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Suggested Reference

Carroll, B., & Nicholson, H. (2014). Resistance and struggle in leadership development. *Human relations, 67*(11), 1413-1426.
doi: 10.1177/0018726714521644

Resistance and struggle in leadership development

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Accepted for publication in *Human Relations.*

Abstract

That leadership development is a contested terrain, like any organisational terrain, can scarcely be considered a new idea, yet research into the intricacies of resistance in this context is very much in its infancy. This article takes recent critical scholarship on resistance as its starting point to explore the interdependencies of power, resistance and struggle in a leadership development environment. Drawing on extensive online interactions collected from an 18-month, cross-sector programme with emergent leaders, this article asks whether the different stakeholders in leadership development could benefit from a more open exploration of power and resistance. Such dynamics offer new insights into the relationship between participants and facilitators and opens up a series of alternative questions, challenges and strategies and for leadership development.

Keywords

leadership development, power, resistance, social constructionism, learning

Introduction

Critically orientated leadership development scholarship has recently broached the impact of power dynamics in leadership development interventions (Ford and Harding, 2007; Ford, Harding and Learmonth, 2008; Gagnon 2008; Nicholson and Carroll, 2013; Sinclair 2009). Such research is able to show the asymmetrical effects of power in development spaces, but rarely explores the potential of such power interdependencies to be a development resource and site of learning in their own right. This article seeks to complement this emergent focus on power by exploring its dialectical relation: resistance. We look at how moments of resistance offer conceptual and practical possibilities for grappling with the dynamics of learning, leading and following whilst acknowledging the multiplicity and complexity of subject positions that need to be negotiated in doing so. Consequently, we consider how the relationships between participants and facilitators could be redefined in development interventions to create some kind of a bridge between ever-present realities of power, resistance and struggle.

We believe that issues of power, resistance, and conformity often mark the work of those who research and deliver leadership development in ways that scholars and practitioners don't yet adequately understand. Equally, they mark the organisational terrain that participants coming out of development experiences will need to recognize and contend with. None of this should be a surprise given that leadership itself is a concept 'freighted with so much meaning' and 'libidinal energy' that it tempts participants, facilitators and organisational champions to appropriate and ring-fence its meaning to serve their diverse interests (Ford and Harding, 2007: 482). This often results in a development process more akin to seduction, leading to conformity, anxiety and the privileging of a very few desired identities (Sinclair, 2009). Leadership development is prone to such outcomes because it walks a fine line between supporting learning and demonstrating its espoused subject matter,

where 'success' may manifest itself in meeting participants' 'desires to be entertained, transported and transformed, to feel greater mastery and glimpse the lusted-after power to be in control' (Sinclair, 2009: 270). Thus, leadership development spaces are steeped in power, resistance and struggle and entangle facilitators and participants alike; yet, strikingly, few in that space seem to know how to work with its energies and insights.

Interest in resistance and power has sparked new inquiries in organisational studies (Courpasson, Dany and Clegg, 2012; Fleming and Spicer, 2007, 2008; Mumby, 2005; Thomas and Davies, 2005; Zoller and Fairhurst, 2007). This work challenges the traditional reliance on power and resistance as oppositional poles in a binary logic, the contrast of subordinates' resistance with managers' power, and the manifestation of resistance as either active or passive dissent. Such challenges have resulted in a more nuanced understanding of the interdependent, interstitial and multidirectional interplay of power and resistance to create, in processes of organizing, new and complex discourses, identities and relationships (Kondo, 1990). A new language of insurgency, enclaves and objects of resistance (Courpasson et al., 2012), discursive autonomy (Zoller and Fairhurst, 2007) and 'adaptation, subversion and reinscription of dominant discourses' (Thomas and Davies, 2005: 687) frames resistance in leadership development spaces. This research also reminds us that resistance is in itself a form of leadership with the potential to 'co-produce a future' (Deetz, 2008: 389) – a powerful outcome from leadership development.

Given the polarised and romanticised nature of resistance and struggle, access to empirical material rich in these phenomena has traditionally been difficult to obtain. Zoller and Fairhurst (2007: 1355) propose that ethnography has 'the potential for capturing these everyday processes as they unfold'. In this inquiry, we studied an interesting and unique 18-month leadership development programme (LDP) that enacts critical- constructionist theories and practices of leadership. We studied thirty emergent leaders, who participated in five

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workshops and contributed extensively to the programme's online learning platform. While detail of this development programme is given in a later section, we note here that the purpose of this programme was to begin to develop a new generation of leaders with the capacity to negotiate the uncertainty, dynamism and complexity that is associated with current and future organizational contexts. It's assumed that leadership will be distributed through such contexts and not be the sole province of those with authority and position. Consequently this programme assumed power, dissent, resistance and challenge to be amongst the skillset required for those emerging into leadership and willing to play an active part in the interactions associated with engaging in complex issues. Participants struggled to claim and build leadership identities capable of the kind of agency that can play strongly in spaces often shaped and held by others. That such a struggle could be enacted and visibly constructed within the programme was therefore seen as a vital dimension in achieving the purpose of the development. We don't claim that the interactions presented here attest to the success of this programme, but do propose they demonstrate the ability of development to make such dynamics available for building collective and distributed leadership capacity.

This article is structured into five sections. First, we theorise resistance with a focus on contemporary organisation studies literature informed by discourse and identity. Second, we explore research on resistance in the leadership development literature. Third, we outline the research context as well as our theoretical and methodological framework, which draws on ethnographic and discursive assumptions. Fourth, we analyse three extended interactions in order to explore power, resistance and struggle as interdependent phenomena. Finally, we discuss implications for development design, delivery and facilitation, focusing on how care and criticality intersect in leadership development.

Theorising resistance

Resistance appears currently to be to under intense scrutiny, particularly from the critical scholarly community. Fleming and Spicer (2008: 302) describe the term as 'a staple concern' in classic sociology that was marginalised to 'near extinction' in the 70s and 80s, and made a 'dramatic reappearance' over the last decade. Such a trajectory reflects substantial theoretical pendulum shifts in working with the construct. Here, we track these movements to open up ways of working with resistance that resonate with the leadership development context.

Traditionally resistance has been understood as a form of 'asymmetric' or 'oppositional influence' (Zoller and Fairhurst, 2007: 1354), locking it into the activities of subordinates (as opposed to bosses), workers (as opposed to managers) and followers (as opposed to leaders) in a primarily reactive mode of 'using power to create something that was not intended by those in authority' (Fleming and Spicer, 2007: 43). In this formulation resistance looks like 'disguised dissent' (Collinson, 2005a: 1430) or '"noise", deviance and discord' (Fleming and Spicer, 2008: 301) and can range from open opposition and confrontation to humour and 'work-slow' strategies. Unsurprisingly, the managerial stance has been predominantly orientated at managing and even eliminating resistance.

The understanding of resistance has been underpinned by a set of binaries: with power, leaders and control on one side and resistance, followers and dissent on the other. Deeper dualisms such as 'organized and unorganized, formal and informal, and individual and collective' (Fleming and Spicer, 2007: 31) along with 'reason/ emotion' and 'fixed and fluid meaning' (Zoller and Fairhurst, 2007: 1340) anchor the distance between resistance and power. This kind of binary thinking means more privileged constructs (such as power) shape and tend to marginalise less privileged constructs (such as resistance) (Mumby, 2005). What ensues is a way of thinking that 'artificially divorces' one construct from another and often

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romanticises each (Collinson, 2005a: 1420). Kondo's (1990: 224) description of the impossibility of an 'authentic, pristine space of resistance' speaks to the simplistic theorisations that result. The alternative to such binary approaches are dialectical forms of inquiry that shift the research orientation from 'either-or' to 'both-and' thinking (Collinson, 2005a: 1420); to exploring 'dynamic tension' and 'interplay' (Collinson, 2005a: 1420); and to understanding dualisms as 'mutually implicative and co-productive' (Mumby, 2005: 21). It is here that critical theorists in particular are re-theorising resistance.

The first step in this re-theorisation is bringing power and resistance into relationship and understanding them as not only 'mutually implicated, co-constructed and interdependent' but 'multiple, ambiguous and contradictory' (Collinson, 2005a: 1427). Such a theorisation is most radically expressed by Kondo (1990: 224) who contended that people 'consent, cope, and resist at different levels of consciousness at a single point in time' and that 'there is slippage and overlap to such an extent that they [power and resistance] fall in on each other'. Fleming and Spicer (2008: 305) characterise such an overlap as a 'chiaroscuro' where the 'two play off each other through mixture, contrast and blurring'. This can be seen in the reframing of power and resistance using the terminology of 'struggle' to capture the 'more nuanced and ambivalent reality' that comes from working with 'an interconnected dynamic' (Fleming and Spicer, 2008: 305). Their theorisation of struggle appears particularly relevant for tracking power and resistance in a learning and development context where struggle is attuned to 'ambivalent and ambiguous moments' (Fleming and Spicer 2008: 306) and embedded in 'collective, communicative conflicts around certain issues' (Fleming and Spicer, 2008: 305). Fleming and Spicer (2007: 57) show the pivotal role struggle plays in crafting agency and self-consciousness, negotiating social interaction, accomplishing personal, relational, and institutional change and 'world making', all of which are arguably the foundation of development.

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Viewing resistance more broadly as 'reinscription and reproduction of the discourses of change' (Thomas and Davies, 2005: 684) appears significant. In short, resistance is discursively produced as gaps, contradictions and disjunctures between proffered or dominant subject positions, and individual identities and interests are opened up. Thus 'resistance can be understood as a constant process of adaptation, subversion and reinscription' of such discourses (Thomas and Davies, 2005: 687). Given that there is no easy categorisation of the different subject positions that can co-exist in any moment, this can only be 'an untidy and complex process that is full of tension' (Thomas and Davies, 2005: 695). In consequence, however, resistance 'is not only oppositional but also generative, nuanced by the paradox and contradiction within' (Thomas and Davies, 2005: 695). In creative or productive resistance (Courpasson et al., 2012), new and alternative identities are crafted as those engaged in it 'co-produce a future' (Courpasson et al., 2012: 802). Collinson (2005a) in particular draws our attention to studies where resistance has proved self-defeating, identity choices actually narrowed, and power asymmetries widened. While Collinson is predominantly exploring the intersection of resistance and gender, he gives a timely warning on too readily romanticizing resistance and failing to see resistance as constitutive of alternative and sometimes unforeseen types of power, control and regulation.

In such a generative theorisation of resistance, resisting can be seen as 'a potential form of leadership' (Zoller and Fairhurst, 2007: 1332), and a 'skillful performance' arising from 'ongoing and situated work' (Courpasson et al., 2012: 816). Courpasson and colleagues (2012: 806) delineate three core steps of a resistance process. The first they call 'enclave insurgency' where a temporary and shifting alliance builds from the energy generated by difference. Secondly, there is 'temporary realignment of power relations' (Courpasson et al., 2012: 806) as the enclave and other parties undergo interactions that disrupt each other. Finally, there is accommodation, where 'the co-production of change' (Courpasson et al.,

2012: 802) can take place. Central to this process is an 'object of resistance' (in their article this is a memo or letter) that acts as a boundary object in facilitating an engagement between the enclave and other parties. This process and associated language help us move attention from resistors to 'resisting work' (Courpasson et al., 2012: 816).

We propose that all leadership development programmes have the potential to be sites where 'resisting work' can take place – whether it is consciously fostered or worked with is another story. The programme we studied is unique in that it invited, encouraged and enacted leadership practices and discourses that were critical of mainstream leadership ideologies – or in other words, it strove to practice some of the recent critical leadership theories even as participants worked in fairly normative management structures. In short, as explained earlier, the programme could be seen as trying to develop a form of resistance leadership (Zoller and Fairhurst, 2007). In our analysis of the programme, we are primarily attentive to micro acts of resistance and struggle that are made visible through talk and interactions. That is partly a consequence of using empirical material from the online component of a LDP where what is communicated (as opposed to what is not) constitutes the development work between participants and facilitators. However, we realize there is a spectrum of resistance, where resistance can embody a range of forms, and acknowledge that our focus is mainly on spoken and visible acts of resistance (what Fleming and Spicer, 2007, would term 'voice' as opposed to escape, refusal or creation). Escape, refusal and creation forms of resistance are equally important to research as each presents a different set of complexities. One of the consequences of focusing on voice is that our data contains more confrontation and conflict, than might be found in those other forms of resistance. We now consider how power and resistance has been theorised in leadership development.

Resistance and leadership development

Given the dearth of research that explicitly theorizes how resistance operates in leadership development programmes, we turn to related studies from management development (Currie, 1999; Gagnon, 2008; Rusaw, 2000). Although management development programmes may be different to leadership ones in terms of philosophy, content and delivery (due somewhat to the management vs. leadership debate), what we are interested in here is how resistance manifests in an adult learning environment for emergent managers and leaders. Therefore, in this section, we highlight how resistance has been framed in this research, and begin to outline how we see the process and purpose of resistance in leadership development.

In the few relevant texts in management development, resistance is generally positioned as an act by the participants in response to the content or process of a given programme. Currie's (1999) case study describes how participants raised vital questions about the programme, such as: how is it related to our everyday practice? Why is it inconsistent with broader changes and dynamics in the organisation? Why do I feel subtly coerced to participate in it? Rather than working with these important questions, the facilitators invoked the language and assumptions of management scholarship as 'unchallengeable expertise' (Currie, 1999: 4) to legitimise the programme and to silence alternative perspectives. Contradictions, inconsistencies and alternative assumptions were not learned from but diffused or reconciled, in an 'exhibition of power' by the facilitators to 'manage meaning' so that the programme could be accepted (Currie, 1999: 58). Although Currie (1999: 58) acknowledges that management development is a process of 'political struggle and negotiation', and that internal conflict can be 'dealt with developmentally', the article's implicit assumption seems to be that management development needs to 'win support' from the various stakeholders. A successful programme therefore establishes

legitimacy by 'ensuring coherence' between programme and organisation, and between facilitators and participants (Currie, 1999: 59). Resistance, it seems, should be quashed as it is a threat to the legitimacy and success of the programme, rather than being worked with to create pivotal learning experiences.

Likewise, Rusaw (2000: 256) argues that because participants are opposed to change and wish to protect the status quo, they resist organisational development: the trainer is a change agent whose role is to reawaken, liberate and emancipate 'enslaved selves' who follow organisational ideologies and scripts. Because employees are painted as prisoners, their resistance is interpreted as 'irrational', 'defensive' and 'oppositional' (Rusaw, 2000: 257), detrimental to the training process and disruptive to the intended change.

Participants may also resist the programme's attempt to fashion their identities. Gagnon (2008: 384), in one of the few articles addressing power specifically in management development, highlighted that the two programmes under study attempted to 'control participants' "insides", albeit with different degrees of intensity and purposefulness'. One programme in particular created uncertainty, competition, anxiety and control to regulate the participant's identity in line with the ideal leader/manager promoted by the programme. Gagnon noted the prevalence of conformity in both of the programmes she studied, and the relative dearth of resistance in either. In another programme, some participants quietly resisted attempts from their peers to regulate their identity. Peers tried to impose identities on others, or judged them for not conforming enough. Although many ultimately 'gave in' to the pressure, a few 'resist(ed) exhortations from peers to change their personal ways of being' (Gagnon, 2008: 387). In the 'GA programme', resistant participants tended to adopt critical attitudes towards the programme and the employer, without showing this in behaviour. Some adopted cynicism, irony and humour as a counter-discourse to the programme, though this

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open display of resistance was rare. The few active dissidents were labeled as 'arrogant' and 'bad listeners' by their peers and facilitators (Gagnon, 2008: 388).

Across these articles, the programme/facilitators are generally seen as recipients of resistance, but little appears to be known about how facilitators may themselves create, invite or engage in resistance. Resistance seems to be cast as an obstacle to be overcome, the defensive response of 'enslaved' (Rusaw, 2000: 256) and fearful employees, an attitude that is rarely enacted, or the behaviour of deviant renegades. We seek to loosen resistance from such framings, and instead explore how it can also be intentionally and productively co-created by facilitators and participants as a site of potential learning and leadership.

Here, power is a key issue, because resistance 'always exists within a network of power relations' (Kärreman and Alvesson, 2009: 1120). Nicholson and Carroll (2013) use a Foucauldian framing to explore how LDPs use technologies of the self and of power to undo participants' identities. This study highlights LDPs' complex power/knowledge relations whereby facilitators are seen as holding an expertise of subjectivity that participants find difficult to openly resist or challenge. Through the disciplinary effects created by confessionary activities and mutual surveillance, some participants in the study seemed to internalize or conform to the programme's leadership and identity discourses. The authors therefore question whether developing the capacity to resist ought to be a staple feature of LDPs, especially those informed by critical or social constructionist perspectives. We wish to extend and complement this study by foregrounding the role of resistance in the powered LDP context. Our research question therefore is: how does resistance manifest in LDPs, and what are the core developmental opportunities and challenges of working intentionally with resistance?

Method

The challenge of studying resistance empirically has been highlighted by scholars who note the dearth of in-depth studies of resistance, and argue for accounts that are informed by ethnography (Zoller and Fairhurst, 2007), narrative (Courpasson et al., 2012), interactions (Jian, 2007) and discourse (Mumby, 2005). Recognising the potential of these methods, our study uses empirical material gathered from an ethnographic study of a long-term LDP. We focus entirely on interactions between participants and with their facilitators that occurred in the online learning environment. Before we elaborate on our method, we describe the programme that formed the basis for our research.

Research context

Our inquiry centres on an 18-month LDP based in New Zealand involving 30 emerging leaders from various sectors, organisations and regions, and six facilitators. As indicated earlier, resistance was to some extent invited and modelled by the facilitators in this programme. The philosophy and pedagogy that underpinned the programme was informed by social constructionism and critical approaches to leadership. For example, the programme taught and modelled the following ideas: leadership-as-practice (Carroll, Levy and Richmond, 2008), critical reflexivity (Cunliffe, 2009), leadership as a social construction (Grint, 2005), identity work (Carroll and Levy, 2008, 2010; Sinclair, 2007), critiques of mainstream leadership theories (Ford et al., 2008; Sinclair, 2007), sense-making (Weick, 1995) and dropping 'tools' (Weick, 1996). The programme markedly challenged many of the mainstream visions of leadership as heroic, leader-centric, transformational and trait-based, which many of the participants held at the start of the programme. Rather, leadership was characterised as relational, discursive, reflexive, and emergent in practices (Fairhurst and Grant, 2010). In totality what drove the social constructionism at the heart of the programme

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was an attitude of disturbance in order to 'upend much conventional wisdom' that has flourished around the leadership construct (Tourish and Barge, 2010: 329). Therefore resistance was accentuated given that contestation was a starting place for the programme.

Unlike the programmes studied by Currie (1999) and Gagnon (2008), this one invited participants to question and challenge the content, process and facilitators. For example, to model this stance, in the first residential workshop one facilitator consciously adopted a 'challenger' role, questioning the substance and delivery of leadership ideas, as well as the logic and intentions of the other facilitators. The programme introduced, enacted and encouraged 'killer' or 'jugular questioning' (Vogt et al., 2003) as a vital leadership practice. The terminology of killer or jugular questioning is deliberately hyperbolic in order to explicitly invite participants to go beyond responses that defer, accommodate or protect existing knowledge and practices. Such an invitation was coupled with active listening and pursuit of deeper assumptions, identities or meanings to (ideally) help the speaker see new ways of understanding or acting. Thus challenge, inquiry and dissent were framed in the service of others' learning. The programme also encouraged participants to create energy, passion and purpose in their leadership by surfacing and working with conflict. They were shown how to surface tensions related to leadership and to work on the 'edge' of these together, without collapsing into compliance, although our data will indicate the complexity of such a call. A series of norms or discourses were established by the facilitators and became the fuel for, or target of, resistance. These norms (regarding the type of leadership and development advocated by the programme) unfolded in a dynamic of power and shaped the participants' sense of choice, voice and agency.

Thirty participants began and finished the programme (17 males and 13 females), and were aged between 22-32 years old. The participants were sponsored by a variety of trusts, corporations, scholarships and community organisations. As this was an "open" programme,

participants came from a variety of sectors such as: education, sports, engineering/architecture/design, medicine and health, banking and finance, defence force, local government, agribusiness and business/commerce. Many participants also demonstrated leadership in community/volunteer activities, played representative-level sport and/ or had received regional or national recognition or awards for leadership service. A threshold for selection into this programme was that they had a current role or position that allowed them to experiment and exercise leadership concurrent with the programme. For the majority this looked like team or project leader/ manager positions. Considerable effort was made to connect participants with their scholarship or organizational sponsors with the latter having a variety or forums or events to interact with their own and other participants. These participants should be understood as recognised high-potential leaders for the future who were increasingly being required to demonstrate leadership in their 'organising' contexts.

In total, there were six facilitators (four females and two males) who came from a range of backgrounds such as outdoor education, family therapy, secondary school teaching, company directorships and organisational development/consulting, and who hold a series of undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications (from Bachelor to PhD). Some are, or have been, active researchers and university lecturers. Only two of these facilitators feature directly in the interactions and consequently they are the focus of the facilitator interview data as well. We note that one of those is the first author. For more information about the provider and its programmes, please refer to the following studies: Nicholson & Carroll (2013) and Carroll & Levy (2010).

Method

We observed both the face-to-face workshops as well as the online community throughout the 18-months and hence our study contains elements of traditional and virtual ethnographic research. The LDP required participants to attend five residential workshops,

located at various conference facilities. Each workshop lasted between two and five days. In addition, the participants were allocated to smaller learning 'clusters', each with about four participants plus one facilitator, which were required to interact almost weekly (and sometimes daily) on an online learning platform. In total, observations of 15 days of residential workshops – some of them audio or video recorded and transcribed – resulted in over 250 pages of field notes. We also had access to over 400 pages of participants' reflective assignments and over 6600 posts made to the online forum. In this article, we focus primarily on the online interactions, which provide a visible account of resistance being created and worked with in a collective.

With participants geographically and organisationally spread, the online platform was used to enable them to remain connected to each other and the facilitators. It was more than just a forum for discussion: the participants were required to undertake intensive leadership assignments that entailed working together to test their assumptions, deepen their thinking and build leadership experiments and activities. It was also the repository for each individual's written reflections. We have based our inquiry on empirical material from the online learning platform because this was the place where sustained, ongoing and connected leadership development work tended to happen between participants and facilitators. The cluster forums in particular would be the sites for three or four month long conversations and series of activities. Online work then tended to mimic the rhythms of organizational, as opposed to learning, contexts where groups and teams have to rekindle each other's energy, track over time with complex and discontinuous tasks and make sense of progress and unpredictability together. In addition, there was an intentionality about composing and responding to a series of resistant postings that signaled a seriousness about resistance we found compelling to explore. The barriers involved in online work - writing one's message, reading others, sitting with one's words up on the screen being read by unseen people,

choosing whether to remain silent or speak out - indicate a different level of agency in action than the spontaneous cut and thrust of debate and disagreement in typical face-to-face learning contexts. Finally, the 'laying bare' of resistance through fine grained discursive means was compelling for researchers who see discourse as central in revealing the constructed realities of leadership and power.

However, working with online interactions presents challenges (Carroll and Simpson, 2012). All empirical texts are partial and fragmentary, and online interactions are no different in this regard; but a limitation of virtual environments is that participants are able to log off and avoid interacting. There were numerous occasions when participants were challenged regarding their assumptions (which we could interpret as being called to do 'resisting work'), but either ignored or avoided the posting. Such silence makes it difficult to determine whether this was active deflection, disinterested dismissal, a display of resistance or a wounded retreat.

Participants may also differ in their online interactions compared to offline settings (for examples see Arsand, 2008; Campbell, Fletcher and Greenhill, 2009: Suler, 2002; Waskul & Douglass, 1997). Some participants may feel bolder, more honest and more comfortable engaging in resistance online, whereas others may feel intimidated, more shy and less comfortable due to the visibility that an online forum creates. Online behaviour may be affected by dynamics evident in interviews, such as impression management and moral storytelling (Alvesson, 2003a). It is helpful to us that because participants also have relationships with each other in the 'real world': the boundary between online and offline is blurred. Arguably the virtual and the real are not separate environments, but overlap and interact (Hine, 2008). Therefore, the way in which participants interact and resist online is influenced (and perhaps constrained) by their interactions at residential workshops.

Observing resistance in online interactions

Leadership, identity and resistance researchers are increasingly turning to interaction-based data to better understand the in-situ processes of such concepts (Carroll and Simpson, 2012; Crevani, Lindgren and Packendorff, 2010; Down and Reveley, 2009; Zoller and Fairhurst, 2007; Jian, 2007; Kärreman and Alvesson, 2001; Larsson and Lundholm, 2010; Nicholson and Carroll, 2013). Observing interactions enables us to see how actors generate and deploy specific capacities of resistance, such as intervening with alternative discourses or identities, and to track even temporary changes in power relations (Courpasson et al, 2012). We initially selected a number of extended interactions that seemed to include resistance, and then chose three interactions based on four main criteria: 1) Does the interaction contain visible, enacted or overt struggle? 2) Is the struggle/resistance sustained in some way over a period of time? 3) Does the resistance speak to larger issues, norms or discourses of the programme? 4) Does there appear to be some degree of impact on the participant(s) and/or facilitators in regards to their leadership or learning? Overall, the final three interactions differ in terms of what is resisted, the interaction between the actors, the emotion and tone, and the effects.

Following Courpasson et al. (2012), we wrote up the selected interactions in a narrative style. Using stories to study resistance is helpful because they encapsulate contextual factors, and also capture how power dynamics can shift, and how relationships and meanings become constructed and contested (Courpasson et al, 2012). We analysed the data by examining the language used by each actor, and their apparent role in the resisting work. We examined the initiation of the resistance: who, how and why. We looked for objects of resistance and how these are held and responded to (Courpasson et al., 2012). In order to understand the relational nature of resistance we explored the establishment of 'enclaves' (Courpasson et al., 2012), and how and why resistance can quicken and escalate as well as stagnate.

Supplementary interview material

Our enquiry also includes data from interviews that were conducted six months after the completion of the programme. The second author interviewed all six facilitators and a selection of participants, but in this article we use only the data from the two facilitators present in the interactions, who were asked to reflect on the nature of facilitation in general and in the particular programme. We have drawn on these facilitator interviews to bring a depth of critical reflexivity to our inquiry that was demanded by both the topic and the intimacy of one of the authors being a facilitator represented in the data. As a facilitator, the resistance incidents represented a similar, albeit distinctive, struggle with identity, power and leadership dynamics akin to the participants. Indeed given the roles of leadership scholar, researcher, teacher, facilitator and practitioner of leadership tend to co-exist in any one person then we do stand in places 'where resistance counts' (Collinson 2005a: 742) and our responses are co-constitutive of 'how' such resistance ultimately will count.

Doing this research for the author who combines the facilitator and interviewee roles was a visceral experience. While retrospectively the two interactions she was involved in had undoubted development value for both herself and participants, the in-the-moment feel of perpetuating the kind of power and voice that only facilitators tend to have whilst being open to a resistant participant voice brought a palpable anxiety, insecurity and risk. Fear of 'winning' the argument and asserting dominance over the participant had to compete against fear of 'losing' and giving up some of her perceived facilitator legitimation. As a scholar she brings the experience of fighting for particular interpretations of truth but as a facilitator she understands the relational nature of development and the need to co-construct truths between people. These moments of interaction to her then are never fully laid to rest: they remain unsettled reminders of tensions impossible to fully resolve. Researching and writing this paper has helped her understand they are tensions that need to be made visible and accessible

to others if a more nuanced leadership practice is to develop between all agents in a development context. The second author occupied a different position: she was a researcher on the programme who primarily observed it and rarely took part in the development activities. Her relative distance from the interpersonal heat of resistance assisted her in selecting and analysing the data, yet for the first author working from within the setting offered special insights. Our two different roles seem to traverse the tension between closeness and distance that is common to ethnographic research (Alvesson, 2003b).

Interaction data

In the following section, we present three interactions that evince different shades of enacting and traversing resistance, and then provide an analysis of all these interactions.

Interaction one: Dampening resistance

After the first residential workshop Rachael, a facilitator, posts to an online discussion forum on behalf of the facilitation team, inviting any participant to converse with the facilitators about how they are experiencing the development process. This is a forum all facilitators and participants have access to. She does so in the spirit of completing the first phase of the programme which contains the early months of the online development work, the first residential workshop and the formal evaluation of the workshop and in initiating a mutual dialogue on the process of being in development while in development. Rachael invites participants to see themselves in a 'relationship with us [facilitators]' and to openly 'ask questions about why this, why now, where does this fit' in regard to their development process. Anthony, a participant replies, 'I have a feeling that the programme isn't transparent, particularly in regards to where the residential workshops will be held'.

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Rachael replies that Anthony's posting 'packs a lot of punch', and she's had to 'think hard about what the guts of it is' – apparently it's about the 'sticky issue' of 'transparency' and the programme 'holding stuff back, not giving you [participants] the full picture'. Rachael asks for clarification about her interpretation of Anthony's post: 'it feels like [the lack of transparency] is getting in the way of creating trust between you and us [participants and facilitators] and the programme? Is that roughly what you were getting at? Are others feeling that too? …. this development process is not a story with a transparent plot, we – you guys and us – all construct the story of this programme together as we go, through our interactions'. She thanks Anthony for 'raising tough stuff', and affirms that 'we'll always meet you directly when you do. So let's thrash it out eh?'

A week goes by and no one replies. Finally a participant Derek intervenes, but ignores Rachael's posting and agrees with Anthony's initial complaint. Rachel responds that she 'doesn't want to drop this question of transparency', and asks 'has anyone got anything to add or am I just barking up the wrong tree????'

A couple of days later, Anthony comes online and agrees that the 'transparency side of things is about trust'. He doesn't connect this statement to the programme, but elaborates that 'the programme is not hugely forthcoming with the reasons why we are doing some of the readings and assignments or why the residential workshops have not all been made public, hence not transparent'. Whilst he is 'enjoying' the other participants and assignments, 'there seems to be a leap of faith required in terms of the direction the programme is taking us/me'.

In a lengthy response, Rachael reflects that the facilitators have 'paid loads of attention' to how 'we interact with you' but 'that doesn't mean that we will ever be able to provide everyone' with 'a full and transparent picture about what this programme is all about or where it is heading, nor would we want to really'. She admits that it was her decision not

to 'tell you guys about where the future residential will be' because she 'loves giving and receiving wonderful surprises.' Rachael explains how 'we construct the meaning of something by playing around with it together, very seldom does it come pre-packaged all ready for you guys to each learn'. She asks, 'if the programme didn't require lots of "leaps of faith" . . . would it be a leadership development programme?' No participants respond.

We designate this a resistance, as opposed to merely a challenge, interaction for a number of reasons. Given this interaction involves a fairly muted, ambiguous and discontinuous series of communicative acts, nonetheless power and resistance are co-crafted between participants and facilitator. The 'giving and receiving wonderful surprises' proves to be the prerogative of facilitators, which warrants only partial disclosure of knowledge to participants in Rachel's mind. The only response legitimated by Rachel is a 'leap of faith', which neither Anthony nor Derek want to accept. Thus the ability to control what counts as a surprise (not knowing where a residential will be) versus what doesn't (a provoking posting by a participant) is the crux of this interaction. While there is some arguing particularly by Rachel in this interaction, we note that participants primarily respond in the form of assertions and propositions that reinforce their stance not offer it up for debate. Their silence in the face of Rachel's assertion of control doesn't appear to signal retreat although we accept silences too can be ambiguous. Thus this interaction constitutes identities who control and others who articulate being controlled.

Interaction two: Firing resistance

In the first formal activity of the programme, each participant had to post to their cluster forum a personal story of a challenging leadership adventure/experience. Cluster members read each story and offered 'killer' questions for the storyteller to explore further.

A participant Lola says she wants to explore 'How can I infect the masses?' in terms of 'the cause I believe in' so that others 'get excited and actively involved in it too?' She requests 'you guys [meaning all participants and facilitators] to work with me on this by questioning me with what I believe so strongly in'. Immediately Leah, a facilitator, writes an unusual posting - a series of dictionary definitions of 'infect' ('taint or contaminate with something') and 'masses' ('the body of common people') with a one-line comment, 'so "infect the masses" has positive associations for you (has connotations of tyranny for me)?'

A participant Ed replies forcefully and directly to Leah, 'I am disgusted by your response. The purpose of this programme is to share and grow as a group together. I cannot believe that, in your role as a facilitator in this programme you can think this is appropriate … get over your dictionary and live in the real world! … We are trying to create an open and supportive environment online where people feel safe to express their thoughts without reprisal'. The comment about 'get over your dictionary' is supported by a brief response from another participant. Leah replies, 'yes it [her first post] is appropriate but so is your response'. She claims that 'going to a dictionary gives one a shock at times as does taking a word out of one context and seeing it starkly in another and the shock would help [Lola] to see her words in all sorts of ways that might help her stretch and refine and work with what she wants to do'. Leah's response, like Ed's, speaks to her understanding of the nature of their development experience: 'supporting one to grow and develop means risking getting a response from an uncomfortable place'. She asks whether supporting people means 'giving them a sort of view through rosy glinted spectacles or coming back directly and straight...so they blink and feel something and feel there's more to say?'.

Ed asks whether seeking 'to elicit a strong response...is a high percentage way of developing people?' and whether 'rather than "throwing a shock" you [Leah]decided to throw a hand grenade and then see if there are any pieces to pick up at the end'. He ends by

saying 'thank you for challenging me' and that he 'will always meet things head on...and look forward to future conversations'. At this point Lola [the originator of the initial 'infect the masses' posting] re-enters, and claims to understand how 'language creates our reality' and that she needs to 'be aware of the reactions my words will demand … Believe it or not, I'm actually feeling quite energised by [the interaction]'. Finally, Leah says she 'sets out to interrogate the realities we [participants and facilitators alike] are bringing into this programme' but that Ed was 'right to question the force I brought to that' and that his response 'reads with the energy, passion, anger and fury' just like her response did and both responses go to the 'personal, political, ideological and emotional'. She sees that 'for both of us then we found a place of great fire and significance'.

This interaction, given its explosive nature, can be seen as a tussle over power and position. However, we would be loath to assume fiery confrontations are automatically constitutive of power and resistance. We selected this interaction because it is dominated by attempts to reinscribe discourses fundamental to the development enterprise. Lola, Leah and Ed, wrestle for the right to construct development in alternative ways: as a virus, as a shock or assault and as nurture. These strike at the level of paradigm, and all that is personal, political, ideological and emotional, which goes some way to explain the force and fury that eventuates when they intersect. The interaction is therefore 'world-making' (Fleming and Spicer, 2007: 57) and power and resistance dynamics offer more insight than a perspective/ viewpoint analysis could.

Interaction three: Resistance indecision

During the third residential workshop, the Ruby cluster is asked to consider 'which identity peaked through' in their work together and to explore what other identities they may like to play with. The discussion centers for a moment on Justin's identity, which they

describe as being like an objective, analytical and 'arm's length' consultant. They ask him to be someone who is more 'emotional' and who 'holds issues closer to his heart'.

In the following days, Rose writes to her cluster, 'I'm still thinking of an appropriate identity we should give Justin. I think his role as a "champion" is too SAFE and puts him in a terrible spot for development, so I think we should give him something more facetious and squeamish...like...[posts a photo of the Teletubbies]'.

Facilitator Leah responds: 'Yes the unresolved question of Justin's identity. What about a wild thing?' Rohan agrees 'I quite like "wild thing". Just because I would never use the phrase to describe Justin.' But Justin responds by saying that he has 'some concerns about the ethics of this identity switching stuff. Does anyone else feel that it's just disingenuous?' Leah asks him to 'explore "disingenuous" for me' because 'I'd be really up for a discussion about the ethics of identity … I want you to back yourself that this concern you are having holds crucial learning for you and us'.

Justin explains how 'switching identities . . . doesn't seem very genuine to yourself to be something or someone you don't wish to be.' He believes that 'I am quite comfortable jumping between different identities and feel that I do so'; however, his cluster has 'quite strongly type cast me … I wouldn't want to give you guys the impression that another identity coming out has come from anyone's volition but my own … there are some identities that I don't think I would want to hold, e.g. the tantrum thrower. If you are playing an identity that you don't really hold (and by that I mean, you haven't internalised it, and don't wish to) then isn't that quite manipulative and misleading to the people around you too? Essentially you are just wearing that hat to influence the people around you without being particularly transparent that that's what you're doing'.

Rose tries to explain the value of identity switching by saying 'this identity exercise will enable us to have more people in the room – the four 'subversive' identities each of us

bring into the room will serve to balance our current roles, and make us more adept at tackling the killer questions about the network and the foundation.' Leah notes that 'there's a "crack" here that's very real around being "typecast" . . . I wonder if that energy is really what we are on about here: in not willing to be who you feel is 'typecast', you have animated or foregrounded or drawn on a "someone" who seems a bit new to this space and it's a someone I would love to invite to stay here because they have fire and strength and a kind of power that I sit up and listen to differently'.

Justin is 'still not satisfied.' He admits that he is 'happy playing this identity work' with this cluster, but if he did it in the 'real world' people may feel like 'they're being subject to some weird social experiment if we're not transparent as to our motives and our methods'. Nevertheless, within a few weeks he sets up an experiment within that both he and his cluster peers volunteer for. His experiment starts 'with this wild thing approach' involving 'mixing up the way the network interacts' and getting people to 'do some really random, different stuff … 'I'm essentially out to cause controversy and stir things up . . . maybe it will work, maybe it won't but I'm gonna give it a go and am prepared to fail'.

Rohan posts 'Justin okay seriously who are you? And what have you done with Justin?' Eric cheers him on saying he 'has totally gone out of his boundary'. Their facilitator asks 'Justin, is it really you? You've gone random and are prepared to fail'. He has 'indeed become a wild thing'.

This experiment catalysed many leadership-related discussions for the cluster, and apparently had some impact on their organisation. For a cluster who generally seemed more comfortable talking and thinking rather than doing, Justin's experiment seemed to be the most visible, sustained and enthusiastic activity/intervention they undertook outside the programme, and embodied practices the programme encouraged, such as taking risks, organising differently, asking questions, working collectively and reflecting critically.

This is an interaction about identity, an issue that tends to spark power and resistance dynamics. In offering Justin new and alternative identities, his cluster both unsettle his existing identity and suggest possibilities for a future identity repertoire. Justin is forced to struggle with others framing his identity as unresolved and in need of change, and the anxiety that accompanies new choices. Having to defend old and existing identities involves at some level resisting the view of him others are representing, but accepting new identities means tacitly consenting to their expectations and implied critique. Justin is left to negotiate the gap or disjuncture that is created by the multiple subject positions made visible by this interaction (Thomas and Davies, 2005). His attempt to do so is a "skillful performance" (Courpasson et al., 2012) in terms of the power/ resistance interplay involved.

The dynamics of resistance

We have argued that these three interactions do more than convey debate, argument and disagreement, rather they mark explicit attempts to speak against the existence of power and control in development. The three interactions indicate that the development setting is an arena where certain actors (facilitators), knowledge (academic expertise), practices, (identity work) discourses, and paradigms (co-construction) are privileged. The participants variously resist the power of certain discourses that attempt to shape one's identity, the power of expertise, and the disciplinary power of peers and 'hierarchy' who monitor and try to regulate one's conduct (i.e. Foucault, 1977). What separates resistance from disagreement here is both a degree of personal risk (how will I be understood and accepted by others integral to this development enterprise) and risk related to the collective enterprise of development (to what degree can this experience contain transparency, powerlessness, judgment, manipulation and still be development).

Comparing the interactions offers insights into how the resistance may offer the potential for learning *in* leadership as opposed to learning *about* leadership. The first interaction depicts the collapse of resistance. Neither of Anthony's two pointed and direct critiques of the facilitator's power evoke energy or support, and therefore no struggle is created where productive learning and change could occur. In terms of the Courpasson et al.'s (2012) framework, no enclave forms around Anthony and, although he articulates dissent, he doesn't garner the collective momentum that Ed and Justin utilise. Nor is there any momentary realignment of power relations, the second dimension of the framework. While eager to understand Anthony's allegations, facilitator Rachel alternates between inquiry mode ('can you help me to understand what you meant') and rationale ('loves giving and receiving wonderful surprises'). While accepting personal responsibility, she chooses repeatedly not to engage consciously from a place of power or resistance ('we – you guys and us – all construct the story of this programme as we go … there is not a predetermined outcome that we are looking for') although a sub-text of power belies her words ('if the programme didn't require lots of "leaps of faith" would it be a leadership development programme?'). Resistance in this interaction remains static and fixed as the property of Anthony, although he too seems tentative and evasive in his writing, which contributes to the dampening of resistance.

We're intrigued that collective resistance wasn't generated online given that transparency, trust, and knowledge seem to be quite crucial discourses that resistance leadership might fight for, and signals that leadership development theory and practice need to better understand how to foster collective (as opposed to individual) resistance (Zoller and Fairhurst, 2007). Given the individualizing nature of many LDPs, developing resistance enclaves is all the more necessary yet all the more harder. It's hard to read the silences from Anthony and the other participants. It's possible their non-participation and online silence

could be seen as a form of resistance akin to what Fleming and Spicer (2007) term 'escape' (as opposed to fear, apathy, uncertainty, paralysis etc.), but here we meet the limits of using online material. Without having access to the offline worlds that the participants concurrently inhabit, online silence may remain inherently ambiguous. In this interaction, the online setting may have hindered the development of collective resistance: it's difficult for individual participants to feel or see the strength of an assembled mass in an online environment where each posting is directly attributed to an individual. Without feeling the power of a visible collective, individuals may keep their resistance hidden (Zoller and Fairhurst, 2007), which raises interesting dilemmas for leadership developers wishing to build resistance leadership using online learning platforms.

The second interaction, in contrast, calls to mind Kondo's (1990: 224) contention that actors 'consent, cope and resist' altogether and in any moment. For example, Ed resists Leah ('you disgust me') and learns from her ('I will always meet things head on'). Leah in turn resists him ('I set out to interrogate the realities we are bringing into this programme') and learns from him ('you are right to question the force I brought to that'). They do 'resisting work' to each other and together to sustain struggle. Leah contributes to a temporary realignment of power by acknowledging the equal contribution of their 'energy, passion, anger and fury'. This realignment of power is vital to counteract the possibility of resistance being used to create or cement power asymmetries (Collinson, 2005b). In this interaction, change is co-produced through the pushing, holding and relinquishing of assumptions in relation to others. This interaction suggests that if co-construction is to be accomplished and not just asserted, facilitators need to be open to resistance as much as participants are, so that participants can gain, perhaps temporarily, power that is more aligned with facilitators than participants. In making such a claim, we don't make light of the technologies, identities and discourses that invest facilitators with asymmetrical power, but we do assert the need for

providers and facilitators to be open to the resisting work required of them for leadership development to be a site where leadership is co-created and understood.

The third interaction indicates how resistance and conformity interact with power and coping. Justin's resistance opposes the horizontal, vertical and discursive power of his peers and facilitator calling on him to enact a 'facetious and squeamish' identity that 'I don't think I would want to hold'. His resistance is informed by deep concerns regarding authenticity, transparency and trust ('isn't that quite manipulative and misleading', and it 'doesn't seem very genuine to yourself'). Justin resists the call to become a 'subversive' identity, and this resistance sparks a 'someone' who has 'fire and strength' and brings a new 'energy' to the cluster. Although Justin's ethical concerns are 'not satisfied' he becomes 'a wild thing' who seeks 'to cause controversy and stir things up'. One reading would be that Justin gave up resistance and conformed to the prevailing discourse and desired identity. An alternate reading is that being resistant also involves consenting and coping: Justin consented to enacting a resistant self. His experience shows that rather than coming from a place of certainty, congruence and comfort; resistance may occur in spite of, or even because of, unresolved ethical tensions. However, we heed Collinson's (2005b: 743) warning that 'the search for identity may also *restrict* resistance'. When resistance practices are used to 'secure a specific notion of self', they may end up reproducing the material and symbolic insecurities they hoped to overcome (Collinson, 2005b: 245).

One clue to how 'resisting work' might be achieved is in the existence of what Courpasson et al. (2012) call 'objects of resistance' in interaction two. Such objects act initially as weapons that enable an action from a resisting stance and then later become boundary objects that facilitate engagement between actors. In interaction two, the dictionary is such an object, and enables the facilitator to fight (clinically and discursively rather than relationally), a representation of leading she opposes. The capacity to argue against the use of

such a tool provides participants with a tangible point of entry into more complex struggle. Understanding facilitators' development tools and technologies as objects of resistance that potentially catalyse realignment of power between facilitators and participants offers a radical reframing of development possibilities. Both discourse and identity regulation or construction can be powerful objects of resistance in organisations, with both offering the capacity to both disturb and re-inscribe existing patterns. A development experience that provides practice and expertise in using such boundary objects might become a powerful site of novel leadership practice.

Facilitating resistance

We turn to excerpts from the post-programme interviews with the facilitators in order to deepen our understanding of the tightropes facilitators consciously walk in the course of leadership development.

Reflecting on the nature of facilitation, Rachael (the facilitator in interaction one) mentions the in-the-moment awareness of feeling '*ecstatic that something has landed and you can see it simmering to despondent that you've completely missed the mark*'. She notes the feel of co-construction that resisting work builds off, and the instability of '*losing my way in a moment*' when such work falters. She goes on to talk about how sometimes '*I've felt myself revert to the defense of an idea, or shutting people down who I feel are being destructive*'. Facilitation then is about building '*a sense of resilience alongside a sense of openness to allow things to happen but to hold on enough, construct the space enough that people know where they're playing*'. In interaction one, though resistance doesn't 'simmer', the willingness to retain an openness that it will appears to be critical in fostering resistance.

Leah talks directly about the '*infect the masses*' forum (from interaction two) as a signature moment of '*doubt and struggle, and about seeing 'the moment of attacking an idea*

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or going for an assumption or floating something provocative' but not necessarily seeing *'what might be unleashed'*. She understands her facilitation as entering an interaction not *'tentatively and half- heartedly'* but with *'full force'*, and she doesn't *'throw something with force if I'm not there with it'*. Thus she understands that the ability to be fully present in a challenge is essential if she is to be a figure of criticality. She wrestles with the asymmetry that accompanies such a provocation: *'once you've done that and you're in a position of influence or power or authority what can they [the participants] do?'* She picks up Ed's hand grenade metaphor: *'they can either catch it and it's, you know, sometimes right or sometimes not right to. It's hard for some types to throw it back at you, which would be the best response. I throw a bomb at you, you throw it back to me, we can cope'*. Interaction two was powerful for her because Ed threw the challenge right back, thus turning a provocation into a mutual and dynamic interplay of resisting work; in other such moments, however, some participants can't or won't do so. She says that *'sometimes I think [about myself] "oh get out of that space"'* whilst also realising that *'the big moments in my life are when someone's opened the door to a different kind of thinking that wasn't there'*. The ethical tension here is between wondering *'what right have I got to float a truth'*, and realising that some participants instead need *'the support of nurturing'*.

Both Rachael and Leah talk about the facilitator side of co-construction in ways that evoke Kondo's (1990: 224) simultaneous 'cope, consent and resist' dictum and that suggest the value of facilitators claiming resisting work as a core process in development work. They reinforce both what it means to be a development expert, and the power, resistance and struggle that construct and intersect the development space. The facilitators' impetus for doing this resisting work is based on the premise that if resistance is not built in LDPs then where will the re-alignments of power and co-production of change that prefigure new organisational realities be understood, practiced and legitimated? That is, if the purposes of

leadership are to resist oppressive practices (Ryan, 1998), oppose constraining and harmful discourses (Collinson, 2012), explore more liberated realities (Ford and Harding, 2007), and organise collectively to catalyse change (Zoller and Fairhurst, 2007), then leaders will need support to enact what are emotionally and relationally demanding (and possibly risky) practices.

Negotiating care and criticality in resisting work

Asking participants and facilitators to engage in resisting work raises ethical concerns and questions. The interactions above suggest that resistance can be felt as threatening, destabilising and isolating, which adds to the anxiety and insecurity that often accompanies learning. Leah asks '*what right*' the facilitators have to '*throw a grenade*' or open a door, as she is aware of their authority and power, and that some participants may not feel able to resist. Rachael highlights the '*resilience*' that is needed, as a facilitator and a participant. Ed seems to fight for the protection of another participant who he feels should have been supported by the facilitator rather than being asked a '*killer*' question. Other research suggests that some LDPs may create conditions of material and symbolic anxiety and insecurity that may depower the participant's sense of voice and agency (Gagnon, 2008). Far from being an entirely productive experience, resistance may create unintended and detrimental consequences, as Collinson (2005b) points out, worker resistance can lead to disciplinary sanctions, career damage, or being fired. While being cautious not to romanticize resistance, we argue that LDPs need to negotiate 'the troublesome and difficult balance' of holding an ethic of care with an ethic of criticism (Gabriel, 2009: 384), and that such a balance may make productive experiences of resistance in leadership development more likely.

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Living with an ethic of criticality can be unsettling, disruptive, fear provoking and isolating as participants experience a loss of innocence, ambiguity, self-doubt and hostility towards what they once took for granted (Brookfield, 1994). As critical reflection involves the dismantling of ideas and assumptions once held as true, it can result in 'profound anxiety and a loss of the sense of identity which those earlier beliefs had supported' (Reynolds, 1999: 179). Faced with these feelings, participants may not have the confidence or ability to question or resist the facilitators. Because critique without care can destroy a 'theory, a process, or a person in their early stages of development' (Gabriel, 2009: 382), it needs to be tempered with an ethic of care, whose absence may cause the fragile relationship between facilitators and participants to become disconnected and 'deeply cynical' (Gabriel, 2009: 384). We see shadows of this language in the empirical material *('I am disgusted', 'seems to be a leap of faith required')*.

An ethic of care emphasises the responsibility we have in our relationships: how we foster growth, trust and respect for each other (Gabriel, 2009; Held, 2006; Noddings, 2003; Thayer-Bacon, 1993): and how we 'maintain, continue, and repair' our relationships and realities 'so that we can live in it as well as possible' (Tronto, 1993: 103). It therefore seems the antithesis of the destabilisation and agitation that criticality can induce. Yet a programme that emphasises an ethic of care without criticality is just as likely to 'destroy learning' as participants may not be challenged or questioned enough (Gabriel, 2009: 384). Tronto (1993) argues that a society functioning with an ethic of care is more able to reshape inequalities of power and privilege, and individuals who endure the strains of critical learning together build a more connected, 'emotionally sustaining' community (Brookfield, 1994: 212). Thus, when care and criticality are evident in learning (and arguably leading), there is a strong possibility that power relations can be resisted and reconfigured by a collective with an enhanced sense of agency.

The suggestion that facilitators and participants need to work the tension between care and criticality presents a difficult task, not least because of the array of multiple and complex subject positions from which all individuals may respond. Building the capacity to work with this tension in order to navigate other equally complex dynamics such as power and resistance is complex. But we believe this is precisely what constructionist leadership research can offer to practice and we invite researchers to join us in such a project.

Conclusion

In some respects this paper stands as an object of resistance, criticising LDPs that stifle and quell participants' resistance; that co-opt resistance and use it to discipline participants; and that prize conformity over dissent. It opposes research that constructs participants and/or leaders as compliant and that ignores how we simultaneously consent and resist. Critical organisational scholarship guides us to explore how power and resistance co-exist to the point where it is difficult to analytically divide them. The leadership development literature has paid scant attention to resistance, yet it seems to us that working with resistance is an energising and unsettling experiences for both facilitators and participants.

We have been particularly interested in framing leadership development as a site of 'resisting work' and exploring how such work can be productive and generative for leadership and learning – without underplaying how fraught this process can be. Our interactions show either the possibility for, or the reality of, resistance as an act of live leadership within a programme. Of paramount importance for us has been to explore how facilitators could work with resistance so that it flourishes as a productive learning, leading and facilitation process. Building on previous research regarding power relations in leadership development, we have sought to explore how power can spark resistance, especially from the participants: yet we acknowledge the asymmetrical power dynamics

whereby facilitators often have greater access to discourses of expertise and can allow themselves to be less visible than participants. Our data suggests resistance worked with productively can result in 'crucible moments' (Bennis and Thomas, 2002) of huge significance for both facilitators and participants, *provided* that both parties hold an ethic of care alongside an ethic of criticality.

Conceptually, this study supports recent research regarding the process and effects of productive resistance in the workplace. If leadership development mirrors the dynamics of organisations, then working with these concepts raises several questions: what are the relational processes involved as people resist, consent and cope concurrently together? How do technologies of power and the self utilised in LDPs become boundary objects able to facilitate realignments of power? What kinds of resisting work most characterise leadership in organisations? How can critical leadership practices avoid the reality that resistance acts may be used to constrain or discipline the resisting participant?

What emerged over the course of conducting and articulating this inquiry is the proposition that if leadership development sites can reflect, replicate and construct the complexities of leading in organisations, then development interventions could be a practice site of meaningful mindset and behaviour change. Underlying our argument is an assumption that LDPs could very well have a progressive purpose of changing organisational rationalities and realities. In order to do this, developing resistance as a leadership practice is vital. LDPs that are informed by constructionist and critical concepts and pedagogies seem ideal for such a purpose, and could work to develop what starts as often spontaneous dissent through resistance enclaves, objects of resistance, resistant identities and discursive interventions to a form of leadership that could ultimately support organisational change. This is a big ask, and we're aware that supporting leaders to become more resistant in their organisations is possibly a threatening and risky move for the individual. But for those who are committed to

creating more democratic organisational realities, we hope this paper goes some way to exploring how this could be done.

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