Article

Acting Up:

Theater of the Oppressed as Critical Ethnography

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Abstract

In this paper the author reports on the use of Theater of the Oppressed in a long-term critical ethnography. Building on the work of performative ethnographers, she reviews the literature on the uses of drama in qualitative research and explores the traditional research lines that are blurred in the process. More important, she details the experiences collecting and analyzing data using Theater of the Oppressed. In other published accounts of performative ethnography, data collection is emphasized and data analysis is not usually discussed, in part, because the line between data collection and analysis is blurred in the use of theater as inquiry. The author not only examines that blurring but suggests a method of analysis that others might find useful. The study focused on the integration of English language learners in a Midwestern U.S. high school. The author used Theater of the Oppressed with teachers to explore their role in the bullying activities of students. The analysis reveals changes in awareness witnessed through the drama.

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Introduction

> Inquiry that aspires to the name *critical* must be connected to an attempt to confront the injustice of a particular society or a sphere within society. Research thus becomes a transformative endeavor unembarrassed by the label "political" and unafraid to consummate a relationship with an emancipatory consciousness. (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1998, p. 264, emphasis in original)

Unityville called out for help. Critical ethnography was our response.

> There exist relatively few occasions, in the course of a lifetime, which provide the opportunity to confront processes of radical social transformation. (Fals-Borda, 1979, p. 33)

What was happening at Unityville[1] seemed radical to those of us who were living life there. Unityville was in flux. Educators were unsure how to respond to the rapid increase in the town's school corporation's number of English as a new language (ENL) students. They invited us[2] in and engaged with us in a long-term critical ethnography called The IU-Unityville Outreach Project. The overall goal of the project was to use inquiry to find ways to succeed educationally with the new groups of students entering the schools. The full ethnography was expansive, including several Unityville schools, years of engagement, and a team of researchers. Various ethnographic activities went on simultaneously from 2001 through 2006. In this paper I draw on one small piece of the larger ethnography.

As one might expect, the complexities and instabilities of participants' experiences were difficult to capture through observations. They were also difficult to capture in interviews because participants were simultaneously novices in reflecting on their experiences and guarded about what they said. In addition to needing methods that could help us explore these complexities, I hoped that the research would contribute to the change process already going on in the schools. Fals-Borda (1979) argued that we have a responsibility as members of the research community to interpret and understand social change so that our work might be a catalyst for transformation. With these aims, I sought to complement our traditional uses of participant observation, interviews, and focus groups with less typical ethnographic methods. One of several innovative methods to which I turned was Boal's (1985) Theater of the Oppressed (TO). In this paper I report on the use of TO techniques to explore teachers' conception of and engagement with bullying as a form of educational oppression.

Teachers drew on authentic experiences while they participated in TO, but those experiences were also rendered malleable to actors' imaginations and transformations. The data generated through TO reflected possibilities of action related to the life of the school, rather than anything we had actually witnessed to date. The technique blurred the line between capturing what was actually going on and inspiring what could be going on. It is a technique that cautiously afforded change at the hands of actors.

The purpose of this paper is to report on methods and findings associated with my adaptation of Boal's (1985) Theater of the Oppressed for critical ethnography. This paper contributes to a growing scholarship that uses theater as research (Conrad, 2004; Donmoyer & Yinnie-Donmoyer, 1995; Norris, 2000; Saldaña, 2005). The particular research questions include

- How was oppression recognized and conceptualized by the teacher-participants in reference to bullying? Most specifically, to what extent and in what ways were teacher-participants aware of the oppression of newcomer students through bullying? and

- What transformations in acting and conceptualizations were evidenced by the teacher-participants through the theater work?

I organized the paper into five sections. In the first section I briefly introduce Unityville and the context of the study. In the second, I review the literature relevant to methodological uses of drama. In the third, I describe the specific method used in this study. In the fourth section of the paper, I present the findings. I conclude with a synthesis of methodological reflections.

This paper offers the following methodological contributions. It serves as an example of the use of Theater of the Oppressed in a long-term critical ethnography through which change was to be understood and documented. I also discuss the blurring of traditional methodological distinctions between data and analysis, real and imaginary, and researcher and participant. In my view, the most important contribution is a report of findings that result from analysis. Few studies using drama as research report on analysis. Ultimately, the paper confronts the challenge for researchers to engage with participants in consciousness-raising, transformation, and emancipation.

The context of high school in Unityville

Educators at the public high school in Unityville contacted me, and, thus, it was there that our work began. In this paper I report only on our work at the high school because that was the site where I used TO. The four most prevalent groups of newcomers were Arabic-speaking Palestinians, Taiwanese, Japanese (the second largest group), and Latinos (the largest group). Latino students arrived from a variety of countries but predominantly from Mexico. The Japanese students were unique in the group because they were typically in the Unityville schools for only a couple of years (they moved to town with their fathers' jobs), following which they returned to Japanese high schools. Furthermore, the Japanese students came from middle-class families, which could not be said of the other newcomers.

Until 2000 there was no special program for ENL learners. In 2000 one of the English teachers who knew some Spanish was partially reassigned to teach the newcomer students for two class periods a day. This teacher was not provided with training to support her reassignment. From 2000 to 2002 the White[3] student population rate decreased from 95% to 90% in inverse relation to the rise in newcomer students. Asian[4] student enrollment increased from .5% to 1%; Hispanic[5] student enrollment increased from 1.4% to 3.7%. There was a steady African American population during these years of less than 1%. The rest of the population comprised newcomer students who fell outside the categories of Asian and Hispanic.

Initial focus groups

We began our ethnography at Unityville High School with a series of focus group interviews conducted in the home languages of the various constituents: Latino students, parents, teachers, and administrators, for examples. These interviews provided us with an opportunity to start a conversation with and across members of the various language groups and across the various roles used to categorize participants. At the time, people in Unityville were not talking with one another about what it meant to have or to be newcomers in the school. Teachers were not even having extensive conversations among themselves about the educational efforts and problems they were encountering.

Initial focus group interviews with educators led us to believe that they did not understand the experiences of their ENL students. Lack of knowledge about ENL learners was coupled with a host of negative attitudes. ENL students were not described by the teachers in terms that were remotely empathetic. The talk about newcomers focused on their lack of "language skills," their "bad attitudes," their "isolationism," and local "fear" of them; for example, many teachers expressed worries that the newcomers' families were in town to take jobs away from Americans or that they were contributing to local crime. Teachers and White students also used racial comments as a way of interpreting what was going on at the school. For example, a large number of teachers reported that Latinos were "like the new Blacks." An important side note to this story is that Unityville had been a seat for Ku Klux Klan activity in the Midwest during the first half of the 20th century. During this time, the Ku Klux Klan had boasted a membership of one third of Untiyville's native-born White men (Moore, 1991). Comparing Latinos to Blacks was racially complicated in unacknowledged ways.

Although we learned a lot through those initial interviews with teachers, our interviews and focus groups with newcomer students were stunning. We learned a lot about the day in and day out experiences of the students because there were many common sentiments expressed during through the focus groups. I used students' expressions to construct a "dramatic reading"[6] for the high school staff (described below) because I wanted to be sure that the educators did not dismiss the voices by trying to argue that they reflected only extreme cases. The dramatic reading can be found in the appendix. Many students told us that they did not feel welcome at the school. They reported that their White peers yell at them in the halls, including saying things like, "Migrant, leave our town" and "Go home, you dirty Mexicans." They did not understand why their teachers yelled at them and expressed a lot of sadness and confusion related to their schooling experiences. Many students said they choose death over a lifetime of experiences like those they were having. The students also told us that their parents had made many sacrifices to bring them to the United States, so they felt it necessary to hide their negative experiences from their parents.

As a team we realized that we had been provided access to experiences the educators were not privy to in part because of the language differences and in part because of trust issues. The high school students' experiences were severe and fundamentally negative. It was our relationships with the students and our concern for their well-being that provided us with motivation to collaborate on a plan for more long-term engagement with Unityville.

Evidence of oppression

Our initial focus group interviews provided us with a general understanding of the scene, including evidence that oppressive relationships were in place, but they did not provide us with enough clarity or detail to promote our thorough understanding of the situation. According to Harvey (1999), civilized oppression involves the deep and pervasive suffering of groups as a result of unconscious assumptions and reactions of well-meaning people in ordinary interactions. The unconscious assumptions are backed up by media stereotypes, social hierarchies, and the systems of advantage we quite easily take for granted. Freire (1977/2000) argued that oppression was relational, objectively verifiable, and changeable. Both Harvey and Freire emphasized the way broad, systemic oppression is located in everyday activities, including those of people who might otherwise find oppression reprehensible. Understanding oppression at the level of everyday life often requires a subtle approach. Our interviews provided us with clues, but we needed methods that could reach deeper into the patterns of everyday activities and meaning making. The Theater of the Oppressed did that by fostering our understanding of the complexities and mechanisms of oppression at work in the school while also providing an opportunity to begin the work of consciousness-raising and the transformation of action patterns. Convinced threefold that

some oppression was part of the lived experience of participants, people can be liberated from oppressive relationships, and TO is one way to foster liberation, I planned a Theater of the Oppressed workshop with high school teachers. The workshop was held in January 2004 as part of a professional development day our ethnographic team sponsored.

A brief description of the larger ethnography

The specific methods related to my use of TO are described below, but it is important to provide the larger ethnographic context within which this smaller piece resides. We began our work in Unityville with a series of focus group interviews in the fall of 2002. Our university contingent transcribed all focus group interviews and translated the ones not conducted in English into English. I analyzed the data, conducted member checks and peer debriefing, then wrote a report to Unityville describing what we found and proposing a critical ethnographic project. We met with a team of Unityville educators from a variety of schools and across a variety of roles. Numerous projects were developed that involved more than 15 graduate students, all the ENL students, three schools, and multiple teachers, classrooms, administrators, and parents.

From 2002 through 2007 we conducted hundreds of hours of observations, interviews, and focus groups as well as a variety of alternative data collection strategies. For example, at the high school we constituted a teacher inquiry group who collaboratively created and implemented a multidisciplinary intercultural peace unit. We obtained institutional review board (IRB) approval from both the university and the corporation's school board. We examined data on all such project activities. Most of our work was at the high school because this is where the most severe problems were being experienced, because there were more ENL students at this school, and because we had the strongest relationships at this school. All of our work with students and their families was conducted in home languages. Most of the graduate students were involved in the project throughout its life.

Several dissertations were completed using portions of the data from the larger ethnography, and several conference presentations and papers have been published. The first paper I published was coauthored with two graduate students, one of whom had taken a full-time temporary position with the school (Korth, Martin, & Sotoo, 2007).

Drama and methodology: An introduction

In this section, I review the literature on using theater as method. By offering TO as a form of critical qualitative inquiry, I hoped to provide active opportunities for participants to explore their own awareness in dialogue with each other and to imagine new possibilities for acting within a context identified as problematic. These sound like pedagogical goals, not ethnographic ones. However, according to a growing number of educational ethnographers, research goals can be broadened and in just such a way as to include consciousness raising, critical reflection, and explorations into the way things could be (Korth, 2002), including what research might be (Fine, 2006). Lather (1991) developed the phrase *catalytic validity* to refer to research projects whose validity rests, in part, on the effects they inspire for those involved in the study. Trinh (1982) argued for a social science whose goal is to provide opportunities for experience rather than explanations of experience. Denzin (2003) described a form of social science methodology aimed at using "words and stories that individuals tell to fashion performance texts that imagine new worlds, worlds where humans can become who they wish to be, free of prejudice, repression, and discrimination" (p.105). He called this performance ethnography. Both Trinh (see especially the film *Reassemblag*e, 1982) and Denzin expressed dissatisfaction with and distrust of research that

aims only to present things as they supposedly are. Aligned with critical researchers in general, their versions of ethnography emphasize its moral character; fallible, and always involved in the tenuous, but necessary, relation between what is and what ought to be.

Ethnographers have traditionally held themselves accountable to standards of engagement that respect the autonomy and freedom of participant communities, aiming to minimize the extent to which their research disrupts the communities. This traditional view coincides with a set of research goals: to describe experiences, activities, and worldviews from within the lifeworld of the community of study and to privilege the experiences of community members on their own terms. The main purpose of critical research is not to reproduce, depict, or represent the life of a community for outsiders as if taking a photograph (Korth, 2005) but, rather, to engage with and understand the life perspectives of a community for its own sake and the benefits of others. Once these goals have been met, criticalists hold, the sanctity of norms internal to a community can be rationally queried on their own terms and by putting them in a dialogue with different sets of norms (Habermas, 1981).

Thus, critical and postmodern ethnographers aim to engage community members in democratic dialogue with multiple possible outcomes allowing for the "could be" of social science. Drama and theater have become part of this critical form of ethnography. For example, Mienczakowski (1995) extended traditions in radio and stage drama with the goal of producing what he called "public voice ethnography for its emancipatory and educational potential" (p. 364). He rightly argued that voicing disempowered perspectives for an audience could meet these potentials.

Using theater as ethnography blurs the line between what is and what could be; in others words, between what is and what ought to be. Furthermore, it challenges uncomplicated notions of *naturalistic* and *observation*, seeking to find something new and to juxtapose what participants see in their own experiences with what they think about those experiences (Madison, 2005). According to Conquergood (2002), who moved during his long career from doing traditional ethnography to doing performance ethnography, performance "opened the space between analysis and action" (p.145). These uses of drama necessarily draw from the naturalistic action-repertoires familiar to actors while providing opportunities to experience newness within familiar contexts.

The use of theater and drama as ethnography

There are some historical developments that led to the juncture we now refer to as performance ethnography/research (Conrad, 2004). As with any history, what has converged as the present moment cannot be simply captured in a detailed account of origins or influences because there are always multiple and divergent sets of experiences with no particularly linear path. Uses of drama and theater to stir critical consciousness and provoke audience reflection audience were being more commonly written about and gained some currency and momentum in the 1960s and 1970s. When adopted, this form of theater unsettles the audience and forces them to actively think about what is happening rather than passively experience the vicarious roles as enacted through the script (Brecht, 1964). This is an explicitly political and social way of doing drama. Contemporary scholars have developed this further, using drama to resolve conflicts and address social concerns (Salazar, 1991; Saldaña, 1999, 2003, 2005). A variety of alternative forms of theater sharing these basic ideas gained popularity in recent decades. There are many playback theaters that engage participant experiences in retelling with a trained troupe of improvisational actors. In Vancouver, Canada, a group called Theatre of the Living (2008) employs TO techniques. Taken all together, these efforts in theater have reframed the passive theater experience into an active opportunity to engage in understanding, social change, and personal transformation.

From within the field of qualitative research, the movement toward participatory action research seeks to engage participants in research (not conduct research on participants) toward their own goals, lives, and social transformations (Fals-Borda, 1987; McTaggart, 1997). There is some overlap across these two trajectories, and that overlap is best marked by a few key references, noted in all the major literature on drama and research.

Performance ethnography (Denzin, 2003) comprises a dialogue through which performers and audience are engaged reciprocally and democratically in performing common "texts." The idea of performing texts of ordinary life experiences to engage democratically and reflectively with those texts was not new to Denzin. Conquergood (1985), Mienczakowski (2001), Smith and Gallo (2007), Jones (2002), and many others have developed the use of drama in conjunction with the conduct of research.

Over a decade ago, Mienczakowski (1995) began writing about public-voice ethnography. He was interested in health care policy and practice and argued that ethnodramas provided emancipatory opportunities for health care community members by putting the reading of data back into their hands. Mienczakowski (2001) provided clear directions for using ethnodrama as a form of ethnography. First, ethnographers created performance scripts based on observations and interviews. Second, the scripts were distributed to community members, who were asked to comment. Third, co-performers, members of the larger community, read these scripts with the additional commentary. Fourth, the scripts were performed by members of that larger community through reading and staging. Finally, the ethnographers facilitated a postperformance discussion that invited the reworking of texts and understandings associated with the performance.

According to Mienczakowski (2001), ethnodrama involves being fully present in the now, not thinking of the past or the future. His emphasis on the present is particularly insightful. It is not merely a reference to a point in time but more inclusively involves an attitude of liminality (Turner, 1967) and a willingness to explore what has not yet come into being by acting in such a way as to bring the possibility about. Liminality (Turner, 1967) connotes a moment of change where one is neither who one was before the experience nor who one will be after the experience. Oftentimes liminal spaces are regularized through ritual, but they always amount to providing a "playground" for being new. Liminality can be linked to what Heidegger (1962) considered part of our ordinary experience: the impending to be; that is, an awareness of the potential of who one becomes through an act about to be undertaken. Performance ethnographers hope to encourage these opportunities to experience liminality and explore the impending to be. Traditional ethnographies tend to flatten this into "what we know." Ethnodrama keeps the impending nature of the present at play. Also, the word *presence* comes to connote the perspective or experience of a self. More specifically, ethnodrama keeps the impending nature of the self-of-the present at play.

Mienczakowski's (2001) ethnodrama is one example of contemporary convergences between theater and critical research. His hope for the return to dialogic and democratic, communitarian, and transformative reflection is clearly critical. On the stage, a critical dialogue of gestures, words, shapes, and images unfolds (Boal 1979; Brecht 1964). Of this critical potential, Dolan (2005) claimed that

> 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)

This "place" has become fertile for doing research. Analysis of the literature indicates that drama is currently involved in research on several levels: It is being used to reflect data and analysis to a broader audience (Arditti, 2003; Cozart, Gordon, Gunzenhauser, McKinney, & Petterson, 2003;

Donmoyer & Yennie-Donmoyer, 1995), to bring participants and others into dialogues that data collection has inspired (Jones, 2002), as a data collection technique (Bowman, 2006; Conrad, 2004; Prentki & Selman, 2000), as disciplinary critique (Smith & Gallo, 2007; Piercy & Benson, 2009), and as a participatory form of analysis (Korth, 2006; Madison, 2005). Of course, many of the above references use drama in multiple ways.

My paper contributes to this literature. Oftentimes with performance ethnography the performance and the findings are synonymous. One of the reasons for this is that "findings" take on a different meaning in participatory action research. The findings are not meant to be a final pronouncement of the way things are; instead, they are offered as a point of dialogue for a broader but inclusive audience, juxtaposing what is and what could be. In fact, Mienczakowski (1995) wrote, "Given in the voices of the respondents, there is little need for an ethnographer to academize and rephrase them to obscure their import, as they are already in the public voice" (p. 368). Traditional analysis risks this. In my work, however, analysis was an integral part of the project. Contrary to more traditional forms of data analysis, the participants were actively engaged. As the procedures are described in detail, I show that at some points the lines between data collection and data analysis were blurred and at other points they were not. This paper is an opportunity to further the methodological conversation on these blurrings.

Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed: A brief introduction

Freire's (1977/2000) pedagogy of the oppressed fosters the development of consciousness and the transformation of oppressive relationships. Liberation from oppression makes it possible for all of us to engage more authentically and completely in efforts to become most fully human. He wrote, "Dehumanization, which marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen, but also (though in a different way) those who have stolen it, is a *distortion* of the vocation of becoming more fully human" (p. 44). There is no more basic reason for engaging in social science research than to serve the potential of becoming most fully human. It seems to me that all other endeavors make sense with this end in sight.

The pedagogy of the oppressed (Freire 1977/2000) locates its critical and liberating potential in the active involvement of oppressors and oppressed in conscious exploration of what binds, legitimizes, and reproduces oppressive relationships. Theater of the Oppressed (TO; Boal, 1985) is a form of pedagogy of the oppressed, the principles of which are completely compatible with a critical qualitative approach to inquiry. For a nice history of TO and related approaches in theater, see Conrad (2004).

Critical methodology, pedagogy of the oppressed, and TO share both an underlying critical epistemology that is pragmatic in nature (Habermas, 1981) and a set of social values that work toward a more egalitarian, mutually respectful, communicatively liberal society capable of supporting its members in their quests to be fully human. The objective conditions of oppression have psychological and communicative effects that make the oppression visible through an analysis of our everyday actions: our ordinary performances. Moreover, "In performance ethnography, the performance spills from the stage into 'real' life" (Conrad, 2004, p. 9), and performances can be used to resolve conflicts and change the ways in which real life is enacted (Sternberg, 1998).

**Creating the Performance:
A Description of Methods**

In this section I provide a detailed accounts of my use of TO as research. I also explore some of the ways in which TO blurred traditional contrasts in ethnography between data and analysis, real and imagined, and, to a lesser extent, researcher and participant.

After a year of working with people at Unityville High School, our team of researchers led a professional development workshop that focused on educational issues/possibilities regarding the growing ENL international student population. The TO sessions were part of this day's activities. The day began with all of the high school teachers meeting in the auditorium. We led a language immersion activity that lasted about 15 minutes. Then we performed a dramatic reading that I composed using data from interviews with the newcomer students (you can find a copy of this script as an appendix). Research team members placed themselves throughout the audience, taking up the various student voices. I read the part of interviewer. The quotes reported above were some of those included in the script. We did not hold a discussion of the script at that point, nor did we provide teachers with a copy of the script. We used it to stimulate a reflective mood and to provide some student-centered purposes for authentically engaging in the professional development activities.

Following this opening session, the teachers attended two successive workshop sessions of their choosing. Theater of the Oppressed was one of their options; Maura Pereira-Leon and I co-facilitated two sessions of TO with 12 participants in each session. Maura, a graduate student, had worked with Freire directly, and I had experience facilitating TO. Both of us had been involved with this ethnographic project since its inception. Both of us had experiences as teachers and also as new language learners in a country not of our origin. Maura is a native Spanish speaker from Argentina. I am a Euro-American Midwesterner primarily monolingual in English. The sessions engaged participants in acting out scenes and analyzing those scenes (I call this pubic analysis). The sessions were audiotaped, and Maura and I took field notes.

Each session began with a warm-up activity, following which we shared a bullying scene taken from our data. We then used a modified version of TO's forum theater to work with the scene. This particular form of TO asks participants to continue reenacting a scene, slowly and believably transforming it as awareness and understanding of the scene shifts. The transformations draw participants into imagining what could be different in how the scene is played out. For our purposes, each reenactment was considered an iteration that I numbered chronologically in the thick record. Between stagings, we spent some time talking about and reflecting on the scenes. I called these interscene dialogues, which produced a public analysis. *Public analysis* is my term for the collaborative explorations into the meaning and identity constructions implicit in the scenes. These strategies are all common in performance ethnography (Conrad, 2004).

Following the workshop, the data were transcribed and field notes were added to produce a thick record. I used hermeneutic analyses, specifically reconstructive horizon analysis and interactive sequence analyses (Carspecken, 1996), to probe more deeply into the scenes, the interscene dialogues, and the facilitated public analysis. Doing this allowed for a more comprehensive analysis across all of these engagements. It also complicated the involvement of participants in the analysis process, which will be addressed below.

The particular analytic techniques that I used treat the data as interactive. It is more common for discourse analysis to be used when analysis is conducted outside of the theater space. Rymes, Cahnmann-Taylor, and Souto-Manning (2008) have provided a thorough description of their use

of discourse analysis and the findings that it produced. Their findings illustrate movement from monologue to dialogue across the different performances of various scenes. These findings would not have been generated by participants because they involved a form of analysis and set of concepts that participants did not have. By conducting discourse analysis, researchers were able to make broader sociocultural connections related to habits of language and to step outside the conscious enactments of the participants.

In contrast, I used a hermeneutic, pragmatic analytic techniques, which allowed me to explicate the implicit patterns of meaning internal to the meaning-making shifts that happened through our work with TO. Rather than going outside the meaning-making intuitions of participants, this approach goes radically internal to those intuitions (Habermas, 1981).

Both the thick record and my analytic work were shared with participants, and the findings presented here are a reflection of these efforts. Other validity techniques were used to be sure that the meaning-engagements of the participants were understood in ways that honored their understandings and in ways that encouraged dialogue around their values and sociocultural commitments. The events were tape-recorded, negative case analysis and strip analysis were used to check out interpretations, and key informants assessed the interpretations (Carspecken, 1996).

The Theater of the Oppressed: Setting the stage

Maura and I waited on the stage for participants to convene. Twelve teachers participated in the Theater of the Oppressed morning group; there were12 more in the afternoon. We had chairs arranged in a circle on the auditorium stage and a handout to share with participants at the end of the session. The teachers looked nervous, which matched the feelings Maura and I shared. Below I report the details of our use of Theater of the Oppressed in the context of this professional development day for teachers.

Introducing the guidelines

The success of TO depends on a couple of principles, which we shared with the teachers and then promised to remind and encourage participants to draw on them. Acting authentically is crucial; participants act parts that they can imagine and consider realistic for themselves personally. In this sense, the ethnographic principle of naturalistic engagement is followed. Furthermore, all contributions are considered confidential and welcome; they must be treated as such.

Warming up

As a warm-up, participants were invited to take turns striking a pose in the center of the group. This is a significant modification of image theater (Boal, 1979), which allows people to act as sculptors on static images formed with bodies. We specifically asked people to assume a position that felt personally empowering. The most common postures were stern, stiff, authoritarian poses. Although we had not asked them to think specifically about the school context, nearly all of the stances depicted the teachers in relation to students with the teachers as powerful. Power was depicted through the stances as an imposed, coercive kind of power. For example, a couple of teachers looked at an imagined audience of students over which they were expressing power by glaring over their glasses, pointing their finger, or looking down. "Power over" was the expression in every pose depicting teacher-student relations. Only one person posed himself in a way that did not depict him as a teacher in relation to students; he got down on his knees in a prayer position. The resounding theme was an interpretation of empowerment as teacher power over students. This was interesting, given our directions to strike a pose of personal empowerment.

Introducing the process

Following the warm-up activity, I described the specific procedures we would be using to dramatize a scene from our data. We used a form of TO (Boal, 1979) called forum theater that required the original scene to be reenacted several times. There was no script, just a scene description from our observation notes, so the acting was improvisational. The structure of the drama required that there be actors (those actively engaged in performing a scene) and "spectactors" (those who were temporarily audience, but with a readiness to take over a role or add a character to the performance). Repetitions are specifically altered by spectactors who assume roles in the performance, changing the performance by taking over a part and acting it out differently. We used a bullying scene taken directly from our data but with the original participants' identities masked. We chose this scene because an increasing number of the ENL high school students were being victimized by bullying and teachers told us they were aware this was going on. That awareness had not translated into meaningful change.

Curtains up

I read the bullying scene to the participants.

> This scene takes place in the hallway during the change of classes. A teacher is standing in the hallway. Two Latino kids are walking together down the hall and three Euro-American kids are calling the Latinos names and basically making them feel unwelcome, saying things like "Speak English or go home." "Get out of here, you dirty Mexican." The teacher is witness to the activities because the teacher is standing in the hallway monitoring students as they move from room to room."

People volunteered for parts. The plan was to begin by having six actors and six spectactors. We started by enacting the scene as it was represented by the data. In what follows, the scenes are described according to roles, but remember that all the participants were White Unityville high school teachers.

Actors, take your places: Staging the originating scene

The beginning scenes were enacted differently by participants across the two TO workshop sessions. In the morning, two Latina students (L1 and L2) began walking down the hallway between classes. They were speaking Spanish to one another (actors were somewhat pretending, somewhat drawing on what little they knew of Spanish). Two White students (E1 male and E2 female) approached them. The female teacher was standing nearby grading papers, rarely looking up. E1 and E2 bashed into L1 and L2. E1 said, "Outta my way, mesican." L1 said, "Sorry." Both Latinas continued to walk, their heads down. They stopped talking and making eye contact with each other. The two Euro-American students walked off in an opposite direction laughing at and talking about the two Latinas.

The afternoon session performed the originating scene differently. Two Latinas were walking down the hall. Two White students bashed fully into the bodies of the Latina students and said, "Beano." The male teacher, who was standing in his doorway, immediately stepped into the interaction. He turned to the Latinas and he said, "Why don't you guys go ahead and go to class." Then he turned to the White students and said, "Apparently you have some rude comments. I don't really like the way you are talking. Would you like to go to the administration?"

I stopped the action at this point to ask the teacher, "Why did you say, 'Do you want to go to the administration?' to the students?" His response to me was,

> Everything is sly in the hallway, and generally it is so subtle that you cannot say anything [you cannot accuse students if you do not actually see or hear what has happened]. Unless it's really obvious, then of course I would say something. Let's go talk about it with the administration and see what they think and then they [the students] will [usually] back down. But usually you can't really say anything.

Then I said, "Okay, let the scene continue and see what happens." Actually, the White students hung their heads in front of the teacher and then went on to class. Again, I stopped the action to ask those students how they felt, how they were affected by the experience. E1 said it was not a big deal, and E2 replied, "No big deal, just make sure next time he doesn't see us." The Latina students walked off, not talking to each other or making eye contact and had been forgotten through the remainder of the scene.

Reflecting on the originating scene: The first interscene dialogues

After the scenes were enacted for the first time, participants in each of the groups wanted to take a moment to reflect, which brought them in dialogue with the roles they had just played or watched. I will describe the discussions here. You will see my thoughts captured in callouts. I did not articulate these thoughts at the time but recorded them in my field notes and reflective journal. A few key points were consistently made about the teacher's role across the two sessions. First, "You have to pick your battles": Teaching behavior was the outcome of weighing priorities, resources, and opposition. The "teacher" in the morning group did not pick the "battle," but the teacher in the afternoon group did, albeit in very limited fashion. In both cases, the potential for physical violence was the most prominent characteristic in the battle-picking. In the afternoon session the "Euro-American kids" were more physically confrontational, making the possibility for physical violence more probable. With this way of thinking, verbal bullying, for example, would not be attended to simply because choices about what to be involved in as a teacher have to be made.

I thought: *All of us know this, so to suggest that the bullying had to be provable according to teacher observation was tantamount to privileging the bullies.*

Second, teachers believed they needed to be able to prove the bullying happened before any sort of administrative action toward the bully could be taken. Of course, bullying research (Stockdalet, Hangaduambo, Duys, Larson, & Sarvela, 2002) indicates that bullies are especially good at not getting caught.

I thought: *This seems contradictory because their own approaches to the students involved limited communication (something Freire would certainly consider an oppressive mechanism). In other words, if they really were not part of the oppression, why was their own talk and action limited?*

Third, the teachers did not originally think of themselves as part of the oppressive relationship. In both groups, from the perspectives of the teacher, the bystanding teacher was not considered a significant participant in the oppression; the oppression was what was going on between the students.

I noticed: *Teachers in neither group treated the White students as if they could develop empathy for newcomer students. The original displays of the scene did not seem very open to breaking the chain of oppression, exemplified in the teachers wanting to either force kids to behave or ignore them and in the truncated way in which the teachers themselves interacted with the newcomer students in the scene.*

These points were identified through the interscene dialogues but not analyzed. They were offered up as simple explanations for how the scenes were enacted. I did not share my thoughts with participants at the time because I was trying to just be open to their experiences and my thoughts were too easily judgmental. I tried to just listen and facilitate.

Reenactments

A succession of reenacted iterations and interscene dialogues followed the first set. With each new iteration spectactors and actors swapped roles. New characters were introduced, and new possibilities were imagined. Every iteration was followed by another interscene dialogue. Maura and I facilitated by stopping action, asking questions of characters, listening, and encouraging dialogue. The findings to follow are a result of my analysis of these iterative reenactments and interscene dialogues, drawing on any public analysis that resulted from those dialogues.

Public analysis

During the interscenes, when participants were engaging in reflective, out-of-character conversations, opportunities for public analysis emerged. The analysis was different from the brainstorming, reflection, and synthesis that went on in these same dialogues specifically because at these moments participants articulated underlying assumptions to the activities and looked at relations across those underlying assumptions. One example of a public analysis finding involved the roles that care and investment played in maintaining oppressive relationships through bullying. One of the participants suggested that the bullies might not be affected by what the teachers or newcomer students were feeling because they do not care what those two groups of people think about them. The group began to uncover assumptions about caring/not caring in the dramatic examples that had preceded this particular interscene conversation. The analysis was then applied to why newcomer students might feel helpless in the context of bullying; perhaps they did not feel cared for by teachers or White students, and perhaps they did not have the cultural resources to invest in the schooling experiences. Participants found that care or its absence and personal investment were subjective assumptions that seemed to reside within the actions of students and teachers in the drama. This analysis was collaboratively and pubic achieved through one of the interscene dialogues.

Blurring the lines: The acting and reacting hodgepodge

Research distinctions of traditional ethnography were blurred through our use of TO; namely, we blurred the lines distinguishing between data and analysis, the real and the imagined, participants and researchers. Looking closely at each reveals the intricacies of using drama as research including tensions specifically linked to the blurring.

Data and analysis

One of the exciting strengths of both the pedagogy and the Theater of the Oppressed is that substantive analyses evolve by working collaboratively with the data. The improvisational scenes and the unplanned moments of reflection demonstrated the way drama compelled dialogue. Each scene, interscene, and public analysis was a source of both data and analyses.

In other words, both the iterative enactment of scenes and the interscene dialogues were products of participants' interpretive analyses of previous scenes. Explicit public analyses gave form and substance to any subsequent analyses. Thus, by paying attention to the elements through which each new interpretation emerged and by looking across iterative transformations, the intuitive

interpretations of participants could guide all additional analytic processes. In addition, contradictions and multiple analytic perspectives could be kept alive in this way: If interpretations were unresolved in the iterations, then they remained unresolved in the analyses.

Through interscenes, participants actively entered into dialogue about opportunities for reframing and transforming the activities by stepping back into their own experiences as teachers and members of the community. From those personal sets of experiences, the participants interrogated the scenes within which they found themselves playing and/or observing familiar roles. The dialogues included issues and experiences that both reached beyond and were provoked by the scenes. For example, at one point a discussion ensued about the possibility of having other White students enter the scene as advocates for and defenders of the newcomer students. This idea surfaced because the bullies did not seem to "care" about what the Latinas or teachers thought of them. It was suggested that perhaps they would care about what their White peers thought of them. Such interscenes contributed to blurring the line between data and analysis because they were opportunities to reflect analytically on the scenes by discussing multiple interpretations, and they were also moments of data worthy in themselves of further understanding and interpretation.

The line was not totally blurred because I did conduct analyses independent of the other participants, treating all of the workshop material as data, even the public analyses. Generally, there is no distinct analysis phase separated in time and space from the dramatic activities in performance research (Mienczakowski, 2001). Nevertheless, I think there are a few good reasons for reaching analytically beyond the dramatic moments. One reason is to further complicate the articulations, perspectives, and assumptions of participants. This was illustrated by Rymes et al. (2008), who provided a detailed account of their use of discourse analysis applied to a single scene and its Boalian reenactments. As a result, they were able to explore sociocultural concepts that would not have emerged otherwise. Their paper is somewhat unique in its use of and reporting on researcher-engaged analysis. Another reason is to be able to gather analyses across larger sets of data. Nearly all of the reports using some variation of performance research look closely at one or two scenes. This is important, but it might be equally important to have a means to transcend the individual episodes within a larger study. It would take a separate analytic effort to do this. Certainly, this was a need we had in Unityville. A third reason involves differentiated expertise/experience. I have a lot of experience analyzing qualitative data. It is one of the ways I can serve the overall Unityville project. We all needed ways to participate in the big picture, and this was my primary way to contribute.

We used a recursive process in all of our ethnographic work, so I brought those analyses back to the group. My analyses were tethered quite purposefully to the interpretive accomplishments of the participants but afforded an opportunity to look more radically internal to those interpretations and the intuitions that guided them as well across sessions and scenes.

The real and the imagined

What about role-playing is real? For example, when teachers were acting the parts of "students", what about that role-playing was real? Sometimes I interrupted the acting to create an opportunity to better understand the experiences of characters. Whenever I did this, it proved difficult for the teachers to keep themselves in their roles. For example, when I stopped a scene to ask a question of a "Latina student," it was difficult for the teacher who was playing that part to talk in the first person, as that particular Latina. This was true for all the roles except, of course, when a person was playing the part of the teacher. The perspective-taking capabilities transformed throughout the workshop. By the end of the theater session, teachers were able to stay in character more authentically with gentle reminders to speak in the first person.

To treat these role-playing activities as ethnographic data blurs the line between real and imagined. It welcomes into research something that is not exactly real in terms of a history of happenings. The acting is clearly an imagined play off the real, particularly and specifically not real but realistic! It was not in every case confidently realistic because the teachers could not know that they were acting the parts of Latinas with much accuracy, but they could try to understand the experiences Latinas might have with bullying by acting out such encounters.

Using this method created the potential for democratic critique as an effect of a dialectic space between the imagined and the real. Although the participants took on various roles in the theater, they authentically engaged their imaginations toward what could be real. Thus, the research was an opportunity not only to describe how the teachers were conceptualizing the bullying situations, but also to examine how the reality of those situations is conceptually structured, how it could be transformed, or how it pointed toward something other than what it was. This particular blurring allowed the juxtaposition between is and ought to be explicated.

Participants and researchers

While reporting on the first interscene reflection, I put my thoughts in callouts. This representation retained a distinction between the participants and me; they expressed themselves, and I kept my thoughts to myself. Yet, I included them here in this ethnographic text. This distinction between me and the participants emerges again below when I present the substantive findings. In this text I have thus retained the distinction between participant and researcher, and this deserves some reflection of its own because in the actual practice of using TO, the line between participants and researchers was purposefully blurry. This blurring is important to retain because it resists the researcher privileging her own perspective.

In our roles as facilitators, Maura and I committed ourselves to authentic dialogue with the teachers; thus, we did not want to hide our perspectives (very much). However, we did not want to risk the teachers valuing our perspectives over their own or the teachers feeling alienated through differences between their perspectives and ours. We intended to engage in our roles as facilitators with the same respect, authenticity, openness, and fallibility that others brought to their roles. This happened to a certain extent, but because there was not role reciprocity, we faced limitations.

At times, I had strong feelings about the things that were said during the inter-scenes, but for the most part I took up a listening mode which was also authentic for me. The following example displays my most intrusive response to participant reflections during the interscenes. I risked being interpreted as an "expert" in the dialogue, yet I also felt as if the teacher was searching for another way to understand the situation, and I could empathize with that.

> *Teacher 1 (female):* I believe you hear things like that, [that people should go back to a "home country" if they don't speak English]. I feel it myself. It is our culture. I think they should speak English and maybe that's because I don't understand. Maybe that's why people [American students and teachers] act that way [resentful of newcomer students who don't seem to be learning English]. I know that I DEFINITELY [spoken more forcefully and loudly] think that if they [newcomer students] are here they should be speaking English. And if you don't, go home. That's the way I feel about it.
> *Me:* It doesn't take a very long history in this country to discover that languages other than English have been around. It isn't like it is immoral to speak a language other than English, is it? I think it would be very hard to go into a new place. It might not be that the students are choosing **not** to speak English, but also

> newcomers probably need to hear their language, they need a language they can express themselves through. At least that is the way I experienced being in Germany without knowing German. I needed to talk English, too, sometimes – but, especially in the early months when I really couldn't talk German. What we hear is that it feels terrible to students to come to a new place and not be able to communicate in the new language and then have the language you are good at disallowed. I know people don't wish these bad feelings on the kids. There is a pedagogical issue; a lot of the kids want to learn English. But it doesn't just happen that quickly. In the meanwhile really bad feelings get generated.
>
> *T1:* It's the message that if you throw them in the water, that then they will swim. Isn't that the attitude? Doesn't that work?
>
> *Teacher 2 (female):* It seems like it just doubles the problem to expect them to learn a content class when they don't know English.
>
> *Me:* That's how it seems to me.
>
> *T1:*   So maybe this isn't the best way?

With traditional ethnography, the involvement of the researcher in the lives of participants is greater than for other social science methods. We maximized that involvement in the overall project. We were participants in many senses of the word. We were completely willing to understand them and to be understood by them. We were with them in their desires for change and in our commitments to change processes and possibilities. We sought egalitarian consciousness-raising for ourselves and with them. We had ordinary relationships with them, and we participated in the work that they were doing.

The participants were also researchers. This was evidenced in the public analysis, for example. It was further evidenced in the sense that teachers raised authentic points of inquiry. One of the educators in the afternoon session sat with his arms crossed over his chest. He stared at me. I think he wanted me to feel uncomfortable. He did not say a word and even refused to introduce himself. He resisted participating and in so doing kept himself as an observer. He was not formally participating and instead seemed to be conducting his own private interpretation of this whole endeavor. All of the other participants were active in the process. As such, they were investigating their own experiences and situations. Moreover, they knew they were doing this. One teacher said, "I don't know what to do. I can see [ignoring the bullying] that this doesn't work. I want to see other possibilities. I want to have things to try out." Other teachers acknowledged when insightful discoveries were voiced. There were many such examples of participants engaging in the theater as researchers.

The tension for me in this blurring involved navigating the balance of role differentiation. Our distinct roles carried external value that we had to work against. For example, the tendency to value researchers' skills more than teachers' skills inspired me to err on the side of voicing my perspective less and baring my errors publicly. Role differentiation also meant that my time was actually designated to do research business (transcribe, coordinate, analyze, track data, write, and so on). This role differentiation necessarily instantiated the researcher-participant distinction.

Summary

The potential for deconstructing traditional research dichotomies between data and analysis, real and imagined, participants and researchers was approached but not maximized. The tensions involved in fully doing away with the lines reflect limitations of the study and critiques of the conditions within which we conducted this piece of performance ethnography.

Critical findings:
What emerged from the theater?

Analysis of/during the workshop produced a set of interesting substantive findings related to two questions guiding this part of the study: How was oppression conceptualized and recognized by the participants with respect to bullying? Most specifically, to what extent and in what ways were participants aware of the oppression of newcomer students? What transformations in acting were evidenced through the theater?

In this section of the paper I use the analysis to respond to those questions. I then place the findings in a brief synopsis of the school bullying literature.

Oppression?

As mentioned earlier, one of the discoveries of the theater work involved revealing the difficulty teachers had seeing themselves as part of an oppressive relationship. Freire (1977/2000) encouraged people to discover the mechanisms that keep their involvement in the oppression hidden from our view. His theory suggests that the oppression might seem sensible and legitimate to those involved with it. Likewise, it might be difficult for the participants to recognize the extent to which they might have something to do with the oppression. Thus, in analyzing the data, it was especially important to see how the oppressions were conceptualized by the teachers, how the teachers were positioning themselves in the oppressive relationship/scene, and the extent to which these conceptualizations manifested their own collusive participation in the oppression.

At the beginning of each of the sessions, participants tended to transform the scenes by changing the way the "students" were acting. When doing this, they almost always began by proposing the suggested change in the second person (even when they were playing the part of the character whose action would change). For example, one of the women playing the role of a Latina student said, "Don't you think that non-traditional students should stick up for themselves?" and I responded with, "Well, let's say that in character from the first person and then we can try it out and see how it goes. But first, how does the idea of sticking up for yourself feel to you? What would it look like?" Another participant (also playing the part of a Latina) said, "Do you think we could get the non-traditional students to tell a teacher?" All the changes proposed by the participants initially focused on having the ENL students act differently, yet the participants had a difficult time taking the first-person perspective of those students. At this point, the participants were conceptualizing the oppressive scene as something that involved only the students; they did not see themselves as players in that oppression.

Here is an example of the scene where "students" were blamed for not getting along. We pick up this scene just after the "bullies" called the Latinas names and shoved them a bit. I stopped the acting to probe the scene.

> *Me: (to the "bullies")* How do you feel right now? Why did you do that?
> *E2:* The kids are really passive aggressive. [Not responding in character]
> *Me:* Okay, can you try talking in the first person?
> *E1: Jumping in to answer for E2.* I think, I had a couple of students [here referring to Latino/as) and they don't want to talk to Americans (sounds a little angry). They just want to talk to themselves; they don't want to talk to Americans. [Not responding in character]
> *Me: (Turning to L1 and L2)* So in this scene do you feel like talking to an American? Would you want to talk to an American?

L1: Well, no because they are being mean to me.

Me: (To E1) Do you want to talk to the Latina students? [E2 moves her head to indicate no.]

E2: Well, no.

Me: (to E2) What might change your mind?

E2: I don't know. I suppose if they [Latinas] talked English.

Me: What might they say to you in English?

E1: Just maybe even, "hi."

Me: Okay, but did you hear her? [Referring back to L1's response to my question] She doesn't really want to talk to you because you were mean. What do you think about that?

E2: Well, they just moved here to take our jobs.

Me: We can ask them why they moved here in just a minute, but can you say more about her not wanting to talk with you because you have been mean. Do you think of what you are doing as mean?

In Table 1 I enumerated the list of insights because their specificity is important to the progression of consciousness-raising according to Freire (1977/2000). By untangling them and looking starkly at them, it is easier to see the precise mechanisms that are entailed in the oppressive conditions and relations. It helps helped participants to envision their own place in those conditions and relations. It is this kind of awareness that is drawn on in the transformational process.

We found that the participants in the role of "teacher" tended to place the burdens for interactive failures with Latinas. At first, it seemed sensible to the teachers to imply that Latina students were to blame, but as they enacted this through their role-play, the unfairness of such an interpretation became apparent. Through the scenes, participants became aware of several aspects of the oppression, making the oppression itself visible. When all the scenes were similarly analyzed, I was able to reconstruct how the oppression and rationalizing of Latino/a bullying was being conceptualized through the dramatic engagement of the participants acting in the various roles. The understandings listed in Table 1 emerged as insights that were expressed through TO. They are meant to be read not as facts about the situations but, rather, as articulations of insights the participants were developing. These articulations are the result of reconstructing implicit aspects of their performances, interscene dialogues, and public analyses.

These varied insights all led to better awareness of how the oppression of newcomer students in the high school was being stabilized through bullying, including through the ways teachers acted. The role of beliefs in sustaining that oppression was evidenced as each of the above insights reflects an interrogation of previously held convictions.

Transformations?

Transformations were also experienced. I introduce this section by sharing two of the transformations that emerged during the interscenes to provide an example. Following that, I report on the findings regarding transformations. These findings are organized into two domains, those related to understanding newcomer students' experiences and those related to understanding the teacher's role in perpetuating oppression. These transformations built directly off the understanding of oppression that had been developing throughout the workshop sessions.

Insights Related to Context	*Insights Related to Student Experiences*	*Insights Related to Teacher Roles*
Bullying occurred in the context of hostility where there was little opportunity for friendship	Latinos had fewer resources for dealing with bullying than did Euro-Americans. This rendered them more vulnerable to it. They lacked the English words to explain to teachers what was happening and they lacked the trust that teachers would support them.	Passive teachers were inadvertently supporting the bullies. The dramatization also suggested the possibility that newcomer students and Euro-American students knew that teacher-inaction was a tacit go-ahead for bullies
Authoritarian responses might not be the only ways to respond and might not be the most effective overall.	Not speaking English did not mean newcomer students did not like Americans, nor did it mean that newcomer students did not *deserve* to be in U.S. schools	Teachers who failed to respond to the bullying set a climate in the school for how newcomer students could be treated by their peers – namely, that in this particular school it was okay to bully newcomers.
	Newcomer students might have been afraid, unhappy, and bewildered.	Newcomer students were more visible to teachers when they acted against the bullying than the bullies were in the first place. Thus, if teachers waited to "see" something, they were more likely to catch Latino retaliation movement than bullying activity. In other words, teachers began to realize there was a skill of not getting caught involved in successful bullying that the newcomer students did not share.
		Some teachers really did not want newcomers in the school. As long as teachers did not acknowledge that this was the case, there was no way to know if this was a majority or minority of the teachers

Table 1. Insights into oppression

Dialogue, brainstorming, and general responses to the scene between spectactors and actors made these organic interscenes ripe for collective transformation. The transforming ideas were often integrated into the next iterations of the scene. For example, "teachers" used Spanish greetings in the hall, which demonstrated an alliance with the newcomer students, gave the teachers an opportunity to attend to newcomer students in ways the Euro-American students would also notice, modeled the value of languages other than English, and made it less likely that bullying could go unnoticed (which actually made it less likely that the students would engage in bullying). Another example involved introducing "White students" into the scene as allies for the newcomer students. This transformation was instigated when one of the teachers said,

> I think that somewhat, like, how did the other students react? We did not have non-Caucasian students when I was in school. But there were always a few kids like myself who felt confident enough in their positions. The teachers didn't see it, but we as other students did. So we would say like, "Hey, why are you doing that." It almost always stopped it. So, not teachers, but other students who these kids want to be liked by, said something. What about that? Is anything like that happening?

Then I said, "Let's try it out. Why don't you be that student?" Then the "student" and the "teacher" found ways to support each other. This resulted ultimately in the teacher behaving more proactively to develop allies among the Euro-American students.

Across the various iterations of the original scene, the teachers began, as a group, to gain insights into two broad aspects of the oppression of bullying newcomer students. These included insights about student experiences and insights about their own role in the oppression. Though some transformative action was created, mostly the iterations served to bring out more of an awareness of the oppression. Insights and transformations regarding newcomer student experiences

As the scene iterations progressed, so did the teachers' explorations into "student" feelings. Exploring student feelings would be considered a transformation for this group of teachers because at the start they did not actively position-take or engage empathetically with the newcomer students. The iterations began to depict the newcomer students more holistically and empathetically. For example, in Iteration 4 one of the "Latina students" hung her head after being teased. I stopped the action and asked her how she felt.

> *L1:* I feel helpless and abused.
> *Me:* So if you are helpless, let's start with how the scene might look different and
>   then see what you can do to help get the scene there.
> *L1:* Well I don't really think I can get them to stop.
> *Me: (To E1)* Is there anything she can do to get you to stop?
> *E1:* I don't know. Probably not. [Not said in character]
> *Me:* Why is that? Don't you care that she wants you to stop?
> *E1:* No not really, they probably just care about being popular with their friends.
> *Me:* Can you say that in the first person?
> *E1:* No, I don't really care what that Latina thinks about me.
> *Me:* How did it feel to say that?
> L1: (In response to E1) I knew that.
> *E1:* Well that felt terrible.
> *Me:* How do you feel when you are bullying?
> *E1:* Powerful
> *L1:* I never feel powerful. I only feel lucky when I finally get away.
> *Spectactor:* Don't you think that maybe things would change if the Latinas stuck up
>   for themselves?
> *Me:* What would that look like? Why don't you take the part of one of the Latinas
>   and try it out.

The iterations brought the teachers into the position of having to voice feelings, experiences, and hopes from the perspective of Latino/a children. The key transformations in their thinking involved shifting from thinking of the bullying as benign to thinking of the bullying as hurtful and violent (even when only verbal) and from thinking of the transnational students as problems to thinking about the transnational students empathetically.

Teachers as oppressors

The teachers were able to identify mechanisms and myths that seemed to keep the oppressive relationship in place. They were also able to begin to identify what their roles in the oppressive relationships were. The following examples reflect beliefs and behaviors commonly shared amongst the teachers at the start of the workshop. These beliefs were critically examined and understood in light of the context of oppression and thus, the beliefs became malleable.

Participants believed in the promotion of English-only practices and policies. The school corpora-tion had an English-only policy at the time, and many of the teachers bragged about this being a strong feature of their approach to transnational students. The participants discovered that an English-only ideology made it seem reasonable to oppress non-English speakers and treat them as

outsiders not worthy of the same treatment as those who did speak English. This also served to divide newcomer students from one another based on their levels of English proficiency. Through TO, participants developed empathy for students in situations where their native language was not a resource. They also experimented with using small amounts of Spanish themselves.

The participants recognized that they routinely acted with a detached sense of responsibility toward newcomer students. This detached sense of responsibility was evident in three ways. First, teachers did not talk about newcomer students as their own. Second, the practice of detaching from responsibility in bullying and other intercultural scenarios was part of the pattern of either teacher noninvolvement or teacher use of heteronomous responses, which we saw evidenced in the initiating scenes. After several scene iterations, participants suspected that this might be one of the mechanisms keeping the oppression in place. According to their analysis, this detachment had previously made sense to them, but through this process they came to question it. They questioned assigning responsibility for the bullying (oppression) in the students without providing the resources and facilitation necessary for students to change the bullying on their own.

The participants believed that they were not calling attention to race and ethnicity and therefore were not racists. They saw this as a fair-minded way to treat students. Newcomer Latino/a, Japanese, Taiwanese, and Palestinian students were most often referred to as nontraditional students, and White students were referred to as traditional students. This facilitated hiding racial and ethnic identifications associated with being non-White. Teachers in the workshop identified this as a problem because there were important social class and racial differences across the groups that affected the students' experiences in an unacknowledged way so long as all newcomers were talked about as if they were the same. In addition, such conflation of the newcomer students despite important differences, such as the Latino children being most strongly and openly discriminated against, resulted in ignoring key aspects of the oppression.[7] The participants discovered that there were racialized ways of thinking about the newcomer students that served to tacitly support bullying and negative attitudes toward newcomers, particularly Latino/a children. To not talk about race or ethnicity, meant that racially motivated discrimination was not fully acknowledged.

Finally, participants realized that they had been conceptualizing potential solutions to difficult situations, like bullying, in noncommunicative terms. Through their dramatic experiences, they realized that to send Euro-American students episodically to the office for bullying was not going to have any systematic effect on creating positive feelings among students or decreasing oppression. Participants saw that any dramatic effort that kept kids from interacting together did not ultimately contribute to undoing the oppression. It would, at the very best, "manage" the oppression. Furthermore, this approach did nothing to foster positive teacher-student relationships.

Across each of these transformations, participants were eager to link their dramatic representations and experiences to their future engagements. As reported on elsewhere (Korth, Martin, & Sotoo, 2007), these participants did engage in changes that brought the issue of bullying and its oppressive mechanisms into dialogue throughout the school.

What does it mean for the bullying literature?

In 2001 Nansel et al. claimed, "Although violence among U.S. youth is a current major concern, bullying is infrequently addressed and no national data on the prevalence of bullying are available" (p. 1094). In their study of more than 15,000 U.S. youth, 29.9% of the sample reported moderate to frequent experiences with bullying. In a review of recent literature on bullying,

Espalage and Swearer (2003) identified several insights from research on school bullying. I am using their review as one way of indicating how the findings from the Unityville study might be put into conversation with the bullying literature.

According to Espelage and Swearer (2003), researchers had trouble defining bullying and victimization. During TO, we also struggled with this, particularly in terms of figuring out whether to count verbal assaults as bullying and in terms of recognizing the Latina students as being victimized, but by the end, both of these problems had been resolved. Espelage and Swearer also found that bullying-victimization behaviors did not tend to fall out in a simple dyad of bully vs. victim. The dyad was complicated by the presence of bystanders. We found this as well, but in our work the "teachers" found themselves to be bystanders whereas Espelage and Swearer applied this term only to other students. Thus, our research might complicate this insight further. Espelage and Swearer also found that sometimes students were bully-victims. Similarly, we discovered retaliation bullying as a possible response for ENL students. Espelage and Swearer found that it was important to view bullying from an ecological perspective; that is, taking into account race, ethnicity, and so forth. According to their review, most scholars acknowledged this as a limitation to their studies. In contrast, an ecological perspective was central to TO. The methodological use of TO might serve as an innovation to the bullying research in a way that would open the research up to an ecological perspective. Espelage and Swearer also discussed gender differences, which our work did not address sufficiently. In fact, because gender concerns did not come up among the participants during the workshop, I looked for opportunities later to confront gender and bullying. Espelage and Swearer discussed the results of studies in terms of individual characteristics associated with bullying and our work moved away from such explanations. Through TO we were attempting to see the social-relational nature of bullying. There were a lot of findings associated with individuals and so it seems that a need for a social-relational approach might be warranted. There is little research available on bullying and school climate distinct from studies that assess prevention programs. This is an area where our findings might also prove useful (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). There is a pattern to the potential ways the findings of this study might be relevant for the bullying literature as reviewed by Espelage and Swearer; namely, in taking a closer look at the interactive, social-relational, ecological, climate aspects of bullying.

With respect to teacher behaviors, Espelage and Swearer (2003) reported that "teachers might foster bullying by failing to either promote respectful interactions among students or speak out against teasing and other behaviors consistent with bullying" (p. 378). More research is needed on this. Our findings might be informative. Boulton (1999) reported that teachers lack confidence in their abilities to reckon with bullies. Many reports indicated that teachers consistently under-report bullying (Stockdale et al, 2002) or incorrectly identify bullies (Leff, Power, Manz, Costigan, & Nabors, 1999). The findings from our study might help to look more closely at teachers' experiences with bullying. Moreover, most of the above cited literature is with children in elementary and middle schools. There might also be a particular need to study bullying of ENL and newcomer students specifically (Korth et al., 2007).

This paper is not meant to provide a close examination of bullying, but I included this subsection so that readers might see how the findings might intersect with the substantive literature.

Concluding thoughts and reflections

Freire (1977/2000) used the word *conscientizcao* to describe the moment in consciousness when one is aware of oppression but not fully able to articulate it or transform it. The findings provide evidence of just that: The participants, including me, were beginning to see how the oppression

worked through a restriction of communicative understanding among participants. Our initial focus groups interviews suggested that oppression was at work, but did not provide a deeper understanding of its workings. Using Theater of the Oppressed in this workshop scenario gave us some precision to further our local understanding while also contributing insights to the overall ethnography.

In an earlier section of this paper, I suggested that the use of Theater of the Oppressed in ethnography blurred some traditional research lines. I will conclude the paper by asking that we think about this blurring and what it means for ethnography, both practically and theoretically.

First, data and analysis recursively overlap; their distinction is blurred because participants are involved in the analytic process and in producing data in a process that moves back and forth. Data and analysis are not only blurred in terms of time and procedures but also because in TO data and analysis are both embodied in the gestures, phrases, facial expressions, tones, and interactions that are enacted. Second, the line between reality and fiction (the real and the imagined) is blurred. Postmodernism (Carspecken, 1999) helped to reframe this dichotomy so that we might talk about it as the collage of perspectives rather than as either reality or fiction. However, a less basic distinction is still called for. If I am going to write an ethnographic text, it seems important to distinguish between describing (a) what happened regarding bullying and (b) how teachers explored those happenings through theater. There is overlap, yet the distinction is needed for the overlap to make sense. It seems that context is what helps to both acknowledge such a line and allow benefits from blurring the line. Last, it is hoped that more equal participation in the research process will ensue. Democratic and critical methods contain structures that allow for participants to have power in the process thus blurring the line between researchers and participants. Moreover, in my experience trust is required on both sides.

I jeopardized this blurring in one way by engaging in additional analyses once the workshop was over. Even though I returned the analyses to participants, doing it independently risked a returned to the researcher hegemony of old. It seemed necessary to me because of our distinct work allocations, which further limited the blurring between researcher and participants. Finding a balance between these was important, in my view. Others at the school seemed to agree. We mediated the potential problems by engaging together as participants over the long term, by conducting peer and member checks, drawing on feedback from key informants, by fostering open disagreement with my analysis thereby acknowledging the potential fallibility of my work, by encouraging multiple perspectives on all claims to truth, and by developing relationships with one another.

Through this long-term critical ethnography, we have explored the educational challenges and possibilities associated with newcomer transnational students. I used Theater of the Oppressed within a long term relationship with school, one that neither began nor ended with the theater. What is exciting about this study is the way in which we have opened a space to transform the oppressive conditions at play in the schools studied. Teachers' understandings of the bullying that victimized newcomer students changed through the ethnographic process. Analyses of those changes was insightful, not only for those outside the school (such as the readers of this article), but most specifically for those who are living out those transformations.

Notes

1. Unityville and all other names, except for mine and Maura Pereira-Leon's, are pseudonyms.

2. I was the primary investigator on the project, which has included 15 graduate student participants. Together we formed a multinational, multilingual team, engaging in various aspects of the overall ethnography. I was involved in all aspects and provided consistency as members of the team graduated, new members joined us, and project priorities and needs shifted.

3. Choosing labels to represent ethnic and racial groups is no easy task, particularly when members of a site do not share terms. For this reason, I alternate terms throughout the paper. Euro-American students were often just referred to by participants as "traditional" students. On formal documents, these same students were labeled Caucasian, and our research team tended to use the term White or Euro-American to designate members of this group. Teachers did not name their own ethnicity/race. In our formal writing as a research team, we tended to use. The term Euro-American helps to draw our attention to the nationality characteristic that was a strong attribute in the dynamics associated with newcomer students.

4. *Asian* was the label least contested across participants at the site. Either national labels or the label Asian was used to refer to students who came primarily from Japan and Taiwan.

5. *Hispanic* was the formal label used on paperwork and in written documents in the school corporation. In the everyday context, White teachers and students referred to Spanish-speaking students primarily as Mexicans but secondarily as Hispanics. In fact, a bilingual (Spanish- and English-speaking) Latino student from California, who was placed in the ENL class because of his ethnicity, was referred to as "Mexican" for nearly a full academic year after enrolling in the school. Our team of researchers tended to use the label Latino/a to refer to this same group of students, but the students used their national label in the first place and Latino/a in the second place.

6. The dramatic reading is included as an appendix.

7. In much of our school data, Latinos were described by Whites in criminal terms and were often referred to by teachers and administrators (in conversations with us and in front of students) as "the new Blacks." Racial differences were acknowledged but not in terms of recognizing racism as part of an oppressive mechanism.

Appendix
Dramatization for Teacher Professional Development

Translating Others
Voicing the Unwelcome Whispers

Actors

Barbara as herself (B)
Spanish speaker student 1 (SS1)
Spanish speaker student 2 (SS2)
Spanish speaker student 3 (SS3)
Spanish speaker student 4 (SS4)
Spanish speaker student 5 (SS5)
Mandarin speaker student 1 (MS1)
Arabic speaker student 1(AS1)
Arabic speaker student 2 (AS2)
Japanese speaker student 1 (JS1)
Japanese speaker student 2 (JS2)
Teacher 1 (T1)
Teacher 2 (T2)
Teacher 3 (T3)

Scene One

T1:   I can't have these students in here. They don't know English?
T2:   What am I supposed to do here? Can't someone tell them how to behave?
T3:   What are they doing here?
Teachers: Help.
Barbara: (To audience) Initially, only the educators' voices were heard; students and parents were silent.
Barbara: (To dramatic actors) Can you tell us about your experiences here in Unityville?

Then in response: All participants talk at the same time in the home language.
- *Spanish speakers talking together in Spanish* (about not really understanding the new school, missing home, and family)
- *Mandarin speaker talking in Mandarin* (about living with aunt, how the expectations are different, liking the decreased pressure)
- *Japanese speakers talking together in Japanese* (about Saturday school, family, not understanding what is going on in school)
- *Arabic speaker talking in Arabic* (about job, not wanting to be in the ESL program, demands of family, school, and work)
- *Teachers talking in English* (about the untrustworthiness of students, their failure because their language skills are weak, wondering about why these students are showing up here in Unityville)

Scene 2

Notes for the scene: Whenever the teachers talk they are talking as an aside to each other and/or me, but not the students. The students are talking with me and not to the teachers.

Barbara: (To students) Let's see if we have this right. It's really great that you are at this school. Do you know that?

SS1: *(To Barbara)* Naw, we're not welcome here.

SS5: *(To Barbara)* They don't want us here. They scream at us in the halls.

SS3: *(To Barbara)* They tell us, "Migrant leave our town."

T2: *(To other teachers)* Don't you think Hispanics are like the new blacks.
T3: *(In response to T2)* Yeah, I mean eventually they will probably blend in like the blacks do.
T1: *(In response to T2 and T3)* Blacks and whites are the same here. The blacks really came to fit in after awhile, the assimilated.

JS1: They don't like us.

SS3: They never call us by our names.

SS4: Sometimes they say to me, "Go back home you dirty Mexican."

SS2: They call me beano. And knock into me in the hall.

T1: *(To Barbara)* The white kids call the Hispanics lots of names.
Barbara: (To T1) How do you know this is happening?
T1: *(To Barbara)* Well, I see it and hear it.
Barbara: (To T1) What happens when the white kids do this?
T1: *(To Barbara)* Then the newcomers just walk off.
Barbara: (To teachers) Well, when I asked the white kids (those belonging to the key club and considered advanced by school teachers/administrators) if they wanted to make friends with the newcomer students, they said No. I asked why not and they said because the newcomer students have bad attitudes. I asked them to say more about their bad attitude. Every one of the students interviewed said that not speaking English was the main indicator of this "bad attitude."
T2: *(To Barbara)* Yes, you see, the newcomers to not make an effort to fit in.

JS2: *(continuing the previous conversation, talking to Barbara)* They don't want us here.

Barbara: *(To the students)* What about the teachers?

AS1: *(To Barbara)* Even the teachers don't want us here.

T3: *(To Barbara)* Why are they here? I've heard there is a sign at the border saying, "Go to Unityville."
T2: I wish they would leave my town. I don't really want them here."
T3: Did you see that brightly colored building down town? It's an eyesore really.
T1: They take attention away from **my** students. That's not fair or right.

Barbara: (To audience) Notice that here when the teachers are using the word "they" in this instance, they are referring to Latino students.

SS1: They don't want us to talk in Spanish, but what can we do?

T1: *(To Barbara, said with pride)* I won't let them speak Spanish in my class.
T2: They could be cheating or talking about us. How would we know?
T3: And the best way for them to learn English is to use it exclusively.
T1: I wish we could get their parents to talk to them in English only.

MS1: Some teachers make fun of us in class. I don't know if they know this.

JS2: Why is my teacher screaming at me? At the beginning I thought that she was upset. Then I understood she was trying to speak slowly and clear. Still, when she talks to me I'm embarrassed because everybody turns to look at me and I don't like people looking at me like I'm strange.

AS2: There are some teachers that help us, but not most of them.

SS4: I like my class but my teacher speaks too fast that most of the time I can't follow him. I can't take notes because I don't understand the idea.

Barbara: (To the students) Have you made any friends?

SS3: I won't talk to my classmates. If I say something they will say a bunch. That scares me horribly. If I don't say anything, they won't bother me.

JS1: We don't have friends.

MS1: There's nobody close to me.

SS3: My English is a lot better this year, but I don't have friends because I feel like I'm neglected.

Barbara: What about during times like lunchtime, for example? Can you make friends with local kids then?

T3: *(To Barbara)* Sometimes, during lunchtime I find newcomer kids hiding in the bathrooms. When this happens I either send them to the office, after all they know they are not supposed to be in there, or I send them back to the cafeteria.
T2: *(In response to T3)* They sit off by themselves when they are in the cafeteria. They keep themselves separate.

JS2: I don't like to go to lunch. They see me and start making fun of me.

SS5: At lunch, if we go to the other tables, the kids say, "Go back to Mexico" or "speak English."

AS2: They say, "You are in America, speak English."

SS1: I like to speak Spanish.

SS3: It feels good to speak in Spanish.

Barbara: Do you want to make friends with the Euro-American and local students?
SS4: They are lazy. Mexicans are hard workers—in school we have to work twice as hard.

JS1: They think they are better than us . . . I had to completely change and they still don't accept me.

SS3: I play soccer. I love it and enjoy playing with them. What I don't like is that they don't call me by my name. They call me Mexican, migrant, or use other terms that I don't even know its meanings. This puts me down. Bu then, I try not to think about it.

Barbara: This sounds very sad.

SS4: There is no time when I feel happy here.

Barbara: What about some of the rest of you?

JS1: When I am sad, I swallow my sadness.

SS5: I skipped school yesterday. My parents do not even know about it. I can't tell them. I can't make them worried about me.

SS2: If I thought the rest of my life was going to be like it is here, I would want to kill myself.

MS1: I don't really want to complain.

Barbara: Have you been able to get some support?

JS2: My parents think everything is right at school.

SS1: I don't talk to anyone about how I feel. My parents wouldn't understand me.

SS3: My family moved here to give me a better chance. How can I tell them how hard it is for me?

Barbara: Do you think you can be successful here?

SS4: I'm not that smart.

AS1: Me either.

AS2: I don't want to be in that ESL class. I think that will just make things worse.

JS1: I don't what they say, how am I going to make it in college?

JS2: It was a thorn in the side that I was forced to write essays in English when I first came.

SS5: I was so happy when I spelled the word correctly, which was very difficult for me.

SS2: I cannot make it.

MS1: We have to go ask questions to teachers on our own. At first, it was very difficult to do that, but if we won't the teachers assumed we understood.

AS1: School is very different in my country. I don't usually know what to do here.

MS1: I feel less pressure here, but I'm not passing my classes.

AS2: Do you think I can pass?

**************** AT THE END OF THE PRESENTATION************

Barbara: It is possible to feel hopeful about the multicultural, multinational transformation of Unityville schools.

SS1: My English is getting better—I understand more of what the teachers say.

MS1: My teacher was talking about a "protractor" and then got one out of the desk and held it up so I could see what was being talked about. This was done without calling attention to me and it really helped me. The teacher was trying to help me.

JS1: I made an A in a really hard class because the teacher gives me PowerPoint papers to take notes on when there is a lecture. This helps me.

SS4: We love this school because I'm going to graduate next year. My parents are happy because I'm going to graduate, get my diploma, and be able to work.

T1: Help me figure out what else I can do?

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