# Being Ethical: Process Drama and Professional Ethics Education for Pre-service Drama Teachers

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## Abstract

This paper outlines findings from a study exploring how participation in process drama may assist pre-service teachers to develop an enhanced sense of moral character, agency and virtue ethics. The study explores the intersection between initial teacher education, process drama, drama teaching and professional ethics education. Findings indicate that process drama offers an immersive, applied, visceral experience that enables pre-service teachers to rehearse difficult conversations, explore ethical dilemmas, model and explore how they want to be. Process drama offers a form of moral pedagogy that supports the development of a holistic professional ethic, addresses all aspects of moral literacy and provides a safe space for pre-service teacher to explore what it means to "be" ethical.

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## Keywords

PROCESS DRAMA; PROFESSIONAL ETHICS EDUCATION; MORAL LITERACY, PRACTITIONER RESEARCH; MORAL AGENT

## Introduction

This paper outlines findings from a study exploring how participation in process drama may assist pre-service teachers to develop an enhanced sense of moral character, agency and virtue ethics. Findings indicate that process drama offers a learning approach that fosters the development of a virtue ethic where the basis for authority emanates from the 'inside-out'; when moral behaviour or ethical decision-making flows from a person's character (Cohen, 2004, p. 49). This is heightened when the design or structure of the process drama enabled the pre-service drama teachers to reflect on moral agency and character.

## Background

The initial impetus for this study emerged from my conversations with pre-service drama teachers. As a lecturer in drama curriculum, I had frequent contact with secondary pre-service teachers during and after their supervised professional experience in schools. I facilitated debrief sessions when they returned to campus and was astonished by their desire to discuss the ethical dilemmas they had confronted during their school placement, rather than drama curriculum or their teaching progress. The pre-service secondary drama teachers recounted how they struggled with ethical dilemmas related to intellectual freedom, rights and responsibilities, equity and inclusivity, privacy and confidentiality. They often felt caught in the conflicting expectations of different school community members. Teaching drama presented additional challenges such as: the safe management of intense aesthetic engagement, the sensitive nature of themes and play content, and the relational and social aspects of drama pedagogy. Pre-service drama teachers participating in the study expressed positions similar to other pre-professionals described in the literature such as:

> 1. *Ethical uncertainty*: they felt uneasy and recognized that they were being confronted ethically but were unclear as to what to do;
> 2. *Ethical dilemma*: they could see the right course of action but felt that the morally right choice of action was beyond their control or beyond the boundaries of their current role or experience; and,
> 3. *Lack of ethical recognition*: they expressed anxiety or elation at their experience but did not recognize the moral or ethical component of the situation.
>
> (Elkin, 2004, p. 1)

For pre-service teachers, a knowledge and understanding of professional ethics is crucial in assisting them to effectively navigate the complex educational landscape of the drama classroom and the school context. Yet, the pre-service teachers I encountered indicated that while they had been exposed to some course content on professional ethics for teachers during their degree, this was usually delivered in a lecture format, leaving them with only a limited understanding in terms of application. I was therefore inspired to design a research project exploring how process drama may assist pre-service drama teachers to reflect on key aspects of professional ethics such as mandatory codes or standards, principled moral reasoning whilst also developing their moral literacy (Hogan, 2009).

## Previous approaches to Professional Ethics Education

Professional ethics is a branch of applied ethics. For teachers, this includes the consideration of issues linked to punishment and behaviour management, due process in discipline, intellectual freedom, rights and responsibilities, equity and inclusivity, privacy and confidentiality (Beckner, 2004; Strike & Soltis, 2004; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Duignan, 2006). Teacher educators have trialled the use of different approaches to moral and ethical education in initial teacher education programs including: case study (Keefer & Ashley, 2001; Nash, 1996); work place integrated learning (Boon, 2011); ethical decision making models (Ehrich, Kimber, Millwater & Cranston 2011); and explicit instruction (Tobias & Boon, 2010).

Critics believe that teacher education programs fail to address the more affective dimensions of professional ethics, particularly the cultivation of moral character (Campbell, 2003, 2004; Griseri, 2002; Hill, 2004; Reiman, 2004). A moral character or a virtue ethic approach examines the personal qualities and disposition of the teacher and how this impacts upon their professional conduct. Carr encapsulates this viewpoint in this statement, ‘we

remember teachers as much for the kinds of people they were than for anything they may have taught us' (Carr, 2007, p. 369). Applying the moral language of character involves not only asking what is the right thing to do but '*which decision has the most integrity in terms of the kind of person I either perceive myself to be or am striving to become?'* (Nash, 1996, p. 63, emphasis in original).

Approaches to professional ethics education may be categorised according to where the authority or basis for decision-making rests. In some learning contexts the theory or principle 'is applied to the situation in a way that is 'outside-in'; that is, it comes from the 'outside'; the theory is imposed from without - for example, objective rules, duty, rights, or constraints of utility' (Cohen, 2004, p. 49). Specific learning objectives of an 'outside-in' approach concentrate on the development of a more 'sophisticated background understanding of the purpose of principles and rules and the way they ought to be interpreted' (Cooper, 2003, p. 40). By contrast, a virtue ethic approach applies the basis for authority from the 'inside-out', where moral behaviour flows from a person's character (Cohen, 2004, p. 49). An 'inside-out' approach aims to produce autonomous moral agents with internalized and personalized ethical principles, and 'lingering moral memories' (Nash, 1996, p. 60) that they will apply as habit 'even when no one is watching' (Coles, 1989, p. 198). According to Cooper (2003), a moral agent demonstrates a higher level of awareness of external influences but functions autonomously, is critically self-aware and mindful of their conduct, and has the capacity to apply this knowledge to their decision-making in both their professional and personal relationships.

Previous practice in professional ethics pedagogy has predominantly focused on an 'outside in' approach through the development of pre-professionals' principled moral reasoning (Bebeau, 2002; Cummings, Muddux, Maples & Torres-Rivera, 2004; McAuliffe & Ferman, 2001). However moral reasoning is only one of four dimensions of moral literacy needed by professionals. The *Four Component Model* for ethical behaviour and the development of moral literacy claims that four integrated inner psychological processes give rise to outwardly observable behaviour (Rest, Navarez, Thoma & Bebeau, 2000). This model includes:

> *Moral sensitivity*: interpreting the situation, considering how different actions would affect others involved, imagining cause and effect chains of events and being aware there is a moral problem.
>
> *Moral judgement*: judging which action would be most justifiable in a moral sense.
>
> *Moral motivation and identity formation*: the degree of commitment to taking the moral course of action, valuing moral values over other values and taking personal responsibility for mutual outcomes.
>
> *Moral character*: persisting in a moral task, having courage and resilience to carry through. (Bebeau, 2002)

Three of these components link to affective dimensions of professional ethics such as moral character, agency or motivation, sensitivity and virtue. This model suggests that both cognitive and affective learning are required to develop an individual's moral literacy, yet, there are very few studies across a range of disciplines documenting attempts to address the affective aspects of professional ethics education (Griseri, 2005; Carr, 2007).

## Theatre, Drama and Moral Education

Theatre has often played a key role in society's problematizing of moral and ethical positions. Examples of this can be located in the plays of the ancient Greeks, Shakespeare, Brecht's Epic and political works and more recently in the use of applied drama or theatre to address social issues and promote positive behavioural change (Ackroyd & O'Toole, 2010; Bhukhanwala & Allexsaht-Snider, 2012; Cahill, 2012; Taylor, 2003)

Winston's research into the use of drama as a moral pedagogy in school settings is particularly relevant to this study. Winston (2000) investigated how students' experience in drama assisted in deepening their learning from moral instruction to moral induction. He found that roleplay, improvisation and theatre in education have the potential 'to raise questions rather than offer answers, to provoke rather than resolve debate' (Winston, 1999). Drawing on the four processes of curriculum: training, instruction, initiation and induction defined by Stenhouse (1975), Winston (1999) found that drama offers a process of instruction and induction, enabling students to explore moral contradictions through cognitive and affective modalities. Winston states:

> In order to develop into independent moral agents, capable of making their own moral judgements when faced with complex and difficult decisions, children need to develop imaginative and emotional qualities that can help them think through moral dilemmas, understand the needs and feelings of others; develop a language to help them discuss the issues of "good' and bad character, right and wrong actions thinking beyond rules where the code does not extend (Winston, 2000, p.91).

Moral instruction focuses on the passing on of information or knowledge in the form of rules or codes, while induction takes this further and is concerned with the passing on of thought systems 'so that students can understand, interpret and make judgement for themselves' (Winston, 1999, p. 460). Winston claims that it is the fusion of thought and feeling, the synthesis of narrative and the enacted qualities of drama that enable students to build a deeper understanding of moral life (1999, 2000, 2005). Winston's later research (2005) into the efficacy of theatre in education as a form of moral education, found that it was structural and relational aspects that influenced the students' responses and degree of moral induction; 'it was the playful and open aspects of the enacted narrative that energized the students' moral engagement and subsequent reflection' (p. 309).

Teacher educators have also recognised how the applied theatre strategies developed by Augusto Boal may assist immigrant, bilingual and pre-service teachers. Cahnmann-Taylor and Souto-Manning used strategies from Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (1992) such as Forum Theatre, Rainbow of Desire (Boal, 1995) and Image Theatre to assist teachers to "Act Up!" (2010, p. 3). Their approach aimed to develop critical multicultural learning communities and for teachers to engage in applied practice, to rehearse difficult conversations and develop models for 'who they want to be' (Cahnmann-Taylor & Souto-Manning, 2010, p.3). They found that performance based pedagogies offered teachers 'an opportunity to rehearse lived experiences, explore alternate scripts, perform them, and prepare themselves for recurring opportunities to speak and act in a manner that is conscious, critical and collective' (Cahnmann-Taylor & Souto-Manning, 2010, p. 5). Other teacher educators have applied these same performance based pedagogies with similar groups of teachers and found that 'exploring embodied experiences in a theatrical space can help both students and teachers to connect viscerally to their experiences in schools and assist them in analysing and understanding the issues raised in new ways' (Bhukhanwala & Allexsaht-Snider, 2012, p. 676).

The study described in this paper was shaped by the body of literature and previous research into the applied use of drama and theatre for moral education and for social change. This study utilised a particular form of educational drama called process drama.

## Defining Process Drama

Process drama, is a complex improvisational group experience that invites participants to create and assume roles, and select and manage symbols in order to create a fictional world exploring human experience. Educators in schools and other educational contexts have found that process drama offers an aesthetic space to develop a deeper understanding of self and situations, expanding participants' consciousness and ways of knowing (Bolton, 1979,1984; Hatton, 2004; Neelands, 2002; O'Neill, 1995; Taylor, 1998). Participants together with the facilitator shape a sequence of episodes, simultaneously assuming the function of audience, performer and playwright, becoming 'percipients' in the fictional dramatic context (O'Toole, 1992, p. 148). Process drama is frequently used in primary and secondary school settings in Australia and internationally (Bowell & Heap, 2001, 2005; Cahill, 2010; Davis, 1999; O'Toole & Dunn, 2002; O'Mara, 2004) and in language education contexts (Marschke, 2005; Piazzoli, 2011).

Another critical element of process drama is the creative and artistic function of the facilitator who operates as playwright, director, actor and teacher - an enabler of both the art form and the 'meaning generated through it' (Bowell & Heap, 2005, p. 60). It is the facilitator who determines the initial frame of the drama or launches the 'pre-text', suggesting time, place, roles and future tension, creating an arc from which relationships to the dramatic action can emanate (O'Neill, 1995, p. 22). The facilitator proactively weaves the units of action, selecting dramatic conventions, working with the participants both inside and out of the action (Taylor, 1995, p. 13). Despite this initial structure or dramatic framing, process drama remains an 'open work' (Eco, 1989; Haseman, 1991), meaning that the outcomes and overall content are not predetermined. The practitioner aims to work *artistically* rather than *technically* (O' Neill, 1995, p. 65, my emphasis) and must be able to '*release* themselves from their lesson plan' (Taylor, 1995, p. 13, my emphasis). The participants are bound by the fiction but free to explore content, perspectives and issues emerging from their collective improvisation.

Process drama has also been used in workplace, community and professional settings. For example, O'Connor (2003) collaborated with mental health practitioners to investigate, how process drama assists people to reflect on attitudes and behaviours associated with mental illness. O'Connor found that process drama was a powerful and sophisticated pedagogical tool that enabled 'refraction' rather than reflection, often illuminating ambiguities and complexities, shining and bending light into new places (2003, p. 277). Cahill in her process and applied drama work with young people in Australia (2006) and women in Vietnam (2010) found that drama practitioners need to avoid the reinforcement of stereotypes through an overreliance on naturalistic dramatic conventions (Cahill, 2014). She suggests that the potentially overpowering influence of metaxis, where the real context can overshadow the fictional for the participant, can be counterbalanced through the use of metaphor, symbolic action and reflection. It is through the careful selection of dramatic conventions and framing of the dramatic context by the drama practitioner that the transformation in attitudes and behaviour can occur (Cahill, 2010; 2014)

However, despite the application of process drama and applied theatre conventions in a range of educational, community and workplace settings, there has been little research conducted to identify how process drama may be utilised in ethics education for pre-professionals.

## The Participants and Ethical Clearance

The study described in this paper took place on campus at a Queensland university (Hogan, 2009). The participants were enrolled in their final semester, with only the education component of their course to complete before moving into their first teaching position in a secondary school. As soon to be drama education graduates, they were familiar with the process drama form and highly competent at improvisation. Eighteen pre-service drama teachers - four males and fourteen females - volunteered to participate in this study. Most were enrolled in the four-year double degree in education and drama and all were hoping to work in Queensland secondary schools after graduation. One participant was completing a postgraduate diploma in education. Sixteen were full-time students and two were part-time. The participants ranged from twenty to twenty-eight years of age. Twelve had graduated from high school and come directly into the degree, two had completed an undergraduate degree, and four had travelled or worked before coming to university.

Ethical clearance for the study was obtained through the university human ethics committee. All participants received an information pack and gave their consent to participate in semi-structured interviews, the process drama workshops and for their reflective comments, recorded on a secure online site, to be included in the study. In spite of these ethical boxes being ticked, I was nevertheless conscious of my previous relationship with the students. I had lectured and tutored many of the participating pre-service teachers in various units in drama curriculum; however at this point of their teacher program, I no longer taught or assessed them. They volunteered to participate and were eager to 'do some drama' during their final semester of studies in education. Pseudonyms are used here to protect the participants' privacy.

## Research Design

The philosophies and practices of phenomenology and constructivism influenced my research design or the 'specific route to travel' (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002, p. 2), and it was my preference for the adoption of an observer-participant positioning which determined my choice of research methodology (O'Toole, 2006, p. 34). The primary foci of the study related to process drama, professional ethics education, and what happened at a personal level for the pre-service drama teachers and for me, as the facilitator. For that reason, my own experience and professional practice could not be separated from the experiences of the participants. When they reflected, I too reflected on their experience of the process dramas we jointly constructed. O'Connor believes that the practitioner should fully participate for, 'reflective and human centred activity such as drama needs to generate research which is reflective and humanistic with the teacher actively engaged in the dramatic frame' (2003, p. 101). While there was a focus on interpretation and the participants' experiences, I collaborated in the action as a practitioner, 'engaged in artistic processes and decisions' (O'Toole, 2006, p. 57), entering the improvised fiction or 'dramatic frame' with them to engage with the problem of professional ethics education. The research design and analysis integrated the complex dialogue that occurred between my experience, observation, participant experience, prior knowledge and reflection. A synchrony exists, between phenomenology, constructivism and the process dramas which lay at the centre of the study and their 'aesthetics of interaction and representation… use of multimodal dialogic forms that incorporate aural, oral, visual and kinaesthetic and symbolic modes of "conversation"' (Cahill, 2006, p. 62).

The overall research design incorporated spirals of action research, within a bounded case study that included the experiences of the curious practitioner. All of the process dramas were videoed by a camera operator hired to film the workshops. This allowed me to reflect on the action after each workshop. As the researcher and practitioner I moved through the steps of planning including action, invention, observation, reflection and re-planning before

the dialectic action research spiral began again (O'Toole, 2006, p. 51). Using the video footage and the responses from participants, I engaged in cycles of self-reflection to examine my own practices, deliberately reflecting on what I could do to improve, reconstruct and find solutions to practical issues (Creswell, 2005, p. 560).

The study drew on a range of qualitative data collection methods. Practitioner research and action inquiry cycles were interwoven with case study. Each of the three drama workshops was contained within a fictitious dramatic framework by roles and contexts providing clear framework or boundaries for the improvisation (O'Toole, 2006, p. 46). Together the three process dramas formed a collective of bounded case studies (Creswell, 2005, p. 440). In addition to the three process dramas, five other case studies were overlaid. The 'unit' for analysis in these five cases were individual participants. All of the participating pre-service teachers were interviewed six weeks prior to the dramas, completed online reflection after each drama and were interviewed at the completion of the three workshops. Five participant case studies were selected once all of the data had been collected. These selected pre-service teachers were representative of the overall background, experience and reflections of all participants and offered contrasting perspectives.

Using a constructivist lens, I have attempted to 'understand the multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge' (Robson, 2002, p. 27) and build a composite interpretation based on both my experience and the reflections of the participants.

## Three Process Dramas

The process dramas involved the pre-service drama teachers improvising with me during the workshops to create three different fictional worlds. Each process drama session lasted approximately two and a half hours. The participants discussed the drama in a focus group immediately after each workshop. The process dramas were spread across a six week period, at fortnightly intervals. After each drama the participants were encouraged to individually write reflections and responses to their experience in an online reflective journal.

The pre-text (O' Neill, 1995) for each process drama emerged from the experiences and concerns of the participants based on information they gave in semi structured interviews exploring the nature of ethical dilemmas they have faced in the secondary school setting. Interviews were conducted six weeks prior to the first process drama.

Process drama one looked at themes related to control, acceptance, power and respect in schools. The second drama explored the concept of boundaries and 'the fine line' between ethical and unethical relationships with staff, students and the handling of information. Tied to this were issues such as privacy and confidentiality for all members of the school community. Process drama two also investigated the purpose of drama education and the special demands placed upon the drama teacher to maintain student safety, manage student disclosure, emotional engagement and maintain a supportive learning environment. However, it was not until the final drama, entitled "The Party" (Hogan, 2009), that the nature of the participants' focus group and post-drama reflections shifted and several participants reflected on moral character and the affective dimensions of professional ethics and *being* ethical.

This final process drama focused on a fictitious second year drama teacher called Karen. The process drama developed around Karen's experiences teaching in a small country town. The narrative developed to include her dating (and possible engagement) with a local young man and her grappling with the ethical boundaries of his younger brother being a student at the school. Karen is invited to the birthday party of her fiancé's brother and must make a decision about whether or not to attend.

## The Cases

Due to the limitations of this paper, the discussion that follows draws only on data collected in relation to just two participants within the study - secondary pre-service drama teachers, Megan and Leigh.

### *Megan*

Megan's participation in the study introduced her to new knowledge, raised her awareness that teachers are confronted with ethical choices daily and helped her to understand that in some cases there are mandated codes of behaviour to guide a professional's actions. In addition to Megan's 'outside-in' concerns about 'correct procedures', connecting her experience to rules and policy, there was evidence of 'inside-out' reflection where she began to contemplate the kind of teacher she might be:

> I believe in a professional relationship with students. I can be friendly, but ultimately I am the teacher, they are the student and there is a line between that relationship. (Megan Online Reflection, 2005c)

With each process drama experience and subsequent written reflection, Megan's confidence and moral position strengthened. Her sense of the "line" defining her professional and personal boundaries became more apparent. Her experience of the three process dramas presented new knowledge, raised her moral sensitivity and gave her analytical or judgement skills to apply to a range of ethical situations:

> These process dramas really opened my eyes to the ethical issues the teaching profession has. Before these I hadn't even thought about them. Seriously, I was completely unprepared to tackle ethical issues, although I believe I would have handled them rather well and in a professional manner, these process dramas have really given me the opportunity to say stop, now what would I do? Why would I do that? What else could I do? Is this the right thing…for me and for the student? I've never specifically asked myself these questions, but now that I am aware of it all I believe I will ask myself these questions in the future which will ultimately influence my future practice. (Megan Online Reflection, 2005d)

Here Megan is demonstrating that she has discovered her own analytical questions, questions that she intends to apply to future practice. These questions demonstrate a stronger sense of moral agency, a critical awareness of the impact of her decisions, actions and choices. Megan's question, "What would I do?" is important for shifts in understanding and the development of moral literacy to occur. She projected herself into the fictional context and ethical dilemma, identifying with the process drama's central moral agent. Her question, "Why would I do that?" conveys her realisation that her sense of self matters - she requires a rationale for her actions and how these personal choices shape her moral character.

Megan's response suggests that in order to deepen participants' understanding of the affective dimensions of professional ethics, the process drama design and structure needs to foster and promote "I" questions such as those above. Therefore how participants are positioned in relation to the ethical dilemma is significant. Megan's process drama experiences challenged her thinking about the role of the teacher, juxtaposing her own understanding of professional and ethical behaviour within community and organizational norms.

### *Leigh*

Leigh frequently projected herself into the context of the drama and attempted to understand what she may do in a similar situation, however after participating in the first two process

dramas Leigh was still confused as 'to what the proper code of behaviour is for young teachers' (Leigh Online Reflection, 2005d) and began looking for concrete solutions to guide her future practice. She believed that her participation in the process dramas overall raised her awareness but failed to provide the answers she was seeking:

> I think the major weakness of process dramas for making people aware of ethics etc. in teaching is that there is no concrete resolution at the end of them. So while they're fantastic at making us *aware* of the issues, and making us think about what *we'd* do, it would be good to have some sort of firm answer to the question to resolve the problem neatly!! Or as neatly as possible anyway! (Leigh Online Reflection, 2005d)

Leigh wanted clearer frameworks for her to judge right from wrong. Leigh demonstrated an increase in *moral sensitivity* (Rest et al., 1999), a self-acknowledged improvement in her ability to see and interpret a situation and to imagine a cause and effect chain of events. While she identified the moral problem, she showed a desire for more moral judgement skills or 'outside-in' authority to guide her decision-making. Later in the same online reflection she presented a counter view, and considered what becoming a teacher actually meant. She made several connections to the 'inside-out' aspects of moral character and a virtue based ethic.

Significantly, the final process drama experience raised her awareness as to how a teachers' personal and professional character are entwined:

> These process dramas emphasised that teaching is about self and ethics. I think it's essential that all beginning teachers have a better understanding of that. Teaching is not just a job but a lifestyle… therefore I think it's imperative that teachers are transparent. Trying to keep parts of yourself private isn't going to work in this kind of situation and being 'caught out' with a secret is going to be worse than being open about it to start with. (Leigh Online Reflection, 2005e)

Leigh's participation in the process drama sparked some initial consideration of a 'worthy mode of being – one that requires them to "be" (self-identity) as they should want to be' (Totterdell, 2000, p. 137), however, she was still unclear as to her personal and professional boundaries or if she would alter her behaviour in similar school contexts. Leigh's views are similar to other pre-professionals who wish to maintain a seamless congruence between their professional and personal lives, not wishing to accept the structural norms or values that certain communities and organisations may encourage (Nash, 1996, p. 85).

***Practitioner reflection***

This noticeable change in the nature of the participants' reflections after the final drama forced me to analyse why this process drama was more successful in fostering greater self-reflection about *being* ethical. "The Party" drama invited the participants to build and explore the personal and professional life of the central role creating a more holistic understanding of her world. The participants were required to view the context through the eyes of the central role or primary moral agent and analyse 'Karen's' decision-making process several times during the drama. Important dilemma moments in the drama were slowed down, stopped and examined. During these moments the participants stepped into the role of Karen, embodied and justified her personal position. The framing of the drama forced 'Karen' and the participants to find an ethical 'way of being' in a range of contexts and find a congruency between her/their personal and professional moral character. While the previous two process dramas devised for the study had focused on a student or a collective body of teachers' experience and school policy, this was the first drama to develop a stronger community context and personal dimension to a central teacher role through a range of dramatic conventions.

Participant responses to the symbolic images and metaphoric scenes created by the group in the final frame of the "The Party" process drama were the richest and most 'affective' reflections that occurred during any of the process dramas. In the final frame of the drama the participants were asked to respond to their experience by creating a dramatic statement about what they found significant. Two of the non-naturalistic presentations offered at this time sparked strong discussion amongst the participants.

In dramatic statement one, Barbara and Michelle each stood on a chair balancing on one foot, their hands outstretched to the side. They stared into the distance, appearing unbalanced and directionless. Randomly, they call out various roles from their daily lives, mother, daughter, Telstra customer, teacher as they teeter from side to side. They try to find their balance and seem to almost place both feet on their individual chair however they never quite reach equilibrium before ending the scene.

In dramatic statement two, Ruth, Liz and Megan used the song "Pop goes the Weasel". Ruth sat and sang in the centre, winding an imaginary box beside her. Megan popped out of the first box, and said, "Ruth Smith likes to go clubbing, has a boyfriend, enjoys having a good time, likes to party..." before Ruth contained her and pushed her back down. Ruth then wound up a second box on the opposite side of the room, from which Liz popped out at Miss Smith, the model teacher, who prepares her lessons long into the night and espouses several pedagogical theories with a very serious and dedicated demeanour. She too is pushed back into the box. The song and the winding starts again until eventually both boxes explode and they argue with each other as to who the real Ruth Smith is. These two personas - Ruth Smith and Miss Smith were eventually subdued and the central Ruth ended the scene by walking away with the parting comment, 'I hate boxes'.

Both scenes stimulated discussion amongst the participants about duty and the search for an appropriate professional and personal persona. They debated how much of themselves they could expose in a professional context. One participant, Barbara, expressed her fear regarding how unpractised she felt for her future teacher role, claiming, 'I don't know who Barbara is as a teacher'. She referred to the balancing scene described above and pointed out that she knew how to be a daughter and a Telstra customer but that "teacher" is so new to her.

In the post-drama focus group discussion following this frame, most of the pre-service teachers reflected on the deeper aspects of their moral selves. This final drama, more than the earlier two process dramas provoked reflection about 'self'. This drama encouraged most participants to look at their professional motivations, emotions and choices from the 'inside-out'. Reflection on their experience within the final "The Party" process drama enabled several pre-service teachers to move beyond thinking about what they should do as a teacher or why and instead to consider who they are, applying the indicative virtue ethic question of "What kind of person should I be?" (Cohen, 2004, p. 49).

Process drama three, "The Party", included planning elements that fostered greater reflection on the affective dimensions of professional ethics and particularly moral character. The design or framing of the process drama significantly influenced the participants' reflections on professional ethics. This included the creation and choice of a key 'character' of the process drama, the central moral agent. When participants identified with the central role, they were more likely to experience metaxis and the sense that 'this could happen to me'. However an appropriate balance needs to be found between role, context identification and fictional distancing in order for all participants to engage and not be hindered by overwhelming tensions from their real experience. When I adopted a negotiated or more open planning approach that allowed opportunity for the central moral agent to be owned and constructed by the group, the drama was more engaging and this influenced the depth and

nature of reflection. This occurred in "The Party" process drama when the participants built a more complete picture of the central moral agent including their personal and professional life.

Reflection significantly enriched the learning of the participants and occurred prior to, during and after each process drama. A variety of reflective dramatic conventions were incorporated in the drama design, notably discussion, writing in role and symbolic or metaphoric response, all of which promoted richer dialogue and more personalized contemplation.

Reflection on professional ethics was enhanced when the design and leadership of the process drama created a safe, supportive and creative learning environment with platforms for dialogue and exploration of the affective domain of feeling and emotion. The choice of pre-text, setting and sequencing of dramatic conventions influenced the effectiveness of the drama and guided and shaped reflection about different dimensions of professional ethics.

When the process drama structure enabled the exploration of the moral agent's world, this helped to identify key decision-making influences and provided a clearer understanding of the actual dilemma confronted by the moral agent. The context creating phases of each drama were crucial and more effective when they built a clearer picture of the organizational and community norms and how these impacted on the ethical decision-making and actions of the key moral agent. Specific moments of choice or ethical decision-making moments were slowed down, examined closely, and viewed from multiple perspectives, allowing time for all participants to explore their position and justifications.

The key finding to emerge from the analysis of the practitioner action research cycles and participant reflections was that process drama can offer an affective pedagogy for professional ethics education, *if* the structure of the drama enabled participants to fully know and empathise with the central moral agent. The structure must be sufficiently open to allow for playfulness, symbolic or non-naturalistic exploration, immersive experience and embodied enactment.

## Conclusion

In this paper I have provided a brief outline of relevant literature related to professional ethics education and the use of drama and performance based pedagogies in moral and teacher education. I have defined process drama and outlined how this form of improvisational experience enabled the participants to engage with professional ethics education. I have shared data and analysis from the study that illustrates how the structure, design and development of the central role or "moral agent" influences the efficacy of the process drama in terms of supporting participant reflection on moral literacy. Analysis of the participant case studies supports the key assertion that process drama assists in the development of all four components of moral literacy: sensitivity, judgement, motivation and identity formation, and moral character (Bebeau, 2002).

In particular, process drama offers an affective learning approach that fosters the development of a virtue ethic where the basis for authority emanates from the 'inside-out'; when moral behaviour or ethical decision-making flows from a person's character (Cohen, 2004). There are commonalities between this study and Winston's (1999, 2005) research exploring moral education and his findings that the enacted, embodied and open nature of learning through narrative and drama assisted children and young people in their moral induction. Similarly, findings from this study focusing on adult learners found that it is the 'open' aesthetic; the opportunity for the participants to play within and shape the dramatic action that strengthened their reflections on the nature of their moral self.

The artistry of the practitioner (O'Neill, 1995) and their role in the design or structure of the process drama also influences the nature of participant engagement. Like Cahill (2014) and her finding that symbolic and metaphoric conventions enable participants to reflect and be in new ways; this study found that the choice of dramatic conventions assisted in the participants' engagement with questions of moral character and ways of being ethical. It was through metaphoric and symbolic dramatic action that deeper reflection or "refraction" (O'Connor, 2003) about moral character occurred.

Findings from this study support those emerging from the use of performance based pedagogies, specifically Boalian applied theatre strategies, in teacher education (Bhukhanwala & Allexsaht-Snider, 2012; Cahnmann-Taylor & Souto-Manning, 2010). Process drama offers an immersive, applied, visceral experience that enables pre-service teachers to rehearse difficult conversations, explore ethical dilemmas, model and explore how they want to be. These findings also indicate that process drama is a form of moral pedagogy that supports the development of a holistic professional ethic, addresses all aspects of moral literacy and provides a safe space for pre-service teacher to explore what it means to "be" ethical. This study, along with the findings offered by other drama education practitioners, suggests that process drama may usefully be applied in pre-professional ethics education in other disciplines. It is unclear, however, how process drama may work with participants unfamiliar with dramatic improvisation. Nevertheless, given the growing evidence of positive applied drama and theatre participant experiences in a range of contexts, perhaps it is time to venture into unchartered territory.

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