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ENGAGING PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS IN THE DRAMA IN TEACHER LEADERSHIP

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Cranston and Kusanovich's co-authored book *Ethnotheatre and Creative Methods for Teacher Leaders* was published in 2016 by Palgrave Macmillan in their series on Creativity, Education and Arts.

ABSTRACT: This paper presents the findings of a qualitative research study that examined the effects of a transdisciplinary ethnotheatre workshop designed to support the professional development of school leaders as they navigate the complexities of teacher leadership. The site of inquiry was a pre-service teacher leadership workshop held in a graduate school class where participants analyzed, witnessed, and enacted ethnodramas, problematizing tensions in teacher leadership. Using a constant comparative approach, the participant journals were read and re-read, coded, and then categorized thematically with particular focus on negative case analysis. The

authors present excerpts from the ethnodrama scripts used in the workshop alongside the research findings, which suggest that, while some participants perceived the injustice of a given situation presented in the ethnodrama, and could articulate how the process of ethnotheatre created avenues for learning about the lived reality of teacher leaders, others indicated either a lack of awareness or a tacit acceptance of the bullying and discriminatory behaviors embedded within the scripts.

KEYWORDS: Ethnotheatre; Ethnodrama; Teacher leadership; Transdisciplinary; Arts-based research

Imagine you expect to review a couple of case studies in an education workshop you have signed up for, and are handed, instead, two one-act plays with title pages reading:

STEFAN AND VICKY
Passive aggressive mentoring or workplace harassment?
A play in one-act
(Cranston & Kusanovich, 2016, p. 108)

and

ASHLEY AND LENA
Diversity dialogues or the marginalization Olympics?
A play in one-act
By
Jerome Cranston and Kristin Kusanovich.
(Cranston & Kusanovich, 2016, p. 122).

Arts-based research practices, like the arts themselves, seek not so much to secure claims and predict behaviours as they do to sharpen our perceptive capacities and enhance our perspectives on a given situation (Barone & Eisner, 2012). Like traditional modes of research, arts-based research contributes to the betterment of disciplines through an expansion of aesthetic modalities through which research can be conducted, disseminated, and represented. Its processes and products can be both expressive and analytical vehicles for conveying not only thought, but also emotion, embodiment, and the senses – aspects of reality otherwise underemphasized in traditional modes of research. Within the realm of ethnodrama and ethnotheatre (Saldaña, 2010) – two particular forms of ethnography – research can be examined in a prismatic fashion using script and character analysis, dramaturgy, and theatrical practices. Performance is a component, but the purposes of performance in ethnotheatre are not usually for the public at-large. The intent of performance, in these instances, is to animate reflection and intensify the construction of meaning on the part of participants. *"Stefan and Vicky"* and *"Ashley and Lena"* are one-act plays that were developed for Drama in Teacher Leadership Workshops that explore the emotional toll of teacher leadership. They are both the products of arts-based research and the vehicles for more creative exploration and analysis of pressing questions about how people learn about the complex profession of teaching.

Backstory

The co-authors met at a multi-day colloquium focused on faith and intellectual life to examine how faculty could help uphold their colleges' and universities' missions for social justice through their teaching, scholarship, and service. While one was a scholar-researcher in educational administration at a large, Canadian, public research-intensive university, the other was a professional choreographer and director working at a small, American, liberal arts, Jesuit/Catholic university with an appointment in theatre and dance and child studies. Like the rest of the members of their working group, these two workshop participants shared propensities for thinking about how to teach about structural and cognitive barriers to issues of social justice, ethics, equity, and spirituality in higher education. But these two group members also discovered a shared interest in teacher preparation and a shared concern about the lack of ethical treatment between staff members at schools, whether in pre-kindergarten to grade twelve education system (P-12), or in the faculties of higher education. They both worked with up-and-coming teachers. They both knew great teachers whose careers ended prematurely due to the stress and strain of unethical behaviours in schools. Though they shared this recognition of the spiritual depletion of many fine teachers, they did not initially imagine how the different skills sets of their very different disciplines might be meaningfully related.

They discussed impactful, critical teaching and learning approaches that could be used in the preparation of pre-service teachers and in the ongoing development of practicing teachers and administrators. They seemed to be looking for a means to truly grapple with the micropolitical in schools, for some way of introducing future teachers and school leaders to a more felt-understanding (Nicholson, 2007; Norris, 2009; O'Neill, 1995) of the impact of abuses of power between educational professionals. It was one thing to consider how to lead conversations about inequity and injustice in educational contexts with one's students, and quite another to look at the ethical dilemmas between adults at schools. How might future teacher leaders learn about some of the challenges they will face and begin to consider how they might oppose and redress these forces (Charmaz, 2017)? The theatre artist knew that all human behaviour was motivated and enacted in relationship to one's preconceptions, beliefs, and community, that it changed with the setting, brought with it a prior set of circumstances, was embodied, and was influenced by what could be called the audience. The educational administrator knew that the management of personnel, of very human resources, was often thwarted by counterproductive adult-to-adult relationships at schools

"It was one thing to consider how to lead conversations about inequity and injustice in educational contexts with one's students, and quite another to look at the ethical dilemmas between adults at schools."

and that managerial, visionary, administrative, legal, and fiscal duties of school leaders could not be learned by merely reading about them.

NARRATOR
This is Victoria. Also known as Vicky.

(Enter STEFAN, with coffee, taking the empty seat at VICKY's table. Looking around quickly to ensure he didn't recognize anyone.)

And this is Stefan. He chose this coffee shop because it is far enough away that he doesn't have to worry about running into a colleague from the school he works at. He often feels every coffee shop within a mile radius of the school is filled with disgruntled educators bashing their administrations, on and on in hushed tones. Or at least that he had more of a reason to be disgruntled than the other coffee-drinking educators grabbing a macchiato at 3:30 pm. (Cranston & Kusanovich, 2016, p. 111)

From Interdisciplinary to Transdisciplinary Inquiry

After the conference was over, Dr. Cranston emailed Ms. Kusanovich a few case studies he had developed to use in some of his leadership preparation courses. He wondered if the point of all these cases, that sometimes engaged students but more often than not felt like empty exercises in educational theory, might be better presented in some theatrical fashion.

She read them and then emailed back that she did not think she could do anything with them in terms of dramatizing the cases. The theatre arts and pedagogy specialist initially felt that there was not enough drama or action to create "interesting theatre" in the cases he had written. The would-be co-researchers disagreed about whether there was drama inherent in the stories the case studies purported to tell.

The theatre arts practitioner suggested to the educational administration specialist that he write a book, a fictional narrative weaving all of these stories together. Informed by Ellis's (2004) work, *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel About Autoethnography*, the educational leadership practitioner took two years and published a book, entitled *Questionable Dismissal* (Cranston, 2014). The book has subsequently been used in two different Canadian universities' graduate education programs as a teaching-text and has been purchased online in Canada, the United States, and Great Britain by the general public.

Kusanovich decided to go through the two hundred pages and thematically code the stories (Saldaña, 2009) based on what had emerged for her as the crossover area of the two fields initially discussed by the researchers: theatre and ethics as performative acts (Ridout, 2007). After the initial coding, rereading the novel multiple times, and revising and then clustering the codes into higher order ones (Saldaña, 2009), the two researchers agreed that these stories were full of drama and could best be told as such. They embarked on a playwriting process of two years, in which they focused on eighteen different ethical dilemmas that had emerged in the *Questionable Dismissal* text. They wrote ten plays and workshopped them throughout the United States and Canada. Two of the plays presented here focus on teacher leadership. One is about inter-colleague bullying towards teacher leaders who are trained to go above and beyond their role and do not recognize the issues around them as potentially toxic. The other is about teacher leaders receiving a barrage of criticisms for leading or advising student clubs that are perceived, by some, to be controversial. In writing and researching about the potential efficacy of these plays in graduate level courses and professional development settings, their ideas about using drama to teach about leadership in educational contexts have developed steadily and been gaining momentum. Each of their plays focuses on particularly thorny, ethical dilemmas lived out in micro-political climates (Blase & Björk, 2010) through micro-aggressions taking place in staff rooms, school hallways, office hours, and coffee shops. These spaces seem to be where the future burnout of otherwise promising educators is staged. These plays in their Drama in School Leadership series, the first of which is entitled, “How to Fire a Teacher,” attempt to weave real educational policy, legal, fiscal, human resources, and personnel management issues into a gripping fictional narrative within a believable social context. All of the plays in this series of ethnodramas for educational leaders, as well as plays written and published in their book *Ethnotheatre and Creative Methods for Teacher Leaders* (Cranston & Kusanovich, 2016) offer fictionalized but believable scenarios that are unfortunately familiar to P-12 and higher education professionals.

Ethnodramas arise from a specific culture for a specific purpose. The authors crafted one-act plays with relatively small casts of five or six characters and little or no need for sets or props. The point was not to make Broadway worthy plays, but to generate materials that school leadership teams could use to open up much needed conversations about the problematic dynamics of informal leadership platforms as experienced by teacher leaders. At one point in the collaborative process of writing the ethnodramas, author Kusanovich was suggesting ideas from educational leadership theory and author Cranston was suggesting ideas from the sophisticated creative arts methodologies. What began as an interdisciplinary partnership grew increasingly into a transdisciplinary collaborative intellectual space (Klein, 2001). Using the materials and processes they developed, the two authors continued to research the effects of what they called “The Drama in School Leadership” workshop (Cranston & Kusanovich, 2013) with its embodied components of character analysis and scenework and present on their findings at academic conferences. They began to see how

this process takes a learner beyond a mere discussion of a case study, and transforms how participants conceptualize the enactment of leadership and ethics (Ridout, 2007) through an immersive, creative process. Studying the drama (as in the art) of the drama (as in the strife) of teacher leadership creates a space and a process to grapple with all kinds of voices in education, whether we empathize with them or not. Teacher leaders trained to be inclusive and welcoming to all students might be better able to grapple with a character like Tim if they meet him in an ethnodrama before meeting him in the real workplace. Here is the character of Tim, a member of the old guard, offering a colleague what he thinks is a great staffroom conversation starter over coffee:

TIM

> *We've got to toughen up our immigration laws and start tossing out all these criminals. Refugees, my ass! They could be a bunch of terrorists, for all we know. They come here without jobs, don't pay taxes, want to keep their religions, and speak their language, and then want to send their kids to our schools demanding special accommodations because they claim they are refugees. I can't believe the Department of Education keeps pushing that idiotic inclusion philosophy. That is what's screwing up the education system.* (Cranston & Kusanovich, 2016, p. 116)

How will a new teacher leader who is ready and willing to work with diverse immigrant student populations in compassionate ways respond? Immersion in drama helps us understand the inherent drama that teacher leaders step into when they are hired or asked to step up to new leadership duties. One of the strengths of transdisciplinary inquiry across theatre arts and educational administration fields is that it opens up the knowledge base of more than one discipline and imagines a new, third-space in which two arenas of thought have not just dialogic proximity but are mutually influencing and informing (Lattuca, 2001; Klein 2001).

The Space of Ethnotheatre

What better way than through the use of drama to both feel and think our way through a dilemma without suffering the social cost of living through it in the real workplace. After all, the primary aim of the aesthetic experience of drama, one that is millennia old, is "the symbolic representation of emotional states per se that set the stage for aesthetic and revelatory experience" (Shweder, Haidt, Horton, & Joseph, 2008, p. 411). As Dolan (2005) claims, live performance "provides a place where people come together, embodied and passionate, to share experiences of meaning-making and imagination that can describe or capture fleeting intimations of a better world" (p. 1). Dramatic narratives provide a way of organizing episodes and accounts of actions; they can bring together mundane facts and fantastic creations (Denzin, 2003; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007). Sometimes fantastic creations help

us see mundane facts more clearly. Performance provides, as Denzin (2003) notes, the opportunity to reaffirm, resist, transgress, re-inscribe, or passionately re-invent socialized practice.

The path to teacher leadership is full of positivistic notions of achieving success for every learner, contributing to creative problem-solving and changing schools for the better. In all of this, a high level of receptivity and a fairly welcoming stance towards teacher leaders is presumed. What future teacher leaders have a harder time imagining is that their informally conceived leadership actions may not be welcomed, desired, supported, or understood by the very culture they purport to serve, that is, by school culture itself. It seems logical that emerging and even practicing teacher leaders should at least be introduced to the notion of human frailty in themselves and among their future co-teachers and administrators in the form of ethnodramas or stories of the profession (Saldaña, 2010). The Drama in Teacher Leadership (referred to by the authors as DiTL) workshops offer a space in which teacher leadership can be reckoned with and safely problematized. It does so through an arts-based research process known as ethnotheatre, a form of process drama that uses drama to engage participants in a learning or revelatory process (O'Neill, 1995). Process drama is a subset of the general category of applied theatre (Leavy, 2009; Nicholson, 2005; Norris, 2009).

Applied drama is a type of performative arts-based representation that allows the human condition to be portrayed symbolically and aesthetically to facilitate spectator engagement, involvement, and reflection (Cannon, 2012; Nicholson 2005). Applied or process drama refers to any use of the concepts, methods, and strategies that are central to the theatre arts, but for purposes other than public display or performance for an outside audience. In other words, there are a myriad of ways in which the techniques of the dramatic arts may be applied to probe specific societal issues or particular concerns of a given community.

Ethnotheatre (Denzin, 2003; Leavy, 2009; Norris, 2009; Saldaña, 2010) is applied theatre that purposefully limits its scope to a specific culture or microclimate of society, and uses the exercises and techniques of the performing arts to experiment with "playing" the roles of the stakeholders in a realistic situation. Ethnotheatre allows adult learners to use imagined roles to explore essentially non-fiction issues, events, and relationships (Crumpler, Rogers, & Schneider, 2006) located and experienced in their very local culture. Ethnotheatre provides an immersive space for participatory, relational, and revelatory storytelling, cultural transmission, and knowledge generation.

Ethnodramas are the actual scripts or plays that are built from non-fiction accounts of the people who live and work in those microclimates. Saldaña (2005) describes ethnodramas as contributing to a capacity-building process. In the DiTL ethnotheatre

workshop, the ethnodramas are the center of study, but discussion, participatory exercises, theory, and experimentation are also present. Though the settings for these ethnodramas and characters are drawn from secondary/high school sites, there may be potential affinities with and applications across the educational spectrum, from P-12 to higher education.

Socio-emotional Situations Deserve Socio-Emotional Learning Methods

In order to give future teacher leaders access to various professional stories that might help them better navigate the socio-emotional domain of teacher leadership, ethical dilemmas and composite, fictionalized cases were crafted into ethnodramas intended to function on two levels: on the one hand, the ethnodramas serve to expand workshop participants' awareness of human behaviour and, on the other hand, the ethnodramas potentially challenge participants' positivistic assumptions about teacher leadership. Ultimately, the hope is that by participating in the DiTL workshops teacher leaders might become better predictors of the human behaviors associated with the social roles that teachers hold (Hindon, 2007). Ethnodramas might frame problems such that future teacher leaders can strategize creatively and compassionately before embarking on major school change and improvement initiatives. Such workplace simulations might help teacher leaders cultivate resiliency in the face of certain kinds of resistance or negativity. The authors and others have previously researched the transformative effects of ethnotheatre in the context of school leadership in general, showing it to be an effective learning method that engenders empathy, cultivates our relationship to and potential acceptance of the "other," helps with perspective taking, and creates a space to tackle topics that are otherwise extremely daunting (Prendergast & Saxton, 2013). DiTL workshops use ethnotheatre as a means to develop this kind of criticality and reflexivity in our next generation of teacher leaders.

Participants in DiTL workshops learn about their professional roles and profession by embodying its values through praxis of character analysis and performance (Cranston & Kusanovich, 2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2015) that is, "from a critical-input experience" (Marzano, 2007, p. 54) that goes beyond a theoretical or philosophical stance. The identity formation of teacher leaders is a response to aggregate influences and the nature of the materials and experiences they encounter. The authors believe that the overwhelmingly positivistic literature on teacher leadership has likely contributed to the simplistic notion that teacher leadership is always welcomed and appreciated, which experience shows us is not the case.

In thinking about identity from the standpoint of both educational administration and performance, Cranston and Kusanovich (2013, 2014a, 2014b) have drawn on Bandura's (1977) research into how behavior between adults is learned observationally. The transdisciplinary system developed for the ethnotheatre workshops relies on observation of self and others in roles we do not necessarily play in real life. The co-facilitated workshops alternate between: topical discussion and presentation of theory, philosophy, and questions;

and highly inventive creative exercises that challenge the norms of professional development frameworks. Workshop participants are allowed to consider and explore leadership as a performance; after all, something performed can be enacted well, or not. This performance of leadership can succeed or fail, can model clarity or confusion, and demonstrate how to handle problems productively and creatively or in a manner that is destructive to relationships between adults in the profession. By observing people enacting characters in school contexts and cultures, we begin to see how role theory and role identification (Biddle, 1979) help us identify (or not) with various stakeholders in a given situation. It is generally difficult to step into a role and create a believable performance, so the authors have taken a lot of time at this step to give participants the basic skills in how to do that. As participants begin to identify with the character, they exercise their empathetic, socio-emotional intelligence. If they play the character convincingly but can critically ascertain what is wrong with the character's actions, behaviors, or statements about others, they may gain empathy to some degree while still retaining their overall ethical assessment of a situation.

An invitation to Brevity and an Emerging Focus of the Research Study

Previous research by the authors (see, Cranston & Kusanovich, 2013; 2014a) suggests that full-day (approximately eight hours long) and two-day (between 12 and 16 hours long) transdisciplinary, ethnotheatre workshops give participants the kind of immersive experience that begets transformative thinking and significant new insights. With sufficient time, theories of leadership can be combined with arts-based, embodied processes of script analysis, rehearsal, and performance, and result in novel and critical understandings of the interpersonal dynamics of a school's staff. Therefore when the authors were invited to give a 2.5 hour workshop and conduct research on it, they naturally wondered whether or not the ethnotheatre experience would still yield positive or meaningful learning outcomes when compressed into a much shorter period of time (López, 2015). They proceeded, and the 2.5 hour workshop on which this study is based was designed to retain key ideas and central interactive exercises without necessarily feeling rushed. Thus, only portions of the original workshop's content were retained and the total time for reflection had to be modified. Every participant read one part from a play aloud in his or her small groups, but only half of the participants would actually perform the second reading in front of the remaining participants.

Given these limitations and challenges, the authors sought to understand the following questions:

1. Was ethnodrama a viable method for unpacking the drama of teacher leadership in 2.5 hours?
2. Could a workshop for pre-service graduate students meaningfully expose participants to the challenges associated with perspective taking?

3. How could the development of empathy for teacher leaders' circumstances, if any, be conveyed?

Research Methodology

The primary purpose of this transdisciplinary, qualitative study (Klein, 2001; Van Manen, 2001) was to examine the perspectives of graduate students enrolled in an educational leadership course at Santa Clara University who would experience, in lieu of one of their regular weekly lectures, an alternative approach to learning: an ethnotheatre workshop that sought to problematize the notion of teacher leadership. It was felt that a qualitative, epistemological tool such as participant journaling (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004) would assist the inductive interpretation of the participant's experience and allow for the greatest variety of expression about the arts-based learning experience.

The Scripts

Scripts for two different plays about teacher leadership, "Stefan and Vicky," and "Ashley and Lena," were presented, analyzed, performed, and reflected on during the workshop. "Stefan and Vicky" explores how the success of a mid-career teacher leader whose methods were untraditional but highly effective was seen as a threat to the status quo of his colleagues. "Ashley and Lena" focuses on how a new teacher leader's advisement of a newly formed gay-straight alliance (GSA) sets off a precarious chain reaction in the school staff. Participants were asked to read the two original and, at the time, unpublished plays written by the authors about teacher leaders facing unanticipated resistance, judgment, or unfair treatment. In both plays, the protagonist teacher leader is proceeding thoughtfully and seemingly in-line with good teacher leadership behaviors and practices. In both plays, the intentions of the teacher leader protagonist are misinterpreted and criticized by some of the character's colleagues, and fully supported by others. In "Ashley and Lena," two characters, Carter and Spears, argue about whether a GSA is just a strategic way to shore up future donor funding. This conversation takes place in the absence of the young teacher leader advising the GSA who not only has no such economically-driven agenda, but is unable to defend her position because she is not present.

GREG CARTER

> *Don't kid yourself, Spears. It's not really about an anti-bullying approach. It's all about the power of pink money. The majority of advertisers see the LGBTQ community as a huge untapped source of discretionary income. Politicians aren't all that concerned with the Brown vote, especially if they've locked up the Black vote. Most of the new immigrant families are from the Middle East and from Arab Spring countries. Those*

> *and our Latino families lack the purchasing power to affect the business leaders who influence the policy-makers in the legislature.* (Cranston & Kusanovich, 2016, p. 128)

After a short introduction to the process, participants read the plays individually then were assigned to one of four performing groups or ensembles. Each of the four groups began the process of character analysis for each of the two plays and was coached by one of the co-authors with some preliminary stage directions for each play. The groups were then given the option to share their staged version of the play or become members of the audience and witness the performance. Ultimately, because of the short nature of the workshop, two groups volunteered to perform the two plays and the other two groups became the audience to witness each play. Everyone experienced both plays, either as a performer or witness.

The Directions

In order to maintain the integrity of the cases' contents and ensure that a full spectrum of viewpoints were aired – whether they represent perspectives that are regarded as socially acceptable or not – the participants had to create a character from the fixed-scripts as they were written. The authors did not employ any applied theatre techniques that would rely on verbal improvisation, divergent rewritings, or other devised theatre techniques. The methods employed in this study also avoided a theatre of representation, whereby participants would draw on actual events in their own work lives and represent them during such a workshop. By not asking for such a direct representation, the authors could ensure that actual dilemmas experienced by participants in their current positions, if any, could not become the subject matter (Meyer, 2001).

Not being able to improvise the words or outcome leads an actor down a more difficult path of having to justify what they are actually saying, through understanding, or attempting to understand, the point of view of the character. This process of grappling with another's motivations helps create a convincing performance in the workshop setting. In the authors' methods (Cranston & Kusanovich, 2013), the integrity of the content is preserved so that despite personal choices of vocal inflection, movement, gestures, or tone, the essential conflict and real challenges posed can be conveyed. Otherwise, verbal improvisations can obfuscate the actual problems unearthed by the ethnodramas. Inexperienced actors, when allowed to embellish their lines, often choose overly facile solutions to problems, or inject humor where there was none, so that the storyline becomes so ambiguous it no longer resonates with the audience the way an intentionally crafted play can.

Participants

Of the 21 participants in the study,[1] all of whom were graduate students enrolled in the Master of Arts (MA) degree in Interdisciplinary Education at Santa Clara University, 18 identified themselves as "student-teachers," two identified themselves as "emerging teacher leaders," and one was a "long-term substitute teacher." Very few had any arts training according to the initial group check-in in which participants shared a little about their educational background and interests. With only two people noting that they had ever sung in a group or played an instrument, and with no other claims to any experience with any of the visual or performing arts, this group was unique, from our research perspective, in terms of having few reference points for arts as a basis for learning.

In all of our previous, longer workshops in both the United States and Canada, there had always been a portion of participants, perhaps 20-30% of the group, who declared that they had some relationship with the arts. Overall, the participants were graduate students who mostly lacked real-world work experience in schools and brought little or no background in any of the arts to the table. Nevertheless, everyone participated in the performance-based methods, but with some shyness and some social awkwardness at times. Understanding that some of the effects of a critical, postmodern, performance-based aesthetic practice (Nicholson, 2005; O'Neill, 1995) are difficult to ascertain, but that some of the effects might be captured through journaling, we offered three open-ended journal prompts to contrast with the otherwise highly communal activities (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004).

Methods

The researchers created open-ended questions for participants to express insights or to articulate knowledge gained throughout the workshop process. Journaling time was given at two different points during the workshop and at the conclusion of the workshop. The writing prompts are listed below:

a. In terms of being able to explain what teacher leadership is and what the dynamics for teacher leaders in schools are like, how would you describe your ability to explain teacher leadership now that you have witnessed or performed the play(s)?
b. In terms of developing multiple perspectives on teacher leadership and being able to see multiple perspectives in the midst of complex issues in teacher leadership, now that you have witnessed or performed the play(s) how would you describe your understanding of multiple perspectives?
c. In terms of your disposition to see and feel what others see and feel, how would you describe your empathetic abilities now that you have witnessed or performed the play(s)?

Analysis

Data analysis involved reading and re-reading the 21 participants' journals (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004) through a recursive coding process to generate meaning from the data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Following the suggestions of Miles et al., the authors reviewed the participants' journals to note similarities and/or differences in the responses to generate tentative themes. The tentative themes were analyzed for "plausibility" in response to the broad question: does it seem to make sense? (Miles et al., p. 278). Particular attention was paid to any negative case data that appeared to contradict the majority of opinions expressed in any one of the themes (Saldaña, 2009). Finally, the specific comments that became part of the thematic data were subsumed and "clustered" into more general categories (Miles et al., 2014). Specific representative examples of the initial data included in the clustering process are presented in the following section to better illustrate how the data informed the thematic clustering process.

Findings

The findings suggest that, overall, the participants were able to articulate an enhanced awareness of the challenges of teacher leadership through witnessing and participating in the one-act plays. The majority of the participants indicated a degree of change in their thinking around ways of explaining how teacher leadership is situated in and among a complex network of complicated "characters" in schools. Though some participants struggled to separate the actions of any given character from their own biases and underlying assumptions of how people ought to act, most indicated a greater attentiveness to understanding multiple perspectives and a heightened empathetic response as an outcome of participating in the workshop. Few, however, were able to explain how empathizing or perspective-taking with characters who were drawn up to be deliberately undermining, oppressive or devious was fundamentally different than empathizing with the teacher leader protagonists in the ethnodrama. As we conducted our second level of data analysis, we were especially sensitive to an emerging notion of how participants, in an attempt to be or at least seem fair and open-minded, and in an attempt to follow the prompts on perspective taking and empathy as opposed to letting the prompts lead them, may have arrived at equal feelings about every character. Many participants did relate to the teacher leader characters who had been wronged or whose hard work and successes as teacher leaders had been misinterpreted in ways that eroded relationships. After compiling results that led us, in some cases, to unanticipated but still helpful observations, we sought to organize the findings around the following three concepts of drama, perspectives, and empathy.

Theme 1. Understanding, Feeling, and Sensing the Inherent Drama in Teacher Leadership

More than half of participants noted in some fashion that the applied drama workshop increased their abilities to understand and potentially explain how complicated enacting teacher leadership can be. In addition, the majority indicated a new awareness of the difficult dynamics or power plays that occur between the adult professionals in a school context, sometimes referred to as the drama in the workplace. About a third commented that the back and forth exchanges between new teacher leaders and colleagues included both positive and negative interactions and could, therefore, prove to be thorny and complicated. About a third indicated that the workshop allowed them to gain insight concerning the need to assert oneself for the good of the school or an underserved group while maintaining a perspective and commitment to championing worthy causes in spite of opposition.

One participant wrote, “Teacher leadership is being able to take a stance and have a voice for issues/topics that may be complex.” Another mentioned possessing a better “feel” for what teacher leadership could be like, while several participants mentioned their heightened sensitivity to noticing the nuances in the problems and surprising resistance teacher leaders face.

Only two participants mentioned stepping into the shoes of the protagonist teacher leader characters to imagine how that would feel. One wrote, “After this play, I have a better understanding of what I would do if a veteran teacher was bullying me. The play gave me a chance to reflect and analyze myself as Stefan [the protagonist].”

Within the responses to the first prompt, in the drama section, there were four responses that indicated one should not take a stand, but rather work with others to come to a middle-ground position. As one participant wrote, “it is important to come to an acceptance of all different positions.” In these responses it seemed that the characters who were constructed to be obstacle-makers, and were often depicted as doing so in some irrational or even unethical way, were not actually seen as doing anything wrong. Instead, they were people whose position needed to be understood.

Theme 2. Perspective Taking

With respect to the ability to gain better insight into the perspectives of teacher leaders and their colleagues and supervisors, the majority of the participants indicated that they believed they had developed an understanding of the effects of teacher leadership from multiple perspectives. The analysis also demonstrated that what is meant by multiple perspectives is significantly broad.

One third of the participants mirrored this sentiment of needing to understand not just the words people are saying but their motives behind them. As one participant put it, "It's amazing how analyzing a character's motives helps you understand where they are coming from." While another one noted, "I can see that it's important to consider the different perspectives of all of the individuals involved in order to consider how they see the issues involved in actually putting teacher leadership into action." However, while there were many references made to taking multiple perspectives, some participants may have wanted to show that they can do this with every character equally, without seriously considering how hard it might be to experience the social reality of schools from the character's point of view. For example, these two characters from the "Ashley and Lena" play described below were created to offer very different perspectives of the social reality of schools, and one might imagine that any given participant might find it easier to take on the perspective of one rather than the other:

> *DARYL PEYTON* *High School Science Teacher. Noticeably uncomfortable with whole GSA idea, yet self- described as friendly to LGBTQ community. Against clubs solving any problems at school.*
>
> *BENEDICTO EDBO* *High School English Teacher. Ready for change, progressive. Believes research and intuits that GSA lessens bullying. Comfortable arguing.*
> (Cranston & Kusanovich, 2016, p. 132)

In other words, the characters were created to challenge the participants' ability to take on opposing perspectives. Several responses suggested that participants could easily accept all of the characters' perspectives as plausible. Instead of sharing what might be more personal or honest inclinations towards particular perspectives of some characters, in some of the responses, there was little to no valuation of the ethics of a situation. It seems that some of the participants subsumed all criticality when regarding situations portraying injustices in favor of a blanket acceptance of all behaviours.

Yet, one participant admitted to being personally uncomfortable when she heard the play was about a teacher leader trying to take on an assignment to facilitate a gay-straight alliance. In other words, the issue of gay-straight alliances dominated her discomfort, not the teacher leader's treatment. So the compassion for all characters that she may have been referring to was not as much for the teacher leader but for the character who does not want to admit or talk about the presence of LGBTQ students.

One of the side characters in the bullying play, Tim, whose anti-immigrant stance was captured in the earlier exerpted dialogue, touts a very over the top "send 'em back and build a wall" kind of philosophy. The characters in the scripts were created to show contrasts and

be recognizable to many. A participant mentioned identifying with this character, rather than the teacher leader who decides to speak up for immigrants to this veteran teacher and then pays the price. Responses such as this one revealed that while we may anticipate opening up insights about teacher leaders through the use of very carefully constructed ethnodramas, some of those exposed to ethnotheatre may be moved by any character who speaks to them, even if they only have one line in the play and are meant to provide a contrasting set of qualities to the one created to represent a teacher leader.

Theme 3. Empathy

One of the participants wrote that, “the plays helped me to better see and empathize with the multiple perspectives of the various actors in the play.” The majority of the participants commented that the workshop increased, perhaps only moderately so, their sensitivity to the human emotions that are affected in enacting teacher leadership. For example, one of the participants commented that, “Sometimes it is difficult to put yourself into some else’s shoes. But, it is important to do so.” Another suggested that, “The plays open my eyes to how those who have contrasting views might also be coming from a good place.” Only about half of the participants referred to a greater ability to empathize due to this experience of ethnodrama. Others indicated the workshop had no effect on their specific empathy levels about teacher leaders, in many cases because they already self-identified as being empathetic people. Some of these responses indicated a finite understanding of empathy capacity. A small number of participants made the connection between empathy and leadership. One participant shared, “Watching the play reminded me that it will be important to listen to others to make an informed decision.”

In conducting the analysis, it was apparent that if a person in the audience identified with the characters who were carefully drawn up as composite fictions of problematic real life people more than the teacher leader protagonists, they may have missed the point of the play which was to trouble the presumption that teacher leadership on behalf of serving students and the school learning climate, when actually lived out by those in the teaching ranks, is always welcomed.

A few of the participants mentioned the importance of approaches such as “listening to all,” or “being respectful of all,” or “being open-minded to all possible perspectives.” While this could simply indicate a peaceful and harmonious approach to life, it also seemed to be a way of simplifying or watering down the problematic inter-personal relationships that are being presented. “Listening to all perspectives” seemed to be on many participants’ minds as they journaled about plays with bullies in them. A majority of the participants did not articulate the situations presented in the plays as needing a critical, problem-solving approach nor did they tend to identify the bullying or chiding or unnerving remarks of the teacher leaders’ colleagues as anything but their “perspective” that needs to be honoured. In

some regards, there appeared to be a belief that empathy is about dispassionately taking on the role of another person, real or fictional.

Discussion

Based on the findings of this preliminary study, the efficacy of a very limited exposure to applied theatre methods intended to enliven the discourse around the challenges associated with teacher leadership seems revealing on some points, but only tentatively so on most. Despite this ambiguity, and perhaps informed by the five years of research on longer form workshops, the authors still discovered evidence that ethnodramas enable the critical presentation of robust and relevant content pertaining to teacher leadership in a way that lecture/discussion methods do not. DiTL methods and materials, when introduced in a relatively brief period, appear to ignite some thoughtful reflection but not necessarily critical analysis of how teacher leadership is variously supported or thwarted depending on the affability, self-confidence, openness and yes, sensitivity of one's colleagues.

While some students gained some educational benefits from the experience, many may not have the chance to deeply consider the implications for teacher leaders of these essentially realistic workplace simulations. The predominance of phrases like "perspective taking" and the need to validate "everyone's point of view" seemed to be at the forefront of the participants' minds, so much so, that they may have been unable to reframe their experience through the lens of any ethical wrongdoing or any conflict where the oppressor and the oppressed encounter each other uncomfortably. No characters are perfect or simplistic in our plays, but some are definitely acting more professionally and more generously, collegially, and fairly than others.

More robust responses to the prompts were derived from previous workshops and in looking at both the factor of time and the element of life experience, the authors concluded that the better learning environment will include a longer commitment of time for the workshop and full participation in the final performance. More diverse life experiences and representatives of multiple career phases among workshop participants would likely generate richer outcomes for all. López (2015) in exploring the potential of participatory theatre in studying a complex subjects also made the observation that without longer time periods in which to explore topics too much may be asked of the participants or be expected from the facilitators.

In addition, more formal assessments of empathy, ones that go beyond brief journaling exercises (Neuman, Chan, Boyle, Wang, & Westbury, 2014), might provide more effective measures of transformation that can occur in the context of arts-based practices like ethnotheatre. Emotions and art are intimately related (Tan, 2000), and, art invites and

gives people a "right" to have any kind of emotional reaction they will have to it. As a result, we discovered that even if there is an intended educative value, a didactic form to the plays, anyone, especially participants without life experience in the context the plays present, but who, like everyone, bring their previously formed judgments to the table, can read and derive any meaning into the characters' actions they would like. The possible confusion between empathy and total subjectivity is beyond the scope of this paper, but deserves to be looked at further in ethnodrama research.

It may be that the climate of inquiry into a profession's lived contexts is impossible to fathom without a greater diversity of opinions to inform the learning experience. Whether that spark of recognition comes from the presence of a few mid-career or master teachers in the group who recognize the nonfiction quality of these fictionalized accounts, or the participants already have some sense of what theatre is to begin with, our less diverse group with less life experience really could have used a longer form workshop to give them the opportunity to go beyond their initial constructions of meaning. It is also significant that with the small amount of arts education shared across the group, the performances themselves might have been more tentative, less emotionally compelling than when done with a diverse cast whose spectrum of ages and life experiences can better inform how they speak, move, and embody another person's identity temporarily. All of these factors made it difficult to see indications of what we might call "rich" results, and harder to tell if the ethical dilemmas were actually understood by all participants.

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Despite the limitations of the study, the association of the experience with increased learning from the dramatic depictions of real life events, the experience of a new kind of perspective taking, and perception of an increased sense of empathy for many upon the conclusion of the experience does portend well for the use of ethnotheatre in school leadership preparation on the whole. Nowotny, Scott, and Gibbons (2001) remind us that the traditional mode of knowledge production is scholarship sensitive and its methods are prescribed by traditional methodologies, whereas transdisciplinary arts-based methods are context sensitive and involve inventive, creative, and sometimes eclectic methods of constructing knowledge and meaning. How other professions such as health, business, engineering, law, and even the arts and humanities themselves might consider their case studies as materials for ethnodrama is a key question as this mode of inquiry expands.

Barone and Eisner (2012), in their seminal work to define arts-based research as a field, have certainly alluded to the fact that in arts-based research, the enhancement of perspectives is privileged over the quest for certainty. Emerging, open-ended findings are, therefore, to be expected. The subset of participants indicating a limited ability to see how anyone might be culpable in the suffering of the protagonist teacher leaders in our plays was enlightening and led us to more questions regarding the processing time required of ethnotheatre, as well as a climate in which total subjectivity is mistaken for perspective taking and/or a moral compass. We also realized that because the group was too large and the time was too short to have everyone render their staged version of the play in a performance for others, some participants lacked that embodied performance component that we would normally insist on. Perhaps this above all limited the transformative learning options for some.

Conclusion

Ethnotheatre workshops may serve to fill a gap in the critical study of adult-to-adult relationships at schools, especially as schools respond to the growing phenomena of teachers enacting leadership in many forms. The Drama in Teacher Leadership methods could serve as a model for further simulations of teacher leadership dilemmas to be developed through ethnodramas. The research indicates these scripted stories are effective resources in a transdisciplinary applied drama workshop (Klein, 2001; Nicholson, 2005; O'Neill, 1995) and this study indicates that role identification with characters by participants did occur. For many, though the initial step into the arts-based research process might have been quite tentative on many levels, the dramatic action inherent in the ethnodramas was compelling participants into the story and allowing them to step into a simulation of their profession of choice. All participants enacted stories of teacher leadership through ethnotheatre, and some of them have still to live through what it means to stand by your principles in the teaching profession, as character Ashley Brunbridge does in "Ashley and Lena."

ASHLEY BURNBRIDGE

> *The fact is the very presence of a GSA sends a powerful message of tolerance. Not just of different sexual orientations, but of all different kinds of people. That's why I am doing it. This is concrete school improvement and it needs to be supported. I am going to work on it my whole career no matter what anyone else has to say. It's my ethic as a teacher leader, and with all due respect, I know I am doing what's right.*
> (Cranston & Kusanovich, 2016, p. 132)

The findings of this study illustrate that the effectiveness of the DiTL applied drama approach in teacher and teacher-leader preparation appears to be diminished when offered

within the context of a single 2.5 hour class, as compared to the effects of other ethnotheatre workshops offered over longer periods of time (Cranston & Kusanovich, 2013; 2014a). In comparison to the findings of other research on applied drama workshops offered by the authors (for example, see: Cranston & Kusanovich, 2013; 2014a, 2014b), it is fair to suggest that the journal responses of the participants of this class-based workshop were generally more brief and less insightful than the responses elicited by longer format workshops where there was more time for character development and reflection available.

As much as there is a desire to provide adult learning opportunities quickly and there is a growing fascination in such notions as “quick-learning” (Kotler, 2014), this study suggests that the applied drama approach developed by the authors for use in the DiTL workshops may not be adaptable to the time constraints that are typically available in university classes. Arguably, the perceived limitations of the class-based applied drama workshop may be an illustration of what Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe, and Orr (2009) identify as the mismatched use of a powerful learning approach that has tremendous potential to improve the learning dynamic yet is not found in most of the formal leadership preparation programs offered these days.

It is also conceivable that the DiTL workshops, as a form of applied art-based educational research (Barone & Eisner, 2012), may not be well suited to the mode of delivery offered through traditional university-based graduate courses on educational leadership – that is, as a one-time lecture topic and experience. However, these are only speculative conclusions regarding the myriad of applications of applied drama to support professional learning that require additional research to better understand.

Strategic methods that are proven to support teacher leadership success and can supplement traditional pre-service programs or function as critical professional development of teaching leadership are called for. It is not apparent that leadership education is generally offered to teachers as a part of their pre-service programs or during their first years in the profession when they are expected to function as teacher leaders. Professional development modules and resources are needed in this area.

The transdisciplinary approach of DiTL offers administrators and teacher leaders tools, materials, a process for analysis, and a simulation of prospective real-world scenarios, using a creative arts-based approach. This study, while far from conclusive, offers a promising approach for today’s educator who wants to succeed in a complex school system requiring vision that is both creative and ethical. Even a single seminar session in ethnotheatre (Saldaña, 2010) using relatable, well-written scripts appears to help most participants begin to ponder some key questions about their own knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward the lived challenges between adult colleagues at schools.

It may also be important to consider the tension between responding to ethical dilemmas as such, and negating ethical dilemmas in a quest to see everyone's point of view. Whereas the central conflicts and dilemmas presented by bullying characters and bullied characters, for example, were usually clear to workshop participants in previous one- to two-day workshops, some of the data revealed that the perception of ethical dilemmas and power imbalances were being sublimated to an almost simplistic equivalence of each person's right to hold their own view, whether oppressive or not.

Thus, though the plays were meant to be instructive tools on some levels, the responses show that some students might have simply held onto the frames they may have entered the room with, or gravitated to a character who shares their worldview. Only in a few cases did evidence of transformed thinking indicating understanding of the intended plot get communicated in the participants' written responses that formed the basis of the data collected.

Just as promoters of teacher leadership may overestimate the receptivity of the school's adult culture and climate to such leadership, so too may practitioners of ethnotheatre overestimate the ability of a group to grasp at the ethical concerns presented in plays. But "to inquire into topics that are of concern to professional practitioners, contemporary phenomenological researchers may need to step outside the accepted limits of disciplinary methodologies…to evoke new and practical understandings" (van Manen, 2001). Through ethnotheatre, the stakeholders in an enterprise, such as the faculty, staff, and administrators partaking in these immersive learning opportunities, can use these powerful tools to dispel stereotypes and help others see all students – regardless of race, creed, color, gender, or orientation – as capable. This can only help the teacher leadership ranks to be more sensitive and perceptive to the individual emotions and dispositions they encounter in their students and co-workers every day.

There is indeed drama in school leadership and there is indeed reason to borrow methods and processes from the dramatic arts to inform spaces of educational leadership development. Obviously there may be ways in which the exposure to the ethnotheatre process enlivens future learning and sparks heightened perception that could not be captured through journaling or in such a relatively small study. A future principal might show restraint someday when her school's graduates give a spontaneous standing ovation to one of her future staff members. She might decide that though she feels insecure, maligning that teacher leader's success is actually inappropriate. The workshop participant who seemed initially resistant to the gay-straight alliance idea, might look up the research on suicide reduction among so-called straight males at schools with GSAs and rethink his or her stance. It is tempting to imagine that when this group of promising future teacher leaders receives their first ill-willed email after doing something really well, or faces their first untoward remark in the staff room from a less than appreciative colleague after their teacher

leadership debut, they might have more reference points, cues and clues, more notions of the phenomenon of the fragility of teacher leadership, and hopefully, creative and collaborative coping strategies to see them through.

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