

# **‘How can you say that the very thing that made you should be abolished?’: A teacher’s repetition of childhood trauma of corporal punishment**

**Simangele Mayisela**

University of the Witwatersrand

## **Abstract**

South African research on teachers’ reactions to the abolition of corporal punishment depicts the teachers’ narratives as lamentations of loss of an opportunity to instil discipline, that contain idealised portrayals of abusive teachers, parents or caregivers. To further understand the psychic functioning of teachers who continue to promote the use of corporal punishment, this paper focuses on a teacher’s narrative of her own childhood experiences of corporal punishment. A window into a particular teacher’s developmental defences associated with experiences with violent primary caregivers, is provided. Apparent is connection from her personal history of the trauma of corporal punishment is explored alongside her identification with her own violent teachers and parental figures, as evident in her representations of her professional identity. The case study in this paper seeks to understand the persistence of corporal punishment, so as to establish appropriate interventions and deeper understanding for forensic purposes.