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Preparing university educators for hot moments: theater for educational development about difference, power, and privilege

Yael Harlap[a]

[a] Department of Education, University of Bergen, Postboks 7807,
Bergen 5020, Norway
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Preparing university educators for hot moments: theater for educational development about difference, power, and privilege

Yael Harlap*

Department of Education, University of Bergen, Postboks 7807, Bergen 5020, Norway

A 'hot moment' is an emotion-laden moment of conflict or tension that threatens to derail teaching and learning. In this study, an educational development workshop used interactive theater depicting a hot moment to prepare university instructors for diverse classrooms. Participants in three workshops wrote short reflections, both before and after the theater-based experience, about whether instructors should consider differences among students. After the workshop, many participants took new dimensions of difference into consideration. Surprisingly, after the interactive theater experience, almost all participants reflected exclusively on instrumental issues in teaching (e.g. classroom management strategies), but not structural issues of difference, power, and privilege that underlie hot moments. The empirical findings and the author's reflections on a personal hot moment are theorized in terms of concepts from and critiques of critical and feminist pedagogy.

Keywords: educational development; difference; diversity; critical pedagogy; theater

Between stimulus and response there is a space.
In that space is our power to choose our response.
In our response lies our growth and our freedom.
– Unknown, cited by Steven R. Covey (2008, vi)

… all language is violent; all knowledge is normalizing;
and all oppositional knowledge is drawn into the order
against which it intends to rebel.
– Patti Lather (1998, 493)

A hot moment in the classroom is a source of dread for university educators; an unanticipated classroom situation laden with tension or conflict is rarely considered an opportunity for learning. In this hybrid empirical and reflective essay, I tangle with hot moments on two levels. I present an empirical evaluation of an educational development program that used theatrical techniques from a critical pedagogy tradition to help instructors prepare for hot moments in the classroom. I also delve into a hot moment I experienced while facilitating the program, to implicate myself in the analysis and discussion and interrogate my own position as facilitator and scholar.

Lee Warren (2006) defines hot moments as 'moments in the classroom when the emotions of students and/or faculty escalate to a level that threatens teaching and learning, usually triggered by a comment on a sensitive issue' (Hughes, Huston, and Stein

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*Email: yael.harlap@psyip.uib.no

2010, 7). Microaggressions can trigger hot moments in higher education contexts – and the educational development program I led used microaggressions as a starting point to explore social and historical fault lines underlying a classroom eruption. Microaggressions are everyday and often unintentional acts related to race, gender, and other forms of difference, that nonetheless corrode the dignity of individuals or groups. Derald Wing Sue et al. (2007) describe microaggressions as 'brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults' (273). Perpetrators of microaggression typically are unaware that their words or behavior, rooted in unconscious biases, have had a hurtful impact on others (Dovidio et al. 2002; Sue, Capodilupo, and Holder 2008). When microaggressions are brought to their attention, they often dismiss them as trivial (Rowe 1990; Sue and Constantine 2007). Microaggressions in classroom settings can lead to hot moments, particularly if a class member confronts or reacts to the perpetrator (Sue and Constantine 2007).

Educators may be surprised by a hot moment, especially if they do not recognize preceding microaggressions (Young 2003). Unprepared educators typically respond by ignoring an incident, changing the subject, or adjorning without addressing the source of tension. They may fear 'losing control' of the class, or feel that they are not responsible for diverting class time to explore the issue (Hughes, Huston, and Stein 2010). However, ignoring an incident can have significant costs. Students may struggle to reconnect with course material, especially when hurt, angry, or intimidated (Huston and DiPietro 2006), and they may feel resentful and disempowered by an instructor's avoidance. Microaggressions can create a hostile climate (Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso 2000), lower students' problem-solving capacities (Dovidio 2001; Salvatore and Shelton 2007), and perpetuate stereotype threat (Steele, Spencer, and Aronson 2002). Finally, an educator's avoidance can communicate that silence is the appropriate response, and worse, can implicitly sanction racist, sexist, or otherwise oppressive comments.

Most university educators are unprepared to respond to students' emotional reactions or incidents that lead to hot moments (Vacarr 2001). Experiential training for facilitating difficult dialogs can help prepare educators handle microaggressions and hot moments (Sue et al. 2009). In 2009, I cofounded an educational development program, the Living Lab, at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. This program used forum theater – an interactive and experiential theater approach from Augusto Boal's (1985, 1992, 1995) *Theatre of the Oppressed* (TO) – to engage participants and was inspired by an established program at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Introducing and problematizing theatre of the oppressed

Boal's TO has roots in critical pedagogy, and specifically in Paulo Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, a problem-posing approach that aims to awaken a critical consciousness: 'the recognition of a system of oppressive relations, and one's own place in that system' (Burbules and Berk 1999). TO has similar aims to 'safeguard, develop and reshape this human vocation, by turning the practice of theater into an effective tool for the comprehension of social and personal problems and the search for their solutions' (Boal 1995, 14). Indeed, TO is grounded in an understanding that seemingly unique individual problems are often common experiences among people who share an oppression: the feminist 'personal is political' (Morley 1998).

Enacting TO in academic contexts raises the question, Who is TO *for*? Theater of the *Oppressor* – equipping the powerful with more oppressive tools – is clearly inappropriate. Although formal education has liberatory potential, it also upholds current power arrangements. University educators, no matter their intentions, play a role in maintaining current systems of domination. A program like Living Lab could be critiqued as preparing educators to better understand everyday workings of power, which they can leverage in their inherently authoritative roles. In itself, the widespread shift of university teaching to graduate or even undergraduate students as inexpensive labor follows from neoliberal policies in education (Skeggs 1995). Educators, though historically economically privileged and elite workers, are increasingly in economically insecure and temporary positions; even my position when I led Living Lab was provisional: 60% time with annual contract renewal. Living Lab could also be critiqued as palliative, providing minimal training for workers within these oppressive constraints, rather than posing fundamental questions about the structure and positioning of educational institutions.

Forum theater as method

Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989, 1997) critiques critical and dialogical pedagogies – yet poses a foundational question that resonates with my understanding of TO's impulse and the practice of forum theater:

> The question, How will I respond? is inescapable because we are both empowered and condemned to meaning-making. We cannot *not* communicate. We cannot *not* respond to the events and stories that in-form us. Even not responding is a response – it has its consequences for myself and for others.

> […] I cannot not respond, and yet parts of my responses will be unintended, the consequences of my responses can't be predicted or controlled, and I will never know their outcomes or the full extent of their unanticipated effects. (Ellsworth 1997, 136)

The purpose of Living Lab was to demand a response from participants – not simply intellectual, but a living, breathing attempt to *make something happen* in pedagogical space. Student actors performed short interactive theater sketches about hot moments derived from actual classroom experiences of microaggression relating to gender, race, class, ability, language, and religion. The performances engaged workshop participants in generating, interpreting, and acting out their ideas about the performed situations, using the TO technique of *forum theater*. In forum theater, participants watch a short play that includes a moment of crisis where something important is at stake and ends in the worst possible outcome. They watch the play twice, first as spectators, and then as 'spect-actors' invited to interrupt onstage action when a character struggles. A spect-actor then acts as the struggling character and attempts a different approach. After each intervention, the facilitator engages the spect-actors in a discussion. In a forum play, the theatrical and verbal dialog (the intervention and subsequent discussion) draws connections between the specific incident depicted onstage and the structural and systemic dimensions of oppression.

Boal described forum theater as a '*rehearsal for reality*' (Jackson in Boal 1992, xxi): an opportunity for a person facing an oppressor onstage to practice taking power. One interpretation of 'rehearsal for reality' is that after multiple attempts are enacted, participants have a broader repertoire for similar situations in the future. From this perspective, TO can be criticized for universalizing situations, thus being insufficiently

sensitive to context (Ellsworth 1989; Lather 1998). However, forum theater participants can expand their capacity for improvisation, their creative potential to act in new situations (Agneta Josephson and Ronald Matthijssen, personal communication). Equally importantly, forum theater creates a space for dialog, using theater and action rather than intellectualized and abstract words, striving to crack the polite (superficial) consensus that exists in a group, revealing contradictions and gaps in understanding and recognition. In contrast to rehearsing 'for reality', forum theater leads us to an embodied understanding that actions have unknowable consequences.

All the short plays in Living Lab portrayed classroom situations involving conflict or tension related to difference, stemming from microaggressions. For example, in a play we performed for the English department teaching assistants – where I myself experienced a hot moment as a facilitator – a white, female student (character) responds to a classroom discussion about themes of sexual and domestic violence in a novel set in Afghanistan by asking, 'Isn't that just a part of their culture?' After a moment of silence, the student looks at a brown-skinned classmate and asks pointedly, 'Well, isn't it?' The classmate (character) shrugs and replies, irritated, 'I wouldn't know'. Meanwhile, the instructor (character) freezes and loses confidence in managing the class – parallel to my own experience facilitating this particular play in the English department.

A typical workshop session involved introductions of the facilitator and student actors, a short warm-up activity, two performances of a forum theater play (the second time with spect-actor interventions), and a short discussion. In the three workshop sessions described in this paper, I – a white, Jewish, Canadian, able-bodied, queer, upper-middle-class woman with one year's experience facilitating TO – was the facilitator.

The airing of grievances: my hot moment in the English department

Ellsworth (1997) warns against the tendency in the literature on critical pedagogy to assume both a 'generic', normative teacher, and in the classroom to assume the voyeuristic position of drawing out student voices without interrogating the teacher's voice. Here, I seek to position myself inside the story such that the analysis and interpretation do not reproduce a disembodied, normative author and teacher, while encouraging you as reader to participate in constructing your own partial and flexible interpretations. Thus, I describe my own experience of a hot moment to open my multiple implicated positions and interests in this paper: as author (I have framed the story and chosen examples of participant reflections to present and interpret); scholar in educational development (I want the paper to be well received and provocative); researcher of Living Lab (I designed and led the investigation); *joker* for Living Lab (I facilitated the workshops); and fan and practitioner of TO as a liberatory practice.

In the English department, we performed two short plays with interventions as part of 'Diversity in English', a full day of events. As the *joker*, my role was to invite, encourage, press, and seduce the spectators to become spect-actors. About 35 people attended, mostly teaching assistants, plus several faculty members, and the Special Advisor to the President of the university on Aboriginal affairs. I facilitated a theatrical and verbal dialog both onstage and with the audience of spect-actors, who were reticent and quiet, especially during the play described above. In the discussion that followed the halting series of interventions, a male, seemingly white, seemingly able-bodied participant commented that his mother was a teacher whose First Nations (Aboriginal) students sometimes liked to 'air their grievances' about 'mainstream society' in class. Soon

thereafter, with time running out for the workshop, the same participant described his strategy for dealing with diverse ideological opinions in class by saying that if he had a student with a swastika tattooed on his forehead, he would want to give that student just as much time and space to speak his opinions as any other student.

When faced with the opportunity to model handling a hot moment in response to a microaggressive remark, like most instructors (Hughes, Huston, and Stein 2010), I felt unprepared and terrified of 'losing control' of the group, I froze and my mind went blank. I chose to pose an open question, 'What do other people think?', trusting the room to offer critiques and alternative interpretations, and letting myself off the hook. However, in the moment (and in retrospect), I felt that I abdicated my moral authority by not responding directly to this participant's willingness to allow hateful speech in his classroom. An inherent difficulty in dialogical pedagogies is that if the 'authenticity' of student voices are privileged – all experiences are different but valid – then power structures are ignored (Luke 1997) and the classroom becomes another arena for the repetition of oppressive speech (Morley 1998), rather than a space that 'talks back' to that speech (hooks 1986/1987). After some uncomfortable silence, a professor responded, heatedly, that they would never allow a student with a swastika on their forehead into their classroom. The discussion eventually shifted to a conversation about what types of speech are acceptable in university classrooms, but the tension was thick when the workshop ended. I left feeling unresolved and ambivalent about Living Lab and my own capacity to respond to hot moments, much less prepare others to meet them with ethical curiosity.

Evaluating Living Lab

Though I cannot know how participants reacted to the hot moment I described, I do have a window onto participants' learning in this and other Living Lab workshops through empirical evaluations. Two questions generated the methodology for the study: what do participants learn from this experience? And, how does the workshop affect participants' analysis of difference (including issues of privilege and power) in teaching and learning?

Here, *difference* refers to social identities that shape how individuals experience the world and how others treat them due to conscious and unconscious biases. Privilege and power are unevenly distributed among groups with different social identities. *Privilege* refers to invisible and unearned advantage based on belonging to a favored social identity group, such as being white-skinned, male, or able-bodied (McIntosh 1988; Johnson 2001). *Power* is conceptualized in terms of 'power-over': the ability of person (or group) A to get person (or group) B to do something they otherwise would not. Power can also be seen as access to economic, social, and political resources.

I collected written reflections at the start and end of three individual workshops designed (and required, or strongly recommended) for English, Statistics, and Teacher Education graduate student teaching assistants in 2010. Of the 35 participants in the English department workshop, 19 agreed to participate in the research evaluation. Similarly, 8 of the 12 in the Teacher Education workshop and 10 of the 18 from the Statistics session participated. In two workshops, faculty members participated; in the Teacher Education workshop, a faculty member was present but did not participate. Participants varied in their semesters of teaching experience (0–12 semesters, average = 1.45) and, for graduate students, length of time in their program (one semester to five years; most in their first year). Participants were diverse in gender, nationality, race/ethnicity, and fluency in English.

Upon entering the workshop space, I described the session and invited attendees to participate in the study. I then offered the following reflective writing prompt:

> People have really different ways of thinking about cultural and other differences in teaching and learning situations. For example, some people would argue that it is important that instructors be aware of and take into account differences such as gender, race, class, nationality, and so on. Others might say that instructors should not focus on these kinds of differences among students when they plan, prepare or teach. Where do you stand? Why?

At the end of the workshop, I offered another 10-minute writing prompt:

> Read over what you wrote at the beginning of the workshop.

> Now write a few sentences reflecting on whether your perspectives from the start of the workshop may have been affirmed or challenged. Consider: Are there things you would want to emphasize, add or change from your initial writing? If so, what are they and why? If not, what events in the workshop affirmed your perspectives?

All the participants who consented to take part in the research submitted their written reflections, demographic data, and a consent form.

The research questions and before-and-after methods reveal my desire for participants to move toward a state of greater recognition of the structural, systemic oppressions enacted and performed in the classroom – and away from the perception of hot moments as unique situations to be handled by teachers as skillful classroom managers. Yet Living Lab, to be palatable to the university (to the teaching center, funding unit, and departments that invited us to perform), was presented as apolitical, against the potential charge of left-wing indoctrination. Ellsworth ([1989](#)) critiques her radical academic colleagues for masking their political agendas, remarking that, 'however good the reasons for choosing the strategy of subverting repressive school structures from within, it has necessitated the use of code words such as "critical," "social change," "revitalized public sphere," and a posture of invisibility.' (301). Indeed, I felt conflicted, wanting Living Lab to be a catalyst for social justice and at the same time not predefining desirable outcomes. I wanted transformation in participants, yet recognized that my own perception and analysis was limited by my partial, incomplete, and shifting knowledge (Lather [1998](#); Morley [1998](#)) and my own interests – for example, for the workshop to be seen as a success by participants.

In collaboration with three colleagues, I analyzed the written reflections from 33 participants that submitted both pre- and postworkshop writing. After coding, three were omitted because their comments were not related to the prompt. We analyzed the content of the preworkshop reflections inductively, created a coding scheme, and applied it to the postworkshop reflections. Then we analyzed the pre- and postreflections together to evaluate whether participants had changed their perspectives, or more accurately, if they focused on new or additional dimensions of difference.

Only five research participants suggested that instructors should *not* take difference into account, reflecting commonly expressed ideological positions. Several of these suggested that treating every student 'equally' or 'the same' is sufficient, which corresponds to a dominant ideology about race, sometimes called colorblind ideology: we are all human and therefore the same underneath our superficial differences (Bonilla-Silva [2006](#)). One reflection suggested that focusing on differences creates divisions, a perspective that works to maintain the privileges of dominant social groups. It also

silences those who would discuss difference, and how differences in social group identity correspond to inequalities in power across social groups. Perhaps surprisingly, these two interrelated types of response were rare in the reflections, leading me to wonder how prevalent they might be among those who declined to participate, perhaps assuming that those viewpoints would be unwelcome in the workshop, in their graduate program, or at the university.

In contrast, 25 of the 30 study participants suggested, in their preworkshop reflections, that instructors *should* consider student differences in their teaching. Many participants were primarily concerned with getting out of the classroom unscathed; others about getting out with their students unscathed; yet others had pedagogical concerns about student learning. Others reflected the kind of structural, social justice-driven analysis that TO practitioners hope to provoke in participants. For example, one participant from the English department workshop[1] wrote:

> Of course instructors should be aware of these issues when they teach because all students speak from particular positionalities especially in relation to so subjective a field as literature. However, to plan for the individual characteristics of students beforehand is impossible; the challenge is to allow all students to interact with material in ways that challenge, engage and animate them. At the same time, all literature and its teaching occurs within a particular context and serves particular concerns. To ignore those is a fallacy, and for it to remain unacknowledged a tragedy.

This participant highlighted several qualities that I desired to see in the reflections *after* the workshop: awareness that students' subject positions and interests shape what they notice and produce; awareness of the impossibility of teachers being prepared for the unknowable; and acknowledgment of how the particular (literature and teaching) occurs within power relations that shape and constrain – but that can be disrupted. We found that 10 of the 25 participants who supported taking difference into account before the forum play had some of these qualities in their preworkshop reflections.

What participants told us at the end of the workshops

Our analysis of the postworkshop reflections and change from before to after the workshop suggests that the forum theater play left many participants wondering, 'What will I do if this happens to me?' Over half of the participants incorporated new considerations into their postworkshop reflections; yet, the code we applied most frequently (eight reflections) was 'Difference creates difficulties or difference is challenging'. Strikingly, all participants except one reflected on issues of immediacy – how to handle a hot moment – even if their preworkshop reflections analyzed subject positions or power relations. One possible interpretation is that contrary to my desires, the workshops, which aimed to elucidate the structural through analysis of the specific, led participants to consider approaches to classroom management and their own fears. Post-workshop reflections were largely focused on what the instructor could (not) or should (not) *do* in the classroom, in the face of a conflict or challenge related to difference, such as in these two reflections:

> I would like to come to listen to what the students are saying and gauge what direction they want the discussion to go in (i.e., What they feel is important and relevant) without 'losing control' of the classroom. In terms of dealing with sensitive issues that come up, I see how it

is important to remain calm and yet steer the discussion in a productive and non-aggressive direction.

The workshop has given me anxieties about whether I will be able to maintain control over my students. I realized I'm a lot more comfortable talking about my own opinions than I am overseeing other people's controversial discussions. My opinion remains unchanged, though – I do still think it is very important for instructors to tackle these issues, but I've gained a new understanding/appreciation for why some may want to avoid them entirely.

As these two reflections suggest, though focused on the immediate, the participants were *not* fixated on developing formulaic strategies or pre-scripted responses to hot moments. Instead, the reflections were congruent with Living Lab's aspirations for participants to realize that actions can have unpredictable outcomes; however, the reflections still centered on classroom 'control' rather than on an analysis of the underlying mechanisms of power at play.

Alternatively, participants may have shifted from vague or abstract notions of how to 'deal with difference' to a more nuanced recognition of the messy realities of hot moments in the classroom. We see this in two examples of postworkshop reflections from the English department:

What's been challenged by the workshops – or affirmed, really – is the role of the instructor in making change on the basis of the acknowledgements of difference. That's a little hard for me to unpack. I guess what I saw was that any number of strategies might reflect an intent to remedy inequality (or injustice!) in the classroom. Maybe what's needed is more opportunity to converse, as TAs [teaching assistants], around this issue. Still, what I saw was a lot of TAs offering advice on how to correct a situation – but, as I said, there's more than one way to achieve results. So, I found I appreciated the discussions about not what to do, but why to do these things in certain ways, and what they might seek to improve.

My initial perspective was affirmed by the workshop. When the instructor ignored difference or did not prepare his/her self to deal with difference in an informed manner, students acted in such a way that silenced other people.

I read the second reflection wryly: Is this participant referring to the fictitious instructor and students in the forum play, or the joker and spect-actors in the workshop when the young man commented on his fictitious neo-Nazi student's right to speak? Gore (1993) asserts that our 'practices have no guaranteed effects.' (58). This is a useful reminder for educators, who trade in an inherently normative practice based on an assumption of knowability: 'Pedagogy, especially at university, is predicated on a sense of *possibility* and *entitlement to an accessible and shared terrain of knowledge*' (Jones 2001, 283). In an analysis of how her Pakeha (white Australian) students resisted learning from her Maori co-teacher, Jones reminds us that although absolute knowledge is a dangerous fantasy, being made aware of our ignorance can provoke great resistance.

The second reflection theorizes the phenomenon of silence in the classroom: some students' talk – perhaps microaggressive talk – silences others. By privileging student voice and inviting all voices as equals into a dialogical arena, dialogical methods – including TO, critical and feminist pedagogies – assume that all participants are allied with oppressed, subordinated voices (Ellsworth 1989), ignoring that power relations are at play in pedagogical space. Silence can alternatively be read as resistance to particular content, or self-protection (Welch 2007). Participants from marginalized groups may

choose silence as a strategy to resist voyeurism, the dominant group's desire to have access to all knowledge, including the experiences of the oppressed (Lather 1998).

Moreover, dialogical and critical methods – including TO – originated in settings where participants, despite many potential differences, shared a common oppression as the focal point for exploration, such as being a landless peasant or a woman facing domestic violence. In academic settings, participants are typically relatively privileged and unlikely to share a common oppression (Welch 2007); this was a particular problem in Living Lab, where participants were also diverse in academic roles. Both graduate students and faculty members are invested in appearing competent and invulnerable. Graduate students are particularly vulnerable when faculty are present, as mechanics of social–cultural regulation and moral supervision are heightened (Gore 1993).

Conclusions

Where does this leave our understanding of hot moments, and the potential for educational development and critical pedagogy to foster thoughtful responsiveness to hot moments in the classroom? Here, the empirical data are limited to short reflections from a sample of participants in three workshops. The strength of the open-ended reflections, however, is that they highlight a wide range of issues that concerned participants before and after the workshop. Developing different research approaches toward a fine-grained exploration of how participants – and facilitators – interpret and respond to situations depicted in forum plays about hot moments could inform educators and educational developers interested in enhancing students' and professors' analyses of difference, power, and privilege as well as their capacity and potentiality to challenge social injustice in academic settings.

Nonetheless, based on the empirical findings, Living Lab seems to have influenced participants' awareness of difference: over half the participants considered some new dimension of difference in university classroom situations, although fewer considered the issues of power and privilege. Almost all new considerations were about instrumental teaching and learning issues like classroom management, and even participants who considered subject positions and power in relation to difference before the forum play were primarily concerned with instrumental issues afterward. Simultaneously, some reflections could be read as recognizing partiality and unknowability in hot moments in teaching.

Lather (1998) writes that 'we are faced with no "outside" of power networks, normalization, and tendencies toward dominance in spite of liberatory intentions'. (494). Enactments of and dialog about classroom microaggressions in pedagogical situations like Living Lab are likely to generate disappointment, anger, resentment, confusion, resistance, and silences – and learning – as participants and facilitators inadvertently replicate dynamics of power and oppression. As all education has potentially oppressive consequences, how do we generate the kind of learning that leads educators (a) to understand structures and systems of oppression and the partiality of their own knowledge and (b) to challenge oppression and its replication? This question itself reveals an individualized orientation toward both learning and social change. Consciousness-raising and personal empowerment approaches – including both critical and feminist pedagogies – can be critiqued as contributing to a neoliberal agenda which makes individuals responsible for their own and perhaps even their students' social and material conditions. Individual teachers and students may experience empowerment, but cannot,

as individuals, effect structural and systemic change without working in solidarity with others to challenge oppression. However, TO has contributed to the building of social movements (domestic workers in Brazil, the political movement Jana Sanskriti in India), and I have seen multiple interventions in forum theater – though not in Living Lab – where the oppressed protagonist recruits other spect-actors from the audience to struggle collectively to wrest power. Whether this could happen meaningfully in Living Lab – a pedagogical workshop at a university – is unclear, and raises the question of the role of TO in a privileged academic setting.

These empirical findings and reflections have implications for practice in educational development. A key concept in Paulo Freire's (1970) work is *praxis*: iterative cycles of action and reflection. Forum theater is a form of praxis: participants interrupt the play to take action, and collective reflection leads to new ideas enacted on – and off – the stage. Praxis cannot start and end with a single workshop; yet, university educators rarely reflect with colleagues on their teaching. Educational development efforts to engage instructors in exploring how hot moments based on microaggressions are connected to larger social and institutional structures of privilege and power require more significant and sustained investment of time. In my current position, at the University of Bergen in Norway, I offer an intensive three-day course for faculty members called 'Hot moments in teaching and learning'. We discuss participants' *own* stories, and through ongoing and collective praxis over three days, transform these teaching problems from individual struggles to shared challenges. The structural dimensions of hot moments reveal themselves more readily when educators work with their own personal stories and see similar dynamics of power and privilege play out in different pedagogical situations. Anecdotally, written course feedback from participants suggests that, above all, they leave with a sense of their knowledge as partial and connected to their subject position and identity, their actions having unknowable effects, and still their responsibility as one of ethical action – a need to respond to hot moments and microaggressions in the classroom and in supervision situations, among colleagues, and beyond the academy.

Acknowledgments

Note

1. All illustrative quotes are from English department participants because I explore that workshop in detail; however, the analysis is based on data from all three workshops.

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