Hong Kong, Canada:
Performed Ethnography for Anti-Racist Teacher Education

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Abstract

For the last four years, I have been conducting critical ethnographic fieldwork in a Canadian multilingual high schoolⁱ, and thinking about the ways I might write up my findings. In an attempt to represent the experiences of those who participated in my study in a way that does not lead to the reproduction of the policies and practices of colonialism and racism I mean to challenge, I have experimented with the genre of playwriting.

As a critical educational ethnographer who is also a teacher educator, I want my ethnographic writing to engage my teacher education students in critical analysis and practice. My experiments with ethnographic playwriting and performed ethnography endeavor to represent the research subjects in a way that not only facilitates their truths but also matters to people who were going to be asked to listen to and act upon these truths.

This article describes a fictional, but ethnographically-informed play about some of the linguistic and academic dilemmas facing immigrant youth and their Canadian-born classmates. The article also provides a summary of the reasons why I believe that research-based drama holds exciting possibilities for critical teacher education.

Introduction

This is a paper about the pedagogical possibilities “performed ethnography”ⁱⁱ has for anti-racist teacher education. As a White, Canadian-born researcher who has undertaken an anti-racist ethnographic project concerning the education of immigrant children from Hong Kong, I know I need to negotiate the politics of writing about “Other people’s children” (Delpit 1995). I am aware that contemporary educational ethnographers and researchers have inherited a legacy of racism and colonialism that makes our research suspect. For example, Indigenous researcher Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) tells us that knowledge about Indigenous peoples has been collected, classified, and represented in various ways back to the West. In turn, this knowledge represented back, through the eyes of the West, to those who have been colonized. Edward Said (1978) has referred to this process as the creation of a Western discourse about the Other which is supported by institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles. The danger of this discourse is that it has created and perpetuated ideas about Other people that have been used to justify oppressive policies and practices that have “intruded into every aspect” of their lives (Tuhiwai Smith 1999:3). In undertaking an anti-racist ethnographic project, my task is to attempt to represent the experiences of those who participated in my study in a way that does not lead to the reproduction of the policies and practices of colonialism and racism I mean to challenge.

As a critical educational ethnographer who is also a teacher educator, I know that my ethnographic findings and analyses needed to speak *to* my students rather than *at* them (Ellesworth 1994). Meaningful school change

requires their participation (Glesne 1998) and I need to represent the subjects of my research in a way that not only facilitates their truths but also matters to people who are asked to listen to and act upon these truths. In working through these dilemmas of ethnographic representation, I have begun to experiment with the genre of playwriting.

In this paper I describe my first ethnographic play *Hong Kong, Canada* (Goldstein 2000a) and provide a summary of the reasons why I believe that research-based drama holds exciting possibilities for representing some of the dilemmas facing Other people's children. The summary is followed by a brief reflection on a lingering question I have about *Hong Kong, Canada*: Is it my story to tell? Moving on to a description of the ways I have begun to work with the play, I discuss the first "rehearsed reading" the play was given by pre-service teacher education students in my Equity in Education course at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT) (December 8, 1999). The article concludes with a discussion of the pedagogical activities that could accompany future readings and performances of *Hong Kong, Canada*.

Hong Kong, Canada

Hong Kong, Canada is a fictional, but ethnographically informed play about some of the linguistic dilemmas facing immigrant youth from Hong Kong and their Canadian-born classmates and principal. While the characters and plot are fictional, the linguistic and racial conflicts dramatized in the play actually occurred and were documented during my fieldwork. For the students from Hong Kong, dilemmas included deciding whether to speak English or Cantonese at school and whether or not to "cross" linguistic, cultural

and racial boundaries when developing school friendships (Rampton 1995). For teachers and administrators, one dilemma was deciding whether or not to implement an English-only policy in their school. Working through these dilemmas is not easy. There are a number a ways of thinking about and responding to each dilemma and not all students and teachers agree on what is the most effective way of moving forward. The play is about the different ways a group of students and a teacher in one fictionalized school have thought about, responded to and negotiated different linguistic dilemmas with each other.

Plot Synopsis

Set in Pierre Elliot Trudeau Secondary School in Toronto, Canada, *Hong Kong, Canada* tells the story of Wendy Chan, the assistant editor of the student newspaper as she struggles with the fallout of having published a controversial issue of the school paper. Wendy is a recent immigrant from Hong Kong in a school where more than one third of the student population speak Cantonese as their primary language. The other Hong Kong-born student who works on the newspaper is Sam, the advertising manager. Joshua Greenberg, the white Jewish editor of the newspaper, is Wendy's love interest. They have become very close even though Joshua knows his family would not approve if they knew he was dating a woman who was not Jewish.

At the beginning of the play, Joshua, Wendy and Sam face two challenges: they must reduce the newspaper's debt and get more students to read the paper. Joshua searches for a controversial issue to write up. He finds one after his friend Sarah complains about Chinese students singing in Cantonese at talent

night. When Wendy also agrees to contribute to a newspaper that creates controversy around the uses of languages other than English in school, she and Sam fight about the negative impact her writing might have on Cantonese-speakers at the school.

A few nights later, Wendy and Sam are laying-out the newspaper for publication (Joshua is not helping as he is attending a family Bat Mitzvah), Sam informs Wendy that he has sold 10 ads to customers who want to advertise tutoring services in Chinese. Wendy is uncertain about publishing the Chinese ads, but finally decides to do so. When Joshua finds out about the publication of the ads he is very angry. He and Wendy fight about the choices each has made that evening – Joshua’s choice not to invite Wendy to the Bar Mitzvah and Wendy’s choice to publish the ads in Chinese. The publication of the Chinese ads provokes Sarah into starting a petition for an English-only policy at school. In response, one of the English teachers, Ms. Diamond, decides to hold a school hearing on the issue providing the students with an opportunity to raise dilemmas of linguistic exclusion, assimilation, and discrimination. The hearing and the play ends with Ms. Diamond telling the students that she will give the principal and vice-principals a report on the hearing so that they can make a decision about a school language policy. The conflict deliberately remains unresolved.

As mentioned earlier, some of the dialogue in *Hong Kong, Canada* comes directly from ethnographic interviews and fieldnotes. Scene 16, “The School Hearing” contains a good deal of this data and I include an excerpt from the scene as an example of some of the dilemmas Hong Kong Chinese students and their Canadian-born classmates must negotiate.

Excerpt From Scene 16: The School Hearing

Diamond:

Please begin.

Sarah:

I strongly support the idea of an English-only policy at Trudeau. A lot of people were angry by the amount of Chinese used at Talent Night. As Joshua Greenberg said in his editorial, "If it is not possible to obtain performers in each and every language represented in our school, then only English should be used because it's the language that we all have in common".

Rita:

I am East Indian. I would have enjoyed hearing one or two Bengali songs performed at Talent Night. But no one volunteered to perform them. We didn't go for it. Why should those who did go for it be stopped from performing what they want to perform?

Joshua:

But I feel left out when people speak Cantonese and I can't understand them. At Talent Night there were two groups of people: those who understood the Chinese acts and those who didn't. Instead of promoting multiculturalism at our school, the event divided us. This wouldn't have happened if –

Sam:

(Interrupting) Talent Night did not divide our community. It was Talent Night, not English night. We were there to watch people perform and demonstrate their talent. You can enjoy a performance without understanding every word. It happens at heavy metal concerts all the time.

Sarah:

An English-only policy would ensure that when I go to a school event, I would be able to understand every single word that is spoken.

Sam:

People who are uncomfortable when they don't understand Chinese are not used to sharing space with people who speak different languages. They want to take away other people's rights so that they don't have to feel uncomfortable, not even for a moment. That's not fair. Toronto -

Sarah:

(Interrupting) If all acts at Talent Night had been performed in English, it would have assisted those who are learning the language to -

Sam:

(Interrupting) But Toronto is no longer just an English-speaking city. It is a multilingual city. We all have to share space with people who speak languages we don't understand. We all have to share the discomfort.

Joshua:

It's good for people to be forced to speak English at school. They'll learn it faster. Look at people like Wendy Chan. She speaks English really well. And that's because she decided -

Rita:

(Interrupting) Instead of an English-only policy, we should be offering Cantonese classes during the school day and encouraging as many students as possible to take them. There would be a lot less anger if more people could speak Cantonese.

Joshua:

An English-only policy will benefit our Chinese students in the long run. It's good thing.

Rita:

Maybe we should be thinking of making Cantonese classes compulsory for students in this school.

Diamond:

(Scribbling a last few notes) Thank you all for your contributions. Our last speaker this afternoon is Wendy Chan. Wendy?

Wendy:

(Stepping forward) The day after they enrolled me at Trudeau my father and mother left Toronto to go back to Hong Kong. The last words my mother said to me as she went through security gate at the airport were "I want you to speak English."

(In Cantonese)

["To do well in this country you must learn to speak English well"]

(In English) My mother wanted all the advantages that were available to Canadian-born students to be available to me. To please her, I decided I would only speak English in school. And speaking English all day did open some doors. I had enough confidence to go on Mr. Wilson's camping trip even though I had never gone camping before and didn't know anyone else who had signed up for the trip. On that trip I met people who were born here and one or two became important friends for a while. But choosing to only speak English also closed some doors. I didn't make any friends with people from Hong Kong.

(In Cantonese)

["I guess they thought I wasn't interested in being friends with them because I always spoke English."]

(In English) Maybe they thought I was Canadian-born, juk-sin, a banana, white-washed. I miss speaking Cantonese.

(In Cantonese)

["I would like be friends with others from Hong Kong. There are many things we share.']

(In English) My mother does not know the discomfort of trying to speak English all day, everyday. She is in Hong Kong where she can speak Cantonese. Some days my mouth, my cheeks, my lips hurt. When my mother tells me, "I want you to speak English" she thinks only of the doors that might open. Not the doors that close. An English-only policy will close doors for those of us who speak other languages. Unable to say what we would like to say in English, some of us will remain silent. An English-only policy also closes doors for those of us who want to practice speaking other languages with students who already know them well. In the last few weeks, I have learned that the doors we have opened are sometimes slammed shut by an unexpected force. It is prudent to keep as many doors open as possible. Thank you...

Representing Dilemmas Facing Other People's Children

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, writers of educational ethnography need to think carefully about questions of representation (see also Clifford and George 1986). There are a number of reasons why I believe that ethnographic playwriting holds exciting possibilities for representing educational dilemmas facing Other people's children. First, playwriting allows me to challenge the "ethnographic authority" (Clifford 1983) of my own writing. Ethnography is an interpretative, subjective, value-laden project. Writing up ethnographic data in the form of a play (in which the conflicts are real, verbatim transcription is often used, but the characters and plot are fictional) reminds readers and spectators that ethnographers invent rather than represent ethnographic truths. The artificiality of playwriting itself is a challenge to the

ethnographic authority of realist writing. Playwright Kathleen George reminds us that “Dialogue in playwriting is not conversation as we know it in our lives – it is the action of the play” (George 1994:xv).

Second, the performance of my playwriting discourages the fixed, unchanging ethnographic representations of the research subjects which have contributed to the construction of our destructive ideas of Other people. Performance allows for changes in acting, intonation, lighting, blocking, and stage design. These changes can shape or even transform meaning of the ethnographic text each time it is performed (Kondo 1995:51). This is particularly important in working towards challenging stereotypical representations of Other people’s children. For example, I have learned that that an actor who plays Joshua Greenberg as confused and uncertain rather than confident and cocky resists representing the character as self-serving and inconsiderate of others (a representation that plays into existing, stereotypes about North American Jews). Instead, he becomes a character whose own assimilated, monolingual upbringing has not prepared him to understand the complexities of living a bilingual life as a “newcomer” to Canada (which is the way I had imagined him).

Third, plays give opportunities to Other actors whom, in performing the play, can enact and enlarge the identities of the characters that have been created by me. Asian-American anthropologist/playwright Dorinne Kondo writes, “The live aspect of theater is critical. Live performance not only constitutes a site where our identities can be enacted, it also opens up entire realms of cultural possibility, enlarging our senses of ourselves...” (1995:50). For the premiere production of *Hong Kong, Canada* at the University of Toronto (July 20 and July 22, 2000), director Tammy Chan and I cast three young Asian actors to play the

roles of Wendy, Sam, and Carol. Jessica Wong (Wendy) and Bridget Mak (Carol) are Chinese-Canadian while John Kim (Sam) is Korean-Canadian. When asked why he auditioned for the role of Sam, John told me that when he read the script for the first time he realized that it involved “acting with a message”. Such work felt rewarding to him as an actor and a Christian. John also said that he could personally relate to Sam’s experience of being an immigrant who had experienced a lot of discrimination in his life. When asked what issue stood out for him when he first read the play, John said it was the stereotype that all Chinese people speak Chinese instead of English and that they are inconsiderate of people who don’t speak Chinese: “I know that they are not inconsiderate. They speak Cantonese because it’s part of their culture. I go to a school with a lot of Chinese speakers and I hear some complaining from non-Chinese speakers. They crack jokes. They don’t intend to be hostile, but the jokes are hurtful. They encourage desensitization”. In the play Sam talks back to the complaints and John said he admired his confidence: “Sam stands up for what he believes in and this is important for me as I formulate my own identity”.

Fourth, when I write plays, the subjects of my research and Other people can view a performance of my ethnographic work and ratify or critique its analysis. I can keep re-writing and performing in response to Other people’s responses. This provides my work with “internal” (Lincoln 1997) or “face” (Lather 1986) validity. One important piece of advice that has come from readers and audiences was to make the character of Sarah (the character who begins the petition for an English-only language policy at school) more vulnerable so that she is not represented as a self-interested, “bitchy” Jew. Luba Danov, the young actor we cast for Sarah’s role in the premiere production of the

play, was chosen precisely for the vulnerability she brought to her reading. As a recent immigrant from Russia and Israel who had learned English as a second language, Luba, told me that she had a personal understanding of the language dilemmas students like Wendy, Carol and Sam faced. At school, she mostly hung out with other students from Russia and spoke Russian with them in the same way that Sam and Carol spoke Cantonese with their friends. However, she was also able to personally relate to Sarah's feelings and point of view because she knew what it was like to feel left out. She thought of herself as a "loner" at school and told me that she found it hard to make friends. Able to identify with Sarah's feelings of exclusion, yet, also able to see the world from Wendy, Carol and Sam's point of view, Luba was able to play Sarah in a way that could elicit sympathy from the audience.

Fifth, playwriting allows me to evaluate how my own bias dominates the text. An analysis of my characters' words allows me to ask, "Who gets the best lines?" Importantly, performed ethnography offers opportunities for both comment and speechlessness (Diamond and Mullen 1999). It allows me to include what is not said into my ethnographic text. In *Hong Kong, Canada*, Hong Kong Chinese student Carol Shen does not speak at the school hearing, but she is present and the stage directions have her responding non-verbally to the points the other characters make. Carol's silence speaks on stage in a way it can not in a traditional ethnographic text.

Finally, performed ethnography has the power to reach large audiences and encourage public reflexive insight (Barone, Eisner, and Finley 2000; Mienczakowski 1997) into the experiences of schooling in multilingual/multiracial communities. When I am "very lucky", the audiences

and performers of my performed ethnography leave the room or the auditorium “changed in some way” (Mienczakowski 1997). There have been times when students have told me that performing or viewing *Hong Kong, Canada* has helped them question or re-think their own professional practices. In these moments, I know that the play has been “persuasive” and has facilitated questioning of social reality (Lincoln 1993).

But Whose Story Is It?

I have argued that playwriting allows for the possibility of facilitating rather than appropriating the telling of Other people’s truths. However, there will be readers who will ask whether a White, Canadian-born ethnographer should be telling the story of *Hong Kong, Canada*. What do I personally know about the dilemmas of immigrant students of colour? What is it that I can not see and hear during fieldwork as a result of my White, third generation Eurocanadianⁱⁱⁱ background? These are important questions and ones that I have been struggling with throughout the research project.

In answering the question of “Whose story is it?” I will begin by discussing the title of my play, which comes from the title of a 1996 newspaper feature on recent immigration to Toronto from Hong Kong. The words of the title, “Hong Kong, Canada”, were typed in enormous bold-faced letters that dominated the page the first story of the feature appeared on. Underneath the title was the following headline:

It's not just another wave of immigrants. Over 20 years, 142,000 from Hong Kong have moved here. With ambition, money and a strong identity, they're changing the city's face (*The Toronto Star*, November 10, 1996, B1)

The Toronto Star's characterization of Hong Kong immigrants as people who were "changing the city's face" from one that had historically been mostly European and white to one that was increasingly Chinese^{iv} shaped" what Canadians were to make of this latest "wave" of immigration. Canada was being invaded by a large number of immigrants from Hong Kong. We were no longer living in Canada. We were living in "Hong Kong, Canada".

The discourse of invasion that emerged from the "Hong Kong, Canada" feature can be related to a perceived threat of shifting economic power bases in Canada. There was much reporting about the wealth that some Hong Kong immigrants bring into Canada throughout the "Hong Kong, Canada" feature that sustained the report's discourse of invasion. For example, there was a picture of the owner of Toronto's Metropolitan Hotel, sandwiched between two headlines: "To Canada, with cash" and "Hong Kong money likes GTA". There was also a description of how Hong Kong immigrants had "changed the look of much of the city" by financing the building of 50 "Chinese malls"^v in the Greater Toronto Area (*The Toronto Star*, November 10, 1996:B1 and B4.)

During my fieldwork, I found that the discourse of invasion exemplified in *The Toronto Star* had made its way into the everyday school lives of the high school students and teachers participating in my research study (see Goldstein [in press]). In discussions with my own students after one of their practice teaching sessions, we realized that this discourse of invasion had made its way into many schools in the Greater Toronto Area. One answer, then, to the question of whether the story of *Hong Kong, Canada* is a story a White, Canadian-born ethnographer should be telling is this: Uncovering, revealing and challenging the racist discourse of invasion that limits academic, social and

work-related possibilities for immigrant students is every educator's responsibility. Without White Anglo-Canadian and Eurocanadian investment in anti-racist research and schooling, the advancement of social justice agendas in education is constrained.

Moving to the question of what I can not see and hear during fieldwork as a result of my White, third generation Eurocanadian background, I learned that multiple perspectives emerged when I worked with a multiracial, multicultural, multilingual team of research assistants. Our perspectives were enriched even further when we asked a group of high school students to join the team. In the third summer of the project, fifteen students from one of the English classes we had been observing during fieldwork were hired as student researchers to participate in a summer playwriting project. The goal of the summer playwriting project was to provide the students, most of whom did not use English as a first language, with an opportunity to develop their English language skills and write their own ethnographies through the genre of playwriting (Goldstein 2000b). These student ethnographies will eventually become part of the set of ethnographic texts produced from the study.

Towards a Pedagogy for Performed Ethnography

As mentioned earlier, last December, a group of my pre-service teacher education students performed *Hong Kong, Canada* for the rest of their classmates. The performance of the play was constructed as an assignment. Working with Hong Kong-born, Cantonese-speaking director Tammy Chan, who was also one of the research assistants on the project, students prepared a polished reading of the play and produced an oral presentation of what they had learned from playing the character they

had played. The actors also produced a written reflection of what they had learned about teaching across linguistic and racial difference through their involvement with the performance. What follows are several excerpts from these written reflections as well as my own commentary on the possibilities performed ethnography might hold for anti-racist teacher education.

Anti-racist teacher education around linguistic difference

Anti-racist teacher educators have written extensively about the importance of teachers learning to see Whiteness in their racially diverse classrooms. For example, educator Peggy McIntosh (1999/1988) tells us that teachers who don't see Whiteness can not acknowledge the advantages or privileges associated with Whiteness. As a result, they do not acknowledge the ways they and their White students are implicated in the practice of individual and institutionalized racism in their communities and do not work to challenge racist practices. To help teachers better understand the workings of Whiteness and institutionalized expressions of racism (as opposed to individual expressions of racism), anti-racist educators have also written about the ways they have taught teachers about social stratification and race in schooling (Sleeter 1999/1996). There has also been writing about the need to help teachers create "positive identities" as White, anti-racist educators once they have understood the ways they are implicated in institutional racist practices (Lawrence and Tatum 1999).

Like their Canadian-born classmates of colour, immigrant students of colour experience racism in school. But unlike most of their Canadian-born classmates, they also experience linguistic discrimination. In striving to work equitably with the linguistic and racial diversity that characterizes our classrooms, teachers and teacher

educators working in communities that have seen the recent arrival of immigrant students need to learn how discrimination on the basis of language intersects with discrimination on the basis of race. Building on the work of anti-racist teacher education, work around linguistic diversity and discrimination should provide teachers with opportunities to learn how to

- (1) hear and acknowledge what might be called “linguistic privilege” (Delpit 1995; Perry and Delpit 1997; Rampton 1995);
- (2) understand the forms institutionalized linguistic discrimination might take in multilingual schools (Delpit 1995; Perry and Delpit 1997; Lippi-Green 1997); and
- (3) find ways to create positive identities as educators who can negotiate linguistic dilemmas and tensions and challenge linguistic discrimination (Goldstein 1997).

My goal in writing and performing *Hong Kong, Canada* was to provide my students with the opportunities to do all these things. What I have learned from my students’ first rehearsed reading of the play is that performed ethnography must be followed up with activities that help students develop some of the new understandings and insights that have been provoked by the performance. Here are several excerpts from my students’ reflection pieces on their work in *Hong Kong, Canada* and my own commentary on what pedagogical activities might follow the reading/performance of the play.

Hearing and acknowledging linguistic privilege:

A reflection piece by the student playing Joshua

...It is evident to me that Josh has never really thought about the use of language in school before, probably because he has never had to. Being white and male, one takes things for granted...Josh has probably never had to worry about being able to understand

the teacher or other kids at school. Also, he has probably never had to worry about fitting in with the other people in his community because of the language he speaks...

Commentary

The student playing Joshua talks about his character having the privilege of not having to worry about being able to understand the teacher or other kids at school. He also links the idea of linguistic privilege to White privilege, which was a notion we had discussed in our course (see McIntosh 1999/1988 for a sample of the some of the ideas we worked with). This tells me that the conflicts and characterizations in the play can provoke (at least some) students to hear and acknowledge linguistic privilege, especially if some work around privilege has already taken place. Many of my students are monolingual English speakers. Like Joshua, they do not have any experience of having to “do school” in a language they are not proficient in. Nor have they experienced what it’s like to have to decide which language to speak at school. The characters of Wendy and Sam provide them with an opportunity to witness the experience of those who do. Even more powerful than seeing and hearing about linguistic privilege play out on stage, however, is describing the way it plays out in our own lives. Adapting an activity described by Lee, Menkart and Okazawa-Rey (1999), I would follow up a performance of *Hong Kong, Canada* by asking my students to keep a week-long diary of the ways English speakers are privileged in their own school and community settings. A week later, I would ask them to share their findings with colleagues.

Institutionalized linguistic discrimination:

A reflection piece by the student playing Wendy

...The issue of “acting White” when speaking English is also dealt with in the play. Sam accuses Wendy of speaking English to “act White” in order to be with Joshua. This reminds me of a poem called “Speak White” written by Quebecois, Michelle Lalonde in the 1960’s. The theme of the poem is maintaining dignity...

...“Speak White” is repeated 16 times in the entire poem and with each time the tone seemed to get angrier. It is implied that speaking White is speaking English. The poem also emphasizes the difference in culture between the English and French speaking Canadians and speaking “White” is like denying the French culture. The poem ends of by saying “we are not alone” meaning that they are not the only cultural group that has felt oppressed and that there is strength in their numbers. This relates to schools where students who find it difficult to express thoughts in a second language feel that they are being forced to comply with the culture of dominance. They may develop negative, angry attitudes towards teachers and education...In the play, Sam’s response to the language issues are through anger...

Commentary

The student playing Wendy reflects on the phrase “acting White” (used by Sam in an argument with Wendy over an article about her decision to only use English in school). She relates the phrase “acting White” to the phrase “speak White” used by Quebecois poet Michelle Lalonde. In her analysis, the student argues that speaking and acting White means speaking and acting English. Here, she is able to describe the way the dominance of Whiteness and English intersect to produce a culture of dominance that some high school students feel “forced to comply with”. This sophisticated analysis is then linked to a discussion of anger that some students feel in response to their experience with the culture of dominance.

It is the anger that is attached to Sam’s accusation that helps make the phrase “acting White” memorable for the student playing Wendy. After all, that

anger was directed at her during the performance of the play. In moving from writing realist ethnography to writing ethnographic plays, I have moved from an activity of representation to an activity which Carolyn Ellis (1997) calls “evocation”. An evocative and dramatic story shows interaction in a way that allows the performer and spectator to participate more fully in the emotional process of resolving conflicts. Performers and spectators are not merely observers the resolution of the conflicts in the story, they become participants. It is possible to use the power of emotion to help teacher education students write focused reflection pieces on what they have learned about teaching across linguistic and racial difference through their engagement with the play. The next time I work with the play, I will experiment with such questions as what provoked a strong emotional response for you? What made you angry? What made you sad? What made you feel bad? What was satisfying? What was not? What confirmed something you believed about students, teachers and/or schools? How did that feel? What challenged something you believed about students, teachers and/or schools? How did that feel?

Negotiating linguistic dilemmas and tensions:

A reflection piece by the student playing Sarah and Sam

...I was often wondering what I would have done (as a future English teacher) had I been petitioned for an English-only by a fair number of students. As much as I believe that there needs to be flexibility and definitely an increase in the education of teachers on how immigrant children feel, I still also believe that within the English classroom, English should be practiced and spoken. As for ESL classrooms, I believe it is extremely important for the students to at least attempt to speak English with each other in the classroom (for practice), but reverting to their first-language **should be allowed** in extreme cases of difficulty in expression or comprehension.

...The more I read the play the more difficult I found it was to come up with a solution that would make everyone happy. In a way, I believe that letting students speak another language other than English will make them feel more at ease at the school, and will thus make them feel more at ease in learning English. On the other hand, I think that sometimes allowing students to speak languages other than English in Toronto schools can hinder English learning and school spirit.

Commentary

The students playing the roles of Sarah and Sam discuss the complexity of the dilemmas faced by the students and principal of the school featured in the play and articulate their own struggles with the contradictory beliefs they hold on whether or not multilingual schools should implement English-only policies. The play deliberately concludes in an open-ended way. No “solution” is provided for the audience. It is up to them to think about the ways principals and teachers might provide leadership around the difficult task of negotiating across linguistic difference. Yet, the teacher-audience also needs leadership from the teacher educator-playwright who has raised such difficult issues. *Hong Kong, Canada* provides my students and I with an opportunity to “attach what is to what could be” (Fine 1994). Together, we can imagine new anti-racist practices that we have not yet seen modelled in our own work lives. One follow-up activity is to have students write the ending of the play. The performance of different endings and some talk around the responses each ending might provoke from different characters in the play would provide for a rich discussion on ways teachers and principals might to move forward.

Conclusion

“Playwrights”, says Kathleen George, “tend to be watchful people. They have an eye upon the society of their day. They absorb its problems, its political and human rights struggles, its personality. But good playwrights are not just news reporters. They are also critics and philosophers who examine a society with an eye to what makes current struggles like the struggles that have always faced human beings, as well as what makes them different” 1994:1). The same can be said for critical educational ethnographers and teacher educators. The blending of the crafts of playwriting, ethnography and teaching has enhanced my anti-racist research program and teacher education practice in exciting ways. Theatre has enormous power, which I have just begun to explore.

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Biographical Statement

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Endnotes

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ⁱⁱ The project of turning ethnographic data and texts into scripts and dramas that are read and performed before audiences has been taken up by a number of writers and researchers in the disciplines of sociology and anthropology and in the fields of performance studies, theatre studies and arts-based inquiry in education. My own playwriting work has been informed by the work of playwrights Anna Deveare Smith (1993;1994); Eve Ensler (1998); Dorinne Kondo (1995); and Jim Mienzacowski (1994;1995;1996;1997).

ⁱⁱⁱ I follow Sonia Nieto (1996) and Carol Mullen (1999) in my use of the term "Eurocanadian" to describe White people in Canada who are not English in origin ("Anglo"), but rather European.

^{iv} The perception that Toronto's "face" has been mostly European and white ignores the historical and contemporary presence of Canada's Aboriginal/First Nations people who have always been part of the city's face. It also ignores the historical presence of non-European and non-white immigrants who have not only been part of the city's face since the beginning of what Aboriginal scholars call "the contact period", but who have contributed to building of the city and the country.

^v "Chinese malls" are shopping malls in which the names of stores are written in Chinese. Sometimes store signs are bilingual, written in both Chinese and English.