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Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing, and Adjourning: Leadership Lessons from some Youth Thespians

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Abstract: *The development of youth agency and leadership skills offers many longterm benefits. This paper analyses an experimental high school action theatre project in the American Midwest, entitled Beyond the Borders (BTB), through the lenses of leadership and action theatre. Action theatre is an alternative theatre form that seeks to raise critical literacy and incite social change. It is often used by marginalized groups (Boal, 1985, 1995, 1998, 2001) but has yet to be adequately represented in educational curricula. I use Tuckman's (2001) group theory processes of forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning to create an ecological model that supports the analysis of BTB's lifecycle because this study involved participants that took on distributed leadership roles and because many theatre processes metaphorically simulate these processes. The data in this paper is reviewed retrospectively. I use a narrative approach in order to present the data "as embodiments of lived stories" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 43). Conclusions include the need to further cover action theatre pedagogies in educational systems because they provide rich experiential learning and leadership opportunities for youth and teachers and a call for organizational school leaders to commit space for optimizing leadership capacity and supports given to teachers and leaders engaged in said processes.*

Keywords: action theatre, critical literacy, distributed leadership, youth leadership, youth theatre

Introduction

This paper examines an experimental high school theatre project entitled *Beyond the Borders* (BTB) through the lenses of distributed leadership theory and action theatre. I cocreated BTB with another artist, using a leadership structure that we called d*irector-less theatre*. This type of theatre contrasts with traditional theatre in that it is more inclusive and more democratic than most theatre structures. BTB began as a three-week summer project

in the American Midwest, that joined two groups together from different high schools in developing their theatre skills by workshopping with artist V. Ashok Kumar—who will be henceforth referred to as Ashok, at his request.

I met Ashok at the annual *International People's Theatre Festival*, hosted by Natya Chetana, a non-government organization (NGO) in northeastern rural India, where I become fascinated by the highly stylized Indian theatre forms as well as the rigorous social commentary generated from plays presented at this festival. The summer project, which later became known as BTB's pilot, aimed to enable students interested in both theatre arts and social issues to explore the intersection of drama and social action by using certain Indian street theatre forms.

Action theatre can mean different things, but usually refers to theatre with an activist element. In university programs, including at faculties of education, action theatre is a rare guest. Action theatre troupes often live off grass-roots energy and meagre funding. I argue that action theatre ought to be introduced in pre-service teacher programs, as the pedagogies used are excellent for sparking creativity and developing youth agency, because they are experiential, student focussed, and promote reflection and critical literacy.

My time with BTB became the focus of my master's research. Ashok served as my expert informant. Beyond the Borders produced copyrighted material, and therefore its name was preserved. The names of students, however, have been changed to pseudonyms that students selected for themselves. This paper provides data and from-the-field conclusions about leadership praxis in K-12 educational contexts, specifically focussed on students, resulting in contributions to scholarship on early leadership emergence and development and on action theatre. Because many theatre processes metaphorically simulate Tuckman's (2001) group theory processes of *forming*, *storming*, *norming*, *performing*, and *adjourning*, I use these as a structuring device to create an ecological model that supports the analysis of BTB's lifecycle.

The data that I collected included interviews, participant journals, artistic artifacts (e.g., plays), and my own ongoing teaching journal (e.g., rehearsal notes, records of audience feedback, reflective entries). I analyzed this data retrospectively for this paper. Reflection on historical experiences is an act of "loyalty of one's self to its own past" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 117). By engaging in reflection, and challenging one's thought and actions, one can discover the positive identity virtue of authenticity (Roberts, Cha, Hewlin, & Settles, 2009), which is capacity-building.

I use a narrative approach in order to contemplate "embodiments of lived stories" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 43). Cogent narratives are best constructed from real, lived experiences. People often understand their own identities and processes through stories

that reveal nuanced complexities. This method allows for deep exploration of "the identities of the individuals and how they see themselves" (Creswell, 2013, p. 71). In this case, it processes my leadership stance at the time of this project. I did not view my role as a teacher, artist, or coach in terms of leadership. Ironically, I think that many teachers don't; they identify as *teachers* and think of leadership as something that vice principals and principals do. Teacher identity is complex, involves the intricate inter-weaving of the personal with professional, and is implicated in agency (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). The story of leadership that follows explores my growing awareness of the complexity of leadership.

Distributed Leadership Theory

From a distributed perspective, social interaction is a critical part of leadership practice.

(Harris, 2013, p. 546)

Distributed leadership is sometimes associated with other leadership models, (e.g., *team leadership*), as it is more collaborative than hierarchical. Bush (2011) distinguished two broad leadership approaches, which he referred to as *formal* and *collegial models*. Distributed leadership is situated in the latter classification, which includes sharing a vision and decision-making processes among team members (Bush, 2011). In recent years, distributed leadership has been the focus of much scholarly attention, particularly in educational settings (Bush, 2011; Gronn, 2010; Harris, 2010; Hartley, 2010); however, a significant portion of this research pertains to adult school leaders, such as principals and superintendents, not the development of youth leaders or classroom teachers.

Definitions of distributed leadership vary greatly (Harris, 2004), perhaps because of wide interest in this theory. Harris proposed the theory as a mindset rather than a methodology, offering a broad definition: "Distributed leadership concentrates on engaging expertise wherever it exists within the organization rather than seeking this only through formal position or role" (p. 13). As a mindset, distributed leadership has much to offer increasingly complex workplaces such as schools. Leadership tasks may be distributed according to either the strengths of the team members or their geographic locations, thus "maximizing effectiveness" and "encompassing the leadership repertoire of the entire team" (Northouse, 2016, p. 365). Distributive leaders need to be good communicators and flexible, adapting to the group's needs as they emerge.

One strength of distributed leadership is that the team's capacity can grow based on utilizing each individual team member's assets effectively. Schools vary greatly from one to another, and so a fluid leadership model taps into the strengths of many players at the same time as responding to unique cultural and other normative needs of the school. The

team is thus strengthened by the best qualities of its members. According to Hackman (2012), this happens when the following conditions are present: 1) a real team; 2) a compelling purpose; 3) the right people; 4) the norms of conduct are clear; 5) organizational support; and 6) team-focused coaching. Another strength of distributed leadership, according to Northouse (2016), "is that it is designed to focus on the real-life organizational work group and the leadership needed therein" (p. 382). Yet another strength that has solid empirical backing, is that distributed leadership can improve self-efficacy and morale (Hulpia Devos, & Van Keer., 2009), and school effectiveness (Leithwood, Mascall, & Strauss, 2009).

In developing his theory of distributed leadership, Spillane (2006) argued for a more inclusive understanding of leadership. His broader vision of leadership called upon viewing teachers as leaders and developing a leadership model that involved a rigorous exchange between formal and informal leaders and followers. According to Harris (2013) "distributed leadership theory reinforces that there are multiple sources of influence within any organisation" (p. 545). This strengthens the possibilities for distributed leadership in schools, so that leadership tasks are distributed laterally across school organizations, rather than hierarchically. I posit that this theory also deserves examination for developing emergent youth leaders, who can experiment with and develop their leadership capacity in distributed leadership settings. This disrupts a more traditional positioning of students as objects. Recognizing the leadership traits in them and identifying them as leaders repositions them as active subjects of their development.

Distributed leadership is highly normative, and herein lies one of its characteristics intriguing to me as a teacher who is interested in developing youth leadership through theatre projects. Theatre processes are often normative; a theatrical group will spend time developing a safe space in which people can work and express themselves freely. At the same time, critiques of distributed leadership also point to its normativity. Consensus seeking is time consuming, and so two of the common critiques are that it is "slow and cumbersome" (Bush, 2011, p. 92), and that its normativity "tend[s] to obscure rather than portray reality" (Bush, 2011, p. 91). Additionally, while distributed leadership in schools may have been borne out of pragmatic needs (Bush, 2011), such as the increasing complexity and demands in times of austerity, it should not be assumed that by distributing leadership tasks throughout the team, the leader has any less responsibility. In fact, the opposite may be true, as the leader must ensure that a positive work climate is maintained throughout distributed processes (Bush, 2011; Harris, 2005). Therefore, for those enthusiasts seeking to explore and develop their own distributed leadership models based upon the theory, it

would be wise to plan for messiness and delays, so as not to become frustrated early on. Quick solutions are not promised here.

Action Theatre: An Equitable Model Featuring Postmodern Marginality

Those who try to separate theatre from politics try to lead us into error – and this is a political attitude. (Boal, 1985, p. ix)

There is no consensus in the literature about what action theatre means. Many types of theatre may be referred to as action theatre, such as forum theatre, guerilla theatre, activist theatre, popular theatre, and people's theatre. I articulate the following definition of action theatre: the intersection where theatre arts meet social activism, for the purpose of bringing about social change. This change may simply be a mindset change, such as raising awareness about an issue, or it may incite specific action(s) of the audience. Guevara (1998) said that action theatre is used "to confront that political and economic system of exclusion to which they belong" (p. 41). According to him, those using action theatre engage in "postmodern marginality" (Tsing, 1993, p. 254), and in so doing, they "absorb the essence of power and then transform it so that the power is seen in new forms and relationships" (Guevara, 1998, pp. 41-42). Tsing's concept of *postmodern marginality* deserves some attention here.

I understand her discussion as distinct from postmodernism, which is beyond the scope of this paper. Action theatre is not postmodern: in fact, while it may use postmodern techniques, it aims to be generative rather than deconstructive, and so this latter feature is important to remember. According to Tsing, marginality does not displace the coherence of modern dominance and exclusion; rather, it refracts modern dominance from other angles. […] The eclectic fragments of marginality argue for survival. Even their deconstructions press for a space to stand on the (already undermined) platform of power. (p. 254)

Tsing's focus above pertained to the rich knowledge possessed by a Meratus Dayak woman of Southern Kalimantan, in Borneo. And yet she could have been describing the pedagogy of BTB, whose members were bound together from a sense of social arising (and shock), and who felt the need to do something artistically in response. BTBers refracted narratives of the dominant culture from a variety of angles, cognizant of what little power they had, but also cognizant of how much agency they could have if they only claimed it. This is the essence of action theatre. It allows for counter narratives to be refracted artistically, giving voice and agency to youth who are becoming playwrights, directors, and actors. As such, one must ask, why isn't this pedagogy at the very least given a cursory overview in

preservice teacher programs? I have taught continuing education drama to teachers for several years and there are few that are aware of action theatre.

Exploring power dynamics appealed greatly to the youth in the pilot, as they were in high school in a post-9/11 context, coming to terms with their country's president having launched a pre-emptive war in Iraq. They were also teens, acutely aware of ageism and many other -isms in their world. They had experienced numerous marginalities and wished to theatricalize these and then discuss the issues with their audiences.

The theatre arts are intrinsically collaborative, despite the visible hierarchy created by playbills and accolades. While mainstream theatres may utilize more formal leadership structures, where the power is concentrated with directors, many theatre organizations distribute leadership, popular theatre projects often challenge dominant power structures. Popular movements in Canada, such as *Theatre Passe Muraille* (1976), which is perhaps the first Canadian action theatre in Ontario, became considered a collective. However, leadership in theatre projects can be enigmatic.

Mainstream theatre, which Boal (2001) referred to as Bourgeois theatre, can be elitist. Tickets are expensive, especially for seats close to the stage and in private rooms. The playbill emphasizes the stars by notoriety, elevating lead roles and directors, while small roles and crew may not get any mention at all, although space for resistance even in elite theatre has been a feature dating back for hundreds of years, from Shakespeare's court theatre to the recent activism in- and off-script during productions of the musical *Hamilton*. The process of bringing a play through production involves a giant commitment to collaboration, all the while preserving the sense of safe space and trust. It would follow that popular theatre troupes would utilize distributed leadership more than plays featured at glamourous theatre houses. Popular theatre groups might also use fluid leadership structures, for financial concerns if not ethical ones.

As a young actor and emergent director, I was influenced by Stanislavsky (1948), who had developed a style of acting called *The Method* in which actors alter their being to become their character. The Method has been said to develop empathy and continues to be used because it tends to lead to believable acting. As a drama teacher, I was also influenced greatly by Boal. His *Games for Actors and Nonactors* (1992) provides a generous volume of drama activities, as well as the philosophy and pedagogy behind the activities.

Boal's (1985) highly renown theatre format *Theatre of the Oppressed* (*TO*) was developed as a popular alternative to elite theatre. Philosophically, it builds upon Freire's seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). Boal was also influenced by Stanislavsky, as he studied The Method in New York then modified it for a popular theatre movement upon returning to his home in Brazil (Boal, 2001). And so, Boal's *TO* offers a theatre format rich

in exploring and theatricalizing postmodern marginalities (Tsing, 1993), by transforming one pedagogy, thus creating opportunities to refract narratives that resonate with the people. One can detect vestiges of The Method in Boal's method. For example, Boal (1995) claimed that three relationships, all which stem from intense emotional work, between actor and image are the most potent: *identification*, *recognition*, and *resonance* (pp. 68-69). In turn, I looked to the work of Natya Chetana (2004), Ashok (Kumar,2005), and Boal (1985, 1992, 1995, 1998, 2001), to inform my emergent pedagogy, inviting the youth in BTB to transform these to suit their purposes.

Stanislavsky is attributed with the adage "Remember, there are no small parts, only small actors" (as cited in Saval, 2009, p. A1). This adage reminds actors of the importance of small details, and to be proud of one's work, regardless of the size of a part given. Similarly, this adage is appropriate in leadership because it may be small acts of leadership, followership, servitude, transformation, or vision that can give rise to great outcomes. Leadership has long been placed upon a pedestal, heroizing the leader while overlooking the backdrop of followers and supporters who help the leader to see his or her vision manifested. As I reviewed the data for leadership lessons from the youth in BTB, and of their leadership and my leadership roles that were distributed and blended together, I was reminded that leadership lessons come in all sizes and forms. I offer this adage in a leadership context too, as I turn to the following leadership lessons.

Leadership Lessons from Youth Thespians

Dissanayake's seminal treatise on art (1992) explored the nature and expressions of art. She contended that art is innately pleasurable, and that people are drawn to "making special" (p. 58). I am aware that all theatre activities that I have ever embarked upon, have been instances of me making special collectively with a group, and that while the work of BTB may be perceived as a social justice movement, it was embedded in the arts. This theatre journey has transformed me profoundly, in the way that other social justice movements that I've taken part of have not.

The following narrative is an abridged story of BTB's life cycle, described as five stages. Amazingly, this project outlasted anyone's predictions. Even when I was encouraged to continue the work after the pilot, I had assumed that BTB, as a theatre troupe, might produce plays for a semester or two. While the project became quite ad hoc at times, committing to working together one show at a time, the theatre troupe continued to produce and perform plays for over three years beyond the pilot project. The lifecycle came full circle when I resigned from my teaching position in order to move back to Canada. I had worked with the school to ensure a successor to work with the students, but soon after, the theatre troupe folded.

Forming: **Beyond the Borders Action Theatre Project**

When asked to evolve BTB from a pilot to an ongoing project, I felt flattered that the work that I was so passionate about was valued externally. Yet I also felt humbled by the responsibility to lead the project, conceived out of a spirit of social justice that was shared by a small group within the community who believed that empowerment gives rise to citizenship behaviour (Bogler & Somech, 2004).

BTB's engagement in *forming* began as soon as we reconvened for school that fall. As the leader and teacher in charge, I had to figure out my own leadership role in this project. I invited the summer participants to meet, and we discussed how BTB would proceed. In keeping with the concepts introduced during the pilot, I offered to the group an opportunity to work with the notion of director-less theatre. This theatre form, which is best understood in extant literature as Boalian (Boal, 1985, 1995), attempts to transform hierarchical theatre practices to more democratic ones. It's a grass-roots, bottom-up approach that features distributed leadership, with an understanding that no one in a theatre troupe is above anyone else. Any teacher placed in a leadership role such as this would notice a conundrum: how does one *lead*, or *direct* (as theatre teachers often do with drama clubs) a director-less theatre troupe? We decided to continue in the spirit of the Indian street theatre pedagogies used during the pilot, but adapted them to an American context.

The students sought to locate their authentic space within the group. Without Ashok leading, the group had the opportunity to "face the questions of identity and role (who am I to be in this group?); *authority and influence* (who will control whom in this group, and will I have my own influence needs met?)" (Schein, 2017, p. 128). It is clear from the data collected that conceptions of identity and understandings of location within the group were as diverse as the members in BTB.

In group projects, personal and organizational identities enjoy a complex dance of possibility but also of friction with one another. Brickson and Lemmon (2009) have defined organizational identity as "a collectively shared self-reflective cognitive schema that members draw on to answer the question, 'who are we as an organization?'" (pp. 412-413). As one can glean from this definition, the individual identities of the members within the organization are necessarily embedded in the organizational identity. However, it does not follow that the contributing identity constructs are aligned with one another. This collective identity formation is the work of forming, storming, norming, and performing as a group. Three key ways in which the collective identity changed were: (1) Ashok, the leader, left, and was replaced by me; (2) the group of students from City Park left, leaving a new collective group waiting to be defined; and (3) the project went from having a finite time

frame to an indefinite one. All of these dynamics involved a change in stakeholders, and would influence the way that BTB forged its organizational identity (Brickson, 2005).

Storming: Toward a Director-less Theatre Model

Schein (2017) has described this phase as being one in which who has authority and influence are determined. In the *storming* phase, BTB grappled with director-less theatre, both conceptually, and in practice. We sought out our individual and collective identities, "explicitly or implicitly confronting and testing each other" (Schein, 2017, p. 128). The ad hoc level of commitment may seem casual to a strategic planner and, I must admit, if funding had been attached to this ongoing project, something more concrete might have manifested. However, for BTB, it did seem like the most honest and ethical choice to make at the time. The concept of director-less theatre was an enigma that gradually unfolded itself to all of us involved. There were times when it worked well, and other times when it seemed to contradict the spirit of the grass-roots nature. For example, when Ivanka (a student) was asked "how do you relate those—your high expectations—how does it affect your role within the group?" she responded,

> Well I think a lot of people also think, they kind of think they're better at it than everyone else, so they just kind of make themselves this, these self-made leaders and it's just kind of announced…it's kind of like dictatorship, as odd as that sounds. (Interview with Ivanka)

During the *forming* period, we spent a great deal of time re-imagining our group. We discussed our group's composition: roughly some two dozen students (the numbers fluctuated) and a teacher. Within the context of the high school organization, in which any club or group must be supervised and led by a teacher or staff member, we agreed that I would lead them. Framed upon the oft used legal term *reasonable* as a guide, I would relinquish academic and artistic control to the students so that they could explore their creative and activist voices, thus developing youth agency within the community. As their leader, I would organize, network, book venues, manage communications, mediate between stakeholder groups, supervise rehearsals, represent and advocate for the group at performances, and guide them along the way. This included artistic and academic guidance, but in these last two areas, I refrained as much as possible and relied upon BTB members to seek my assistance, in order to authenticate their student-led experience.

Norming: Student Leaders Emerge

When BTB began *norming*, we discovered that some members were actively seeking leadership opportunities, while others had other priorities. According to Schein (2017), not

everyone desires to have influence over others in the group, but are perhaps more interested in cohesion. Some of the students had clear leadership goals that predated BTB.

Günther, for example, had already enjoyed leadership roles at his church and in the drama club.

> Günther, a self-professed "alpha" was a natural leader and everyone in the group deferred to him. He was also a talented actor, not only versatile in mainstream plays but also a great mimic of television personalities and impressive at improvisation. He was confident and assertive, and hence much of his material was adopted by the group. (Author's notes).

Günther was charismatic, and his leadership emerged and flourished quickly as he demonstrated his willingness to lead. Ivanka, who was in grade nine when she joined the pilot project, had distinct leadership aspirations, but since she was younger and less established in the school community, she developed her leadership in less overt ways than Günther. Alex, who had joined BTB specifically to provide support behind the scenes, developed a servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977; Reinke, 2004) that went largely unnoticed. However, her humble contributions such as researching, documenting, and organizing, proved critical to the strength of BTB without her ever exerting influence over the group.

When I interviewed Alex and asked her "how do you relate those—your high expectations—how does it affect your role within the group?", she answered "I think it gives me a little more leadership." (Interview with Alex). There were members who were not interested in leading at all (e.g., Aruna and Taylor). Deilek, who joined BTB after the pilot, although new to the school, was an enthusiastic follower who rapidly embraced leadership roles. Like Günther, Deilek was outgoing, charismatic, and ambitious.

> My own expectations are to eventually in the future, have a leadership role, theoretically, in some, in a political sense, and so I guess I find myself now, not necessarily in a leadership role, but as a strong member of the group, which leads me hopefully to someday be able to support the ideals the group has and promote the concepts of the social issues that we discuss. (Interview with Deilek)

Aruna was more content in followership roles. Yet her energy, enthusiasm, and willingness to follow and try new things motivated the group. Claire, like Aruna, was a supportive follower. She was one of the members who signed up for the India field trip, which was a combined BTB theatre trip and an Interact Club service project. Claire was selected as the protagonist of the play. She also took on significant duties prior to the trip to raise funds, get intercultural training, and help organize the service project. Prior to this trip, Claire had not identified as being capable of leadership. She shared her story of coming into herself from afar:

I really did love working with Ashok, his accent was a little difficult to understand however all of his positives out weight (*sic*) the one negative. The positives are his willingness to help and you can tell that he seriously wants to help. Also his enthusiasm about theatre and social issues was really infectious. He did a lot for me in the aspect that he picked me for the lead role, I know it sounds conceded (*sic*) however that was the first time in my life that I thought that I was actually good at something and I wasn't a complete failure. This did a lot for my confidence as well because if I could put on a play before these people in a different country and also they had some sort of predisposition on the fact that we were Americans. Working with Ashok also taught me to think outside the box more. (Claire's participant journal)

Returning from the trip, Claire took on numerous leadership challenges and larger acting roles. Today, Claire is a public leader who positively influences people.

Because of Günther's leadership aspirations, I approached him about the group's vision.

Günther: If it were completely up to me, I would take it, more of a current events type thing. Um, cause that's just where my personal tastes run. Ah, you know stuff…civil liberties I think would be a good one. Um, kind of how political elections have turned into, not so much elections, more as, you know, the all the negativeesque stuff like that. More of uh, I wouldn't say pop culture, more of a current social, what just to use a good word on this, ah, a social *direction* type thing. Or more commentary on, I hate to say pop culture, that *society* as it is, is going down now…Yes. But that's just me.

REBECCA: Sort of like editorializing on where society is going?

Günther: Yeah. But more, I mean, my tastes also are towards satire […] it's my opinion that people respond better to, ah, more heavy messages if they're laughing. Laughter is rather disarming for sensitive issues. (Interview with Günther)

Performing: The Challenges of Distributive Leadership

"Inevitably, issues of power, authority and inequality loom over distributed leadership as they do in any other form of leadership and its associated practice." (Harris, 2013, p. 546).

In the *performing* stage, BTB took on task accomplishment by and through performance (Schein, 2017). The director-less theatre-cum-distributed leadership of the group stumbled around the multiple hats that people wore. As the school's drama club advisor, I oversaw the 1-Acts Festival. One of my duties, that of the festival stage manager,

required me to keep on top of the various play directors to ensure that all plays were ready to go. When BTB was performing in the festival, then I as the festival director had to ensure that BTB conformed to festival performance protocols. And yet, as the advisor to the director-less theatre group, members might have expected me to abstain from acting with authority over the group. Some of our workshop gigs were more informal in nature, and since virtually every BTB member was overextended in extracurricular activities, and since the project was director-less, I didn't always hold members to the same attendance norms as I did when directing musicals. In one instance, I wore the 1-Act Festival director hat to the BTB rehearsal, and announced that dress rehearsal attendance was mandatory, and that anyone who was absent would see their role replaced for the evening of the production. Two students who were strong actors, missed the dress rehearsal but showed up to perform on the production night. I held to my promise and they did not perform that night. I later wrote,

> I felt guilty about following through with this because I had resisted the temptation on many occasions to assert control over the group in any way other than to facilitate their work and advocate for them to community members. (Author's notes)

That incident weighed heavily upon me afterward and led me to do two things. First, I sought input from other students about their goals, specifically regarding attendance, and I also sought the feedback of two supportive mothers of members, who had offered to help with administrative tasks, and to ease my increasing sense of burden with holding it all together while serving the students and giving them agency and leadership opportunities. Second, based on the feedback that I received from students, who were feeling increasingly pressed by post-secondary applications and admissions, I spoke with the group about issues of time and commitment. We collectively decided that from then on, our new modus operandi would be to take *in-progress* works, and to continue to elicit audience feedback, which would now be dual in purpose: to seek impressions about the issues presented, and to seek their opinions about the dramatic material presented. This solution worked.

Distributed leadership is a democratic (Chapman & Harris, 2002), yet timeconsuming (Bush, 2011) "and fraught with argument, cross-purposes and other obstacles that may lead one to believe that consensus will never be achieved" (Stroud Stasel, 2010). While it felt like a compromise of my values, and hence an initial affront to my own teacher identity as a goal-oriented person, to present pieces of theatre as formative, unpolished pieces, it resonates with my pedagogy as a drama teacher, which is to say that process is richer than product in terms of the learning taking place.

The following lesson applies to the development of future leaders, especially in education. It emphasizes the value of lived experiences in forming a praxis. I wrote, Perhaps

the biggest lesson that I have learned from the entire experience, but mostly from watching students in their processes is that education needs to provide for actual experiences (Dewey, 1938) that will lead students toward greater responsibility and advocacy. […] How do we best prepare our students for their future lives as adults? This is no simple task. In reviewing my journals and the research participant journals, as well as the interview data, I understand that the entire BTB experience has affirmed for me what I have believed for a long time: in order for children to transition from a state of little power and little responsibility to one of greater power and greater responsibility, they must be given many opportunities to experience power and responsibility. In doing so, they can test their ideas and discover their budding values systems. In addition, they strengthen their confidence in self-advocacy and responsibility-taking. This is how good leadership is developed and no amount of learning theory can replace the value of experience that is necessary for this, although theory can be used to enhance learning through experience. Without actual experience, however, students' understanding of power and responsibility remains academic […] Opportunities must be created so that students can explore their ideas and develop their autonomous voices. (Stroud Stasel, 2010, pp. 177-178).

Students need experiences to learn and develop agency. Agency development is critical for growing into responsible adults. Crucially, budding leaders need experiential education in order to grow.

Adjourning: Reflective Analysis

School leadership … is a complex synergy of emotion and leadership. (Crawford, 2009, p. 2). *Become part of a movement to a more holistic approach that nurtures the diverse talents of all our children"* (Robinson & Aronica, 2015, p. xvii).

Eventually, when I left the school, BTBers *adjourned*, and sought other opportunities. Interestingly, many of these involved embracing bigger leadership roles. One student wrote a play, another a film. One became involved in social justice advocacy at college and ended up working in the White House, others became leaders in their organizations and communities after they left high school. Once we adjourned, I began my data analysis, and entered into a deep reflective phase that has transformed the way I think and teach. In this section, I analyse some of the challenges that present themselves when using distributed leadership.

Norming Must Include Development of Trust

Dramatic arts teachers understand the importance of trust. A drama class cannot progress without first establishing trust with one another. A drama production risks being muted and flat in the absence of trust. These understandings are fairly universal among drama educators. Trust is equally important in leadership-followership dynamics, since trust between leaders and followers generates both flourishing and positive emotional states (Cameron, 2003; Kreiner & Sheep, 2009; Kutsyuruba, Walker, & Noonan, 2016). These states involve an energy commonly referred to as *working in the zone*, which is also understood as *flow* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997), resulting in high levels of engagement in one's work as well as the emergence of intense creativity. It is flow that can transform students in a dramatic production to discover their gifts, leading to "spontaneous gratitude children express for being allowed to learn this way" (Paxton, 2011, p. 10). I posit that the generation of flow makes transformational leaders influential: they are able to transform followers to a level of engagement where followers feel personally connected to their work, and hence produce better quality work (Judge et al., 2001).

Is Fluidity of Leadership Enough?

When considering the versatility of distributed leadership, chiefly the feature of leadership fluidity, some real challenges and questions emerge. I struggled to define the various delegated leadership hats that I accepted, aware that while leadership was purposefully distributed to the teens in this theatre project, yet as the teacher in charge, I was still accountable for maintaining the troupe in a healthy state, which is to say, aligned with the school policies and the educational laws governing the school when it came to BTB's activities.

Leaders such as teachers, who may wear multiple leadership hats in different capacities, may also find conflicts in reconciling information or actions from one leadership role with those of another leadership role. Most BTBers were or had been students in my classroom; some were debaters on the team that I coached, or in school play and musicals that I directed. As a teacher, I was am privy to classified information that may determine a course of action, which I could not make transparent to the students, despite our working in a director-less theatre project, where full transparency was a norm. I do not know of any educators who are not engaged in multiple leadership roles, and it can be a treacherous tightrope walk at times. The successful navigation of one role can impinge upon an unrelated role that the same leader fulfills (e.g., the 1-Acts Festival previously referenced). This has implications for multiple-hat leaders, because the leader may be engaged in other leadership styles, such as transactional leadership (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003), which is top-down.

Notwithstanding the clear benefits of distributed leadership in school settings, with the specific purpose of developing emergent youth leaders, might distributed leadership as a mindset also be more fruitful when paired with complementary ways of thinking or modes of doing? In other words, what complementary theories and methods might strengthen a distributed leadership mindset or approach?

Leadership traits such as humility, which increase a leader's impact in servant leadership (Nielsen, Marrone, & Slay, 2010; Sousa & van Dierendonck, 2017), may also be useful in distributed leadership situations. Greenleaf's (1977) vision of servant leadership distributes power justly, and therefore offers possibility with distributing leadership for the purpose of developing youth leaders. Rather than exerting power over followers, servant leaders work to empower others (Lynch & Friedman, 2013). One way of empowering others is to observe the strengths of the followers and then facilitate the development of their leadership capacities through distributed leadership.

Another example from transformational leaders, who "foster appropriate changes by tapping into and shaping common values, goals, needs, and wants to develop and elevate others in accordance to the agreed upon values" (Burns, 1978, p. 20), may be informative in the distributed leadership context. Transformational leaders invest significant energy developing the capacity of their followers. Transformational leaders have been shown to motivate (Burns, 1978), improve school climate (Barnett, McCormick, & Conners, 2000) and school effectiveness (McCarley, Peters, & Decman, 2016). A pairing of the two leadership styles could be used so that emerging youth leaders who express an interest in leadership are mentored by transformational leaders.

When does a Leader Override the Distributed Leadership of Another Leader?

The occasion of my cancelling the performance of two members who skipped the dress rehearsal provides an opportunity to reflect upon leadership perspectives. The literature suggests that distributed leadership is in some ways more complex than it seems. It certainly appears that at times I may have assumed that the delegation of leadership based on strengths in a director-less theatre model would be so socially just that it would mitigate the growing pains that ensued by our shared journey. One thing is clear from this experience, which is also reflected in the literature (e.g., Bush, 2011): the development of leadership takes time and space for experience. It is a messy process, and leadership ought to start with youth that are so-inclined. In this regard, BTB offered a rich leadership opportunity for those youth who wanted it, and they have developed themselves significantly since the project.

Conclusions

In reviewing the data from the participants in this study, it appears that some people are strongly attracted to leadership and discover facets of themselves through leadership processes. The same holds true of artistic processes. People like to belong, and while some participants felt a greater sense of belonging through the discovery and subsequent development of their leadership, such as Claire, others, such as Aruna, expressed their sense of belonging as being a committed follower and fellow actor.

Spawned as a cultural project, supported by and embedded in equity and diversity initiatives that were paramount at the time, BTB nonetheless needed to create its own collective identity and culture. Bush (2011,) has claimed that "leaders have the main responsibility for generating and sustaining culture, and communicating core values and beliefs, both within the organization and to external stakeholders" (p. 182). As a teacherleader interested in promoting youth leadership, I looked to the needs of the members of BTB to determine how to best empower them in their quests.

Of course, I also held legal and moral responsibility as the academic advisor to BTB, and so I was always acutely aware of external stakeholder opinions. This was one of the reasons why I sought and accepted external parental and professional feedback. I wanted to support the students in their desire to test their views and develop agency, but I also needed to make sure that these processes wouldn't run amok. Kirika (2001) stated: "It is through education and learning that leadership can be mastered as an instrument that informs and influences human behavior and its consequent outcomes" (p. 15). Strong leadership, both at the school and with the equity and diversity organizations, enabled BTB to have its life cycle. Because of this, many youths were given opportunities to explore leadership at a very young age. At the end of the day, education is all about the kids and their development.

Distributed leadership is a useful model in educational contexts. I agree with Harris (2004) that this model serves leaders better as a mindset than as a prescription of set procedures. It is up to the leaders in their own unique context to give specific shape to what distributed leadership looks like. Even still, distributed leadership comes with risks, especially when the leader is amateur. While distributed leadership welcomes emergent, amateur leaders, such as myself and the students in my charge, it also requires strong educational administrative leadership in order to guide and maintain stability within the group. Additionally, because both the needs of the group and the leadership structures are fluid, we also need versatile and adaptive leaders to facilitate development among the budding leaders. Distributed leadership, like other models, needs to attend to leaders-intraining.

Distributed leaders should also commit to regular reflection that includes recording evidence from their work, so that they can map their progress, challenges, and next steps. Finally, youth and teacher leaders need to have strong mentors to help and support them. This includes not only the presence of one or more mentors available for the emergent leaders, but also that structural supports in the school-wide plan be there to support spaces, times, and the learning processes for emergent leaders to develop their capacities. I was not assigned a mentor for my work with BTB; however, I was able to rely upon my principal, who was accessible, ambitious, and supportive of my work for the school. Likewise, the diversity coordinator informally guided me throughout all the work that was linked with the various equity and diversity bodies during my tenure. Finally, Ashok continued to mentor me regularly from India. I had the structural supports needed at school, which generated trust between me and my leaders which led me to believe that I was able to grow, and not to fear the inherent struggles in the journey that necessarily come with such experimental work and developmental leadership. By receiving ample support to lead and serve, I in turn was able to mentor and guide the students in BTB who sought to lead themselves. These leadership lessons serve to illustrate a wide range of possibilities of distributed leadership, as well as to unpack some of the various challenges that this model presents.

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*Art is **always** an instance of making special* (Dissanayake, 1992, p. 92).

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