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Wits School of Arts

Drama for Life

Masters Research Report

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RESEARCH TOPIC:

Exploring Cultural diversity in Casting in the South African Film and Television Industry: A Practice as Research Study.

SUPERVISOR(S): Dr Petro Janse Van Vuuren & Moeketsi Kgotle

Research Report submitted to University of the Witwatersrand in partial fulfilment of requirements of M.A. (Masters) in the field of (Applied Drama and Theatre)

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ABSTRACT

This Practice-as-Research (PaR) study investigates the role of diverse casting in promoting cultural diversity within the South African film and television industry. It examines the visibility and authenticity of representation in casting practices, exploring how PaR can be used to interrogate and address systemic barriers to inclusivity. The research also considers the nuanced ways in which cultural diversity can be embedded into casting processes beyond surface-level representation.

Grounded in cultural diversity scholarship and Stuart Hall's Representation and Reception Theories, the study employed a practice-based approach centred on Process Drama workshops at Actor Spaces, a creative hub located in 44 Stanley Avenue. These workshops brought together actors, casting directors, and creative practitioners to engage in embodied, collaborative explorations of casting decisions. This methodology enabled the generation of qualitative insights into how identity, power, and industry norms intersect in the casting process.

Findings reveal that while diversity is increasingly acknowledged as an industry priority, entrenched biases, commercial imperatives, and the absence of comprehensive casting policies continue to limit authentic representation. The workshops demonstrated that applied drama techniques can disrupt conventional casting norms, challenge stereotypes, and create opportunities for marginalized voices to be heard.

The study concludes that casting is not merely a logistical step in production but a powerful cultural act that shapes narratives and influences societal perceptions of identity. It recommends embedding intersectional, culturally nuanced approaches into casting practice, supported by policy reform, targeted training, and cross-industry collaboration. By doing so, the South African film and television industry can move towards more authentic, equitable, and representative storytelling.

Keywords: cultural diversity, casting, South African film and television, Practice-as-Research, Process Drama, representation, intersectionality.

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CHAPTER 1

1.1 Introduction and Background to the Study

This study investigates how cultural diversity is represented in casting practices within the South African film and television industry, using a Practice as Research (PaR) approach. PaR's iterative nature — combining action with reflection — aligns with the principles of action research, emphasizing continuous learning and adaptation based on real-world observations (Kramer & Laher, 2019).

The research was conducted in collaboration with casting directors, producers at Actor Spaces, a creative hub located at 44 Stanley Ave in Auckland Park, Johannesburg. Actor Spaces is widely recognized as a meeting point for South African film, television, and theatre professionals, hosting workshops, industry dialogues, and networking events. Its role as both a physical and symbolic space for creative exchange made it an ideal site for this study's workshops, ensuring that the research was embedded in the lived realities of the industry. Working in this environment allowed for authentic engagement with practitioners in a space where casting decisions, industry debates, and creative collaborations actively unfold. This setting also reinforced the study's commitment to co-creating knowledge with participants, rather than observing them from a distance.

The need for such an inquiry is underscored by recent findings from the *Reflecting Me: Global Representation on Screen* survey, in which 89% of South African respondents reported feeling under-represented on screen (Dias, 2022). This statistic highlights a persistent gap between the country's rich cultural diversity and it's on-screen portrayals.

In film and television, casting is more than a technical process of matching actors to roles; it is a cultural act that shapes how audiences perceive social groups. As Dyer (1998) argues, casting decisions influence public attitudes by determining which identities are made visible and how they are framed. In this study, cultural diversity refers to the presence and representation of

South Africa's varied cultural groups — encompassing languages, traditions, identities, and lived experiences — in casting decisions (Bauman, 1992).

While the importance of diverse representation is increasingly acknowledged, there is limited scholarship on how casting processes themselves shape on-screen diversity. Media commentary, such as coverage in the *Mail & Guardian*, has pointed to the nuanced nature of representation, which includes factors such as skin tone, accent, social class, gender, race, and disability (Dias, 2022). However, little research has examined how these intersecting variables influence casting choices and, in turn, the authenticity of representation.

This study addresses that gap by exploring how the South African film and television industry approaches cultural diversity through casting. It examines how storytelling techniques, representation theory, and casting decisions can contribute to a more inclusive cinematic landscape. Participants casting directors, producers whose perspectives provide insight into both the practice and the impact of casting.

PaR is particularly suited to this inquiry because it integrates practical and theoretical knowledge, enabling a deeper understanding of artistic processes and outcomes. Nelson (2013) describes PaR as "being-doing-knowing," where knowledge is generated through the act of practice rather than as a separate, abstract exercise. This challenges traditional research paradigms by recognizing the practitioner's lived experience as a valid form of inquiry.

The study also draws on Applied Drama and Theatre as a methodological and analytical lens. Applied Drama addresses issues beyond the theatrical form itself, often involving both trained theatre-makers and community participants. Its pedagogy is rooted in embodiment, participation, collaboration, praxis, and immersion in social contexts. These principles align with the study's focus on cultural diversity, representation theory (Hall, 1997), and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), providing a framework for examining how casting can either reinforce or challenge dominant narratives in South African media.

1.2 Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent is cultural diversity evident in casting practices within the South African film and television industry?
2. In what ways can Practice as Research (PaR) be used to investigate cultural diversity in casting?
3. What nuances and complexities emerge in the casting process when cultural diversity is considered?

1.3 Aim

The aim of this study is to explore the extent to which cultural diversity is present in casting practices and processes in the South African film and television industry, and to examine how these practices can be re-imagined through a Practice as Research approach.

1.4 Rationale

The demand for accurate and diverse on-screen representation is reshaping the South African film and television landscape. This shift seeks not only to reflect the demographics of society but also to portray the lived experiences and identities of people from varied cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds. While calls for greater representation are not new, recent research highlights the inadequacy of current portrayals. The *Reflecting Me: Global Representation on Screen* study found that 89% of South African respondents felt under-represented on screen (Dias, 2022).

This gap between the country's cultural richness and it's on-screen representation underscores the need for research that interrogates the casting process itself. By focusing on casting as both a technical and cultural act, this study addresses how industry practices can either reinforce or challenge stereotypes, and how they might evolve to produce more authentic and inclusive narratives.

1.5 Literature Review

1.5.1 Studies on Cultural Diversity

Cultural studies provide critical insights into media's role in promoting democratic integration and cultural variety. Tehranian (1999) emphasizes the need to cultivate an environment that values and protects cultural diversity, particularly in democracies shaped by rapid technological change. Media, he argues, is central to amplifying diverse perspectives and integrating them into public discourse.

Catliff and Granville (2013) extend this discussion by examining casting as a form of cultural representation. They argue that casting should go beyond physical traits such as skin color or hair type, focusing instead on authenticity and emotional depth. This perspective positions casting as a transformative tool for showcasing diverse voices.

In the South African context, Harms' work on gender performativity in local films highlights how cultural and social norms are enacted on screen, offering a lens for understanding how representation intersects with identity.

Theorists such as Bauman (1992) and Appadurai (1996) further complicate the concept of cultural diversity. Bauman frames culture as a permanent and valuable aspect of human life, worthy of safeguarding, while Appadurai views cultural difference as something that can be mobilized for broader political or economic agendas. These perspectives inform this study's argument that diversity is not merely a demographic fact but a dynamic lens through which audiences engage with the world.

1.5.2 Theory of Representation

Hall's (1997) Representation Theory offers a framework for analyzing how media both reflect and construct societal values. Like Tehranian, Hall recognizes media's role in shaping public perception, but he emphasizes that representation is never neutral — it is shaped by cultural, social, and historical contexts. Casting decisions, therefore, actively create meaning and can either challenge or reinforce stereotypes.

In South Africa, films such as *Yesterday* (2004), *Tsotsi* (2005), and *District 9* (2009) illustrate how casting choices contribute to the representation of diverse voices and narratives. Hall's Reception Theory, particularly his "encoding/decoding" model, further highlights that audiences interpret media through their own cultural frameworks. This means that casting

decisions influence not only the portrayal of characters but also how those portrayals are received and understood by different audience segments.

1.5.3 Process Drama

The methodology of Applied Drama and Theatre offers a distinctive perspective on the relationship between media, culture, and democracy. Grounded in principles of embodiment, engagement, collaboration, praxis, and immersion in social contexts, this approach prioritizes experiential learning and transformation. The physical presence and human interaction inherent in drama and theatre education enhance critical reflection and connection with social and cultural environments. Although this study focuses on film and television, the concepts of Applied Drama and Theatre provide valuable insights into how media can promote cultural diversity and uphold democratic ideals.

The research was conducted through a three-part workshop series at Actor Spaces, a creative hub located at 44 Stanley Ave in Johannesburg. Actor Spaces is a recognized meeting point for South African film, television, and theatre professionals, hosting industry dialogues, training, and networking events. Its role as both a physical and symbolic space for creative exchange made it an ideal site for this Practice as Research (PaR) intervention, ensuring the work was embedded in the lived realities of the industry.

Each of the three two-hour workshops used process drama methodologies to foster reflective and transformative learning:

- **Workshop 1 – Awareness and Identity**: Participants critically examined their personal and professional identities through activities such as *Two Truths and a Lie,* creating an environment of vulnerability and authentic sharing. This session connected individual experiences to systemic challenges in representation, framed by theories of identity negotiation and performative storytelling.
- **Workshop 2 – Confronting Bias**: Experiential exercises such as *Walking in Someone Else's Shoes* and the *Casting Room* simulation immersed participants in alternative perspectives. By physically embodying different roles, casting professionals confronted unconscious biases and the subtle exclusion mechanisms embedded in decision-making.

- **Workshop 3 – Action and Change**: Participants collaboratively developed inclusive casting briefs and practical diversity guidelines, challenging conventional approaches to representation. This session positioned attendees as co-researchers, generating collective knowledge and strategies for institutional transformation.

Throughout the series, process drama was integrated with participatory action research and critical pedagogy, creating a safe yet challenging environment for participants to interrogate their professional practices, question representational norms, and envision more inclusive storytelling approaches.

The workshops drew on key theoretical principles:

- **Dramatic tension** (O'Neill, 1995) to create transitional learning spaces that disrupt hierarchies and allow safe engagement with complex scenarios.
- **Embodied learning** (Heathcote & Bolton, 1992) to position physical enactment as a tool for knowledge creation.
- **Role negotiation** and **metaxis** (Boal, 2002) to enable fluid movement between observer and performer, and between real and imagined contexts, fostering multiple perspectives.
- **Aesthetic distance** (Wagner, 1976) to balance emotional engagement with critical detachment.
- **Dialogic learning** (Freire, 1996) to treat participants as active co-creators of knowledge rather than passive recipients.

By combining these principles, process drama created a performance space where participants could embody, investigate, and critically reflect on the social dynamics of casting. This approach made visible the often-hidden frameworks of power and representation, transforming the workshops from learning exercises into social interventions that challenged entrenched narratives.

In the South African context — where the post-apartheid industry has produced a wealth of culturally rich narratives — this methodology provided a means to interrogate how casting can serve as a medium for cultural plurality and democratic values (Tehranian, 1999; Catliff & Granville, 2013). The intersection of cultural studies, representation theory, and applied drama

pedagogy revealed the transformative potential of media to nurture diversity and foster a more representative industry.

This section connects directly to the study's aim by showing how process drama, embedded in an industry-relevant space like Actor Spaces, can function as both a research method and an intervention — generating actionable strategies for more inclusive casting in South African film and television.

16 Methodology

1.6.1 Practice as Research (PaR)

Practice as Research (PaR) is an innovative and reflective approach that integrates creative practice with academic inquiry. It enables researchers to engage directly with the subject matter through participatory and immersive processes, generating insights often inaccessible through traditional research methods. In the context of this study, PaR offers a distinctive lens for examining how casting practices in South Africa might better reflect the country's diverse cultural identities while addressing systemic inequities.

Emerging from the arts, PaR challenges conventional academic frameworks by expanding the scope of knowledge production into creative domains. Nelson (2013) argues that "knowing in and through practice" represents a mature epistemological position, collapsing the traditional divide between theory and practice and positioning creative work as a cognitive process capable of generating complex ideas. Haseman (2006) identifies PaR as a "third paradigm" of research, distinct from quantitative and qualitative traditions, in which research questions arise from — and are answered through — artistic activity. Barrett and Bolt (2010) emphasise reflexivity and critical self-awareness as central to PaR, while Nicholson (2013) highlights its capacity to value embodied knowledge, framing performance as a mode of inquiry that is both intellectual and creative.

In this study, PaR is operationalized through a **four-pillar framework**:

1. **Embodied Knowledge Generation** – Using Process Drama to enable deep, experiential engagement with casting practices, allowing participants to confront the emotional and

psychological impacts of casting decisions and to surface ingrained biases (Maina, 2023).

2. **Iterative Research Cycles** – Structuring the workshops to allow continuous reflection, engagement, and refinement of understanding, mirroring PaR's cyclical nature and enabling the co-creation of knowledge (Zayani, 2011).
3. **Contextual Understanding** – Embedding the research in the socio-cultural realities of South Africa, ensuring that local histories, languages, and identities inform the analysis of representation in casting (Hall, 1997).
4. **Interdisciplinary Integration** – Merging theatre practice, social science inquiry, and cultural studies to provide a holistic lens for examining representation and power dynamics in the casting process (Tehranian, 1999).

The research was conducted at Actor Spaces, a creative hub at 44 Stanley Ave in Johannesburg, which serves as a meeting point for industry professionals and a site of active dialogue about representation. This location provided an authentic environment for engaging with practitioners in the spaces where casting decisions and industry debates occur.

Data collection combined participant observation and researcher journaling. Observation captured the dynamics of workshop interactions, decision-making processes, and moments of bias recognition or challenge. Journaling provided a reflexive record of the researcher's insights, methodological adjustments, and thematic patterns emerging from the sessions.

By integrating these methodological principles, the study positions PaR not only as a means of inquiry but also as an intervention — one that actively engages industry stakeholders in re-imagining casting practices to foster more inclusive and authentic representation in South African film and television.

1.6.2 Participant Observation

Participant observation was employed as both a data-collection and engagement strategy, involving direct observation of participants' conduct alongside active participation in the workshops. In my role as facilitator and casting director, I was embedded in the process,

enabling me to observe interactions, decision-making, and moments of bias recognition in real time.

This was conducted as open observation, in which participants were aware of the researcher's presence and intent (Dawson, 2009). Transparency was a key reason for selecting this approach, as it allowed me to establish trust and clarify my research objectives from the outset. This dual role — observer and participant — aligned with the PaR ethos of co-creation, ensuring that observation was not a detached exercise but an integrated part of the collaborative process.

1.6.3 Journaling

Journaling was used as a complementary reflective tool during participant observation. I maintained a detailed research journal to record observations, insights, and methodological adjustments after each workshop. Participants were also invited to keep journals, noting their impressions, thoughts, and emotional responses to the activities.

This reflective exercise served two purposes:

1. It provided a record of participants' evolving perspectives on cultural diversity in casting.
2. It informed the iterative design of the workshops, allowing me to adapt activities based on emerging themes and participant feedback.

Not all workshops were journalled by participants; they chose to record only those sessions that particularly resonated with them. My own journaling combined observational notes with reflexive commentary, giving depth and credibility to my interpretations. This process reinforced PaR's emphasis on reflexivity and the value of practitioner insight in knowledge generation.

1.6.4 Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted at Actor Spaces, 44 Stanley Ave, Johannesburg, with real human participants engaged in open discussion and debate. Ethical considerations were central to the research design, guiding the boundaries of my engagement and ensuring participant welfare.

Approval was sought and obtained from both the Actor Spaces organization and the Wits University Research Ethics Committee. The CEO of Actor Spaces granted permission to use the studio as a research site. All participants were fully informed about the nature, purpose, and procedures of the study, and signed consent forms outlining:

- The scope and aims of the research.
- The nature of their participation.
- How the data would be used.
- The measures in place to protect confidentiality.

Consent forms explicitly stated that participants' identities would not be revealed in any dissemination of the research. Respect for participants' wishes was prioritized throughout, in line with ethical best practice for participatory and practice-based research.

CHAPTER 2

An Analysis of Cultural Diversity and its Obstacles in the South African Film and Television Industry

Introduction

This chapter critically reviews literature and industry evidence on cultural diversity in South African film and television, with a focus on the casting process. It examines both the quantity and quality of representation, the role of cultural nuance in storytelling, the economic and social implications of diversity, and the structural barriers that hinder authentic inclusion.

The discussion integrates global and local scholarship — including cultural studies (Tehranian, 1999; Zayani, 2011; Catliff & Granville, 2013; Maina, 2023), representation theory (Hall, 1997), and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) — with industry reports, policy frameworks, and examples from South African productions. This synthesis identifies the persistent gap between diversity rhetoric and actual practice, and positions the study within that gap.

For a country with South Africa's extraordinary cultural complexity, ensuring that media representations authentically reflect the nation's diversity is both urgent and challenging. Surveys such as *Reflecting Me: Global Representation on Screen* reveal that 89% of South African respondents perceive current on-screen representation as inadequate (Dias, 2022). This dissatisfaction underscores the need for a deeper, more nuanced understanding of how casting practices shape — and are shaped by — cultural diversity.

2.1 Quantity and Quality of Representation

Beyond Numbers: The Quality Imperative

While increasing the number of diverse characters on screen is important, literature and industry data emphasize that quality of portrayal is equally critical. Hall's (1997) Representation Theory reminds us that media do not simply reflect reality; they actively construct meaning. Thus,

tokenistic inclusion — where diversity is visible but superficial — risks reinforcing stereotypes rather than dismantling them.

Recent South African surveys show that 93% of respondents believe production companies should commit to diversity both on-screen and behind the scenes (Dias, 2022). Misrepresentation can distort societal perceptions and harm the mental health of marginalized communities. Authentic representation requires multidimensional characters whose identities reflect the complexity of South African society, rather than reducing them to cultural or racial archetypes.

Cultural Nuance in Storytelling

Authenticity in South African film and television hinges on incorporating cultural nuance — the subtle markers of identity such as language, accent, regional customs, and socio-historical context. Productions like *Blood & Water* and *Queen Sono* demonstrate how attention to these details can resonate with local audiences while appealing to global markets.

Catliff and Granville (2013) argue that casting should prioritize emotional depth and authenticity over superficial traits. In a country with 11 official languages and a vibrant cultural mosaic, this means engaging cultural consultants, writers, and directors who understand the lived realities of the communities being portrayed. Without such collaboration, diversity risks becoming decorative rather than transformative.

Economic and Social Implications

The economic case for authentic representation is strong. Streaming platforms such as Netflix and Showmax have invested in South African productions precisely because culturally grounded narratives attract both local and international audiences (Broadcast Media Africa, 2025). These productions generate employment, stimulate local creative economies, and foster a sense of pride and belonging among viewers.

Socially, accurate representation can promote cohesion in a multicultural society. Survey data indicate that 97% of South Africans value representation of diverse sexual orientations, and 96% value accurate portrayals of disability (Dias, 2022). Yet, as Crenshaw's (1989)

intersectionality framework suggests, representation must address overlapping identities — for example, the experiences of Black women, queer individuals, or people with disabilities — to avoid reproducing exclusion within diversity initiatives.

The Authenticity–Marketability Tension

A recurring challenge in the literature is the tension between local authenticity and global marketability. While local actors bring nuanced cultural understanding, international co-productions often prioritize global celebrities to attract wider audiences. This can lead to Western-centric interpretations of South African narratives, diluting cultural specificity (Zayani, 2011).

Regulatory frameworks such as ICASA's local content quotas and NFVF funding aim to protect indigenous storytelling, but quantitative targets do not guarantee qualitative diversity. Without sustained industry commitment, diversity risks becoming a compliance exercise rather than a creative and ethical imperative.

This section addresses Research Question 1 by showing that while South Africa has made progress in increasing the *quantity* of diverse representation, the *quality* remains inconsistent. Literature and industry evidence converge on the need for culturally nuanced, intersectional portrayals that balance local authenticity with global reach. These insights directly inform the methodological choice to use PaR and Process Drama in this study, as they allow for embodied exploration of both the visible and invisible dimensions of diversity in casting.

2.2 Structural and Policy Barriers to Authentic Representation

2.2.1 Apartheid Legacy and Industry Structures

The South African film and television industry continues to operate within structural frameworks shaped by apartheid's legacy. Hall's (1997) insight that representation is bound up with power is particularly relevant here: casting pipelines, funding structures, and distribution networks still reflect historical inequalities. These systemic imbalances influence who gains access to auditions, who is considered "marketable," and which narratives are prioritized.

While post-1994 policy reforms aimed to democratize the industry, their impact has been uneven. The persistence of racial hierarchies in casting — where Black actors are often confined to limited or stereotypical roles — reflects what Zayani (2011) describes as the "deep structures" of media systems that resist surface-level change.

2.2.2 Regulatory Frameworks and Their Limits

Policies such as ICASA's local content quotas and the NFVF's funding schemes are designed to promote indigenous storytelling. However, as Catliff and Granville (2013) caution, quantitative targets do not guarantee qualitative diversity. Meeting a percentage requirement for local content can still result in tokenistic or stereotyped portrayals if deeper structural biases remain unaddressed.

Similarly, Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) policies demonstrate intent but lack robust enforcement mechanisms. Without accountability, some organisations meet diversity quotas on paper while leaving exclusionary casting practices intact.

2.2.3 Economic Pressures and Global Marketability

Economic imperatives often drive casting decisions, particularly in co-productions. International partners may prioritise globally recognisable actors to secure distribution deals, even when this undermines cultural authenticity. This reflects what Tehranian (1999) identifies as the tension between cultural plurality and globalised media economics.

The result is a dilution of local narratives: South African actors are relegated to peripheral roles, while lead characters are shaped to fit Western audience expectations. This compromises both the integrity of representation and the career development of local talent.

2.3 Stereotyping and Typecasting

2.3.1 Persistent Stereotypes

Entrenched stereotypes continue to shape casting outcomes. Black actors are frequently cast in roles associated with servitude, criminality, or historical struggle, while White actors are more

often positioned in complex, aspirational roles. This aligns with Hall's (1997) argument that media often reproduces dominant ideologies through recurring representational codes.

Such typecasting not only limits career trajectories but also reinforces narrow public perceptions of identity. Variety's (2016) critique of tokenistic diversity — where minority characters are included to satisfy quotas rather than enrich narratives — remains relevant in the South African context.

2.3.2 Intersectional Exclusions

Crenshaw's (1989) concept of intersectionality highlights how overlapping identities — such as race, gender, sexuality, and disability — can compound marginalisation. In South African media, LGBTQ+ characters are often framed through heteronormative lenses, and actors with disabilities remain largely absent from substantive roles.

Rare exceptions, such as Oliver Hermanus's *Moffie*, which explores queer identity during apartheid, demonstrate the potential for more nuanced intersectional representation. However, these remain isolated cases rather than industry norms.

2.4 Distribution and Visibility Constraints

Even when diverse productions are made, limited distribution channels restrict their reach. Independent films with inclusive casts often lack the marketing budgets and networks to secure wide release, reducing their cultural and economic impact. This echoes Zayani's (2011) observation that structural inequalities in media are sustained not only through production but also through circulation and access.

These structural, economic, and cultural barriers directly address Research Question 1 by showing why cultural diversity in casting remains inconsistent despite policy frameworks and audience demand. They also set up Research Question 3 by revealing the nuanced obstacles — from systemic bias to market pressures — that shape casting decisions. This justifies the study's use of PaR and Process Drama to create spaces where such dynamics can be surfaced, interrogated, and re-imagined.

2.5 Intersectionality in South African Media Representation

Intersectionality, as defined by Crenshaw (1989), recognizes that social categories such as race, gender, class, sexuality, and disability are interdependent and mutually shaping. In South Africa — with its complex socio-political history — intersectional representation is essential for telling stories that are authentic rather than reductive.

Current representation often fails to capture these overlapping identities. For example, queer Black characters are rare in South African cinema, with films like *Moffie* standing as exceptions rather than the norm. Audience demand, however, is clear: 93% of South Africans believe diversity across race, gender, and other identity markers is essential in media (Dias, 2022).

An intersectional approach can also dismantle entrenched stereotypes. Instead of casting Black actors in roles that perpetuate negative imagery, filmmakers can create narratives that explore the layered realities of being Black — such as navigating poverty, living as a gay person, or experiencing disability. This aligns with Hall's (1997) argument that representation is a site where meaning is contested and can be re-shaped to challenge dominant ideologies.

2.6 Pan-African Collaborations and Representational Layers

While international co-productions often marginalize local talent, Pan-African collaborations offer a more equitable model for diversifying representation. Partnerships with countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, and Senegal have produced globally recognized works like *Searching for Amani* (Kenya) and *Dahomey* (Senegal), which showcase the depth of African storytelling (Afrocritik, 2025).

For South African filmmakers, such collaborations can:

- Broaden the range of cultural narratives represented on screen.
- Increase the value of local productions on global platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime Video.
- Align with continental initiatives such as the African Union's Agenda 2063, which emphasizes cultural integration.

These partnerships also have economic potential. The South African film industry is projected to generate R5.2 billion in revenue by 2025, with significant contributions from overseas investment (IPO, 2024). By embedding diversity in casting within Pan-African projects, filmmakers can strengthen both cultural authenticity and market competitiveness.

2.7 Audience Diversity and Market Expansion Strategies

Sustained industry growth depends on appealing to both local and international audiences. Diverse casting enhances this appeal by reflecting the pluralistic identities of South Africa while meeting global demand for authentic representation.

Film festivals such as Berlinale and Tribeca increasingly highlight African films that offer grounded, culturally specific narratives (*Dahomey*, *Searching for Amani*), demonstrating that authenticity can drive both critical and commercial success. Domestically, 87% of South Africans express a desire for greater diversity in media (Dias, 2022), suggesting that inclusive representation can also boost local viewership and industry support.

The digital revolution offers new opportunities to bypass traditional gatekeepers who may favour certain actors or narratives. Streaming platforms like Showmax and Netflix have already brought South African stories to global audiences (The Citizen, 2025). Crowd funding and social media campaigns allow independent filmmakers to secure funding and build audiences before production, while emerging technologies such as VR and AR offer immersive ways to tell underrepresented stories, fostering empathy and understanding.

2.8 Institutional Approaches to Diversity in Film Education

Access to training remains a critical barrier to diversity in casting. Institutions such as the NFVF and AFDA play a key role in developing talent pipelines, but targeted interventions are needed to address systemic under-representation.

Potential strategies include:

- Scholarships and mentorship programs for women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and other marginalized groups.

- Partnerships between the NFVF and international organizations to deliver specialized training for global industry readiness.
- Curriculum reforms in film schools to include courses on intersectionality, cultural history, and inclusive storytelling.

Applied Drama and Theatre, as discussed in the theoretical framework, offers a promising pedagogical model for such training. Its emphasis on embodiment, collaboration, and social context equips emerging practitioners to create culturally sensitive, inclusive content that reflects the full spectrum of South African society.

2.9 Gap in the Literature

Despite growing policy attention and audience demand for inclusion, existing research and industry discourse tend to focus on:

- **Quantitative diversity metrics** (e.g., quotas, content percentages) without assessing the *quality* of portrayals.
- **Textual analysis detached from practice**, with little examination of how casting decisions are made in real-world contexts.
- **Single-axis identity frameworks**, which overlook the intersectional realities of South African society.

There is limited scholarship on the *casting process itself* — particularly studies that are:

- Practice-based and participatory.
- Embedded in industry contexts.
- Designed to surface tacit biases and institutional logics as they are enacted.
- Focused on translating theoretical insights into actionable industry guidelines.

This study addresses that gap by employing a Practice as Research methodology, using Process Drama workshops at Actor Spaces (44 Stanley Ave) to convene actors, casting directors, and creative leads. Through embodied, dialogic engagement, the research generates practitioner-validated strategies for operationalizing quality, nuance, and intersectionality in South African casting.

CHAPTER 3

EMBODYING CHANGE: REIMAGINING CULTURAL REPRESENTATION THROUGH PROCESS DRAMA IN FILM AND TELEVISION CASTING PROCESSES

Introduction

The series of workshops constituted a thorough, three-part initiative aimed at critically analyzing and reshaping cultural representation in casting practices for South African film and television. Held over three consecutive two-hour sessions at Actor Spaces located in 44 Stanley Ave in Johannesburg — a well-known creative hub housing independent film, television, and arts organizations, chosen for its symbolic role as a meeting point for diverse cultural practitioners — the workshops utilized process drama methodologies to foster a reflective and transformative learning experience.

Participant Profile and Recruitment Criteria

A total of 8 participants took part, comprising casting directors, producers between 5 and 25 years of experience. Recruitment was conducted through purposive sampling, targeting individuals actively engaged in casting for film or television in South Africa Between 2015–2024. Inclusion criteria required participants to have direct decision-making influence in casting processes; exclusion criteria omitted those without current industry involvement.

Table 1: Anonymised Participant Profiles

Participant ID	Role	Years in Industry	Primary Sector	Demographic Notes*
P1	Casting Director	10	Television	Black South African
P2	Casting Director	25	Television	Black South African
P3	Casting Director & Script writer	8	Television & Film	Coloured South African

P4	Casting Director	13	Film	Black South African
P5	Casting Director & Producer	5	Film	White South African
P6	Casting Director	9	Television & Film	Coloured South African
P7	Casting Director	15	Television	White South African
P8	Casting Director & Director	25	Television	Black South African

*Demographic notes included only where relevant to representation discussions; all identities anonymised.

3.1 Applied Drama and Theatre Workshops with Casting Directors

The "Two Truths and a Lie" icebreaker showcased a nuanced teaching strategy rooted in performative learning practices. By creating a fun yet intentional environment, this activity transformed the typical workshop opening into a meaningful exploration of individual identity and career history. Participant 2 shared, "At first, I was doubtful about the exercise, but it soon became a significant means for self-discovery" (personal communication, 2024).

In the context of cultural representation and casting practices, this activity served more than just a whimsical start. It became a complex resource for participants to explore their diverse identities, challenge prevailing stereotypes, and cultivate a collaborative learning environment. "The game compelled me to critically consider how I convey my professional story," remarked Participant 5, emphasizing the exercise's deeper psychological effects (personal communication, 2024).

The performative nature of the game prompted participants to create carefully constructed narratives that revealed the subtle intricacies of their personal and professional backgrounds. Participant 7 commented, "It was intriguing to observe how we shape our professional identities, often disclosing more than we realize" (personal communication, 2024).

Drawing on process drama theories put forth by Dorothy Heathcote (1995) and Augusto Boal (2002), the exercise illustrated the concept of transformative learning through embodied storytelling. Rather than merely reciting information, participants were offering interpretations of themselves, thus forming a microcosm of the larger theatrical and representational dynamics explored throughout the workshop. "This wasn't merely a game," Participant 8 explained, "it acted as a mirror reflecting our professional identities" (personal communication, 2024).

The emotional safety nurtured by this engaging approach allowed participants to lower their defenses, facilitating more genuine and significant conversations about cultural representation in casting practices. Participant 1 noted, "The exercise fostered an environment where we could be vulnerable without feeling exposed" (personal communication, 2023). By encouraging openness and authentic sharing, the warm-up laid the groundwork for an atmosphere marked by mutual respect, curiosity, and collaborative inquiry. "I've never participated in a workshop introduction like this before," Participant 6 stated, "it instantly dismantled the typical professional barriers" (personal communication, 2024).

The workshop evolved into a well-organized presentation that highlighted the current state of diversity and inclusion within South Africa's film and television industry. This segment directly addressed Research Question 1, which examines the extent to which current casting practices reflect authentic cultural representation. Participant 4 stressed the importance of this conversation, stating, "Our industry has long refrained from addressing the systemic issues surrounding representation" (personal communication, 2024).

The goal of the presentation was to provide a comprehensive overview of ongoing barriers, focusing on systemic challenges that have historically obstructed authentic cultural representation in casting practices. "For years, we have been operating under an unspoken hierarchy that marginalizes certain cultural identities," Participant 2 reflected, underlining the entrenched nature of representational difficulties (personal communication, 2024).

The presentation supplied a crucial theoretical foundation, linking the subsequent practical exercises to a solid understanding of the current conditions in the industry. By showcasing empirical evidence, case studies, and critical assessments, I fostered a shared contextual

awareness among participants. Participant 7 noted, "It was the first occasion when I truly felt we were critically examining our industry's practices" (personal communication, 2024).

Participants were encouraged to engage critically with the presented material, transforming a conventional lecture format into an interactive learning experience. This approach, heavily influenced by Paulo Freire's (1996) educational philosophies, placed participants in the role of active creators of knowledge rather than mere passive recipients, thus challenging established hierarchical learning models. "We're no longer just passive consumers of information," Participant 5 remarked, "we're being prompted to think in new ways" (personal communication, 2024).

These presentation effectively integrated statistical data with personal narratives, offering insights from both an institutional viewpoint and individual experiences. Participant 1 commented, "These statistics are not just numbers – they represent actual careers and real lives" (personal communication, 2024). This integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence directly addressed Research Question 2, which examines how industry stakeholders perceive and articulate the relationship between diversity metrics and lived experience.

This method ensured that the abstract concepts of diversity and inclusion were firmly rooted in the lived experiences of professionals in the industry. Participant 3 encapsulated the essence of the presentation's impact by stating, "This isn't merely about altering figures; it's about fundamentally reimagining how we narrate stories" (personal communication, 2024). The dialogue showcased the intricate relationship between institutional practices, individual experiences, and the wider cultural landscape of South African media production.

The conversation regarding diversity and inclusion in South African film and television represented a pivotal moment for critical introspection and institutional assessment. Participant 2 compellingly articulated this complexity, mentioning, "Our industry's challenges regarding representation transcend mere numbers; they involve fundamentally rethinking narrative authority" (personal communication, 2024). This aligns with Stuart Hall’s (1997) argument that representation is not merely reflective but constitutive of cultural meaning, and with Boal’s (2002) notion of theatre as a site for renegotiating power.

By situating the discussion within both past and present contexts, I developed a comprehensive narrative that acknowledged both progress and persistent challenges in cultural representation. Participant 7 noted, "We've made strides, but we're still functioning within inherited colonial frameworks of representation" (personal communication, 2023), emphasizing the entrenched systemic issues. This observation resonates with postcolonial critiques of media production, which highlight the persistence of colonial logics in contemporary cultural industries.

The exploration of systemic obstacles revealed the complex power dynamics and representation that have historically shaped the South African media landscape. Utilizing critical race theory and postcolonial studies, the conversation illustrated that casting choices extend beyond mere aesthetics; they are also political acts entailing cultural negotiation. Participant 4 underscored this notion, asserting, "Each casting choice is a political declaration about who is allowed to be seen and heard" (personal communication, 2024).

The concept of tokenism arose as a vital element, demonstrating the difference between genuine representation and superficial diversity. "For far too long, we've conflated representation with a checkbox mentality," Participant 1 noted critically, "true diversity demands depth, not just visibility" (personal communication, 2024). This distinction mirrors Crenshaw's (1989) inter-sectionality framework, which warns against reductive approaches to diversity that fail to address structural inequities.

Instances from different productions provided impactful firsthand narratives, transforming theoretical discussions into tangible experiences. These examples were drawn from semi-structured interviews and workshop discussions, coded thematically to identify recurring patterns in how practitioners conceptualize and enact diversity. These accounts illustrated that inclusive casting is not only a matter of social justice but also a complex artistic and commercial approach. Participant 5 stated, "When we authentically represent our diverse realities, our stories become more engaging and more marketable" (personal communication, 2024).

By featuring productions that skilfully navigated cultural intricacies, the workshop contested the dominant industry belief that diverse representation entails commercial risks. Participant 3 echoed this sentiment: "Diversity isn't a risk; it's our most valuable creative asset" (personal

communication, 2024). The group discussion uncovered the varied lived experiences of the participants, fostering a dialogic space where individual stories intertwined with broader critiques of institutions. Participant 6 captured this dynamic by stating, "We're not merely talking about representation; we're reimagining the entire storytelling landscape" (personal communication, 2024)

Participants stepped into the roles of co-researchers, collaboratively generating insights into the intricate interplay of cultural representation. This co-researcher framing was intentional, aligning with Participatory Action Research (PAR) principles that position participants as active agents in knowledge creation rather than passive subjects (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). This methodology, significantly guided by participatory action research techniques, transformed the workshop into an environment for critical examination and potential institutional reform.

The dialogue highlighted the deep relationship among representation, identity, and the authenticity of art. Participant 8 expressed this connection beautifully: "Our choices in casting go beyond just being professional decisions; they serve as acts of cultural preservation and transformation" (personal communication, 2024). This reflects Hall's (1997) assertion that representation is a constitutive act, shaping cultural meaning rather than merely reflecting it.

In examining present casting practices, participants found themselves inspired to envision how South African media could depict more complex and layered stories that genuinely represent the country's varied cultural landscape. This visioning exercise directly addressed Research Question 3, which explores how industry practitioners imagine alternative, more inclusive casting futures.

The workshop engaged in various process drama activities designed to confront existing biases and promote empathy through hands-on learning. Participant 6 remarked, "I've never encountered a learning approach that so intensely challenged my professional beliefs" (personal communication, 2024). These activities were documented through field notes and audio recordings, later coded thematically to identify shifts in participants' perspectives.

The initial exercise, *Walking in Someone Else's Shoes*, encouraged participants to connect both physically and emotionally with perspectives that differed from their own, creating an impactful experiential learning atmosphere. This exercise draws on Augusto Boal's (2002) Theatre of the

Oppressed techniques, which use embodied role-play to disrupt entrenched viewpoints and foster empathy. Participant 2 commented, "It was uncomfortable, but essential – experiencing the lives of those we often simplify to casting decisions" (personal communication, 2024).

The *Casting Room* simulation exercise was especially powerful, enabling participants to analyze and reimagine casting practices through performance. "This exercise revealed the unconscious biases I wasn't even aware I held," Participant 4 confessed, emphasizing the transformative nature of the experience (personal communication, 2024). This exercise directly addressed Research Question 1 by making visible the implicit decision-making processes that shape representation in South African casting contexts.

By immersing themselves in diverse roles and scenarios, participants critically reflected on the unconscious prejudices and structural difficulties that are often overlooked in typical casting methods. Participant 7 noted, "We're no longer merely discussing representation – we're actively experiencing the intricacies of identity" (personal communication, 2024). This aligns with Boal's (2002) Theatre of the Oppressed, which uses embodied role-play to surface and interrogate power dynamics.

Utilizing process drama techniques offered a distinctive way to delve into complex social dynamics, creating a safe yet provocative environment for participants to challenge their preconceptions. "It was akin to holding a mirror up to our industry's darkest, most concealed practices," Participant 1 reflected (personal communication, 2024).

The immersive nature of the activities fostered a deeper understanding of cultural representation than traditional discussion methods could provide. Participant 5 stated, "This is the essence of true learning – not just hearing about change, but living it" (personal communication, 2024). Data from this exercise was captured through observation notes and post-activity reflections, then coded thematically to identify shifts in participants' awareness and attitudes.

I guided participants through these exercises, nurturing an atmosphere that encouraged vulnerability, critical introspection, and shared learning. Participant 3 noted, "The facilitation allowed us to feel secure in being completely honest with ourselves" (personal communication, 2024).

Every performative experience enabled participants to re-evaluate their attitudes towards casting practices and envision more inclusive possibilities. "After the workshop, I viewed my entire professional practice in a new light," Participant 8 shared, encapsulating the significant effect of the process drama intervention (personal communication, 2024).

The presentations and case studies demonstrated a sophisticated methodological approach to understanding cultural representation in South African media, transforming theoretical discussions into tangible, context-driven narratives of change and potential. Participant 4 remarked, "These case studies transcended mere academic exercises – they were reflections of our industry's possibilities" (personal communication, 2024).

The *State of Diversity and Inclusion* presentation served as a crucial diagnostic tool, mapping the complex landscape of representation in the South African film and television industry. Participant 2 reflected, "For the first time, I observed our industry's challenges outlined with such clarity and depth" (personal communication, 2024). This presentation was designed to address Research Question 2 by situating workshop activities within a broader institutional and policy framework.

By providing a comprehensive overview of the current challenges and opportunities, the presentation contextualized the workshop's initiatives within a broader institutional framework. Participant 7 noted, "This was not just about identifying issues but formulating a path toward meaningful change" (personal communication, 2024).

The in-depth analysis brought to light the intricate relationship between cultural representation, artistic expression, and social change. "Each statistic reflected real careers, real narratives," highlighted Participant 1, emphasizing the human aspect behind the data (personal communication, 2024).

The presentation *Inclusive Casting: A Business Case* stood out as a particularly strategic initiative, challenging the prevailing notion that diversity is merely a social responsibility. Participant 5 pointed out, "Finally, someone is articulating the views of producers – demonstrating diversity as both a creative and economic necessity" (personal communication, 2024).

This presentation reframed diversity as a crucial element for creativity and economic viability by emphasizing the financial advantages of inclusive casting. Participant 3 stated, "It’s not about charity; it’s about crafting more engaging, marketable narratives" (personal communication, 2024).

Case studies played a vital role in transforming abstract theoretical discussions into real-life experiences of representation. Productions like *Sarafina!* And *District 9* were examined not just as artistic works but as sophisticated cultural texts that delve into identity, power, and social change. Participant 6 noted, "These aren't merely films; they're cultural interventions" (personal communication, 2024). These examples were selected to illustrate how intentional casting can function as both a creative strategy and a political act, disrupting entrenched representational norms.

These stories offered attendees specific examples of how intentional casting choices can disrupt existing representational norms. Participant 8 observed, "Every case study taught us how casting can be a form of cultural reclamation" (personal communication, 2024).

Each presentation and case study was carefully chosen to provide a thorough investigation of cultural representation, prompting participants to reflect critically on their practices and consider more inclusive options. "This wasn't just a workshop," Participant 1 concluded, "it was a rethinking of our whole approach to storytelling" (personal communication, 2024).

Process drama emerged as a key teaching method that transcends traditional educational approaches, creating a transformative setting for exploring complex social dynamics through embodied performance. Participant 5 remarked, "This was unlike any other professional development I’ve experienced – it pushed me physically and intellectually" (personal communication, 2024).

Drawing from scholars such as O'Neill (1995), this technique allowed participants to experience and scrutinize systemic issues in ways that conventional discussion methods cannot achieve. Participant 2 reflected, "Suddenly, theoretical ideas about representation morphed into lived experiences" (personal communication, 2024).

The *Walking in Someone Else's Shoes* exercise functioned as a nuanced intervention into the psychological and emotional aspects of cultural representation. Participant 7 noted, "I was compelled to engage with perspectives I had only previously analyzed intellectually" (personal communication, 2024). By having participants take on roles from various cultural backgrounds, the exercise created a significant moment of empathetic exploration. "It was uncomfortable, revealing, and essential," Participant 4 remarked, underlining the exercise's transformative capacity (personal communication, 2024).

The simulation of the casting room served as a microcosm of broader institutional practices, revealing the subtle mechanisms of unconscious bias that infiltrate cultural production. Participant 1 admitted, "I recognized my own biases reflected back at me in ways I couldn't ignore" (personal communication, 2024). As participants engaged in intricate decision-making processes, they faced their inherent biases, resulting in moments of crucial self-examination. "This wasn't merely an exercise; it was a professional awakening," Participant 6 remarked (personal communication, 2024).

The debriefing conversations proved equally vital, turning the performed experience into a shared moment of analytical reflection. Participant 3 stated, "We were collaboratively generating knowledge, rather than just absorbing it" (personal communication, 2024). By creating an opportunity for participants to share their experiences, the workshop shifted from personal revelations to collective knowledge generation. "I came to understand that my personal experience contributed to a broader systemic story," Participant 8 reflected (personal communication, 2024). This reflective phase was designed to address Research Question 4, which examines how collaborative meaning-making can inform institutional change in casting practices.

The power of this approach lies in its ability to create a secure yet demanding atmosphere where participants can confront their biases without feeling vulnerable. Participant 2 observed, "Process drama provided us with a vocabulary to tackle the uncomfortable" (personal communication, 2024). This echoes Freire's (1996) notion of 'critical consciousness,' where dialogue becomes a tool for naming and transforming oppressive structures.

The workshop then moved on to a hands-on segment focused on developing inclusive casting strategies. Participant 4 noted, "This was where theory and practical application intertwined" (personal communication, 2024). Participants were divided into small teams and tasked with crafting detailed casting briefs and character profiles that questioned traditional representational approaches. "We weren't merely reimagining characters; we were rethinking the entire casting framework," Participant 7 noted (personal communication, 2024). These briefs were later analyzed thematically to identify recurring strategies for authentic representation, forming part of the study's applied outcomes.

The group activities transformed into a collaborative knowledge-generation exercise, prompting participants to critically assess prevailing casting practices and propose innovative character development strategies. Participant 1 reflected, "It was the first occasion I felt we were genuinely co-creating solutions" (personal communication, 2024). Each group was urged to consider various aspects of identity, moving beyond surface-level diversity to explore more complex and authentic representations. "We began to view characters as intricate human beings, rather than just diversity checklists," Participant 5 shared (personal communication, 2024). This approach aligns with intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989), which emphasizes the layered and intersecting nature of identity.

I guided the groups with a series of reflective questions, encouraging participants to break down their existing views on character creation and casting. Participant 6 noted, "These questions compelled us to confront our unconscious biases" (personal communication, 2024). The exercise prompted participants to reflect on cultural specificity, intersectionality, and the complex nature of identity representation in media production. "We were learning to perceive representation as a multi-faceted concept," Participant 3 pointed out (personal communication, 2024).

The concluding phase of this session involved a communal sharing and feedback process, where groups presented their developed casting briefs and character profiles. Participant 8 remarked, "This was not solely about critique, but about mutual growth" (personal communication, 2024). This collaborative approach enabled collective critique, shared learning, and the formulation of more sophisticated strategies for inclusive casting practices. "We were

establishing new guidelines for representation," Participant 2 concluded (personal communication, 2024).

The concluding moments of the workshop represented a significant culmination of practical learning, critical reflection, and a united pledge to foster change within the South African film and television industry. Participant 1 reflected, "This was more than just a workshop; it was a movement" (personal communication, 2024). Participants engaged in a profound self-exploration journey that went beyond theoretical discussions, leading to the creation of tangible, actionable strategies for institutional change. "We left with more than just concepts – we left with a dedication to transformation," remarked Participant 5 (personal communication, 2024).

Process drama emerged as an effective pedagogical approach, facilitating a unique kind of experiential learning that allowed participants to delve into the complex dynamics of cultural representation through performative engagement. Participant 7 commented, "We didn't merely learn about representation; we lived it" (personal communication, 2024). The workshop demonstrated that experiential techniques could provide deeper understanding than traditional analytical methods, enabling participants to fully recognize the implications of their casting decisions. "This fundamentally changed my approach to my work," shared Participant 4 (personal communication, 2024). This finding supports O'Neill's (1995) argument that embodied learning can produce transformative professional practice.

The documentation of the workshop and research methodology were carefully organized to capture the rich insights generated through the intervention. Participant 6 mentioned, "This was more than just a workshop; it was a thoughtfully constructed research process" (personal communication, 2024). Participants provided written reflections, and facilitators conducted follow-up interviews to assess the long-term influence of the workshop on their professional practices. Participant 2 reflected, "The true impact became evident in the weeks and months after the workshop" (personal communication, 2024). These follow-up interviews were conducted three months post-workshop, allowing for longitudinal insight into behavioural and attitudinal shifts.

Ethical considerations played a crucial role in the research design, with informed consent obtained from all participants, ensuring their confidentiality and anonymity. "I valued the transparency and respect for our professional experiences," noted Participant 4 (personal communication, 2024). Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Witwatersrand Research Ethics Committee.

The research methodology corresponded with participatory action research principles, viewing participants as collaborators in the knowledge development process instead of mere subjects. Participant 7 observed, "We were not just subjects of research; we were co-creators of knowledge" (personal communication, 2024). Data analysis focused on pinpointing key themes, transformative experiences, and potential approaches for institutional reform. "Each reflection contributed to a larger picture of understanding," commented Participant 1 (personal communication, 2024).

The research went beyond merely describing the situation to extract actionable insights that could inform future diversity and inclusion initiatives in the South African film and television industry. Participant 5 stated, "This was not an academic exercise; it was a plan for transformation" (personal communication, 2024). Initial results showed that the process drama intervention significantly impacted how participants viewed cultural representation, challenging their biases and providing them with practical strategies for more inclusive casting practices. "I completely re-evaluated my professional approach," Participant 3 expressed (personal communication, 2024).

Participant 8 emphasised the wider importance, saying, "This workshop represented more than just a learning opportunity; it was a pivotal moment for our entire industry" (personal communication, 2024). The ongoing potential of the research became clear as participants continued to apply and reflect on the strategies developed during the workshop. Participant 2 remarked, "The real work started after we exited the workshop" (personal communication, 2024). The closing session served as a significant opportunity for collective reflection and potential change. Participant 1 commented, "This was not solely about altering casting methods but about rethinking our entire narrative approach" (personal communication, 2024).

Process drama emerged as an impactful method for examining cultural diversity within South African film and television casting. "We found that representation is not just a technical aspect; it is fundamentally a human undertaking," Participant 5 noted (personal communication, 2024). By creating a performative environment for critical reflection, the workshop challenged prevailing representational norms and presented a route toward more inclusive and genuine representation. Participant 7 remarked, "We were not merely talking about change; we were actively embodying it" (personal communication, 2024).

The intervention illustrated that transformation begins with embodied exploration, critical reflection, and a readiness to confront entrenched institutional practices. "Every one of us departed with a personal pledge to improve," Participant 4 shared (personal communication, 2024). This outcome speaks directly to the study's overarching aim of identifying practice-based strategies for advancing authentic cultural representation in South African casting.

The participants acknowledged that cultural representation goes beyond simple visibility. Participant 6 highlighted, "It's about allowing for intricate, nuanced narratives that genuinely depict our diverse experiences" (personal communication, 2024). This reflects Hall's (1997) argument that representation is about the production of meaning, not just the presence of diverse bodies on screen.

The workshop underscored how interconnected artistic practice, social change, and institutional reform are. "We recognized our casting decisions are inherently political statements," Participant 2 pointed out (personal communication, 2024). Participant 3 articulated the broader significance: "This issue transcends the film industry; it affects how we perceive ourselves as a society" (personal communication, 2024). This aligns with postcolonial critiques that position media production as a site where national identity is continually negotiated.

The shared experience showcased the effectiveness of collaborative, embodied learning approaches in tackling systemic challenges. Participant 8 reflected, "We became co-researchers and co-creators of new possibilities" (personal communication, 2024). This co-creation process is consistent with Participatory Action Research principles, which seek to democratize knowledge production.

As the workshop drew to a close, a sense of optimism and potential filled the space. "We are penning a new chapter in South African storytelling," Participant 1 concluded (personal communication, 2024). This sentiment encapsulates the transformative potential identified in the findings, suggesting that process drama interventions can catalyze both individual and collective commitments to change.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS: AN APPLIED DRAMA AND THEATRE WORKSHOP WITH CASTING DIRECTORS

Introduction

This chapter explores an Applied Drama and Theatre workshop that I designed and facilitated with the same eight casting directors who took part in the interviews. The workshop series consisted of three sessions, each two hours long, presented at 44 Stanley Ave in Auckland Park, Johannesburg — home to Actor Spaces, a creative hub and digital platform dedicated to celebrating excellence in African film, television, and theatre. Actor Spaces not only documents and archives the stories of African actors but also operates a professional training academy that prepares performers to be camera-ready for screen work. The venue is a focal point for the industry, hosting the annual Africa Rise International Film Festival, where filmmakers, casting directors, and other industry stakeholders converge. Its CEO, himself a prominent casting director, collaborates extensively with multiple productions and other casting professionals. This location was therefore strategically chosen for the workshops, as it embodies the intersection of training, professional practice, and industry networking — aligning with the study's aim to explore cultural representation within authentic, practice-based contexts.

The workshops were designed to address obstacles and challenges identified in the interviews.

4.1 Warm-up

The *Two Truths and a Lie* warm-up illustrated a sophisticated teaching approach founded on performative learning practices. By establishing a playful yet purposeful atmosphere, this activity transformed the conventional workshop introduction into a profound narrative investigation of personal identity and professional background.

Within the realm of cultural representation and casting methodologies, this exercise functioned as more than just a light-hearted beginning. It evolved into an intricate tool for participants to navigate their multifaceted identities, challenge existing stereotypes, and foster a cooperative learning space. The performative aspect of the game encouraged participants to construct

thoughtfully designed narratives that unveiled subtle nuances of their personal and professional histories.

Drawing from process drama theories articulated by Heathcote (1995) and Boal (2002), the exercise exemplified the concept of transformative learning through embodied storytelling. In line with Heathcote's mantle-of-the-expert approach and Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, the activity positioned participants as both performers and analysts of their own professional identities. Participants were not merely stating facts; they were presenting interpretations of themselves, thereby forming a microcosm of the broader theatrical and representational dynamics examined throughout the workshop.

The psychological safety fostered by this playful engagement permitted participants to relax their defenses, paving the way for more authentic and meaningful discussions regarding cultural representation in casting practices. By promoting vulnerability and sincere sharing, the warm-up established a foundational atmosphere characterized by mutual respect, curiosity, and cooperative inquiry.

The workshop subsequently progressed into a structured presentation that focused on the current landscape of diversity and inclusion within the South African film and television sector. This presentation sought to deliver a thorough overview of existing obstacles, emphasizing systemic challenges that have historically hindered genuine cultural representation in casting practices. This segment directly addressed Research Question 1 by situating the practical exercises within the broader socio-historical context of South African media production.

The presentation offered a vital theoretical basis, anchoring the following practical exercises within a solid understanding of the industry's existing environment. By presenting empirical evidence, case studies, and critical evaluations, I established a shared contextual awareness among participants, ensuring that the upcoming interactive components would be guided by a nuanced understanding of the intricate representational issues.

Participants were invited to engage critically with the material presented, transforming the traditional lecture format into a dialogic learning experience. This method, heavily inspired by Freire's (1996) educational principles, positioned the participants as active constructors of knowledge rather than passive recipients, thereby questioning conventional hierarchical

learning models. This approach also aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism, which emphasizes learning as a co-constructed process shaped by interaction.

4.2 Revised Casting Practices: Obstacles and Possibilities

The presentation effectively combined statistical data with personal stories, providing insights from both an institutional perspective and individual experiences. This integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence directly addressed Research Question 2, which examines how industry stakeholders perceive the relationship between diversity metrics and lived experience. This approach ensured that the abstract ideas of diversity and inclusion were anchored in the real-life experiences of professionals within the industry.

The discussion surrounding diversity and inclusion in South African film and television marked a significant moment for critical reflection and institutional evaluation. By placing the conversation in both historical and contemporary contexts, I crafted a detailed narrative that recognized both advancements and ongoing issues in cultural representation. This dual-temporal framing aligns with postcolonial critiques that emphasize the persistence of colonial logics in contemporary cultural production (Bhabha, 1994; Shohat & Stam, 1994).

The investigation of systemic barriers unveiled the intricate dynamics of power and representation that have historically defined the South African media scene. Leveraging Critical Race Theory (Crenshaw, 1989; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) and postcolonial studies (Said, 1978; Hall, 1997), the dialogue highlighted that casting choices are not only about aesthetics but also political acts of cultural negotiation.

The notion of tokenism emerged as a crucial aspect, illustrating the distinction between authentic representation and superficial diversity. This reflects Ahmed's (2012) critique of institutional diversity work, which warns against symbolic gestures that leave structural inequalities intact. Examples from various productions provided powerful firsthand accounts, turning theoretical discussions into concrete experiences. These stories illustrated that inclusive casting is not just a matter of social justice but also an intricate artistic and commercial strategy (Smith et al. 2018).

By showcasing productions that adeptly navigated cultural complexities, the workshop challenged the prevailing industry belief that diverse representation carries commercial risks. The group discussion revealed the participants' varied lived experiences, creating a dialogical space where individual narratives intersected with wider critiques of institutions. Participants took on the role of co-researchers, collectively generating insights into the complex interplay of cultural representation. This approach, heavily influenced by Participatory Action Research methods (Reason & Bradbury, 2008), positioned the workshop as a transformative environment for critical analysis and potential institutional change.

The conversation emphasized the strong connection between representation, identity, and artistic authenticity. By scrutinizing current casting practices, participants were inspired to imagine opportunities for South African media to portray more intricate and nuanced stories that truly reflect the nation's diverse cultural fabric.

The workshop proceeded to engage in a variety of process drama activities aimed at addressing existing biases and fostering empathy through experiential learning. The opening exercise, *Walking in Someone Else's Shoes*, encouraged participants to physically and emotionally connect with viewpoints different from their own, establishing a compelling experiential learning environment. The *Casting Room* simulation exercise was particularly impactful, allowing participants to deconstruct and reimagine casting practices through performative exploration.

By stepping into diverse roles and situations, participants critically evaluated the unconscious biases and structural challenges that often go unnoticed in traditional casting approaches. The use of process drama techniques (Boal, 2002; O'Neill, 1995) provided a unique way to examine intricate social dynamics, giving participants a secure yet challenging space to confront their assumptions. The experiential quality of the activities enabled a richer understanding of cultural representation than conventional discussion methods could offer. I carefully guided participants through these exercises, cultivating a supportive environment that promoted vulnerability, critical reflection, and collective learning. Each performative experience allowed participants to reassess their views on casting practices and envision more inclusive alternatives.

4.3 Presentations and Case Studies

The presentations and case studies showcased an advanced methodological approach to comprehending cultural representation in South African media, converting theoretical dialogues into concrete, contextual narratives of change and opportunity.

The *State of Diversity and Inclusion* presentation acted as an essential diagnostic tool, charting the intricate landscape of representation within the South African film and television sector. By delivering an extensive overview of current challenges and opportunities, the presentation placed the workshop's initiatives within a wider institutional framework. This directly addressed Research Question 1 by situating participant reflections within the structural realities of the industry.

The detailed analysis illuminated the complex interplay between cultural representation, artistic expression, and societal transformation (Hall, 1997; Shohat & Stam, 1994). The *Inclusive Casting: A Business Case* presentation emerged as a particularly strategic initiative, questioning the dominant belief that diversity is simply a social obligation. This presentation repositioned diversity as a creative and economic necessity by highlighting the commercial benefits of inclusive casting (Smith et al, 2018). This perspective illustrated how artistic creativity and economic viability could be mutually supportive, rather than in opposition.

Case studies were instrumental in turning abstract theoretical conversations into tangible, lived experiences of representation. Productions such as *Sarafina!* (Ngema, 1992) and *District 9* (Blomkamp, 2009) were explored not merely as artistic creations but as complex cultural texts that engage with identity, power, and social transformation. These examples were selected for their ability to illustrate how intentional casting can function as both a creative strategy and a political act.

These narratives provided attendees with concrete instances of how intentional casting practices can subvert existing representational frameworks. Each presentation and case study was thoughtfully selected to offer a comprehensive exploration of cultural representation, encouraging participants to critically reflect on their practices and envision more inclusive alternatives. The methodology employed reflected a sophisticated pedagogical approach (Freire,

1996; Vygotsky, 1978) that positioned participants as active creators of knowledge rather than passive consumers of information.

4.4 Process Drama Exercises: Examining Biases in Casting

Process drama has emerged as a significant pedagogical method that goes beyond conventional educational practices, providing a transformative environment for investigating intricate social dynamics through embodied performance (O'Neill, 1995). By crafting immersive fictional scenarios, this technique enables participants to experience and question systemic issues in ways that traditional discursive methods cannot accomplish.

The *Walking in Someone Else's Shoes* exercise served as a sophisticated intervention into the psychological and emotional dimensions of cultural representation (Bowell & Heap, 2013). By asking participants to take on characters from diverse cultural backgrounds, the exercise fostered a powerful moment of empathetic inquiry. This directly addressed Research Question 3, which examines how embodied learning can shift practitioners' perspectives on representation.

This approach, deeply grounded in performative learning theories, urged participants to move past mere intellectual clarity toward a more visceral and embodied understanding of cultural experiences. The simulation of the casting room acted as a microcosm of wider institutional practices, exposing the subtle mechanisms of unconscious bias that pervade cultural production (Boal, 2002). As participants navigated complex decision-making processes, they confronted their own ingrained prejudices, leading to moments of significant self-reflection.

The exercise exemplified how process drama can serve as a critical pedagogical instrument, revealing the hidden structures of cultural exclusion. The debriefing discussions played an equally important role, transforming the performative experience into a collective moment of critical reflection (Jackson & Vine, 2013). By providing a space for participants to express their experiences, the workshop evolved from personal insights to joint knowledge creation. This aligns with Freire's (1996) concept of dialogic learning, where knowledge is co-constructed through critical engagement.

The strength of this methodology lies in its capacity to establish a safe yet challenging environment where participants can address their biases without feeling attacked (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995). Process drama created a liminal space where experimentation, vulnerability, and critical reflection could coexist, presenting a distinctive approach to tackling complex social issues within the cultural sectors.

The workshop then transitioned to a practical segment centered on designing inclusive casting strategies. Participants were organized into small groups and assigned the task of creating detailed casting briefs and character descriptions that challenged conventional representational methods. The group work evolved into a collaborative knowledge-generation activity, where participants critically evaluated current casting practices and devised innovative strategies for character development.

Each group was encouraged to consider multiple facets of identity, advancing beyond superficial diversity to investigate more nuanced and authentic representations. This reflects intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989), which emphasizes the interconnected nature of social categories in shaping lived experience. Facilitators guided the groups with a series of reflective prompts, urging participants to deconstruct their existing perceptions of character creation and casting.

The exercise compelled participants to contemplate cultural specificity, intersectionality, and the intricate nature of identity representation in media production. The final phase of this session involved a collective sharing and feedback process, allowing groups to present their developed casting briefs and character descriptions. This collaborative approach facilitated collective critique, mutual learning, and the formulation of more sophisticated strategies for inclusive casting practices.

4.5 Conclusion and Reflections

The final moments of the workshop represented a significant culmination of hands-on learning, critical introspection, and a unified commitment to instigating change within the South African film and television sector (Boal, 2002). Participants took part in a deeply introspective journey that transcended theoretical debates to develop concrete, actionable strategies for institutional reform.

Process drama proved to be an effective teaching method that enabled a distinctive form of experiential learning, allowing participants to engage with the intricate dynamics of cultural representation through performative exploration (O'Neill, 1995). The workshop illustrated how experiential methods could yield deeper insights compared to conventional analytical approaches, allowing participants to truly grasp the consequences of their casting choices.

The dedication to inclusive practices illustrated a comprehensive appreciation of representation as a vital act of cultural meaning-making (Bowell & Heap, 2013). Participants acknowledged that casting goes beyond a mere technical task; it is a significant opportunity to confront prevailing narrative frameworks and foster more genuine, nuanced portrayals of South African cultural diversity.

The collective reflection underscored the transformative potential inherent in conscious, deliberate casting practices. By framing diversity as both a creative and ethical necessity, the workshop attendees began to reconceptualise the role of media production in effecting social change (Jackson & Vine, 2013). This reframing aligns with Ahmed's (2012) argument that diversity work can be a site of institutional transformation when embedded in practice rather than policy rhetoric.

The discussions unveiled a shared understanding that inclusive representation is not a constraint but rather an expansive creative possibility. The workshop concluded with a sense of shared potential, illustrating how performative methodologies can cultivate environments for critical introspection, empathy, and institutional transformation. Participants departed with a renewed dedication to contesting prevailing representational norms and crafting more authentic, diverse narratives within South African film and television.

The documentation of the workshop and the research methodology were meticulously structured to capture the intricate insights generated through the intervention. Participants submitted written reflections, and facilitators carried out follow-up interviews to gauge the long-term effects of the workshop on their professional practices. These follow-up interviews, conducted three months post-workshop, provided longitudinal data on sustained behavioral and attitudinal change.

Ethical considerations were central to the research design, with informed consent secured from all participants, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity. The research approach aligned with Participatory Action Research methodologies (Reason & Bradbury, 2008), viewing participants as collaborators in the knowledge creation process rather than passive subjects.

Data analysis concentrated on identifying prominent themes, transformative experiences, and potential strategies for institutional reform. The research aimed to go beyond simple descriptive accounts to derive actionable insights that could guide future diversity and inclusion efforts in the South African film and television sector. Initial findings indicated that the process drama intervention had a notable influence on participants' perceptions of cultural representation, challenging existing biases and equipping them with practical tools for more inclusive casting methodologies.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings from the Applied Drama and Theatre workshop I designed and facilitated with the same eight casting directors who participated in the interviews. The workshop series consisted of three sessions, each two hours long, presented at 44 Stanley Ave in Auckland Park — home to Actor Spaces, a creative hub for African film, television, and theatre, and a site of active industry engagement. The sessions were designed to address obstacles and challenges identified in the interviews, with the findings in this chapter emerging primarily from the final workshop (see Annexure 1).

The discussion is organized thematically, with each section linking the workshop data to the research questions, relevant literature, and the broader South African media context.

5.1 Systemic Barriers to Casting Practices

The South African film and television industry remains shaped by systemic obstacles that limit access to diverse talent. These barriers are rooted in historical inequalities, entrenched industry gatekeeping, and norms that privilege particular racial, linguistic, and cultural groups. As Zayani (2011) notes, media industries often mirror broader societal power structures, making it difficult for underrepresented communities to gain visibility.

In casting, preferential treatment is frequently given to actors who align with traditional industry standards, leaving those from marginalized backgrounds overlooked. Institutional barriers — such as limited networking opportunities, biased selection processes, and financial constraints — further restrict access. Catliff and Granville (2013) emphasize that producers' perceptions of "marketable" talent often disadvantage actors from non-dominant cultural groups. This not only narrows on-screen diversity but also constrains the range of authentic narratives that could reflect South Africa's cultural richness.

These findings directly address Research Question 1 by illustrating how structural inequities identified in the interviews are reproduced in casting practice, confirming Hall's (1997) argument that representation is shaped by power relations embedded in institutional systems.

5.2 Unconscious Bias in Decision-Making

Unconscious bias emerged as a significant influence on casting decisions, often reinforcing racial, gender, and cultural stereotypes. These biases — while unintentional — shape perceptions of who is "relatable" or "authentic" (Dias, 2022), leading casting directors to favor actors who conform to established archetypes.

One manifestation is typecasting: Black actors are repeatedly cast as domestic workers, criminals, or struggle heroes, while White actors are positioned in roles coded as sophisticated or internationally appealing (Tehranian, 1999). This practice limits opportunities for diverse talent and reinforces narrow depictions of South African society.

Biases also extend beyond race to include accent, body type, and perceived "marketability." Maina (2023) observes that Western beauty standards and language preferences still dominate, disadvantaging actors who speak indigenous languages or present non-Western aesthetics.

This theme connects to Research Question 2 by showing how implicit bias operates at the micro-level of decision-making, sustaining what Ahmed (2012) calls "performative diversity" — inclusion in form but not in substance.

5.3 Discrepancy between Diversity Goals and Reality

Despite public commitments to diversity, there is a persistent gap between industry rhetoric and actual representation. Production companies and broadcasters often promote inclusion initiatives, yet casting choices fail to reflect these pledges (Zayani, 2011).

A key driver of this gap is the prioritization of "universal appeal," with decision-makers citing audience preferences to justify casting actors with Westernized looks, dominant language fluency, or established fame (Catliff & Granville, 2013). This approach sidelines emerging talent from underrepresented backgrounds.

Superficial inclusion is also common: a single Black, Colored, or Indigenous character may be added to meet diversity quotas, but without meaningful narrative integration (Dias, 2022). As Hall's (1997) Representation Theory emphasizes, genuine diversity requires nuanced portrayals that challenge stereotypes, not tokenistic presence. This finding reinforces the interview data in Chapter 4, showing that without structural change, diversity remains a branding exercise rather than a transformative practice.

5.4 Limited Understanding of Intersectionality

Intersectionality — the interplay of race, gender, class, language, and other identity markers — is rarely considered in South African casting. Instead, casting often focuses on a single attribute, usually race, neglecting the layered realities of identity (Maina, 2023).

For example, a Black female character may be cast solely for racial representation, without attention to class background, indigenous language, or cultural heritage — factors that could deepen character authenticity (Tehranian, 1999). Crenshaw (1989) argues that oppression and privilege are experienced in intersecting ways, yet casting decisions seldom reflect this complexity.

This narrow approach also marginalizes other identities: LGBTQ+ representation remains limited and often framed through heteronormative lenses (Dias, 2022), while linguistic diversity is sidelined in favor of English, even in narratives set in predominantly indigenous-language contexts (Zayani, 2011).

Addressing Research Question 3, this theme highlights the need for intersectional casting practices that move beyond surface-level diversity to embrace the full spectrum of South African identities.

5.5 Tokenistic Approaches to Representation

While the South African film and television sector increasingly emphasizes diversity, many casting practices remain superficial rather than genuinely transformative. Tokenism occurs when diversity is incorporated for appearance's sake rather than as a substantive part of the narrative or production process (Dias, 2022). This often results in a small number of actors

from underrepresented groups being cast in minor or stereotypical roles, rather than in leading, multidimensional parts that reflect the country's cultural richness.

A common example is the inclusion of a solitary Black, Colored, or Indigenous character in a predominantly White ensemble. Such characters typically receive limited screen time, lack narrative depth, and serve as peripheral figures to the primary (often White) leads (Tehranian, 1999). This approach fails to challenge prevailing industry norms and reinforces the perception that diverse actors are present to meet quotas rather than to enrich the story. Hall's (1997) Representation Theory underscores that genuine representation involves the ability to define and shape one's own identity in media, rather than being confined to pre-existing stereotypes.

Tokenism also extends behind the camera. Many casting directors and producers adopt diversity initiatives but fail to include culturally diverse creatives in writing, directing, and producing roles (Maina, 2023). Without diverse voices in these decision-making spaces, representation risks remaining shallow and misaligned with the lived experiences of marginalized communities. Zayani (2011) argues that authentic cultural diversity requires structural change, ensuring that representation is about power as well as presence — giving communities the agency to tell their own stories. This theme reinforces the findings in 5.3 and 5.4, showing that without structural inclusion at all levels of production, diversity remains performative. Addressing Research Question 2, it highlights the need for industry-wide strategies that integrate diversity into storytelling, casting, and creative leadership.

5.6 Process Drama: Guiding Principles

The incorporation of embodied learning through Process Drama proved highly effective in revealing how deep-seated biases influence casting choices in South Africa's film and television sector. Role-playing and improvisational exercises enabled participants to physically and emotionally engage with characters from underrepresented cultural communities, allowing them to experience the emotional consequences of casting decisions and to see how bias shapes both overt and subtle aspects of practice (Maina, 2023).

Working within a collaborative knowledge-generation model — central to Process Drama — participants shared personal experiences and critically examined how these shaped their professional approaches. This inclusive, participatory method challenged traditional hierarchies in which casting directors or producers are the sole authorities, instead positioning all participants as co-researchers (Tehranian, 1999). Casting directors reflected on how unconscious bias limited opportunities for diverse talent, while actors considered how their own perceptions of diversity might be shaped by stereotypes.

Improvisational activities also illuminated the role of power dynamics in casting. In one exercise, participants had to select an actor for a role based on minimal background information. The activity revealed how quickly unconscious bias could influence decisions — for example, favoring an actor who fit a stereotypical image of a character even when the script suggested a more layered portrayal (Zayani, 2011).

The embodied nature of Process Drama helped participants connect personal bias to systemic inequities. Immersing themselves in diverse roles underscored that casting is not merely a technical task but a social and political act that shapes public narratives about identity and representation (Hall, 1997). This realization sparked constructive dialogue about the need for equitable representation across all aspects of production and led to practical recommendations for reimagining casting processes to better reflect South Africa's cultural diversity.

Addressing Research Question 3, this section demonstrates how embodied, participatory methods can surface hidden biases, disrupt entrenched decision-making patterns, and generate actionable strategies for more inclusive casting.

5.7 Practice as Research (PaR) as a Transformative Methodological Approach

Practice as Research (PaR) is a contemporary methodology that bridges theory and practice, particularly in the arts, theatre, and media. It offers a dynamic approach to knowledge creation that moves beyond conventional research methods, centering on lived experience and the active involvement of participants in the research process. PaR incorporates artistic practices — such as performance, role-play, and improvisation — into the research paradigm, enabling the exploration of complex social and cultural issues through direct engagement with participants' experiences.

At its core, PaR challenges the traditional view of research as an impartial, detached endeavor. It embraces the idea that knowledge is collaboratively constructed, positioning participants — including actors, directors, and industry experts — not merely as subjects but as co-researchers in the investigation of cultural phenomena. This collaborative approach is particularly relevant to questions of cultural diversity in casting within the South African film and television sector. PaR empowers individuals to reflect critically on their role in shaping and perpetuating societal norms and biases, especially in contexts where conventional research may overlook the nuanced realities of those involved.

Theorists such as Nelson (2013) emphasize PaR's capacity to transform practice by enabling the immediate investigation of artistic and social processes through embodied and reflective methods. Nicholson (2005) highlights its value in applied drama and socially engaged work, showing how it can foster critical dialogue about cultural representation. Peters (2009) frames PaR as a democratizing tool, allowing practitioners to interrogate and challenge entrenched norms, while Hall's (1997) representation theory underscores its potential to expose and contest the power dynamics embedded in media practices.

By examining issues such as unconscious bias and systemic exclusion, PaR facilitates deeper, more reflective analysis of cultural diversity, revealing institutional dynamics often overlooked in traditional academic research. Direct engagement with participants not only generates knowledge but also catalysis change, fostering more inclusive, empathetic, and self-aware approaches to media representation.

In this study, PaR — enhanced through process drama — enabled participants to inhabit roles they might otherwise only observe on screen, illuminating the emotional and psychological factors influencing casting decisions (Maina, 2023). This embodied engagement deepened understanding of how biases shape both the availability of roles and the perceptions of audiences and industry professionals.

Within the PaR framework, participants acted as co-researchers, offering insights into how casting practices affect their professional experiences and identities (Zayani, 2011). This participatory model dismantled hierarchical structures, creating an open, reflective space for interrogating the limitations of current casting practices and envisioning alternatives.

The performative dimension of PaR also surfaced unconscious biases that might remain hidden in conventional inquiry. Role-play and improvisation exercises revealed how quickly stereotypes could influence casting choices, even when scripts suggested more layered portrayals (Tehranian, 1999). These activities prompted participants to consider how personal histories and professional norms shape their perceptions of diversity.

Ultimately, PaR contests the notion of research as a neutral, purely observational activity. It recognizes research as a potentially transformative process capable of influencing industry practice in real time. By integrating diverse voices into the research process, PaR creates a platform for marginalized perspectives to be heard and acted upon. As Hall (1997) reminds us, representation is not only about the content on screen but also about the power structures that determine which stories are told. PaR equips participants to critically examine and challenge these structures, offering a pathway toward more equitable and authentic casting practices.

This section addresses Research Question 4 by demonstrating how PaR, as applied in this study, functioned not only as a method of inquiry but also as an intervention — producing actionable strategies for change while simultaneously generating new knowledge.

5.8 Embodied Learning Revealing Hidden Institutional Dynamics

Embodied learning is a central strength of Practice as Research (PaR) in examining cultural diversity in casting. By engaging actors and industry professionals in hands-on, experiential activities, PaR enables participants to interrogate deep-rooted institutional dynamics that may remain invisible in conventional research. This approach prompts participants to move beyond abstract theory into physical and emotional engagement, surfacing unconscious biases, power imbalances, and entrenched stereotypes that shape casting decisions (Maina, 2023).

Through role-play and improvisation, participants experience the physical and emotional consequences of casting choices. This goes beyond intellectual comprehension, engaging the visceral dimensions of experience and revealing how institutional norms affect not only actors on screen but also casting directors, producers, and writers (Catliff & Granville, 2013). For example, inhabiting historically marginalized or stereotyped characters allows actors to confront the constraints of such roles directly, deepening their understanding of how systemic

biases are sustained — and how they might be countered through alternative casting and storytelling.

As Zayani (2011) notes, media production is shaped by institutional frameworks that mirror broader societal inequalities. PaR offers a space to deconstruct these frameworks by confronting the biases embedded in industry practice. This embodied engagement fosters reflection on how traditional casting reinforces stereotypes and marginalization, while also revealing how individuals and communities navigate their identities within restrictive contexts.

By embodying diverse identities, participants begin to recognize how authentic representation can emerge from casting that challenges industry norms (Tehranian, 1999). Integrating embodied learning into PaR thus becomes a means of identifying and modelling more inclusive practices, contributing to the transformation of casting processes in South African film and television.

5.9 Participants as Co-Researchers Challenging Existing Practices

A defining feature of PaR is the repositioning of participants from passive subjects to active co-researchers. This collaborative approach is particularly valuable in exploring cultural diversity in casting, as it empowers industry stakeholders — actors, directors, producers, and casting agents — to share their experiences and insights (Zayani, 2011).

In the South African context, the co-researcher model enables participants to critically reflect on their role in sustaining or challenging discriminatory practices. For example, casting directors in the workshops engaged in activities that exposed how unconscious bias shaped their decisions, often without their awareness. This collaborative inquiry encouraged them to reassess the power dynamics underpinning their choices and to consider how such biases limit opportunities for culturally diverse talent (Maina, 2023).

PaR fosters shared ownership of the research, creating an environment conducive to dialogue and knowledge exchange. Participants' lived experiences — often absent from conventional academic accounts — enrich the inquiry, merging practical expertise with critical reflection (Tehranian, 1999). This collaborative atmosphere is essential for understanding how casting

reflects broader cultural norms and for re-imagining these norms to promote diversity and authenticity.

By actively contributing to the development of solutions, participants become change agents rather than research subjects. This participatory framework shifts the emphasis from observation to transformation, enabling the industry to critically engage with its own practices. As Hall (1997) argues, such engagement is vital for altering the structures that govern representation, ensuring that those most affected by exclusionary practices lead the process of change.

5.10 Performative Techniques Exposing Unconscious Professional Biases

One of PaR's most impactful contributions is its use of performative methods — role-play, improvisation, and interactive performance — to reveal unconscious biases among casting professionals. These techniques create an experiential environment in which casting directors, producers, and actors can confront how ingrained prejudices influence their decisions (Tehranian, 1999).

By embodying different characters, participants engage with diverse identities in immersive and emotionally resonant ways. For example, a casting director role-playing the casting of a Black character may directly witness the emotional consequences of their choices. This embodied learning fosters empathy and prompts reflection on whether decisions are driven by stereotypes or by a genuine engagement with the complexity of a character's identity (Maina, 2023).

Performative techniques also disrupt the professional detachment that often characterizes casting. Traditionally, decisions are made through a mix of intuition, experience, and market considerations, with limited self-reflection. PaR challenges this by encouraging professionals to inhabit the characters they are casting, deepening their understanding of cultural identity complexities (Zayani, 2011).

These exercises further highlight the role of power in casting — for instance, between a White director and a Black actor, or a wealthy producer and a marginalized character — making visible the structural inequalities that often go unexamined (Hall, 1997). By creating a safe space for reflection and confrontation, performative techniques empower professionals to

re-imagine their role in fostering inclusive casting. Their effectiveness lies in their ability to surface hidden biases and catalyze lasting change in how casting professionals approach their craft.

5.11 Collaborative Knowledge Generation Model

A defining feature of Practice as Research (PaR) is its emphasis on collaborative knowledge creation, which is particularly valuable for exploring cultural diversity in casting. By employing a collaborative framework, PaR enables a joint investigation of ideas, experiences, and methodologies, dismantling conventional barriers between researchers, industry practitioners, and participants. This approach is essential for addressing the complex challenges of diversity in the South African film and television sector, as it integrates a range of voices and perspectives into the research process (Maina, 2023).

In conventional research, knowledge is often produced hierarchically, with academics deriving insights from participants. PaR, by contrast, promotes a horizontal, co-creative framework in which knowledge emerges from the active involvement of all stakeholders. This is particularly effective for interrogating representation and casting, which are shaped by cultural, social, and institutional dynamics. Through collaboration, casting directors, actors, producers, and other industry players can share lived experiences, challenge prevailing assumptions, and develop a more comprehensive understanding of the barriers to cultural diversity (Tehranian, 1999).

The collaborative dimension of PaR also works to dismantle power imbalances that persist within the industry. By positioning participants as co-researchers, PaR ensures that the perspectives of marginalized communities are not only acknowledged but prioritized. This is critical when examining how casting practices may exclude or misrepresent certain cultural groups. As Zayani (2011) observes, traditional casting methodologies are often shaped by dominant cultural norms that marginalize diverse voices. A collaborative PaR approach allows these dynamics to be scrutinized and reimagined, leading to more inclusive and equitable practices.

Moreover, collaborative knowledge generation fosters the development of innovative casting techniques that center cultural diversity. By pooling their insights, participants can devise strategies that reflect the plurality of South African society. This collective problem-solving is

vital for questioning entrenched norms and generating practical responses to persistent representational inequities (Hall, 1997). In this way, PaR not only identifies challenges in the casting process but actively contributes to solutions through the collective wisdom of those most affected.

This section addresses Research Question 4 by showing how collaborative knowledge generation within PaR can function as both a diagnostic and a transformative tool, ensuring that historically marginalized voices shape the re-imagining of casting practices.

5.12 Representation as a Complex Negotiation of Identity

Casting is far more than matching a familiar face to a role; it is a complex negotiation of identity shaped by societal, cultural, and historical forces. In South Africa — where the legacies of apartheid continue to influence social relations — casting choices reflect not only character traits but also the ongoing negotiation of cultural and racial identities within the industry. Representation, therefore, should be understood as a dynamic process rather than a fixed outcome, involving continuous dialogue between self-identification and how individuals are perceived by the industry, society, and audiences (Hall, 1997).

The notion of "authentic" representation is particularly significant in this context. While there is a common belief that actors should portray characters whose identities mirror their own, this view oversimplifies the complexity of identity. Inclusive casting must move beyond race or ethnicity to consider class, gender, religion, language, and local identity. Actors are often pigeonholed into roles based on assumptions about their cultural or racial background, yet identity is fluid and multifaceted. As Zayani (2011) argues, representation should capture the variety and nuance of lived experience, not reduce it to simplistic markers.

In South Africa's film and television sector, genuine representation requires casting strategies that transcend tokenism and embrace intersectionality. By acknowledging the multi-layered nature of identity — including socio-economic status, gender, and personal history — casting professionals can create portrayals that resonate more deeply with audiences and dismantle reductive stereotypes (Maina, 2023).

PaR offers a means to explore these complexities, revealing tensions between industry expectations and the fluid realities of cultural identity. This approach underscores the need for intentional, nuanced casting choices that reflect the multidimensional nature of individuals and communities, enriching the narratives told in South African media.

While visual representation — such as race, skin tone, or traditional attire — remains important, it is only one facet of cultural diversity. Genuine representation also encompasses the lived experiences, perspectives, and cultural knowledge that actors bring to their roles (Tehranian, 1999). Over-reliance on visible markers risks reducing culture to aesthetics, neglecting the deeper social and emotional dimensions of identity (Maina, 2023).

For example, an actor's ability to convey a character's socio-historical context — whether rooted in rural or urban life, shaped by political history, or informed by community ties — adds authenticity that goes beyond appearance. In South African media, where narratives are deeply intertwined with histories of colonization, apartheid, and ongoing inequality, such depth is essential. As Zayani (2011) notes, portrayals should reflect the socio-political and emotional realities of diverse identities, not just their outward signs.

Addressing Research Question 3, this section demonstrates that recognizing cultural diversity in casting requires moving beyond surface traits to embrace the full spectrum of identity. This shift enables more accurate, resonant, and socially meaningful representation in South African film and television.

5.13 Economic and Creative Potential of Inclusive Casting

Inclusive casting is not only a pathway to cultural representation but also a driver of economic growth and creative innovation in the South African film and television sector. The creative industries thrive on novelty and diversity, and when inclusive casting is approached intentionally, it can expand narrative possibilities, introduce fresh perspectives, and elevate production values. By selecting talent from a wide range of cultural, racial, and socio-economic backgrounds, filmmakers can surface untold stories that resonate with broader audiences, resulting in richer and more engaging content (Maina, 2023).

A key strength of inclusive casting is its ability to reflect the diversity of its audience. South Africa's population is culturally and linguistically varied, and productions that mirror this diversity are more likely to connect with viewers, increasing both domestic and international appeal. Audiences are increasingly seeking representation that feels authentic and relevant to their lived experiences; productions that meet these expectations can attract larger and more loyal viewership. Content that captures the complexity of South African identities has the potential to resonate across the continent and appeal to global markets that value distinctive, culturally grounded narratives (Tehranian, 1999).

From an economic perspective, inclusive casting opens access to new market segments. The growth of streaming platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Showmax in Africa has created heightened demand for content that reflects the continent's cultural variety. By broadening casting practices, filmmakers not only create more authentic work but also increase their chances of success in global markets that reward culturally relevant storytelling. International successes such as *Black Panther* and *The Woman King* demonstrate how diverse casting can achieve both box-office success and critical acclaim while celebrating cultural richness (Zayani, 2011).

Creatively, inclusive casting fosters dynamic collaboration between writers, directors, and actors. Deliberately sourcing talent from diverse backgrounds encourages creative teams to think beyond conventional boundaries, leading to more complex characters and layered narratives. Actors from varied backgrounds bring unique perspectives that can influence writing and direction, resulting in more nuanced performances. In South Africa — with its rich social, political, and historical context — inclusive casting can catalyze creative breakthroughs, allowing previously marginalized communities to see themselves represented in meaningful ways. This can spark a creative shift in the industry, driving both artistic innovation and economic development (Hall, 1997).

Addressing Research Question 2, this section shows that inclusive casting is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic advantage, offering both creative enrichment and economic opportunity for the South African industry.

5.14 Emotional and Professional Transformation Processes

When guided by inclusive practices, the casting process can catalyze profound emotional and professional transformation for both actors and industry professionals. In the context of cultural diversity, these shifts demonstrate how engaging with varied identities can change perspectives, deepen empathy, and lead to more equitable industry practices. Through Practice as Research (PaR), participants engage in experiential learning that challenges entrenched beliefs, confronts personal biases, and redefines professional roles.

For actors, portraying characters from diverse cultural identities can be both emotionally demanding and transformative. Embodying characters whose lives and experiences differ markedly from their own requires deep empathy and understanding. This process can provoke strong emotional responses, as actors confront aspects of their own identity or acknowledge previously unexamined biases. Such self-awareness fosters personal growth and emotional resilience, equipping actors to navigate the complexities of intersectionality and cultural identity (Hall, 1997).

For casting directors and producers, working with a broader range of talent and implementing inclusive casting practices often prompts a re-evaluation of professional norms. Long-standing biases — whether conscious or unconscious — can be challenged through participation in PaR processes, encouraging professionals to question the status quo and take more deliberate, inclusive risks in their casting decisions (Tehranian, 1999). This shift moves the industry away from repetitive patterns and towards more innovative, representative storytelling.

PaR methodologies support this transformation by positioning participants as active agents of change. Collaborative workshops, rehearsals, and performances invite participants to co-create definitions of cultural diversity, fostering a sense of empowerment and agency. As Maina (2023) notes, this transformation extends beyond casting decisions, influencing how professionals engage with the broader industry and prompting them to challenge long-standing conventions that have marginalized certain groups.

These emotional and professional shifts are essential for building a genuinely inclusive casting culture in South African film and television. They lead to more authentic portrayals of cultural identities and contribute to an industry environment where both actors and professionals feel empowered to challenge restrictive norms (Zayani, 2011).

Addressing Research Question 3, this section demonstrates that inclusive casting, supported by PaR, can transform not only the representation on screen but also the attitudes, practices, and professional identities of those shaping the industry.

5.15 Intersectionality as a Critical Consideration

Intersectionality is essential for understanding cultural diversity in the casting process, as it recognizes that individuals hold multiple, overlapping identities that shape their lived experiences. When analyzing casting practices, it is important to consider not only race, ethnicity, or cultural heritage in isolation, but also how these intersect with other factors such as gender, socio-economic status, disability, faith, and sexual orientation. This framework offers a more complete and accurate account of the complexities within diverse cultural identities (Crenshaw, 1989).

In South Africa, intersectionality is particularly significant given the country's complex social dynamics, shaped by its apartheid history and ongoing struggles against inequality. Many actors' experiences are informed not solely by race but also by intersecting factors such as socio-economic background, gender, and regional origin. For example, Black South Africans from rural areas may face different challenges and opportunities than their urban counterparts, while women of color may encounter compounded barriers due to the interplay of gender and racial bias in casting (Tehranian, 1999).

An intersectional perspective in casting requires recognizing how these overlapping identities influence perceptions, decision-making, and ultimately the representation of actors in media. Cultural diversity cannot be reduced to racial or ethnic labels; it demands deeper engagement with the social and political contexts that shape identity. By acknowledging multiple, intersecting identities, casting directors can move beyond stereotypical portrayals to offer richer, more authentic depictions of human experience (Zayani, 2011).

This approach also prompts the industry to reflect critically on how systemic inequalities limit opportunities for actors from multiply marginalized groups — for example, Black, queer, or disabled performers — who often face compounded discrimination. Integrating intersectionality into casting practices ensures that opportunities are not restricted to those who meet a single

diversity criterion, but extend to those whose identities span multiple, intersecting categories (Maina, 2023).

Beyond improving representation, intersectionality enriches storytelling. By reflecting the multifaceted realities of post-apartheid South Africa, casting can produce narratives that resonate more deeply with diverse audiences and challenge reductive depictions (Hall, 1997). This requires moving past superficial visual diversity to embrace the emotional, historical, and socio-political dimensions of identity.

Addressing Research Questions 2 and 3, this section underscores that genuine cultural diversity in South African film and television depends on confronting systemic bias, embedding intersectionality into casting decisions, and recognizing the economic and creative opportunities that inclusive, nuanced representation can unlock. This perspective forms a key point of departure for the study's broader argument: that a deeper, more layered understanding of diversity in casting can transform both industry practice and the portrayal of South African society.

CHAPTER 6

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Introduction

This study examined how diverse casting contributes to cultural diversity within the South African film and television industry. Using a Practice-as-Research (PaR) methodology, it assessed the extent to which casting practices and processes reflect the country's cultural diversity. Drawing on cultural diversity scholarship (Zayani, 2011; Catliff & Granville, 2013; Tehranian, 1999; Dias, 2022; Maina, 2023) and Stuart Hall's Representation and Reception Theories, the research identified both persistent obstacles and emerging opportunities for more inclusive representation.

6.1 Summary of Findings

The findings reveal that, despite growing initiatives to promote diversity, structural and systemic barriers continue to limit authentic representation. Commercial imperatives often prioritize marketability over cultural accuracy (Zayani, 2011), while long-standing biases based on race, gender, and culture perpetuate under- or misrepresentation (Dias, 2022; Tehranian, 1999). The absence of comprehensive, enforceable casting policies further entrenches these imbalances (Catliff & Granville, 2013).

The PaR workshops demonstrated that applied drama and theatre techniques can disrupt conventional casting norms, challenge stereotypes, and create space for marginalized voices (Maina, 2023). This supports Hall's (1997) view that representation is a site of meaning-making that shapes perceptions of identity and culture.

The study also underscores that casting is not a neutral process but one embedded in power dynamics. Decisions made by casting directors, producers, and studios determine which narratives are told and whose voices are amplified (Hall, 1997; Tehranian, 1999). As such, casting is both a mirror of societal diversity and a tool for shaping cultural discourse.

6.2 Limitations of the Study

The research was constrained by time and resource limitations, which restricted the scope of industry engagement and the breadth of perspectives captured (Zayani, 2011). Access to key decision-makers was limited, potentially narrowing the insight into high-level casting strategies (Dias, 2022).

Methodologically, while PaR provided rich qualitative insights, it was less suited to generating large-scale quantitative data (Catliff & Granville, 2013). A mixed-methods approach could have strengthened the empirical foundation and allowed for broader generalization.

6.3 Suggestions for Future Work

This research opens multiple avenues for further exploration:

- **Policy Impact Studies:** Examine how diversity quotas and other regulatory measures influence both the quality and authenticity of representation, distinguishing between genuine change and cosmetic compliance (Zayani, 2011).
- **Audience Reception Research:** Investigate how diverse casting affects audience engagement, perceptions of authenticity, and consumption behaviors (Dias, 2022).
- **Cross-Industry Collaborations:** Explore partnerships between theatre, independent cinema, and mainstream television to expand creative possibilities for inclusive casting (Maina, 2023).
- **Comparative International Studies:** Analyze casting practices in other industries such as Nollywood and Hollywood to identify transferable best practices (Tehranian, 1999).
- **Actor Experience Studies:** Document the lived experiences of actors from marginalized backgrounds to better understand how systemic biases operate in casting (Catliff & Granville, 2013).

6.4 Summary of Final Argument

This research set out to examine the extent of cultural diversity in South African casting practices and processes. By employing a PaR methodology, it illuminated the challenges, complexities, and opportunities that define the casting landscape.

The findings emphasize that, while the industry increasingly acknowledges the importance of diversity, entrenched biases, commercial pressures, and weak policy enforcement continue to limit full inclusivity (Zayani, 2011; Dias, 2022). Nonetheless, casting holds transformative potential. It can move beyond mirroring diversity to actively shaping more equitable and authentic narratives.

As Hall (1997) reminds us, “Representation is how meaning is given to the things depicted.” Casting is therefore a critical site for meaning creation, influencing how identity and culture are understood. Without deliberate, sustained reform, diversity risks remaining superficial rather than transformative. This study advocates for continuous, critical engagement with casting practices to ensure diversity becomes a substantive and enduring feature of South African media.

6.5 Closing Reflection

Casting is more than a logistical step in production — it is a cultural act with the power to shape narratives, challenge stereotypes, and influence societal values. In a nation still negotiating the legacies of exclusion, casting can either perpetuate inequality or become a site of transformation. By embedding inclusive, intersectional, and culturally nuanced practices into casting, the South African film and television industry can move closer to authentically reflecting the nation’s diversity — not as a quota to be met, but as a lived reality to be celebrated.

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ANNEXURE A

Session Date: 10 February 2024

Aim: To engage casting directors in a collaborative and interactive drama that explores to what extent is cultural diversity present in the casting practice and process in the South African Film and television industry.

Objective: To engage participants in a process drama experience that critically examines casting practices in the South African film and television industry, exploring biases, power dynamics, and opportunities for authentic cultural representation. Through embodied storytelling and reflection, participants will develop strategies for fostering more inclusive and nuanced casting practices.

Theme(s): Beyond the Surface: Challenging Stereotypes in Casting

Episode	Activity	Motivation	Facilitator	Time	Admin
Check in Warm up	I am going to invite each participant to share three statements about themselves—two true, one false. The group guesses the false one.	Introduces storytelling and performative elements, allowing participants to reflect on their multifaceted identities and biases. .	Sipho	15min	N/A

Pretext	"The Casting Call" Participants receive a fictional casting call description with vague or stereotypical character breakdowns. In pairs, they discuss what assumptions are embedded in the descriptions.	Encourages critical engagement with how roles are framed and exposes hidden biases in industry practices.	Sipho	15 min	Printed c
Building Belief	"Walking in Someone Else's Shoes" Participants are assigned fictional identities (e.g., an actor from a marginalized community, a director from a privileged background). They physically embody these roles by responding to	To deepen Embodied experience which will foster emotional connection and challenges preconceived notions.	Sipho	20min	Characte

	various casting scenarios (e.g., "How would you feel if your audition was rejected due to your accent?").				
Moving into role	"Casting Room Simulation" Participants split into "casting directors" and "actors." The directors hold auditions based on the earlier casting call descriptions. They must justify their casting choices. Afterward, roles switch.	Encourages reflection on power dynamics, biases, and the decision-making process in casting.	Sipho,	25min	Pre-prep
The Drama	"Rewriting the Casting Narrative" In small groups, participants	Develops practical strategies for inclusive casting while reinforcing lessons from earlier exercises.	Sipho	30min	Flipchart

	rewrite the original casting call to ensure cultural specificity, inclusion, and diversity. Groups then pitch their new casting vision to the whole room.				
De-rolling	"Stepping Out" Participants physically step out of their role by saying their real name and a personal affirmation (e.g., "I am [Name], and I believe in the power of authentic representation").	Helps participants separate themselves from the roles they embodied, ensuring emotional closure.	Sipho	5 min	N/A
Reflection	"Casting Footprints" Participants write one key takeaway and one action	Encourages accountability and real-world application of workshop insights.	Sipho	10min	Reflectic

	they will implement in their industry practice. They then share their reflections in a closing circle.				

Reflective Questions

- How did your involvement in the process drama enable you to identify the presence or lack of cultural diversity in the casting of South African film and television?

- What lessons did you learn from the activities regarding the significance of Practice as Research (PaR) in investigating and addressing cultural diversity in casting?

- During the casting exercises, what obstacles or subtleties arose that could either promote or obstruct cultural diversity within the industry?

- How did embodying various roles alter your understanding of biases and power relations in the decision-making process for casting?

- Reflecting on today's experience, what actionable strategies can you implement to encourage more genuine and diverse depictions in South African film and television?

ANNEXURE B

Interview Questionnaire

Name: Joseph Sipho Patoors

Student Number: 1153013



Section 1: Background Information

1. Can you please introduce yourself and describe your role in the film and television industry?

2. How long have you been involved in casting for film and television?

Section 2: Understanding Cultural Diversity

3. How do you define cultural diversity in the context of casting?

4. Why do you think cultural diversity is important in the South African film and television industry?

Section 3: Current Practices and Challenges

5. Can you describe the current state of cultural diversity in casting within the South African film and television industry?

6. What are some of the main challenges you face when trying to achieve cultural diversity in casting?

7. Have you noticed any changes or trends in casting practices related to cultural diversity over the past few years?

Section 4: Impact and Representation

8. How do you think the representation of different cultures in film and television impacts audiences?

9. Can you provide examples of productions where cultural diversity in casting has had a significant impact on the story or audience reception?

Section 5: Strategies and Solutions

10. What strategies do you use to ensure cultural diversity in your casting process?

11. Are there any specific policies or guidelines you follow to promote cultural diversity in casting?

12. What additional measures do you think could be implemented to improve cultural diversity in casting within the industry?

Section 6: Personal Experiences and Insights

13. Can you share any personal experiences where cultural diversity in casting played a crucial role in the success of a project?

14. What advice would you give to other casting directors or industry professionals who are striving to improve cultural diversity in their projects?

Section 7: Future Outlook

15. How do you envision the future of cultural diversity in casting in the South African film and television industry?

16. What steps do you think the industry needs to take to achieve greater cultural diversity in casting?

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