



THE TWO FACES OF LEADERSHIP: AN (ETHNO)DRAMA OF THE PRINCIPALSHIP

Jerome Cranston
University of Regina
jerome.cranston@uregina.ca

Kristin Kusanovich
Santa Clara University
kkusanovich@scu.edu

Jerome Cranston, Ph.D., is a Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Regina, which is located on Treaty 4 territory and on the traditional homeland of the Métis. He has spent much of his professional life practicing and studying educational administration and uses critical perspectives to uncover how organizational structures and behaviors can act as blinders to social injustice and inequity in the education system.

Kristin Kusanovich, MFA, is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Theatre & Dance and the Child Studies Program at Santa Clara University, located on the traditional territory of the Ohlone. Ms. Kusanovich is a professional choreographer, director, and workshop facilitator committed to enlivening discourse around issues of justice, ethics and civic engagement through the arts.

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

Abstract: Leadership has two faces: an outward-facing, public, performative dimension as well as an inward-facing, private aspect. The emotional labour performed ‘behind the scenes’ by leaders often remains hidden from observation. Nevertheless, it exacts a toll on their wellbeing. Opportunities to gain insights into the socio-emotional toll experienced by leaders are therefore limited. This arts-based research stages that oft hidden drama in the form of a five character one-act play, or ethnodrama, created from anonymized data generated from semi-structured interviews with school principals in Canada. The data was first coded using emotional codes developed from the positive and negative affect schedule [PANAS] (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). The most pronounced affects were incorporated into an original ethnodrama using the interview data and were subsequently validated by readers of the final artistic product. Stakeholders in education, leadership or the arts might engage in ethnotheatre, through performing or witnessing this work, to understand the hidden dynamism of the socio-emotional toll of school leadership. This article offers insights into the transdisciplinary intersections between leadership education and arts-based research, followed by the full script of the ethnodrama, and concludes with a description of the unique process through which data generated from classic, qualitative methods was artfully fashioned into *The Two Faces of Leadership*.

Keywords: school leadership; ethnodrama; ethnotheatre; transdisciplinary; arts-based research

Nothing to Observe

It is fairly easy to understand why school leaders, particularly principals and vice-principals, must be figureheads, embodying all the cues of calm capacity that a complex organization such as a school requires. Nevertheless, their roles require cognitive labour and call for emotional investment. After all, learning how to perform well in a dynamic, real-time leadership context with a sensitivity to privacy and confidentiality, the central to the work of school administrators, is a complex task (Wallace, 2010). But how are aspiring leaders and those who prepare them to learn about the difficult aspects of the lived-experience of leadership if it is neither socially nor professionally acceptable for leaders to convey, let alone admit, any suffering, or what might turn out to be essentially the hidden socio-emotional toll of the job?

There are many reasons why people in high ranks choose to mask their true feelings, especially those involving personal and professional suffering. However, if that full experience of being a school leader always remains hidden from view, then those wishing to move into leadership roles really do not have a way to learn observationally about the principalship. In some of his seminal work on behavioral theory, Bandura (1977) observed that most human behaviour is learned observationally; that is, others model it for us, and undoubtedly, we, in turn, learn from observing others. It is through observing others that an observer forms an idea of how new behaviour can be performed. This learning, in the form of “coded information” of language, gesture, proximity, and vocal and facial expression, serves as a guide for future action.

Performing in a role as a school leader means selectively presenting certain aspects of the emotional life that is being lived by that leader. Quite rightly, a principal would not and should not burden the 1st graders she visits on her rounds with tales of woe regarding teacher layoffs due to tightened budgets, should not bring anger about her own colleague’s actions into an interview she is conducting with a potential new staff member, should not let on about her traumatizing encounters with board members while consoling a new and uncertain family just arriving in the district, city or country. No, a principal would not express her inability to resolve personnel management issues to everyone’s satisfaction while talking to middle schoolers during lunch. Clearly, for reasons of professional responsibility, developmentally appropriate communications, generosity to the group’s mood, respect for situational appropriateness, and sometimes simply because of the confidential nature of the work, school leaders thoughtfully spare not only students, but families, staff, colleagues and even superiors from some, or perhaps even all, of the anguish, stress and difficulties they regularly experience.

Limits to Listening

How then can aspiring leaders or leader educators uncover the hard-earned lessons from experienced leaders when there is no public forum for such expression? One obvious place in which such honest, backstage discussions can occur is in a confidential space. In an appropriate setting, among trusted professionals or colleagues, school leaders can and do share their inner feelings and might divulge how they are not always confident, all-knowing leaders who feel capable or remain resilient in the face of the reality of their complex roles. It is in those spaces that school leaders can express vulnerability, fragility and doubt. Though the principalship may not be known for a great deal of outwardly observable, public displays of emotions, the actual emotions of school leaders surely include the full range of human feelings and in the confidence of a few trusted colleagues or friends, such stories can be, and often are, divulged.

A guiding question is: how might the lessons learned from such a listening session, apart from the benefit it might have to the two or three people present, be shared more widely? The question is important because as Wallace (2010, p. 596) proposes, the majority of the so-called preparation programmes for educational leaders persist in ignoring the centrality of emotion to the work of school administrators, thus perpetuating the toxic notions that administration is either a rational exercise that can and should be divorced from the emotional aspects of human interaction or that emotions can be commodified and placed at the service of 'greedy organisations.'

By way of response the authors set out to create a palpable and engaging medium through which the all-too-often hidden aspect, the emotional face of school leadership, might be brought to life in such a way that it could serve as a means to develop more emotionally-resilient school leaders.

Cautionary Tales about the Drama in School Leadership

Just as responsible preparation in any field includes cautions about job hazards and avoidance of harm to self and others in the course of doing one's particular line of work, responsible leadership preparation should include acknowledgement of the emotional labour and the emotional toll of leading. In our ongoing research that spans close to a decade of work, we have been examining various facets of the emotional toll of school (Cranston & Kusanovich, 2013, 2014a) and teacher leadership (Cranston & Kusanovich, 2014b, 2015) through the lens of drama (as in art), to unpack the drama (as in strife) found in these purportedly desirable positions to which many educators aspire. We have also been

developing a “fixed-script” method (Cranston & Kusanovich, 2015) that preserves distinct worldviews of characters deliberately constructed to function in particular ways within the story. Drawing on this work, we have fashioned a transdisciplinary approach (Cranston & Kusanovich, 2017) using ethnodrama to make the complexity of educational leaders’ lives more visible, to embody those challenges artfully, and to put that fuller spectrum of actual lived behaviours of leaders forward for artistic and intellectual examination.

Beatty (2000) and Goleman (2006) were well aware of the need for new approaches to develop principals professionally – as leaders – to prepare them for the emotionally-taxing nature of the job. They noted that responsible leadership preparation needs to foster more robust understandings of the complex socio-emotional dynamics of the relationships between adults within schools. Weiss (2002) pointed to the very real emotional impact that constantly attending to a school’s staff would have on those who lead. How could the arts serve as the conduit for conveying the socio-emotional complexity of the job of school leadership?

Enter the Arts as Research

Eisner’s work on artistically crafted research argued that while arts-based research was not concerned so much with precision as with enhancing perspectives, it still had the potential to offer coherence, imagery and particularity (Eisner, 1995) to a research question. Furthermore, it created a vehicle by which “the transformation of experience from the personal to the public” could occur (Eisner, 1997, p. 179).

Saldaña’s (2011) seminal work on the intersections of art and research further opened up the imaginations of the research community to embrace dramatization, scripts, and embodied performance as a way of engaging the three-dimensionality and time-bound nature of reality. Thereafter, the marriage of data and performance generated new forms of work that could be read and experienced simultaneously as both research and art.

This pointed the way for the use of dramatized scripts in research, scripts with fictional personal details and yet with settings and plots based on real accounts of real leadership experiences that could carry critical knowledge of, for example, today’s school principalships to audiences needing that knowledge. A highly compelling form emerged, that of ethnodrama. Ethnodramatic scripts are based on a particular culture or people; in this particular research work, the culture of school administrators takes center stage. A newly written one-act ethnodrama is presented here, as both art and research. After the play concludes, the authors explain their process of collecting data from a group of contemporary

school administrators and of coding, disguising, refining the data, and of workshopping the draft script with a different set of school stakeholders.

Ideally ethnodramas are performed live, and are embodied to some degree. An ethnodrama, when staged, becomes ethnotheatre (Saldaña, 2005, 2011) the moment there is an audience to see and hear the multi-dimensional experiences of the actors. According to Leavy (2009, p. 13), dramatic performance allows individuals to “get at the elements of lived experience that a textual form cannot reach.” Zillman (1994) proposed that dramatic representations allow for the development of emotional sensitivity and empathy as a form of perspective taking. But even to read a play without necessarily moving it to performance for an audience is to begin to feel the weight of each character’s decision-making, personality traits, tendencies and missteps. Thus, we offer an ethnodrama that presents five fictional characters, all school principals or vice-principals, that can be read silently or out loud with four others. It can be done from stationary places around a table or can include, as indicated by the simple stage directions, entrances and exits to and from a table. There can be some or no additional audience present.

The field of arts-based research requires a dual kind of rigor: it combines the analysis and iterative designing and composing inherent in the creation of any artistic work, and it demands that a valid research process which can form a model for future research be adhered to. *The Two Faces of School Leadership* contributes to arts-based research scholarship by pointing a path forward where both of these intents are clearly present. The play itself can be adopted by any group seeking an experiential mode of learning and inquiry into the felt reality of school leaders. It stands alone as a one-act play that can be performed more fully with props and staging. It can spark reflection, further questioning and inner shifts in the readers or listeners. The full script of the play is provided here, with some analysis that situates the work in the larger context of ethnotheatre and the applied theatre tradition whereby art is generated and exists not only for art’s sake, but for the sake of a greater social good.

Preparing School Leaders: A New Approach

This play may help to counteract the preponderance of administrator training that is devoid of publicly observable non-desirable displays of emotional experience (Mann, 1999; Wilmore, 2004). We hope the play humanizes the principalship. At the same time, our ethnodrama may raise questions that are at odds with the positivism of educational leadership training. When hidden costs such as the toll on relationships or socio-emotional burdens are accounted for, would most leadership positions be described as sustainable? Just how feasible is success in school leadership given the structure and unpredictable

inputs experienced by people in these positions? Is there a reason that university preparation programs are reluctant to get at the downside of leadership?

According to experts in health and psychology, positive coping and the communication of suffering should not be mutually exclusive (Larson, 1993). While debates have raged for decades about how best to prepare principals for their leadership roles (Lashway, 2003), those forming future school leaders and students of leadership themselves have not spent enough time unpacking what really are the two faces of leadership – the outward facing “all’s well” face and the inward facing “this may not end well” face. These transdisciplinary methods offer the complex, dynamic system of dramatic performance as a fitting modality for the study of the complex, dynamic systems lived out by principals and vice-principals in schools. They give us the embodied visualizations of the lived reality of the principalship that had been missing from other methods such as case studies and role-play.

The Two Faces of School Leadership: An (Ethno)drama of the Principalship is a one-act play that allows participants and audiences to learn, observationally, about what happens when principals are given the opportunity to communicate beyond the positivism required of a school figurehead. It can be tackled by any group of five or more interested people. In a reading or performance, these characters can be gendered male or female or gender-fluid. We invite groups of readers to adjust pronouns as needed to work for any individual playing any role. Stage directions, given in parenthesis, are not read aloud in a performance of the play, but may inform the readers’ gestures, inflection and mood. They can reveal what the character actually feels, beyond or in spite of the words they use, and help the reader realize the tensions and emotional weight of the scene. We recommend that each reader read their own character’s description to themselves, and that someone reads the properties list and setting sections out loud.

Without further ado, presented here are “Hunter,” “Kai,” “Reese,” “Marley,” and “Devyn.” They have come to a leadership retreat that runs from Wednesday evening through Friday afternoon. It is Thursday, the morning after the opening session held the previous evening, and an ad hoc conversation emerges from a random group of five attendees at the breakfast table.

Take in their attitudes and behaviors, pain and earnestness, compassion and jadedness, quirks and hopes. Notice their vulnerabilities and their defenses. Perhaps you might even note what feels like varying degrees of honesty. In any case, experience the meaning that emerges for you as you observe, or become, tentatively, any of them. Following the presentation of the script, we will describe the research approach we used to develop it.

THE TWO FACES OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP:
AN (ETHNO)DRAMA OF THE PRINCIPALSHIP

A One-Act Play

by

Jerome Cranston

&

Kristin Kusanovich

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

HUNTER

Seven years of experience in school-based administration as a Principal of a small K-5 school. Formerly taught Social Studies for ten years in Grade 7 to Grade 12. Currently completing a Master of Education specializing in Educational Administration. Often focused on budgetary issues.

KAI

Eight years of experience in school-based administration as the Principal of a medium-sized K-8 school and recently a smaller K-8 school. Formerly taught Math and Science in middle school before stepping into administration. Has completed a Master of Education specializing in Counselling and identifies as proficient in diffusing conflicts. Yet, overall, thinks teachers complain too much.

REESE

Three years of experience in school-based administration as a Vice-Principal of a medium-sized K-5 school. Formerly a Special Education teacher for 10 years. Currently completing a Masters of Education specializing in Educational Administration to have more credibility with colleagues at other schools who have this degree. Fairly concerned with image, somewhat stymied by change.

MARLEY

A new Vice-Principal in a large high school. Formerly a part-time Visual Arts teacher and guidance counsellor. Stepped out of the education system for nine months to pursue art career but came back. Has done multiple trainings in bias, white privilege, and has certifications in cultural competence. Currently completing a Master of Education specializing in Educational Administration to be a better Vice-Principal.

DEVYN

Two years of experience in school-based administration as the Principal of a small high school. Formerly taught multi-subjects in grade 2 and then a grade 7/8 split Physical Education class. Completed a thesis-route Master of Education specializing in Social Foundations. Thesis topic was on the academic achievement in school engagement of socially and academically marginalized youth. Not sure whether s/he was a 'diversity hire'. Concerned with mental health crisis.

STAGE PROPERTIES LIST

5 paper or plastic plates to be carried by each person. On the table: any variety of folders, pens, glasses, phones, random pieces of plastic ware and one wrapped granola bar in a bowl. A piece of paper taped to the table that reads:

Be Well.

SETTING

THURSDAY MORNING. A BREAKFAST TABLE IN THE DINING CENTER OF A RETREAT HOUSE. The set is quite simple. One table and five chairs.

The previous night, at the school division's annual year-opening administrative retreat, the thirty-five school-based administrators, made up of principals and vice-principals, had been introduced to each other at the Welcoming Reception. The Superintendent of Schools opened the evening with a series of icebreakers and then informed everyone that the focus for the year's retreat was on "finding balance and the importance of being well."

8:30 AM. The first morning session begins at 8:58 AM.

HUNTER and REESE are seated at the table with their plates and just starting to have breakfast. KAI enters carrying a plate.

HUNTER

(stroking cheek with one hand)

Why 8:58 A.M.? That is such a weird start-time. So breakfast is 28 minutes long? I hope we don't have to do more sharing, like those ice-breakers last night. That was stressful.

KAI

(running hand through hair, coming to table, sitting)

Hopefully we're done with this emotional stuff.

I don't really have time for it. I just want to get going with this leadership workshop. But I have to admit it's kind of nice to have some time away from home. Oh look at that.

(notices sign, and reads it)

Be. Well. Well. How about that?

REESE

If only it were that simple. Just read a quote and...there you go.

HUNTER

(pokes at imaginary plate with imaginary fork four times)

Maybe it is simple. But it's hard to feel that when we have budgets to take care of and hiring to finish. I've been away from home a little too much lately.

(holds fork up in air, suspended, doesn't eat)

I don't even know why I said "yes" to coming to this thing.

REESE

(fixing watchband)

Yeah, three days...

It's like they forgot we've got staff who really need us and schools to get back to...to supposedly lead.

(MARLEY and DEVYN enter the space, each holding a plate, while talking to each other and stop before they arrive at the table where HUNTER, KAI and REESE are sitting)

MARLEY

(talking with animated gestures)

It's a weird place that you live in as a vice principal. Right? Like you're not the boss and you're not a teacher.

Like you're not one of them, but you're not really the one in charge.

DEVYN

Kind of like that thing we did last night where you say "I am a... blank" and you have to look at someone and really mean it.

MARLEY

Yeah, as a V.P. I don't know what my "blank" is half the time.

DEVYN

(partly disagreeing)

I've had lots of really good experiences with being in charge – I think I'm just a combination of both my boss and my teacher self, and really good mentors. I would say it comes down to balance. But then again I'm a Principal so it's more clear.

MARLEY

(exhaling, frustrated, standing behind free chair to finish his/her thought to DEVYN)

Sure. Balance. But I still get looked at by my teacher friends like I'm not one of them anymore and by my fellow administrators like I'm just a teacher, you know, kind of intruding into their world.

DEVYN

(warmly)

Like you're some sort of spy for the teachers?

MARLEY

Yeah, totally. If this workshop is about balancing everyone else out I'd love it.

(to the group)

Good morning everyone.

(Marley sits)

DEVYN

Some people struggle to be the boss even when that is exactly what a situation calls for. This is pretty easy for me, I've led teams. You have to be directive when you are in charge..

(sits in last available chair, suddenly unsure)

but of course I don't think you have to be like that all of the time.

(now sees REESE, recognizes from last night's reception)

Hi HUNTER? No wait; it's REESE?

Sorry. I forgot your name.

REESE

(pointing at HUNTER)

That's HUNTER.

DEVYN

(smiling)

You're REESE. That's it. Right.

(nodding to REESE)

What do you think?

REESE

(pretending to not have been listening to the earlier conversation)

About what?

DEVYN

What we were talking about.

REESE

Oh that.

Well, I hear what you are saying about being vice and all. It's not easy to know where you stand. Or how to get it right.

KAI

(Reaching arms straight out in any direction to stretch, then interlacing hands in lap, on table or behind head during the following lines)

When I asked myself: can I do the job? I wasn't at all hesitant. I see myself as a natural leader. I feel there aren't a lot of things that I can't handle, even unforeseen stuff.

(Warmly, with some humor)

Except ice-breakers. I can't handle those. We never did stuff like that back-in-the-day.

DEVYN

I don't really think that I knew what a principal did when I was brought on. Actually, not all of it. I mean, did you all know?

KAI

Ask Hunter. He's/She's like you, a principal of a small elementary school.

(warmly)

I learned that. Last night. During the ice-breaker.

HUNTER

(rapidly tapping a pencil)

One of the hardest things I have to do is help teachers adapt to increasing demands on them in the classroom to meet student needs. And help them preserve their own personal sense of well-being. Without the resources half the time...

MARLEY

(chin in hand, elbow on table)

I don't know.

(pointing generally forward)

Trying to balance what the teachers want, to be happy,

(indicating backwards)

and also what the principal wants, to be happy; well that's probably the hardest part of the job.

REESE

(slumping back in chair, wearily)

I think we expect a lot more of teachers than we did, say even 10 years ago.

HUNTER

For sure.

REESE

I mean, the face of the classroom has changed so much. I mean, I'm not just talking ethnic diversity. But financial diversity, you know.

Just so much...diversity

(kind of runs out of ideas about diversity)

HUNTER

Yeah, I know.

REESE

(not acknowledging Hunter's comment)

Well those increasing demands do add up. They suck up a lot of time and energy. Don't you think?

KAI

(pulling on own ear)

Well trying to manage where the school is going and also manage so people perform at their best, and yeah, whether each individual finds their fulfillment in their job, or not;

(letting down guard a bit, more vulnerable)

it's frustrating and difficult and it can add stress and, yeah, it can be very emotional.

DEVYN

It's good to hear you say that, actually. When you introduced yourself last night I was like, wow, that person is so together. I think your "blank" was leader? You stood there and said I am a leader. I mean, you are still so together but it's just good to hear what you just said.

MARLEY

Everyone comes to their work with their own stories, you know? I'm trying to create space and time to have important conversations to shift people's thinking.

KAI

Hmmm. I am not sure if anyone really wants to have those important conversations when they could just complain.

MARLEY

Sometimes I get the feeling they don't want me to ask them about important things, like their biases.

HUNTER

Biases? Really? I'm more worried about the budgets that are coming down from central office administration, than biases... and the new top-down initiatives that will arrive from on high with a change in government.

REESE

I agree with Hunter. I think a lot of people have become burned out. Because every new leader feels like they have to come up with a big idea to pin everything on.

HUNTER

Yes, is staying up-to-date really as complicated as people make it?

REESE

A lot of these new initiatives have crashed and burned within two to three years. They leave people very jaded. I say down with initiatives. Let people teach or run a school the best way they can.

DEVYN

Yeah, but those initiatives don't keep me up at night. The biggest issue in education right now is probably mental health. I think between kids and adults we've got a crisis on our hands – everyone's always talking budgets – but

(pointing to own forehead/temple)

I think its up here.

People are...

People are just...

HUNTER

But even mental health is a financial issue. Where is the staffing to handle this crisis?

MARLEY

(pushing hand into heart more and more throughout line)

I'm worried about the teachers because they're getting weighed down by it all. The budgets that suddenly change. And the new initiatives. And the mental health crisis. Teachers are in danger of bleeding to death.

KAI

(chopping table lightly with side of flat hand)

Really? I have experience in counseling people with real needs. Some teachers just like to complain. About everything. They need to deal with it.

DEVYN

(lacing fingers and putting forearms on table)

I think one of the biggest challenges for me as a young parent who is trying to raise a son alone while in a leadership position, and especially in an environment where I am not exactly the majority...

I don't know that my colleagues necessarily recognize the implications of some of their words and actions and how that might impact me differently than it would impact someone else. Like when they talk about checking the diversity box and I'm sitting right there. Like when they talk about distractions at meetings being a problem. And my son, who just sits in his stroller during our meetings sometimes, is really one of the best-behaved children I know. And they've all said, oh no, please bring him.

KAI

(not really at DEVYN, looking elsewhere)

Well is your son...
Being distracting? At the meetings? Maybe?

MARLEY

(to DEVYN)

Wait wait wait. They are talking about checking the diversity box? What idiots.

REESE

(turning to face HUNTER)

I have a story about a parent who called the superintendent's office last year to tell her I was an incompetent idiot.

HUNTER

(surprised)

What? What happened?

REESE

(animated, using hands to gesture)

A mom came in to the school to register her child. I recognized the mom as a former student of mine. From my Special Education classroom at the high school I used to work in. She had been in a classroom of students with severe behaviour issues along with academic needs. Lots of students there needed to be in treatment. Counseling, for trauma that they've experienced. I don't remember her graduating. Weird feeling being that I taught her like ten years ago.

(looking concerned)

She sits down and right away says: I'm illiterate and can't read the registration form.

(pauses)

So, I don't think she remembered me, but I sat down with her in the office and went through the forms step by step. I asked all the typical questions like: Who is the mother? Who is the dad? Who has custody? Who's picking up the kids? All of those kinds of normal things.

(reliving the confusion)

But, then she suddenly gets up and says she has to leave the meeting because she had to go somewhere. But, we weren't done. We hadn't got to any of the health questions or any of the specific information about the child's actual needs. But, as she's leaving she casually says; Oh by the way my kid has ADHD and has to have an educational aide.

And then keeps on walking out. And, as I'm talking to her, she's walking towards the door and I said: Well you need to come back. I'm sorry, but we really need to get some more

information to prepare properly. But, she just walked right out the front door.

HUNTER

And then?

REESE

Well we called her a couple of times. Didn't ever hear anything back. A week later, the mother and her kid just showed up. She walks into the office with her two other kids also and said: I'm here so Sami here can start school.

(pause)

I said: We need some more information.

(chuckles and continues as if amused)

She turns to her kids, and says: It's all your fault. See what happens when you can't fricking behave! And, then she just walked out and left in a huff. She just walks out of the building. Again.

(pause)

I was like: Whoa! That's not cool. So, this time I went after to talk to her.

(pause)

KAI

What happened?

REESE

As I'm walking out, I can see she is sitting in her car, parked right next to the school. I was looking right at her.

(pause)

She was looking right at me. I waved, like, saying I'll wait... And, then she just left. Drove away.

(slight laugh)

And, now I'm getting the sense that this isn't going the way that I thought it was going to go.

(chuckles, nervously)

But, I had an aid call home to get the info. She got it all. And, the student started school the next day.

(pause)

So, I think it's over and that we're good. But, then the next day I heard that she called the school division office to complain. That's when she called me an idiot. Next thing you know she sent a written a letter to the board of trustees.

DEVYN

Ah crap.

REESE

I don't know who wrote it. I guess she said in the letter that I was mean to her and taking it out on her because of things that happened almost ten years ago in my classroom. I had no idea what she meant.

(pause)

But then I thought about it, and remembered she had wanted to use the office shredder for some reason like every day in class. During class. Like all through class. And one day I just told her it wasn't working. But it was.

(pause)

But this couldn't be about that. I had to go to the board office, and explain the situation.

KAI

About the shredder?

REESE

(losing a little patience)

No, just about the struggle to get her kid properly enrolled. In the end, nothing happened to me, nothing awful I guess.

DEVYN

It's possible she was offended or felt attacked.

MARLEY

Yeah, did you say you went out after her.

REESE

Maybe I accidentally offended her. It's possible. But, I apologized to her in the foyer when she was walking out of the building. I don't know why she felt she had to send a letter. The whole thing made me super mad.

(pause)

Do you think it was about the shredder?

DEVYN

(serious)

That is a really big deal. Having a letter on file.

MARLEY

It sounds like it's still bothering you; at least a little bit.

REESE

I don't even really know what I would have done differently. I think I did the right thing. I mean, I can sleep at night. I mean now.

HUNTER

Did you even have the budget for the extra educational aide?

REESE

(ignoring HUNTER's comment, turning to face MARLEY)
I was a little frustrated that the board office was continuing to make me go through it by keeping the letter on file and giving this person who was obviously... so much credit.

(sighs)

Yeah, it was a little irritating at one point. And mostly left me worrying just a little bit. Yeah, worrying. Kind of from then on.

DEVYN

For me the big stressor at school has nothing to do with the job requirements. I'm fine with the work I am supposed to be doing in *theory*. It has to do with the personal politics that take place in the school division and the personal attacks that I've had to endure.

KAI

Like what?

DEVYN

I'd rather not even go into it.

MARLEY

(energetically)

I always felt like I was in the middle. In these kinds of conversations when personal politics are at play. It has been very frustrating.

KAI

Oh, when my assistant superintendent was having his own crisis, well, that complainer did essentially nothing and we all had to pick up the pieces. Probably, that was the biggest stressor. People a level above you falling apart. Then you have nobody to talk to. And it's not like I was going home to calm every night.

DEVYN

One time I had to go to court over a divorce case that involved a little girl. I knew she should remain in my school that was close to her father's home. He had custody for what I thought were obvious reasons to anyone. But, my decision was overturned, and she was allowed to enrol in another school. Near the mother. My superintendent, a man, and another principal, a man, just sided with the mother.

(sigh)

Simply because she was... the mother. Definitely not the best for the kid. I was so angry. I was confused. I was upset. Then the personal attacks started.

KAI

I get it. I mean, I really do. Did I ever tell you about the kid who came to school in a Confederate soldier uniform?

REESE

Up here? I don't think so.

KAI

One day a student showed up wearing this over-the-top army uniform, boots and all, with a cap, you know, the kind with a brim. I saw him in the hall that morning and said, you need to take the hat off for the rest of the day. He asked if he could call his dad. I said, Yeah, you can call your dad. But it's not a big deal. You just need to go put the hat in your locker and then let's get to class. Next thing I knew dad was in here.

REESE

Uh oh.

KAI

Wouldn't sit down. He said, I'm not sitting in this place. Wouldn't shake my hand. I said, obviously, you're upset. Can we have a chat? He said, I don't want to chat with you. I want to know why you're taking away part of my son's history. I asked, part of your history is to dress like a soldier at school? He said, yep that's part of his way of showing gratitude for the fighting men. And women. That serve us every day.

(pause)

I said, you've got to help me understand. But, right away he replied, you're ruining his life. Don't you know this is what Hitler did?

(laughs)

I just said, you know what? I'm sorry. This conversation is over. You need to leave.

REESE

(incredulous)

Hitler? How did he get Hitler?

KAI

The father said, I'm going to call the news media. Then he said, I'm going to have your fucking job. You fucking Nazi. Your clothing is offensive. You go change your clothes then. You're offensive to me. All I kept saying is: you need to leave. You need to leave. He went and sat out in the office, phoned the news media, and then another one. That night on the news they reported that this kid was suspended for being patriotic. He was never suspended. I didn't even send him home. The dad pulled him out.

REESE

Was it a part of their family's history?

DEVYN

That actually may be a thing down there. A day of commemoration of something. Maybe?

MARLEY

No way people. I've been through all this sensitivity training too. I see what you are trying to do, but that dad was just plain wrong. Our divisions' hat policies are clear and they are all the same school to school.

KAI

And, on top of it someone called me insensitive to veterans and that quote got into three news outlets. It's like...

(Sigh. Realizes the story telling is over)

Yeah, it felt really shitty.

(awkward laugh)

REESE

(pulls out a notepad, flips a few papers)

8:52. Did any of you do that writing thing for this morning?

MARLEY

(not acknowledging the question)

There are some things that are difficult with my position. A little bit exhausting.

REESE

(raising voice slightly)

We were supposed to think about how we can create space and time to have important conversations. It was something about having thick skin, big ears, and honest egos. I think?

MARLEY

(continuing to ignore REESE)

One of the hardest things over the past three years has been dealing with lots of frustrations. Sometimes we need to push the system, but if it's fundamentally opposed to what you believe in, then maybe education is not the right place for you to be working. I don't like putting my energy where it doesn't pay off. I have done that many times.

HUNTER

I get it Marley. I like a payoff for my energy too. I like to think I'm a resilient person, though. You know? Someone who pushes back and doesn't get set back, too much, by it all.

DEVYN

It's incredibly draining trying to do my work and be seen as a legitimate leader when people want to reduce me to a diversity box that's been checked.

REESE

Early in my career in administration I needed to make people happy. I wanted people to like me and it's hard to get to that point where you can live with people not liking you. It never gets easy but it gets easier.

MARLEY

I have had to set some boundaries, for myself. Like with parents. Some of them I friended as their kids' teacher started creeping me on Facebook when I became vice-principal.

(slight pause)

Now I really clarify with parents what is friendship versus a working relationship. Now I'm like super leery and would never Facebook friend a parent. Well maybe not every request.

REESE

Not if you have a personal life.

MARLEY

(laughs)

I'm not worried. I have nothing to hide.

REESE

I do. I have a personal life.

(turning to face KAI)

What about you, KAI?

KAI

I think a lot of great teachers move into leadership thinking I'm a great teacher, so I'm going to be a great educational leader. They don't know all else that they need to do.

HUNTER

Being an educational leader is only one component of the job.

KAI

Right, because on top of that you know we're human resources managers. We're building managers, and we're also in charge of finances, and all of these other parts of the job take away from that educational leadership piece. It's exhausting.

HUNTER

When I worked in a high school and kids had issues, you could talk to the Principal. The Principal could get them a bus ticket. You could get them a job. You could get them to a shelter. But, when the kids are little you can't do that. They're little kids, and they're just... they're having...they are living lives that nobody should have to live. I don't think I was ready for that. I just don't think I was aware. You just can't get the kids out of some of these terrible situations. That has been hard. I was taking a little bit more of it home with me than I normally would.

KAI

You have to deal with it. At a certain point, you realize that you're the master of your own ship and you better do something about all the crap so you don't take it home.

HUNTER

Fine, KAI. But all the same, some parts of the job, yeah, you can deal with them. Other stresses can build up over a long period of time and can be terrible if you have to endure them alone.

KAI

For me, if I'm honest, then "yes" the work has had a personal impact. I've felt super frustrated, super unsupported in the past. Over time there are some things that I kept replaying. The kid in the soldier outfit. Not the kid so much, but the Dad, and being called unsupportive to vets...

MARLEY

My biggest concern of that is the systemic implications of having people in leadership positions with the mindset and mentality that all of this stress is normal. We are going to burn out good people. Then what?

REESE

Like so many, I had a "Me Too" experience. It took basically two years to work through all the gossip and rumours and figure out how my reputation was being attacked behind my back, even though I was the one who...; just a big mess around the story and perception that had been created about me around the workplace abuse incident. It was a really difficult time.

DEVYN

You people are all making me realize that leadership roles are basically stressful *enterprises*. Not all school leaders should have to behave like they know what they are doing all the time, because they can't know. That's what I'm hearing.

HUNTER

(looking into space as if checked out)

My spouse sent me a couple of texts during board meetings. He/She found our daughter in a room holding a picture of me. Crying because I wasn't home that night again. For like the third night in a row. For just a moment, I got a little bit frustrated. I don't think anyone in the world really cared about what we were talking about right then. What difference was I making by being in that meeting trying to shed light on new initiatives in long term school finance? Taking that much time away from my own kids...

(pause)

Those are the moments that began to really weigh on me. I changed things after that.

REESE

(slowly standing, leaning against table and stretching calf muscles)

We've talked about the stress and the emotional drain, but come on. Sometimes you can get a big emotional boost when things go well. Even just who you have as your principal, from my point-of-view as vice-principal...that's a make or break experience.

MARLEY

(seeing REESE, looking around, slowly standing)

Hunter I once missed my friend's wedding because I was giving a weekend workshop on people's implicit biases. I felt terrible about it too.

DEVYN

Oh darn.

MARLEY

No, but, this is the thing. Then I heard the workshop I gave really helped a small, rural school staff get past some major problems and do so much better. So yeah, Reese, I agree. We back each other up in terms of supporting students and then work together better after that. I have a really good group of people that I'm working with now. Finally.

KAI

(slowly standing, stretching arms)

You know, I feel pretty comfortable now and it has come from the people I've been working around and the school that I'm currently at. Almost everybody is pretty much caring and empathetic.

DEVYN

(standing, fixing chair a few times)

As long as everyone is acting in good faith and you have a common vision that comes from everybody, you can find fulfillment in your job. Yeah, it can be a big boost to see good things happening because of your efforts.

(pause)

It's obvious we aren't in it for the cash. We're in it for the students. Sometimes our job is just to love the kids and let the academics take a back seat to that.

KAI

I think we can love the kids and not have the academics take a back seat, but that's just me.

HUNTER

(looking at those standing and the table)
You guys look like you are done?

KAI

(not moving)
Time to go, I guess.

REESE

(not moving, to group)
I feel awful already.

MARLEY

I agree. This is going to be a long day.

HUNTER

(gathering things, still sitting, warmly)
I sure hope we don't have to talk about our emotions.

KAI

(walking out, over shoulder as exits)
Yeah. Talking about all that emotional baggage stuff is so over-done. I can be sensitive when I need to be.

DEVYN

(over shoulder as exits)
I know. I sense that I've got like 600 emails from my staff already and the day is just beginning.

MARLEY

(calling to those already exited from the space, warmly, walking out)
On Monday we get to go back to being the leaders of our awesome staffs. They expect us to respond like we are the leader. They're looking for someone with a level head to be in charge. Someone with that "all's well" kind of face, you know?

REESE

That's what I try to have every day I walk into that school of mine. It's better than my "this may not end well" face.

HUNTER

(only HUNTER and REESE are left. To REESE)
Let's go check it out. Maybe it will be good to just think
about being, well, well, more often. Time to get your
principal face on.

(REESE smiles brightly, pats HUNTER on shoulder,
REESE exits followed closely by HUNTER, who grabs
one last wrapped granola bar)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Performing the Data

The dramatic irony of characters who do not realize that they just revealed many of their emotions while on their way to a session for which they have conspired to avoid any emotional displays, is something that the audience, not the characters, benefits from noticing. The drama makes transparent otherwise private conversations, and invites us to grapple with the non-fiction world via fiction. This ethnodrama is the written result of reconstituting data into scripted form. The process as well as the product (i.e., the performance) of enacting ethnodramatic scripts (Leavy, 2009; Norris, 2009; Saldaña, 2005, 2011) would be where the ethnodrama becomes ethnotheatre. But this particular ethnotheatre performance is not solely from the imaginations of the playwrighting co-researchers. *The Two Faces of Leadership* draws approximately ninety-five percent of its imagery and content from actual words and emotions shared during interviews with research informants. The work of the co-researchers was to develop narratives that captured the rawness of these monologues of school leadership experiences, to negotiate the meaning of these experiences into five characters' perspectives who would come together at a leadership retreat breakfast, and to authorize their own and others' interpretations of the inner life of these school leaders and the interpersonal dynamic that might carry them into a group conversation through the development of a scripted play (Saldaña, 2005, 2011). In response to critics who attempt to dismiss the value of ethnodrama as a weak form of research, Saldaña (2011) contends that ethnodramas achieve verisimilitude and universality through the reconstruction of reality into monologues and dialogues. In these stories we can piece together a semblance of the whole, and finally observe the lived reality of the contemporary principalship in order to develop our perspective (Eisner, 1995).

Saldaña (2005) is resolute that ethnodrama should be aesthetically pleasing and function as a work of art. He advocates for artistic quality in all arts-based research and exhorts social scientists who are transferring their data to the stage to think like artists or better still, he suggests, they ought to collaborate with a theatre professional to write ethnodramas and to stage ethnotheatre. Saldaña encourages transdisciplinary approaches to ethnodrama and ethnotheatre studies by referring to the outcomes of single-disciplinary ethnodramas: "Just as no one wants to read mediocre research, no one wants to sit through mediocre theatre" (2005, p. 31).

In an attempt to create well-scripted ethnodrama that would allow educational leaders to focus on the underestimated socio-emotional cost for acting rightly within the framework of school leadership (Cranston & Kusanovich, 2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2015, 2017; Goleman, 2006), the research study was approved by the appropriate institutional research ethics board and then semi-structured interviews lasting between approximately sixty to seventy-five minutes were conducted with seven individual volunteers who had formal positions of

school leadership in Canada (i.e., vice principal, principal or central office administrator). Participants were asked to describe the challenges they face as they lead a school's staff. The interviews specifically focused on their perceptions of the human dynamics associated with team-building and conflict resolution (Creswell, 2013).

Encoding and Enlivening Emotions

The interviews resulted in twenty pages of transcript data and 1134 lines of data. The data was analyzed thematically through an iterative process of coding and recoding data segments to create general themes that served as the storyline for the script (Creswell 2013; Saldaña, 2012). According to Saldaña (2012), one of the eight "first cycle" strategies that can be used to code qualitative data is an affective approach to coding using emotional codes. Emotional coding allows researchers to apply emotional codes to qualitative data to examine the interpersonal and/or intrapersonal experiences of research participants, and was appropriate given that the co-researchers wished to reveal any hidden emotional toll that is inherent in school leadership. The emotional codes used in the first cycle were drawn from Watson, Clark, and Tellegen's (1988) "Positive and Negative Affect Schedule" (referred to as the PANAS). The PANAS, which has been used in various research contexts for over thirty years to measure individuals' positive and negative affective states, served as a conceptual model for the emotional coding.

Each interview was coded individually using Watson et al.'s (1988) ten positive and ten negative affect dimensions; see Table 1 below for the emotional codes used in the first cycle of coding.

Table 1.

PANAS Emotional Codes according to Watson et al. (1988)

Positive affect	Negative affect
Attentive	Hostile
Active	Irritable
Alert	Ashamed
Excited	Guilty
Enthusiastic	Distressed
Determined	Upset
Inspired	Scared
Proud	Afraid
Interested	Jittery
Strong	Nervous

Subsequently, each of the interviews was subjected to a second cycle of coding using a thematic, pattern coding approach in order to group the emotional codes to a smaller number of significant sets, themes, or constructs (Saldaña, 2012) that then could be illustrated in the interactions between the composite characters. This shorter list of codes included the following positive affects: “active”, and “determined”, and the following negative affects: “distressed,” “hostile,” and “upset”. Of the positive and negative emotional codes that surfaced in the second cycle analysis the highest frequency ones were the three negative affects: “distressed,” “hostile,” and “upset”. Thus, in writing the ethnodrama, the authors made sure to emphasize those three negative emotions so the ethnodrama would represent the PANAS data as closely as possible. The five characters demonstrate positive qualities of being active and determined in the way they adamantly ended up sharing their stories and in their doggedness in trying to do their jobs well.

Similarly coded stories were then adjusted for anonymity, blended in some cases, and broken into multiple stories in other cases. What emerged were stories invested with the emotional equivalency of the original transcripts that retained a vast majority of verbatim words. Only sixteen words not from the data had to be added to the dialogue of the play. These are: 1) army uniform, 2) blank, 3) commemoration, 4) Confederate soldier, 5) credit, 6) fighting, 7) filled, 8) happening 9) hat, 10) heavy, 11) Monday, 12) patriotic, 13) please, 14)

shredder, 15) stroller, and 16) theory. The stage directions in parentheses that indicate entrances, exits, gestures or other clues for performance did not come from the transcripts.

These five characters never existed, but the dynamics of the scenarios they recount, and every emotional outcome they refer to, was experienced by those they represent, who in turn could be seen as representing a larger group of some of today's working principals and vice-principals.

Meaning is not meant to be singular or bounded by the researchers' understandings. Between the spoken dialogues and the stage directions, the reader/player may interpret the characters' reasons for their acts, as well as infer the causes behind their words and actions (Leavy, 2009; Saldaña, 2005, 2011).

The play then underwent a subtle revision process known as workshopping the script. This involves a simple form of performance in which a play is staged as a reading. A group of faculty and adult students were invited to read, rehearse and offer granular and global suggestions to the playwrights about the script so that small revisions could be made to the language, staging, and pacing to improve the script for reading/performance (Saldaña, 2011).

Readers were not given any information on the PANAS data coding process, or reference to a master list of emotional codes, but were asked to articulate the emotional terrain of the play in their own words upon reading it. The five readers offered one to three emotions or feelings they experienced from the play. This generated ten items, ordered by the researchers: 1) being ignored; 2) loneliness; 3) harmful nostalgia; 4) feeling betrayed; 5) heaviness; 6) being set-up to fail; 7) having issues with having to be present to everything; 8) anger; 9) frustration; and, 10) cynicism. The first four seem in line with the PANAS item of distress, the next three aligned with the PANAS item of upset. The last three seem in line with the PANAS item of hostility. All in all the emotions that were identified spontaneously by the actors after reading the ethnodrama preserved the dominant emergent emotional codes from the pre-scripted data analyses. This alignment indicated to the researchers that the translation from data to art had, on the whole, preserved the primary emotional coding of the original raw interviews.

Building the Repertoire for Resilience in Leadership

The real test of this work is how it will be taken up by emerging leaders early on in their graduate school programs or careers, by practicing leaders with a few years of experience to inform their decisions, or by seasoned school leadership professionals who have many contexts and situations as reference. What kinds of conversations and relationships might

be forged upon reading or performing this ethnodrama at any particular school site? It may also be helpful for other school staffs, parents and community stakeholders to really have a glimpse in to the varied and unpredictable nature of leadership in dynamic environments like schools. Neither playwrights nor researchers can predict the significance of their work on an audience or readership. It may be immediate or gain its meaning later when lived experience starts to resonate with the remembered stories within the play. When life begins to imitate art as much as we have attempted to have art imitate life, the truths of this work and its value may emerge.

In preparing for school leadership, the joys, the highlights, the ideals must be studied, but so too should the behind the scenes challenges be elucidated and acknowledged, if only as cautionary tale. We hope that more art and research collaborations that bring out the drama in school leadership will ensue, and that embracing the inevitable complexity of leadership in schools becomes that much more possible for having been exposed to this breakfast table and its cast of characters.

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