I think it would happen at a later stage when you are about to engage in the sexual act, that is when you think of pulling out a condom. This time is for kissing and stuff. You do not have time to be talking about condoms, you get bored.
- Facilitator:* If there is no agreement, can the woman tell the man to put on a condom?
- Participant 4:* Judging from the image she is pushing him back a bit.
- Facilitator:* Why is she pushing him back?
- Participant 4:* This could be a conversation to use a condom.
- Participant 5:* In this situation a condom cannot be used. The guy wants sex and the girl is refusing. Assuming that the girl is playing hard to get then the guy will just insert his penis fearing that she might start refusing again.
- Participant 1:* When you get a girlfriend it is very difficult for a Malawian lady to agree to have sex without a struggle usually most boys force themselves on the girls.
- Participant 6:* Usually their refusal is not rejection rather it is tactical, they do not want you to see them as cheap. So they refuse while they want.
- Facilitator:* How do you know that it is tactical?

The session ended with an agreement that there was need to explore strategies for soliciting clear verbal consent from sexual partners. The idea was prompted by the images about power dynamics that revealed the circumstances under which the young men attained sex. Day seven began with exploring the meaning of consensual sex and all the participants accepted that this is sex that happens when two people are in agreement. The participants were divided into three groups and asked to come up with a series of images that depicted strategies that would lead to consensual sex. The images that were produced suggested that a two-way form of communication; preferably before foreplay or sex, was an effective way of getting consent.

Mulunguzi Secondary School

Mulunguzi Secondary School was the second site I worked in. I used a similar format to that of Chancellor; trying one method and moving on to the next when I felt I could take it no further. Work at Mulunguzi began in April 2015. For our workshops we used the school hall or open ground adjacent to the kitchen. The participants were identified by the school's drama patron; a teacher responsible for the school drama club, and who had been asked by the headmaster to put together a group of interested young men. We met twice a week; on Wednesdays and Sundays for two hours each time. During school days, I would often wait for 20-30 minutes for participants to show up. This often limited the time we had. In the briefing session we agreed to create a performance piece to be presented to the entire school. I wanted the group to create a performance in order to engage with their peers and to create debate on the issues we had been discussing in the workshops.

Day one began with games. The success of image theatre at Chancellor led me to reuse the method. The participants were asked to make images that showed what it means to be a man. Initially, the group did not understand the question and I had to demonstrate. After demonstrating the group seemed excited to try it on their own. The images that emerged showed manliness as being courageous, lacking emotions, the ability to perform the sex act, initiating sex and doing tough physical work. The session was only for an hour and left little room for critical discussion. It was agreed that we would continue in the next session.

On day two we continued with image theatre. First, the participants were divided into two groups and were asked to make a series of images defining masculinity. I was struck by the fact that in all the images sexuality; performing sex, sexually related acts and men as initiators



Figure 5: Mulunguzi. A participant explains the meaning of his image about masculinity.

of sex, was the main theme. In the discussion that followed the participants asserted that sex was central to masculine identity. For instance, one of the participants argued: ‘Sex helps to make a relationship strong by encouraging trust’. His next statement however, contradicted the first, ‘Moreover, the girl feels that she cannot leave you because she will feel used’. It seemed to me that sex was used to trap girls in relationships rather than building trust. The session ended on an agreement that we needed to explore other ways of performing masculinity.

On day three participants were divided into two groups and asked to create an image portraying ways in which a man can depict manliness without sex. There were huge challenges in this session. I had hoped that the young men would be able to portray manliness in a more positive sense. I wanted to find out if the young men could think of themselves as male beyond ideas based around hegemonic forms of masculinity. The images that were produced presented men exerting authority over women. Next, the groups were told to make two sets of images showing how they enact leadership in their own relationships. Two images created a debate. The first was of a boy in an authoritative position calling a girl over. This was followed by one with the girl greeting the boy. The interpretation was that a man does not give up when asking a girl out. Asked to offer other examples of male power in relations, one of the students said: ‘When

people are in a relationship and the man calls for the presence of his girlfriend, the man threatens to beat the girl if she refuses the man's demand or request'. When asked why violence was necessary the answer was: 'To prove or show her that you are a man'. It was understood that young men often turned to violence or the threat of violence as a tool for obtaining female obedience. The other example of the use of force was when acquiring sex from girlfriends. A form three student explained: 'When you want to have sex and you are trying to undress her she will cross legs as one way of refusing. In those instances, a man is supposed to make sure that it works according to his plan'. Asked if they ever use condoms in such circumstances, most boys replied that people do not bother out of fear that the girl will change her mind. While the participants were aware that sex without consent is rape, I noted that their attitudes were primarily influenced by myths about female sexuality which assumed that women pretend when it comes to sexual matters.

A problematic example of Drama in Education at Mulunguzi

I introduced Dorothy Heathcote's the mantle of the expert (Heathcote & Bolton 1994) as a form of inquiry on day four. I noted that although image theatre had helped unpack some ideas about masculinities, the group was resistant to changing images in order to find alternative identities. In the Drama in Education (DIE) method, the group was asked to come up with a booklet for young people that explored HIV risk and ways to mitigate it. I encouraged them to reflect on how certain forms of masculinities can shape sex practices. The participants were assigned the role of a creative team responsible for developing the content. I was the publisher. The first stage required the participants to justify the need for this book to the publisher, who was the financier. Once the content had been developed we could adapt it into a performance to present at Mulunguzi. The group worked for 30 minutes and came up with justification and a design for the book. It was simply entitled 'Abstinence Being faithful and Condom use (ABC) among Youths'.³ It would look at abstinence, being faithful and condom use among young people. In their presentation they argued that their book looks at the following questions: Does ABC work and if not why? Who takes responsibility for condom use in a relationship? How could young couples be faithful to each other?

Day two was dedicated to the theme of abstinence and condom use. The participants were asked to be part of a panel discussion on an imaginary radio talk show. Four volunteered;



Figure 6: Participants and I (far left) planning an intervention using DIE.

two were interviewers and two were interviewees. The issue the panel explored was if abstinence works for young people. The rest of the group were free to ask a question or make comments. During the discussion, some of the participants argued that abstinence meant not being in relationships, rather than not having sex while in a relationship. After a few follow-up questions we all agreed that it meant the latter. At this point I asked the group to think of how young men could show that they are men in a relationship without sex.

Day three continued with the DIE exercise. On this occasion, the participants had to create and perform in a television advertisement for a new condom called 'Real Love'. The advert had to encourage young people to use condoms. The group deliberated on why there was a low uptake of condoms and the factors that prevented young men from using them. It was explained young people are put off by the latex smell and the belief that condoms cause tiredness. Therefore, the task for the group was to develop an advert that challenged these myths. The first advert was simply message-based. I then challenged them to develop a compelling story to use in their performative advertisement. The next three sessions were dedicated to developing the story. The participants suggested that the story shows two

characters; one who uses condoms and the other who is against them. We began rehearsing the piece and the thinking was that this would feature in the final performance.

I reintroduced image theatre by asking two participants to re-create some of the images that had been made in the image theatre workshops. The first image showed a man embracing a woman from behind, with his hands on her bosom. The next stage asked the participants to change this image so as to reveal how we can be in relationships when sex is not available. The second image showed a boy and girl sitting down and reading together. The group interpreted the image as friendship. The second image of manliness showed a man standing behind a woman with one hand on the left thigh of the woman lifting her skirt and the left hand below the woman's right breast. Initially, the image symbolised that a man had to sleep with a woman to prove his manhood. Before we changed the image the group was asked if telling young people to practice abstinence was practical considering that young men used sex in order to define themselves as male. The group agreed that telling young men not to have sex would not work. In order to enable the group to think about how boys could enact masculinity beyond sex I asked the group to create four images that depicted how men initiated sex. After the images had been made, the next step required them to make the opposite sides of these images; showing how sex can be initiated with respect and intimacy. Surprisingly, the subsequent images portrayed the men in very intimate positions like caressing and hugging. The participants explained that in the images both the women and men had agreed to have sexual intercourse. After the session, I felt as though the exercise had nudged the group into a positive direction, but more work was needed. Generally, I think this session was one of the most challenging for the group. I think the problem had to do with the fact that I tried to rush through a lot of things in one day session. While the idea was to use images in order to inform our story development, a gradual process of interrogation would have worked better.

We adapted some of the images and the story for the advertisement into a play. By the end of May the mood of the participants had changed. Most of the participants had stopped attending workshops or showed up late as a form of resistance to the workshop. In a conversation with one young man, I discovered that the group were unwilling to perform a play about sexuality in front of their peers. The last workshop was on 2 June. I was deeply frustrated and viewed this exercise as a total failure. On 30 June, I had a follow-up discussion with the group, who agreed to meet with me after the headmaster had intervened, to find out what went



Figure 7: Participants improvise a sketch about the consequences of risky sexual practices.

wrong. In the discussion, it emerged that the participants were uncomfortable performing a play about sexuality, sexual consent and condom use in front of a mixed-sex audience, but were willing to perform only for the boys. One of the problems was playing female characters. Some of the participants stated that doing this would negatively impact their chances of dating some of the school girls. For the young men enacting female characters was considered not manly. I wanted the group to create a play which could be present to both boys and girls in order to stimulate real debate about issues relating to sexual consent, gender relations and HIV. Therefore, performing for an all-men audience would have only reinforced dominant hegemonic ideals of masculinity.

Transforming masculinity: Process or performance?

Chancellor College, Part 2 (2015)

At the end of May, the participants from Chancellor returned from their three-week break. Work commenced in the second week of June. On day one the participants agreed that they wanted to make a documentary. It would be composed of student interviews, testimonies from the group and performative interludes; music, poetry and spoken word or rap music. Its aim was to answer what it meant to be a virtuous man for university students. I had decided that this was the direction where the work needed to go because the participants had begun exploring ways of getting consent from their girlfriends. Moreover, many of the ideas and images of masculinity were sexually risky and oppressive of women and I felt that the participants had to be enabled to think about masculinity in more positive ways. The idea was inspired by a Christian student bulletin posted on a noticeboard outside the college library that had featured a number of female students talking about the qualities of a virtuous woman they claimed to possess. Briefly, the biblical characteristics of a virtuous woman are outlined in the Old Testament Scripture of Proverbs 31: 10-31. The woman is described as wise, faithful, industrious, kind, hardworking, loving and caring of the poor and full of dignity. Against this backdrop I asked the group what the characteristics of a virtuous man would be. The group was intrigued by the concept and set out to find possible answers. In the discussion, a number of interview questions were developed. Does a virtuous man seek sexual consent from his girlfriend? Is he respectful of girl's wishes? Does he practice regular condom use? Does he sleep around with multiple concurrent partners? Would he know his and his partner's HIV status?

On the second day, the group continued to explore possible questions and how the documentary was to be presented. In the discussion I suggested that some of the questions could be tackled through Invisible Theatre; Forum Theatre and Image Theatre. At the end of the session, participants were equipped with video cameras to interview students. It was a Friday and the Student Union normally organises a weekend of games, drinking and partying during the second weekend of the term. During the next workshop participants started working on an invisible theatre sketch on day three. The participants devised a sketch was about three friends; one who was HIV positive and who had disclosed to one of the three friends. Later on, he decided to start dating a sister of one of the friends who was HIV negative. When the brother

finds out he confronts the friend and a verbal altercation ensues. This was our point of intervention. Rehearsals went on for two sessions. During this time, I noted that the participants were not very confident about performing invisible theatre and, consequently, workshop attendance was low. Another problem, according to some members, was that some had never acted before and they found the methods intimidating. There were only two drama students in the group. I proposed that they devise a forum theatre play instead as this would give us enough time to rehearse and the group could perform in a controlled environment. Moreover, one of the drama students could facilitate the forum session. We worked on the play for three sessions. A final year young woman helped us with the female role. The play we devised was entitled *Status*.

Status: A forum theatre performance about HIV disclosure and masculinity



Figure 8: Actors performing a scene in *Status* at Chancellor.

The play told the story of a male university student, Mabvuto, who was a virgin. When we are introduced to Mabvuto he is in a relationship with Linda, a fellow student. Problems begin to emerge when Linda insists that they start having unprotected sex as a proclamation of true love. Mabvuto objects but, later on, agrees on the condition that they get tested for HIV first. At the clinic Mabvuto discovers that he is HIV positive and Linda is not. Linda accuses him of trying to infect her and leaves. Mabvuto calls his parents to confront them and finds out that he

acquired the virus at birth from his mother. Fearing that Mabvuto will infect her, Linda ends the relationship. Soon Mabvuto's status is known and all of his friends abandon him. Afterwards, he becomes a devoted Christian. In his final year of school he meets a first-year girl named Alice who is interested in him. A few weeks later the two start dating. Alice asks her boyfriend if they can start having sex since everyone is doing it. He agrees but insists that they use condoms. During an HIV awareness week, Alice and Mabvuto meet a group of student peer educators distributing free condoms. Mabvuto tells Alice that they should get more condoms. She objects and argues that they should stop using them as the latex gives her a rash. Mabvuto agrees without disclosing his HIV status and the play ends.

Performance analysis

Status was performed at 10am on 31 July 2015, in the open-air theatre at the Department of Fine and Performing Arts. By 9:30 an audience of students and a handful of academic staff members began to gather. In total, there were about forty-five people. I think the size of the attendance was adversely affected by the time we decided to stage the play since most students had classes. Female students made up the majority of the audience. I took an active role in the play as director, singer and guitar player. The performance started with a chorus composed by the participants and myself. The lyrics were as follows:

I am living life like a brand new creature
Zoyipa zonse ndasiya (I have left all the bad things behind)
I am living life like a brand new creature
Ndasintha (I am a changed person)
Love your life, know your status
Condomise and be faithful to your partner

The performance was largely in Chichewa, with some dialogue in English. It was performed as theatre-in-the-round. This allowed the actors to move freely in and out of the performance space. The performance incorporated some of the images that were made during the image theatre exercise. Musical interludes were used to link scenes. In total, the play had eight short scenes. There were no special costumes that were used, just black t-shirts and black trousers. The performance lasted for about 40 minutes.

Forum theatre



Figure 9: A young woman audience member offers a solution during a forum scene.

At the end of the play, the joker (forum theatre's facilitator), played by a final year drama student, invited the audience to think about some of the problems they had observed in the play and to offer alternative courses of action that our main characters could have taken. The first person to raise a hand was a male student. His contribution was that when Alice persuaded Mabvuto to have unprotected sex the boy should have refused. At that point the joker invited him to take the role of Mabvuto and the whole scene was reenacted. The new Mabvuto argued that he could not have unprotected sex as he was HIV positive. When Alice heard this she became angry and accused him of trying to infect her with the virus, to which Mabvuto argued that if that was the case then he would have agreed to her proposal. The joker stopped the scene and immediately the actors received a thunderous applause.

The joker took the stage and continued to probe and ask the audience if they had noticed any other problems. For a few minutes, it seemed as though no one was willing to contribute. However, before long a final year female Drama student raised her hand. She explained that she wanted to change the scene in which Linda and Mabvuto were arguing about having unprotected sex. The new Linda simply agreed to Mabvuto's proposition that they still use condoms, rather than having risky sex to prove their love for each other. A male student audience member offered a different view. He argued that Mabvuto should have rejected

Linda's proposal for sex, rather than giving in. The joker invited him to take the role of Mabvuto. The scene was reenacted. This time around Mabvuto insisted that he and Linda were not going to have sex at all because that was what they agreed in the first instance and that Linda should know that not sleeping with her does not mean he loves her any less. Another female student said that she wanted to change the scene at the clinic because the way Linda reacted to the results was unfair on Mabvuto because him going for an HIV test was a sign of honesty. In the new scene, Linda tells Mabvuto that being HIV positive is not the end of the world and that it is possible that he might have contracted the virus at birth and that she still loves him. Unfortunately, the scene was interrupted by the actor who played the role of the medical doctor when he decided to chase the actors out the space. After realising that this was unplanned the joker then asked the female student to explain the thinking behind her actions. She then went on to say that despite Mabvuto's status Linda should have stayed with him because leaving him was a form of discrimination. She received applause for her contribution.

Another female student proposed to change how the medical doctor counselled Mabvuto and Linda. She argued that Mabvuto and Linda could have asked for more information that could have empowered them to live positively. The joker then invited her to enact the scene. This time around two female students played the two roles. When the scene ended a male staff member offered another viewpoint on the scene. He explained that it would have been helpful if the doctor had informed the couple that it is possible to have a healthy and long term relationship when one partner is positive and the other is negative. A female academic staff member suggested that Mabvuto should have told Alice his HIV status before dating her, rather than keeping it a secret. The joker then asked the audience if students would be willing to disclose their HIV status? At that moment, a female Drama student raised an interesting question. She said: 'Should HIV positive students only date those who are positive or can an HIV negative person date someone who is positive?' The debate then took an interesting turn. In response to the question that was raised a final year male drama student asserted: 'There is a lot of hypocrisy among Christian students on campus who pretend that they are not engaging in sex when in actual fact they are. This is happening because being seen with a condom makes you the biggest sinner. As a result, many Christians are having unprotected sex, which is helping to spread the disease'.

In my opinion our adaptation of forum theatre was an effective way of engaging the audience. It also allowed the participants to hear what other students thought about some of the issues they had been debating. By reversing the role of who initiates sex and condom use in young people's relationships we hoped to stimulate debate and discussion on a few key issues that affect young people. In Malawi women occupy subordinate positions when it comes to negotiating sex or safe sex practices. By reversing the role that men ordinarily take in the social relationship we had hoped to show an alternative form of manliness. Of course having Mabvuto's character not disclose his HIV status was used to create a pathway for our audience to engage with the story and to offer alternative action. After the performance the group and I did not meet again until June 2016. One of the contributing factors was that the following Monday was the start of the reading week and most of the students claimed they would be busy. I think they were just tired as the workshop had now run for a period of six months; though intermittently at times.

Dzenza Secondary School (2016)

Day one began with warm-up games. After the getting to know each other I introduced the group to image theatre. The participants had to create images of what it means to be a man. They were divided into three groups. The first group created an image of a man having his beard shaved. The second group created an image of a boy talking to a girl. Group three made an image of a man looking, lustfully, at a woman's posterior. The interpretation of the images was that being a man meant having a beard; having the ability to ask a woman out and, finally, having sexual desires.

In the next step the participants were asked to adapt *nthano* (folktales) in order to respond to the question of manliness. Group one presented a story about a group of animals that wanted to get married to the Elephant's daughter. However, Elephant stated that his daughter would be married only to someone who could till his field. The problem was that that piece of land was infested with mosquitos. Each time a potential suitor came he would get bitten and eventually gave up. In their story, Kalulu (hare) was a trickster who went to the girl's father to ask for her hand in marriage and agreed that he would plough the field. When the other animals (suitors) came to also undertake the task Kalulu began telling them a story of the hyena, which had black patches on its fur. When Kalulu mentioned patch he would slap his body and in so



Figure 10: Dzenza. Participants incorporate local drumming patterns and songs into a play.

doing killed the mosquitos that were biting him. By the time he had finished telling his story he had managed to plough the field and won the girl's hand. The second group presented a folktale about Kalulu and his wife, Fulu. The story was that Kalulu and his wife were unable to have a baby and after failing to conceive for years Kalulu leaves his wife. After leaving her, he finds a new wife and within a year they have a baby. In the discussion we had group one explained that being a man meant being able to propose to a woman. When I further probed I discovered that the acquisition of a woman was important for achieving manliness. When I asked them if they were ready for marriage they said no, but explained that the acquisition of a girl was proof that you were a real man. Group two explained that in their story being a man meant the ability to have children. I asked the group if they were ready to have children and they said that it is something that they would be ready for once they had finished school. I was struck by how finishing secondary school, rather than being married, signified a step forward towards achieving masculinity for these students.

Day two began with games and songs. I asked the group to develop their *nthano* into sketches. I spent time with each group developing their stories. After each had performed we combined the two sketches to make one story which we would turn into a play. On the third day we started developing the second *nthano*, which I felt had a richer story. We explored what

normally happens when a married couple has problems. The suggestion from the participants was that they needed the help of local marriage advisers, *nkhoswe*. The other suggestion was that the marriage should end. Using the devising process I was able to engage the participants in critically thinking about masculinity. One of the issues that the second folktale was dealing with was fatherhood. I asked the group if it was possible for Kalulu and Fulu to live without children and still in be in love? Some of the participants argued that it was possible while others said it was not. I suggested that we try acting out the scene. In the improvisation scene Kalulu believed that the problem was with his wife rather than him, which prompted him to start cheating. This presented us with an opportunity to explore some of the outcomes of risky sexual practices. During the discussion, one participant argued: ‘Kalulu should get a sexually transmitted disease, particularly HIV’. The reason, he further explained, was that Kalulu did not know the HIV status of the women he was sleeping with. I wanted to know what would compel our character not to use condoms. The participants explained that men believe the common saying that sex is sweeter without a condom. We then developed the subsequent scenes depicting Kalulu’s promiscuously.

Day four began with a discussion on some of the masculine scripting; about fatherhood and manliness, that had come up in the previous sessions. I asked the group if making a play about these themes would be relevant to their schoolmates. The participants admitted that this kind of play would only be relevant upon the completion of school. We then decided to change the theme of the play. One participant suggested that the story should be about how a boy, Kalulu, wants to have unprotected sex with his girlfriend, but she is unwilling as she does not know his HIV status, and hence he starts sleeping around and contracts HIV. We agreed to adopt the new story. We rehearsed for three days. The title of the play was taken from a local proverb, *Pawiri pawiri sipauzilika*, (You Cannot Serve Two Masters At Once).

Pawiri pawiri sipauzilika: Using local art forms to talk about gender identity and HIV

The play was about Kalulu, a male student at Dzenza, who was in a relationship with Fulu (Tortoise). It began with a group of animals; Kalulu, lion, hyena, a flock of crows and giraffe, going to Elephant, Fulu’s brother, to ask for permission to date his sister. Elephant informs the suitors that they can only date his sister if they wash his very smelly clothes. While at the laundry, Kalulu starts telling stories instead of working. Each animal gives the clothes a wash

but the stench, eventually, causes all animals to abandon the task. Realising that the other animals have done 85% of the washing, Kalulu rinses clothes and informs Elephant that he has completed the task. He is then given permission to ask Fulu out. Later on the two start a relationship. After a few months of dating Kalulu suggests that they should start having sex. Fulu disagrees arguing that she does not know his HIV status. Consequently Kalulu starts cheating on his girlfriend and acquires the HIV virus. Fulu discovers that her boyfriend is cheating on her and when she confronts him he tells her it is because she refused to give him sex. Fulu agrees to sleep with Kalulu and contracts HIV. Concerned by her deteriorating health Fulu goes to the hospital to get tested. The doctor tells her to come with her boyfriend but does not disclose her HIV status. A few days later she returns with Kalulu and they find that they have the disease. They receive good counselling and are put on antiretroviral drugs; however, Kalulu does not adhere to his. The two break up and Kalulu's health worsens. When Fulu confronts him he dismisses her and continues to live recklessly. A few months pass and Kalulu dies. There is a memorial service held for him at the school and some of his friends perform a song in his memory. The play ends here.

Performance analysis

Pawiri pawiri sipauzilika was performed on Saturday 25 June on open ground behind a block of classrooms and the staff office. The participants suggested that space because it was strategically located along a path leading into the school. Before the performance two members of the group started drumming to attract our audience. In rural areas in Malawi drumming patterns are used to signal either a community gathering or a death announcement. We thought this would be a good way to start our performance. There was an audience of over sixty people, composed of students, teachers and some children from the surrounding houses. Our play started at 10:45 and lasted for thirty-five minutes.

The play adapted local art forms; folktales, storytelling techniques, dances and songs, as vehicles to examine masculinity and HIV risk in young people's relationships. The decision to use local art forms was largely influenced by the work of people like Steve Abah, Penima Mlama and David Kerr and Chris Kamlongera's Primary Health Tfd Project of 1985-87 whose work advocates the use of local people's art forms, languages and other participatory methods to



Figure 11: The doctor, Fulu and Kalulu at the clinic.

explore their problems. The play was performed in Chichewa because the participants came from Chewa speaking areas. We staged the play using theatre-in-the-round as this is a common performance aesthetic found in many Malawian performance traditions. The play also used a storyteller and storytelling as other local aesthetic forms. The storyteller introduced the audience to our story, characters and also linked the two independent folktales for the audience to show continuity. Another local source was the use of stock characters from local folktales; the Hare as the trickster and Elephant as the wise king.

During the first day of rehearsal I had brought in local drums, which I had managed to rent from the Department of Arts and Crafts in the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The participants were very excited that we were going to incorporate local dances and music into the performance. Their enthusiasm and excitement were extraordinary. I also think using forms that the participants were familiar with made the sessions relevant to them. The Nyau masquerades, also known as *Gule wa Mkulu*, are a well known dancing tradition of the Chewa of the Central region of Malawi (Kamlongera et al. 1990). The participants came from Chewa rural areas where the practice of Nyau masquerades is common. I encouraged them to incorporate and modify songs and dances from their areas. There were a number of good drummers in the

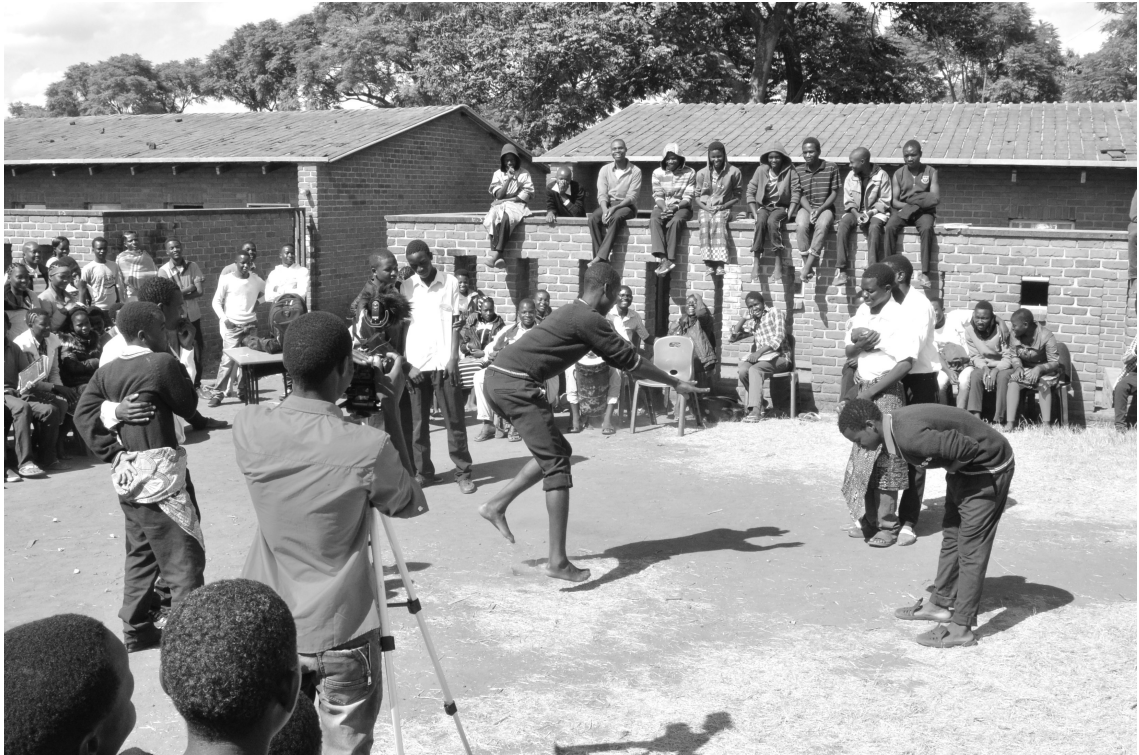


Figure 12: A scene from *Pawiri* uses tableaux and a dance to depict Kalulu's risky sexual behaviour.

group, but few skilled dancers; though I suspect that some of them were reluctant to showcase their proficiency in Nyau dances due to its strict code of secrecy. Local songs and dances played an integral part in the production. These were used as linkages for scenes and also as theatrical devices. For instance, to portray Kalulu's promiscuity, the group decided to use a traditional song with lyrics that spoke of a promiscuous husband, who drinks heavily and sleeps around. This was accompanied by a one-man dance. Another example was the scene in which Kalulu and Fulu go to the clinic. When the doctor told them the results, the three actors playing Kalulu, Fulu and the doctor created a tableau which showed that Kalulu and Fulu were arguing. At this time a poem was recited that spoke of how Kalulu regretted his dangerous lifestyle that resulted in him acquiring HIV.

The performance could be described as tragicomic. Although we did not set out to make a comedy it was the way the character of Fulu was portrayed that caused much laughter. The audience found the exaggerated feminine characteristics of the actor who played Fulu hilarious. Apart from being entertaining I also think the play was aesthetically beautiful. Moreover, the use of local art forms and sources made it accessible to the audience. Audience participation

was engaged through a post-performance discussion, which was facilitated by me. Ideally one of the participants should have led the discussion but unfortunately there was no time to train them. The performance worked well as a powerful tool for showing how HIV affects young people and exposing how dangerous conceptions of masculinities further spread the virus. From my observation the students were intrigued by the theme of sexuality as displayed during the discussion.

Post-Performance discussion

When the performance ended I invited the audience to reflect on three questions: What were the lessons they drew from the play? What mistakes did the characters make? And what would they do if they were Kalulu or Fulu? In response to the first question a female student explained: 'The lesson I have taken from the play is that we should not sleep with boys or girls without protecting ourselves since HIV is dangerous'. Similarly, another female student asserted that Kalulu's story was an example of how risky sex practices lead to HIV. A male student responding to the third question said: 'If I was Kaulu I would have been taking the medication that he got from the hospital'. A different female student said the mistake Kalulu made was not adhering to the doctor's advice. 'I would have taken the medication to prolong my life', she explained. I then asked: What if you were Fulu? The young lady emphatically responded: 'I would have insisted on using a condom'. A male student said that if he was Kalulu and his girl had refused to have sex then he would have waited until an appropriate time.

I observed that the central theme of the play was clear to the students. Therefore, to initiate a richer debate I asked them what young people can do in order to mitigate the risk of HIV. One female student responded: 'Being faithful to one sexual partner'. Upon noting that most of the responses were from the female students, I turned to where the young men were seated and posed the same question. The first response was in chorus with the young men saying they would abstain. I found this problematic as it indicated that they were giving

responses which they thought I wanted to hear. I then retorted: 'What if you are unable to control yourself?' A male student stood up and answered: 'If condoms are available then the two must agree to have sex'. Some members of the audience asked what if you do not have condoms? A male student offered an interesting suggestion; he stated: 'When your sexual drives

become uncontrollable, the best you can do is just go to class to study'. Similarly, another male student said that sexual desire can be controlled by having a cold shower. Interestingly, their responses drew a lot of laughter from the audience. I asked the audience if they found these suggestions helpful at all. In response, a female student stated: 'Real love does not mean having sex before marriage and if a boy insists on sex then the best thing to do is breaking off the relationship'. Her answer got a lot of applause from the female students who agreed with her.

When there were no more comments I decided to wrap the discussion up. The audience was invited to a final dance and while we were dancing a female student told me that there were some questions that they wanted to discuss. I asked everyone to return to their seats. The first question came from the same girl who had told me that there were more questions to explore. She asked: 'What should happen when you are in a relationship and you both have sexual desires?' One female student stood up and responded by saying that sporting activities can help to distract one from such feelings. The second question, asked by a female student, was: 'If you are in a relationship and two of you have gone for an HIV test and the both of you are negative does that mean it is okay to have unprotected sex?' Her question was greeted by a loud 'No'. Responding to the question, one student told her that she would end up getting pregnant. The male students responded in a chorus saying: 'You can use withdraw method'. A very confident female speaker said that she wanted to respond to the question concerning being HIV-negative and having unprotected sex. She argued: 'Most of you are saying that it is okay for this couple to have sex because the boy always argues that he loves the girl and that if she gets pregnant then he will take care of the baby and her. If they truly love each other then what is the problem with waiting until they are married?' Her contribution received cheers from both the boys and girls.

As the discussion went on the girl who had asked the question about unprotected sex stood up again and asked another important question. She asked: 'What should girls do when a boy says he wants to have sex and you are not ready to lose your virginity?' This drew a response from one of the girls who had been vocal throughout the debate to explain: 'If a boy insists on sex then break up with him'. I was intrigued by her response, but I wanted to gain more of an insight into the link between sex and love for young people and asked her: 'What if you both love each other and do not want to break up?' In her response, she said that if the two

of you really are in love then you can wait until you are married. It would appear that most of the female students viewed love, marriage and sex as interlinked.

After the discussion, the participants and I had a meeting to reflect on the process and the play itself. In our discussion one participant admitted that he found the debate helpful because some of the issues that emerged had not been discussed in our sessions. Another said it was interesting to see how theatre engaged the audience in a debate. One participant stated that the debate taught him some of the strategies he can use to avoid risky sex before marriage. Some of the participants found the ideas of using cold showers to suppress sexual desires to be useful. In the postmortem, the participants told me that within the next five years they desired to be HIV negative and once they had married they would seek to live lifestyles that did not put their spouses and themselves at risk of HIV. In many ways, the outcomes of Dzenza experiment confirmed my thinking that local art forms used in a dialogical way can empower young people to examine HIV risk, sexuality and masculinity in their own relationships.

Notes to Chapter 3

¹ Part of this chapter appears as 'Participatory Theatre as a Practice as Research Tool for Engaging with Young Men to Interrogate Masculinity and HIV in Malawi' in *PARTake: The Journal of Performance as Research*, 1.2 (Forthcoming).

² The Dutch Reformed Church in Malawi (D.R.C.M) arrived in 1889 and established the first mission station at Mvera in Dowa in the central region under the leadership of Andrew Murray. Murray had made contacts with the Livingstonia missionaries and the Scots felt the Dutch missionaries would be an ally against the Catholic-Portuguese threat in the South. In 1894 another station was set up at Kongwe and in 1896 the D.R.C.M moved its administration to Nkhoma in Chief Mazengera's country, Lilongwe district (Phiri 2007).

³ In Malawi, HIV and AIDS education for young people is taught through the Life Skills Education (LSE) programmes for in and out of primary and secondary school students (MARPR 2015). The LSE interventions aim to raise awareness on HIV and AIDS and to promote gender equality (MARPR 2015). In schools, LSE is offered as a subject in primary and secondary school nation-wide.

4 CONCLUSION: LESSONS, OBSERVATIONS AND LOOKING FORWARD

This final chapter focuses on the findings of my research at Chancellor, Mulunguzi and Dzenza. I look at the lessons learned from practice and how my practical experience intersects with my wider reading to point out the issues relating to young men's sexuality in Malawi. I also discuss how theatre methodologies have helped me understand how young men are defining themselves as male and the problems that emerged in relation to these definitions.

In Malawi, young men are under pressure to perform masculinity through practices that are sexually risky and which act as barriers to current anti-HIV interventions that target men. In order to affirm themselves as men, young men think they need to demonstrate sexual competence, and they see it often as necessary to do this by not using condoms, having multiple sexual partners and controlling the circumstances in which sex occurs. The failure to engage men to interrogate perceptions about manliness that are harmful to both them and women will, if not challenged and changed, have disastrous social and health consequences for the next generations of Malawians. While everyone in Malawi knows about HIV risk, the disease continues to spread because traditional anti-HIV interventions that promote the ABC (Abstinence, Faithfulness and Condom Use) approach are woefully insufficient; I would argue that this is at least partly because they fail to take into account dominant formulations of masculinity.

Learning from Practice at Chancellor College, Mulunguzi and Dzenza

In her article 'Targeting Men for a Change: AIDS discourse and activism in Africa', Jane Burja (2000: 7) explains that in the beginning 'AIDS campaigns set up women as targets for intervention and in the process presented them only as victims waiting for rescue or empowerment'. She further says that the prevalence of HIV in heterosexual relations requires men to take up an active role in safe sex practices, particularly when the first line of protection is a male condom. In my research, I found no evidence — though of course, everyone was aware of the dangers of infection — of HIV interventions in Malawi that targeted men in order to critically engage them in examining the role of masculinities in shaping sexual practices. According to Izgubara and Okal (2011: 27), anti-HIV messages targeting men in Malawi mainly

aim to encourage 'sexual abstention, partner reduction, faithfulness and condom use, undermining their capacity to perform as real men'. They further explain that this work is not effective because for many Malawian boys taking on dangerous sexual practices that put them at risk of acquiring HIV is part of a strategy for becoming what they and society see as a 'real' man. Against this backdrop, my research set out to find best practice, using participatory theatre-based methodologies, for engaging men in taking up an active role in HIV mitigation, by enabling them to critically analyse how certain masculinities are harmful to both men and women. This seems to me a potentially helpful way forward because it engages men in a dialogic discussion to understand what constructions of masculinity give rise to dangerous sexual practices, how harmful they are to men (and their female partners) and how change might be negotiated.

Can theatre be useful as a strategy for engaging young men in challenging dangerous forms of masculinity? There have been a number of theatre-based projects led by practitioners such as Steve Abah and Micheal Etherton (1982), Pennia Mlama (1991) and more recently Lynn Dalrymple (2006), Jane Plastow (2007), Sanjoy Ganguly (2010) and Dennis Francis (2011) that provide evidence that ongoing and participatory theatre can empower ordinary people to interrogate problems and find solutions for change. A recurrent feature of the work of these practitioners is the centrality of identifying communities as agents of change who set the agenda, decide on the issues and how they are presented, as opposed to dominant Tfd practices which seek to transmit NGO and donor messages and impose solutions. In my research I discovered that although Tfd in Malawi has been used for HIV prevention its role has been to raise awareness of the problem, rather than empowering communities to interrogate the gender inequalities and behaviours that encourage the spread of infection and to identify long-term solutions to social and behaviour change. This is not to say that conventional practice is not important in cases where information is lacking, as for example when people need to know the importance of going for HIV testing. However, as we know, awareness about risk does not stop people engaging in high-risk sexual practices (Lie 2008: 280-283). The problem is that when there are no efforts to interrogate, at the community level, the forces that spread the disease and to find community-based solutions for change; it is unlikely that information alone will result in behaviour change (Whitehead 1997). While current uses of Tfd in Malawi have resulted in

raising levels of awareness, the disease continues to spread (Izgobara and Uchie 2011, NAC 2014).

My application of theatre-based methodologies was intended as a dialogical tool for engaging young men in order to investigate current attitudes to sexual engagement and to explore possible strategies for enabling young men to define themselves in more positive ways, as opposed to gender identities that are sexually risky and oppressive of women. My thinking was influenced by the leading commentators who agree that TfD's main role is to encourage critical thinking, debate and to facilitate the empowerment of ordinary people (see Kidd 1984, Mlama 1991, Mda 1993, Kerr 1991; 1994). I also was influenced by Paulo Freire's problem-posing pedagogy (1970: 80-81); the idea that the participants and I could engage in critical dialogue, as co-investigators, of problem exploration and solution identification. I also decided to use participatory forms because I was aware of their 'capacity to help participants, on one hand, to externalise their systems of beliefs and on the other to step back from them so that they may gain perspective' (Francis 2011: vii). Moreover, theatre could also help participants to 'enlarge our frames of references and to emancipate us from rigid ways of thinking and perceiving' (O'Neil 1996: 145, cf Francis 2011). Apart from this, I also was aware that theatre has the potential to create a sense of community and to facilitate open discussion on sensitive issues in ways that are fun, non-threatening, relevant and meaningful (Francis 2011). I would argue that the efficacy of this work was premised on the belief that dialogical and truly participatory theatre can stimulate an open and critical discussion on sexuality, masculinity and HIV with young people and that meaningful and relevant theatre work can lead to change.

Generative tools

Before I travelled to Malawi to conduct fieldwork in 2015, I was aware that some methods would work well as generative tools while others were more useful as diagnostic forms. By this I mean, generative techniques produced, illustrated and embodied themes of masculinities, while diagnostic forms enabled the participants to critically examine and problematise these ideas of manliness. The first form I used to generate understanding of masculinity was drawing of ideas concerning the type of men the participants were and aspired to be and where their ideas about manliness had come from. Drawing brought out autobiographical narratives and, from these, I learned the tropes of manliness dominant among the participants. Minority views

that substantially differed from dominant narratives were infrequent. For instance, only two participants (Chancellor and Mulunguzi) openly said they were virgins and wanted to wait until they were married to engage in sex.

After I felt that I could not take drawing any further, in analysing the issues, I moved on to Playback Theatre as developed by Jonathan Fox and Jo Salas (Salas 1996). According to Nick Rowe (2007: 32), the form uses ‘performance so that stories and the truths they reveal can be examined, explored, reflected upon and perhaps changed’. The thinking was that through sharing of personal stories the group could examine past experiences and learn from them. However, I found that in playback the stories that participants told each other functioned more as generative themes than as a focus for change. The form worked well in bringing up the dominant tropes concerning ideas of masculinity; however, I found it limited since it relied on participants’ past experiences as a form of self-critique. This meant that it was difficult to ascertain if the participants still held these views about masculinity or had moved on.

The final generative tool was Image Theatre (Boal 1979). The form was useful in generating themes about masculinity at Mulunguzi. Image work functioned well as an embodied representation of the young men’s ideas of masculinity. The dominant theme that emerged was sexual activity as a marker of manliness. However, what struck me was how the form enabled me to learn the various formulations of masculinity based around sexuality. For instance, a man had to be domineering during sex and a man had to dictate the terms under which sex occurred. In addition, the images were able to reveal participants’ anxieties, sexual fascinations and attitudes. Another feature of image theatre that I found helpful was that it eliminated the need for participants to say things to impress me (as a researcher) or their peers because they could just show their ideas and did not need to explain themselves.

Diagnostic tools

According to Augusto Boal, the strength of image theatre is in ‘its extraordinary capacity for making thought visible’ (Boal 1979: 115). In my research, I used image theatre at Chancellor College to enable participants to analyse their identity construction and the gender inequalities in their relationships. The form brought participants’ thoughts to life through physical embodiment. What was particularly useful for me was that the form empowered the participants to explore strategies for challenging dominant masculine ideas. For example, in one of the

sessions, the images produced showed that the young men generally did not seek proper sexual consent from their partners. Image theatre revealed how certain sexual behaviours were deeply problematic and increased their risk of acquiring HIV. For instance, the debate about sexual consent showed the use of force by young men to attain sex is oppressive of women and puts both partners at risk of infection because condoms are not used. Moreover, the participants started to see how certain formulations of masculinity are oppressive of women and, through image theatre, began to explore ways in which they could find ideas for change. Participants could enter into dialogue with each other using images, rather than spoken dialogue and this meant that the confident participants did not dominate the discussion and allowed for each member to contribute. Image theatre was a diagnostic tool that offered the participants new insights through the interpretation of images, allowed them to challenge each others' ideas and facilitated exploration of masculinity and sexuality.

Another method I used to examine issues of masculinity with participants was Drama in Education. I used Dorothy Heathcote's 'mantle of the expert' (Heathcote & Bolton 1994) at Mulunguzi after I felt that I could take image theatre no further. I realised that the group was very reluctant to directly challenge some of the ideas of masculinity that emerged in the image theatre work. I think a problem was that I quickly moved to trying out ideas for change, rather than allowing the group to fully understand how their ideas of masculinity were harmful to them and to women. Heathcote and Bolton (1994: 32) explain 'knowledge becomes information, evidence, source material, specific, records, guidelines, regulations, theories, formulas and artefacts, all of which are to be interrogated'. In many ways, Heathcote's ideas resonated with me because I was interested in encouraging the group to analyse their ideas about sexual practices by developing an HIV prevention resource book for their peers. The method allowed the participants to explore myths about sexuality, sexual practices and their related risks. It is interesting that during the content development process the group were able to think about how HIV and unwanted pregnancies might be encouraged by certain forms of masculinity. However, I had to return to image theatre for them to find ideas for change. Although the form was useful, I found it difficult to use. This is because it required a lot of time and I think my biggest mistake was that I did not fully outline the specific goals I wanted the group to achieve at each stage of the process. What ended up happening was that the group spent too many hours planning, rather than developing an actual product.

The final method I used for interrogating ideas of masculinity and HIV risk among young people was Boal's forum theatre. Here I talk about forum theatre as a strategy for analysis within the context of meaningful audience participation. My inclination towards Boalian techniques was in part influenced by attending a forum theatre workshop in 2014 at Leeds led by Sanjoy Ganguly, arguably the leading practitioner of forum theatre in the world (Ganguly 2010). Osita Okagbue asserts that 'looking at the plethora of Theatre for Development programmes in Africa, one really struggles to find any that in actual fact tries to get the members of the target communities to become genuine actors or participants in the theatre-making process' (1998: 27). In my research I learned that this is a problem that has affected Malawian TfD since it first emerged. In most TfD plays audiences are relegated to the position of passive observers whose participation is limited to chorused responses initiated by actors posing leading questions to them. At Chancellor, we used forum theatre in order to actively engage the audience. In the Boalian method, forum theatre uses unfinished sketches that pose a problem to the audience in order for them to try out possible solutions (Boal 1979). *Status* was not an unfinished sketch; however, it presented several problems that the audience had to change in order to resolve the problems the play presented. Forum theatre worked as a dialogical tool that enabled our audience to become agents of change and through forum scenes, the audience reflected upon the problems presented and actively tried out various possible solutions for change. In these moments and the debates that followed, learning and new knowledge about dangerous sexual practices, condom use and HIV disclosure were generated. I did observe, however, that at times the audience tended to focus on the symptoms of the problems, rather the structural causes that had encouraged the problem. I think the problem came up because we did not make it clear to the audience that they could only intervene to change the actions of the oppressed person. Moreover, we did not agree on who the oppressed was. This means meant that the audience had to make their own interpretation of oppression.

The power of using local aesthetic forms

In 2015 I returned to the UK after completing the first tranche of workshops in Malawi. During this period, I started writing my thesis and doing further reading on the various ideologies and applications of TfD. It was during this time that I decided that I had to use local art forms within my practice. My thinking was influenced by the work of Steve Abah (2007: 437) who says:

‘Theatre for Development addresses community issues and problems using the people’s language and art forms as a media of expression’. Reading and writing about the Primary Health Care Tfd project led by David Kerr and Chris Kamlongera also nudged me towards using indigenous art forms.

I used local art forms at Dzenza to understand ways in which they can generate themes and make theatre accessible and relevant for audiences and participants. Folktales, once adapted, worked well to generate the participants’ ideas about masculinity. However, I also learned that this form could not take things further as it did not provide us with diagnostic tools to analyse the social structural causes of the problem. It is important though to realise that the strength of local performance traditions is in their ability to provide relevant performance aesthetics, structural and performance devices that made the play entertaining and easily accessible. For instance, the playfulness of storytelling and stock characters like the trickster Hare allowed the audience to connect with the characters. The participants also enjoyed the work. A distinct difference between the Dzenza and Mulunguzi groups was the former’s willingness to make theatre, largely, I think, because they were using forms they were familiar with. I recall the participants’ excitement about using local dances, songs and drumming patterns in their play. I also found the adaptability of the folklore, songs and dances to our needs particularly useful. Taking local songs and changing their lyrics to enhance scenes helped to make the play meaningful. When we performed the play the audience enjoyed seeing their fellow students using adapted *Gule wa Mkulu* dances and singing songs from their homes. I also think that the familiarity of the form encouraged active participation in the subsequent debate.

Limitations and implications of practice

My research was limited by the time I had to work with participants. I worked at Chancellor for six months, often for irregular periods, for over a month at Mulunguzi and for nine days at Dzenza. This meant that at some sites there was no time to really engage in depth with participants. Another major limitation of this work was the male gender exclusivity. Being a heterosexual male In discussions participants argued that the use of force and coercion was encouraged by women themselves and masculinity that emphasised sexual competence and virility was desired by women; yet these leave women vulnerable to HIV infection and gender-based violence. Consequently, the absence of women’s voices in the work meant that it was

extremely difficult to authenticate these claims or to challenge them. An obvious next step in taking my work forward would mean the inclusion of women's voices.

Is the methodology fit for wider use?

I would argue that the methodology I experimented with has the potential for wider use. Its strength is based on the integration of generative and diagnostic tools. I found that each form had its own strengths and limitations; however, what is abundantly clear now is that a simple message-based approach cannot be effective in tackling the issues of masculinity, sexually and HIV with young people as these problems require forms that facilitate critical interrogation and the exploration of solutions for change. In my work each group of participants presented their unique challenges which shaped my own practice and produced new knowledge. The effectiveness of utilising a toolbox of theatre-based methodologies combined with dialogic discussion is based on its capacity to offer facilitators a range of techniques for overcoming new barriers when one form cannot be taken any further. Moreover, the methodology works well as a research tool. An examination of the narratives that emerged produced a microcosm of Malawian society. They revealed the gendered politics in young people's sexual relationships and the various forms of masculinities existing in Malawi. What theatre showed in this research is not new, but simply revealed new ways of showing what we already know about youth masculinities in Malawi (see Izugbara and Undie 2008, Izugbara and Okal 2011, Kaler 2003). I would argue that what is novel about the work is how theatre can offer embodied, illustrative and dialogical ways for engaging young men in examining the harm that emerges from defining themselves in limited ways based around sexual performance, risky sexual practices and oppression of women, and to begin to think about defining themselves in ways that reduce risk and protect women. My findings demonstrate, incontrovertibly, that given the complex, psychological embedding of narratives about 'deadly' masculinities, simple message giving about ABC is not going to reach deeply enough to getting young men to challenge very deeply accepted dangerous and regressive narratives about masculinity; hence the need for dialogic and participatory forms that can help young men undertake how certain masculinities put them, and their partners, at risk and are oppressive of women. On this account, I think the approach with which I experimented with can be a useful tool for anti-HIV arts-based work targeting men in Malawi.

Impact of methodology on participants and audiences

From the outset I had hoped that my practice could stimulate the young men to challenge deadly masculinities that spread HIV. In June 2016, I returned to Malawi and interviewed six of the participants from Chancellor to find out if the workshops had been helpful to them. According to two of the respondents, the workshops had been useful insofar as encouraging them to seek proper sexual consent from their partners. An MfD student said: 'I thought it was normal not ask for consent, but after the workshops I realised that it is necessary'. The second participant confirmed this change when he explained: 'I believe in consensual sex. Before, I thought if a girl says no then she actually means yes'. Two other participants told me that the work had helped to challenge their preconceived ideas about masculinity. For instance, a third year MfD student claimed that although the things we were discussing were not new to him, he found the work useful because it helped him to rethink his sexual behaviour. He said that previously he would frequently change girls in order to experiment sexually. Similarly, another participant told me that he initially thought having one girl was not enough and he needed to have a second girl as a backup plan in case the first girl disappointed him. He said the workshops helped him to begin to reconsider these ideas. One of the drama students who was single during the research said: 'There was the issue of a virtuous man. What does he do? I have a girlfriend now and she lives in Blantyre and there were so many chances where I could have entered into relationships with other girls, but I decided that I want to stick with one girl'. One of the participants I interviewed offered a very interesting explanation of how the workshops had brought change. He explained:

Initially, I defined myself based on what my friends said. I felt I have to sleep with a lot of girls in order to be a man. I would go to my friends and say *ife ndi ma man, timadya plain* (I am a real man because I have unprotected sex). The eight months that have passed have been a time of reflection. I am single but I keep getting sexual offers from girls which I refuse. If I get a girl, I want to do it out of love and not just for the sake of sex ... I do not want to have meaningless sex.

Although the respondents said that the workshops had helped them, they also admitted that consistently practising their new ideas was not easy. One participant told me that he had difficulties practising consistent condom use, arguing that if his girlfriend did not protest then they ended up having unprotected sex. He justified his risky behaviour by saying: 'It would not be the first time for me not to use a condom'. Another participant reported that reducing the number of sexual partners was a challenge. He said that after attending the first three workshops

he decided to take his then girl for HIV testing; though he went there alone the first time as he was afraid of testing HIV positive. When I probed further he explained: 'Well, to be honest, one of the reasons is that I cheated on her'. Asked why he had cheated on his girlfriend, the respondent said: 'The girl was my previous girlfriend and, yes, I used a condom. I think I cheated because I am still emotionally attached to her'. Asked if doing this had challenged his new masculine identity the respondent said: 'It did. I felt that as a real man I should have refused, but I was weak'. What struck me most was that he did not appear to have a strategy for averting this problem in future. Perhaps this is one of the limitations of the study. Although it is difficult to ascertain if the changes registered by the respondents are real and will be sustained, I would like to believe that if they are genuine then this work is a step forward. At the same time, the challenges the participants claimed to be facing suggest that this work needs to continue over longer time periods for real change to occur. While my work was primarily research, it shows that this work did impact some participants; though regrettably I cannot know if it had a similar impact on any audience members. Generally, my work was really about identifying male practices and I did not have time in most situations to go into the second stage of really engaging with possible change, which I think needs to be further investigated.

In my view, the methodology offered audience members the opportunity to engage with each other and have a dialogic discussion. Audience participation at Chancellor was enabled by forum theatre and at Dzenza a post-performance discussion was used. In both cases boys and girls were empowered to talk openly about identity, sexual practices and HIV. In Malawi spaces where young men and women can engage each other as equals on issues about sexuality and HIV are non-existent. The performance at Dzenza stood out for me because of the notable differences between boys and girls responses during the debate. Ideas of love, intimacy and sex within marriage were recurrent themes that emerged from the female audience members. Contrastingly sexual activity featured more among the boys; though there were a few who proposed abstinence as an admirable manly attribute. In my view, socio-cultural practices and beliefs account for the differences in ideologies. In many patriarchal societies, as is the case in Malawi, young men are under pressure to enact masculinity based around sexual dominance (Baker and Ricardo 2005, Walker et al. 2004, Chitando and Chirongoma 2012, Tamale 2011). By contrast, young women are indoctrinated to believe that being a woman is about, 'proper domestic discipline and decorum, sexual probity and moral sanitation' (McClintock 1994: 47).

In Malawi men tend to control public spaces because of patriarchal norms and women are relegated to being passive observers. At Dzenza theatre allowed young women to challenge the young men's gender stereotypes and to offer alternative models for masculine behaviour. This was remarkable given the nature of Malawian society. Although it is difficult to ascertain if the performances resulted in any social change, my work shows real grounds for hope that there could be better understanding between men and women and real discussion of sexual issues if my practice could be more widely developed.

How Boys Become Men

Sexuality

For the young men at Chancellor, Mulunguzi and Dzenza sexual performance was viewed as an important marker of ideal masculinity. At Chancellor, participants spoke of how sexual competence was expected of men. The group expressed anxieties about being unable to sexually satisfy their girlfriends because failure to satisfy one's partner made them socially less manly. Similarly, the youth at Mulunguzi spoke of how sexual activity was a signifier of real manliness. They were anxious about losing peer respect if they did not have sex with their girlfriends, fearing that they would be seen as less manly. Baker and Ricardo (2005: 16-17) offer the following insight: 'the status that a sexually active young man might attain among his peers can sometimes be equally, if not more important, than the intimacy that comes from the sexual relationship itself. This pattern of sexual bravado as a means of peer acceptance often continues into manhood'. Understood in this way, it is obvious that the young men generally saw sexual activity as a means to enhance their narrow view of masculinity, rather than an expression of love and commitment. For example, one participant said: 'Nowadays, a relationship is justified by having sex unless you have future plans to marry each other'. While another participant said: 'A man forces his girlfriend to have sex to avoid being mocked by friends'. Similar scripts were reported by Izgubara and Okal (2011) in their recent study of Malawian men. They assert that respondents viewed sex as 'a means both for performing gender and for realising images and ideas of modernity and belonging celebrated by media and globalisation' (2011: 23). I would argue that male youths in Malawi are under social pressure to perform forms of masculinity that increase risk and oppress women.

The participants' ideas about masculine virility were characterised by sexist sex role stereotypes and sexual conquests. At Chancellor sexual stamina and a big penis size constituted the features of masculine power used to assert power over women; and other men. A fourth-year drama student said that having a big penis gave a man respect and offered him security that his girlfriend would not be pursued by other men. On the other hand, sexual activity was also used to retain girls in relationships. A participant at Mulunguzi said that after sex a girl would not leave or end the relationship as doing so would make her feel used. During the image theatre session real men were depicted in domineering sexual positions. In their article on masculinity and HIV risk Jewkes and Morrell (2010: 5) write: 'one example of a black African hegemonic masculinity is found in the Zulu concept of *isoka*, an idealised heterosexual, virile man, who is desired by women, and whose prodigious sexual successes are the envy of other men'. The participants' narratives show that a Malawian version of this narrative is also in operation. An analysis of the young men's narratives about gender sex roles and power dynamics in heterosexual relationships reveals distorted and narcissist views based around masculine sexual conquests.

Risky masculinities

Risky forms of masculinity that emerged were characterised by multiple sexual partners, non and inconsistent condom use and violence against women. The university students considered wealth, marriage and having children as desirable attributes of a post-university successful masculinity; yet felt having sex with many sexual partners enhanced one's masculinity. Such a contradiction is well explained by Walker et al. (2004: 27), who argue that when economic prospects are low for young men the trend is to find other ways of proving masculinity by having sex with multiple sexual partners and taking on other risky behaviours. Taking multiple sexual partners also fits into the idea of hegemonic masculinity. In precolonial Malawi men gained control over women with the payment of bride-wealth or bride service (see Phiri 1983, Phiri 2007, Power 1995, Chanock 1998). Through this system, a man could gain more wives if he was wealthy and could claim a culturally superior big man masculine identity (see Baker and Ricardo 2005). Understood in this way, young men in contemporary Malawi view taking on more sexual partners as a normative masculine performance of culturally superior gender identities. The risks these sexual practices pose for young men's, and their partners, health are

obvious. It is extremely worrisome that in contemporary Malawi young men are taking huge risks to perform limited and, potentially, deadly forms of masculinity.

The use of force, coercion and violence on unwilling sexual partners emerged as another form of risky masculinity. The participants asserted that the use of force and coercion in sexual relationships was normal as women did not give into sex easily. According to them, women expected a man to use force. The use of force in young people's sexual relationships has huge implications for HIV risk and I would argue that the experience for girls causes serious psychological harm. In these abnormal sexual encounters condoms were never used. While participants expressed fears of contracting HIV, their sexual behaviours were contradictory to this understanding. Writing on power dynamics in young people's relationships MacPhail and Campbell (2001: 1615) say that 'inequalities in power between male and female partners in heterosexual relationships holds sway over the ability of young women to either refuse sex or negotiate the use of condoms'. It is appalling that young men claimed that they feared to contract HIV, but were unwilling to empower their girlfriends to dictate or even negotiate the terms under which sex occurred. It is clear that the oppression of women by men is being perpetuated by traditional and sexist myths about female sexual behaviour, the social pressure young men are under to perform hegemonic gender identities and shallow notions of masculinity.

The findings here are not new. However, my research confirms how patriarchy, culture and gender inequalities in Malawi perpetuate the domination and control of women by men. Unless these dangerous constructions of masculinity are challenged and changed young men will continue to enact them.

Implication for HIV prevention

My research with young Malawian men shows that understanding the association of masculinity with risky sexual practices has important implications for HIV and AIDS in Malawi. I would argue that anti-HIV programming for men in Malawi is in need of urgent re-adjustment at policy level. There is a need to recognise the role that hegemonic forms of masculinity play in men's attempt to maintain social positions of power, which inevitably increase their HIV risk and leave women vulnerable (Walker et al. 2004: 24). Men need to be engaged as part of the solution as opposed to being viewed as the problem. I am not arguing that the Malawi National AIDS

Commission (NAC) does not recognise the gendered nature of AIDS in Malawi. My argument, however, is that if men do not take a leading role in challenging and changing dangerous masculinities little will change. I would argue that my research shows that men can be engaged to question hegemonic masculinities and to think about positive attributes of masculine identity. For example, during the theatre workshops the young men spoke about responsibility as a quality of man, which was an alternative, albeit limited, positive masculine gender identity. While this notion of responsibility can be used to reinforce and uphold men's domination positions in sexual matters, the idea, if re-appropriated, offers a potential resource in HIV prevention. The concept of responsible men can be mobilised to capacitate young men to see themselves as a solution to mitigating HIV risk by practicing safe sex practices, being faithful to a single sexual partner and protecting themselves and their partners from infection and domestic violence. The work at Chancellor about a 'virtuous man' was an attempt to construct positive attributes of masculinity devoid of high-risk sexual practices, force and violence. In general, a virtuous man was considered to be aware of his HIV status and his partner's; practice safe sex; be respectful of women, and as one who sought sexual consent and had one sex partner at a time. In many ways the concept of a virtuous man positions men as pro-active participators of HIV prevention.

According to Higgins et al. (2010: 7), 'heterosexual men are disadvantaged by a model that negates men's health risk and fails to address how masculinity can be harmful to their own — and women's health'. In line with this thinking, campaigns that promote the reduction of sexual partners and condom use in Malawi are woefully inadequate because they clash with, and fail to acknowledge, dominant ideas about manliness that encourage risky sexual behaviours (Whitehead 1997, Jewkes and Morrell 2010). At the same time encouraging young women to use or carry female condoms without changing the gender power dynamic becomes problematic. Rather what are needed are dialogical and truly participatory theatre-based initiatives for men aimed at deconstructing and transforming the practice of risky and oppressive masculinities at the individual and the community level. Local leaders, communities, teachers, churches and parents have to be involved; as they play a crucial role in shaping how boys become men, to promote caring and protective masculine identities. I also think boys and girls have to be enabled to discuss the problem: sexuality, gender construction and HIV risk.

The methods I used show an indication of how dialogical and truly participatory theatre-based methods can be useful for engaging young people on issues concerning sexuality and HIV.

Where does the research point going forward?

I should end by reflecting on where this research points going forward. My findings show that truly participatory and dialogical theatre-based techniques can be impactful in enabling young men to interrogate masculinities that encourage the transmission of HIV and that oppress women and to consider strategies for change. As a situated researcher the narratives that emerged were not particularly new to me, but confirmed what I have always suspected: young people lack spaces for engaging in meaningful discussion on what it really means to be a man. Most of the participants spoke of how Malawian tradition, youth culture, media, older men, girlfriends and peers were the primary sources for information on being a man. In my research, I discovered that the young men lack positive male role models. Perhaps an important question to ask is what happens after these ‘deadly’ masculinities have been challenged? And what do we replace them with? My research did not go very far in exploring this, but an obvious next step in taking this research forward would be to engage with boys in order to construct alternative masculinities that replace those that are harmful to men and leave women vulnerable to infection and gender-based violence.

What I learned throughout the study is that in order to challenge and change these hegemonic masculinities young men and women have to be engaged with to discuss sexuality, gender and HIV. Further research and preparation would need to be undertaken prior to rolling out a mixed gender programme. Moreover, lessons could be drawn from a related successful product in Tanzania called the TUSEME model (www.fawetz.or.tz). Projects such as the TUSEME model are useful examples of how boys and girls can be engaged to discuss sensitive issues in ways that are meaningful and empowering for young people, which a mixed gender iteration of my work could draw inspiration from. Of course, boys and girls would work separately in order to bring out gender-specific problems. Later on the two groups would work together to examine the problems and find long term solutions.

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