

# (Don't) Rock the Boat: Talking about Wellbeing and Graduate Supervisory Relationships

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## The Process

Our Research-based Theatre (RbT) project, *Don't Rock the Boat*, started as a series of live theatre workshops that prompted discussion about graduate supervisory relationships and wellbeing.

**“Research-based Theatre** (RbT) an innovative methodology that brings research to life as a mode of inquiry and/or knowledge mobilization.”  
<https://rbtcollaborative.ubc.ca/about-us>

**Why?** Supervisory relationships are central to graduate student success and wellbeing but are often difficult to talk about.

**What?** A series of six live theatre workshops. about graduate supervisory relationships.

**Who?** UBC graduate students, faculty, and staff.

**When?** Fall 2019.

**Where?** Dodson Room in UBC Main library.

**How?** Scenes interspersed with small group facilitated discussions amongst participants to identify and explore challenging issues through lens of the characters and situations enacted on stage.

The link to *Don't Rock the Boat's mini documentary*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1rX4NxiooY>.



*Don't Rock the Boat's live-theatre workshops that took place in the Fall of 2019. Left to right: Tetsuro Shigematsu, Bahareh Shigematsu and Ingrid Broussillon (Photo credit: Simangele Mabena)*

In the summer of 2020, phase two of the project focused on creating four professionally acted, filmed and edited scenes. These were piloted online through small-group facilitated discussions.



*“No Other Choice” focuses on health and other challenges facing international students. (Ingrid Broussillon )*

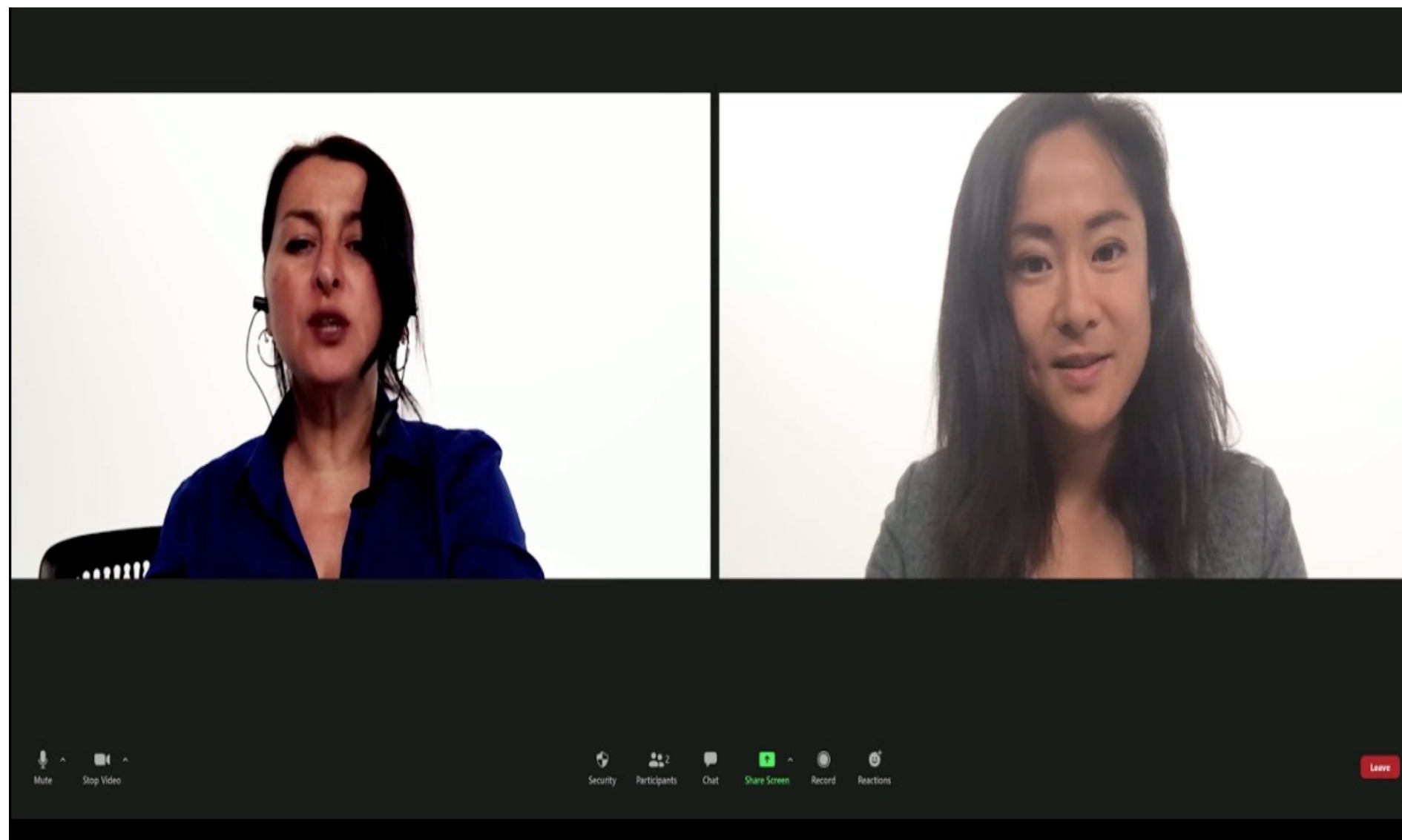


*“Disclosures” features an inappropriate disclosure of a graduate student's mental health condition by their supervisor. (Tetsuro Shigematsu, Matt Reznec)*

## The Scenes



*“Contentious Authorship” raises issues around authorship, competition between graduate students, and the supervisors' role in resolving conflicts. (Agnes Tong, Brahm Taylor)*



*“Zoom Fatigue” highlights communication challenges and underlying issues arising from imposter syndrome in academia. (Bahareh Shigematsu, Meghan Gardiner)*

## Facilitated Discussions

Discussions led by facilitators made use of a facilitation guide that accompanies the dramatized scenes. The guide is designed to clarify points of confusion, provide questions and prompts to explore salient concerns and, deliberate issues around systemic aspects of wellbeing, equity, diversity, inclusion. The facilitated discussion also offers participants the chance to reflect and offer feedback on content presented in the scenes.

## Impact of Workshops

“[I was surprised by] my own emotion, vulnerability, humility – how much I have yet to learn, how I want to be better, do better by my students” – Faculty

"I left the discussion today having felt that graduate student's voices are heard and there is complexities within the supervisors themselves." – Student

## From RbT to an Open Education Resource

An important project goal was to create a sustainable open education resource that consists of the dramatized scenes and the facilitator's guide. This resource will soon be available in Pressbooks and can be used in graduate student or faculty orientation, departmental retreats or other venues as a novel method of provoking important dialogue.

The project's name shifted to *Rock the Boat*, to reflect our intention to address systemic issues influencing the wellbeing of graduate students and faculty members in the context of supervisory relationships, equity, diversity, and inclusion. For inquiries about the resource, please email: [rock.the.boat@ubc.ca](mailto:rock.the.boat@ubc.ca)

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