

# A SCRIPT FOR CHANGE: USING THEATRE TO FACILITATE DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS ABOUT GRADUATE SUPERVISION

SUSAN M. COX, MATTHEW SMITHDEAL, MICHAEL LEE *University of British Columbia*

**ABSTRACT.** Graduate supervision profoundly impacts graduate student, faculty, and staff wellbeing. Tensions within supervisory relationships are further complicated by equity and inclusion related barriers facing marginalized communities within academia. To address this situation, we created *Rock the Boat*, an open access educational resource that uses Research-based Theatre to provoke dialogue about supervisory relationships. *Rock the Boat* includes four professionally acted scenes plus a facilitator's guide and supplementary resources. Our online piloting process supports the effectiveness of *Rock the Boat* in generating dialogue and enhancing perspective-taking, empathy, and reflective practice among participants. This paper offers a narrative review of the process of creating *Rock the Boat*, detailing many decisions made during the transition from live theatre workshops to film and online discussion.

## UN SCRIPT TRANSFORMATEUR : UTILISER LE THÉÂTRE POUR FACILITER LES CONVERSATIONS DIFFICILES SUR LA SUPERVISION DES ÉTUDIANTS AUX CYCLES SUPÉRIEURS

**RÉSUMÉ.** Les tensions au sein des relations de supervision sont complexifiées par les obstacles liés à l'équité et à l'inclusion et ont une influence profonde sur le bien-être de tous. Pour répondre à cette situation, nous avons créé *Rock the Boat*, une ressource éducative en libre accès qui utilise le théâtre basé sur la recherche pour susciter le dialogue autour des relations de supervision. Notre processus de mise à l'essai en ligne soutient l'efficacité de cette ressource pour générer des dialogues et favoriser la prise de perspective, l'empathie et la réflexion critique chez les participant·e·s. Cet article détaille les nombreuses décisions prises lors de la transition des ateliers de théâtre en présentiel vers le format filmé et la discussion en ligne.

## GRADUATE SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIPS

Despite considerable evidence that supervisory relationships play a pivotal role in the success of graduate students, graduate student supervision is one of the most under-researched forms of teaching and pedagogy in higher education. While supervisory relationships may take on a myriad of different forms, they are often characterized by an “apprenticeship model” which is “typically conducted *intuitively* by professors” (emphasis added; Maor et al., 2016). As such, it is often assumed that junior faculty will simply pick up the necessary skills, and that more senior faculty will master them sufficiently by the time their first doctoral student completes a dissertation. The lack of training and support for cultivating effective supervisory skills is pronounced and has become all the more evident since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, as many new supervisory relationships are now formed online and many existing relationships have had to adapt to a novel, online context.

The need for greater attention to graduate student supervisory relationships is made all the more pressing by the increasing recognition that post-secondary universities are experiencing a mental health crisis among graduate students. A recent meta-analysis (Satinsky et al., 2021) estimates the rate of depression in PhD students as 24%, compared to recent data that suggests there is a 5-6% rate of depression in the general population and 13-15% for young adults specifically (18-29 years old). Likewise, the rate of anxiety disorders in young adults generally is estimated at roughly 4%, while the rate for PhD students is roughly 17% (Satinsky et al., 2021).

The mental health crisis in post-secondary universities is certainly not limited to students. There is also increasing recognition of the mental health and wellbeing challenges faced by faculty and staff. While much of the research on the impacts of graduate student supervisory relationships has focused on students’ success and wellbeing, there is also considerable evidence that these relationships impact faculty wellbeing, professional identity, and development. Problematic relationships and poor student progress have been associated with increased levels of stress and decreased levels of wellbeing amongst supervisors, especially when they are junior faculty. Likewise, difficulties with balancing supervisory responsibilities and the demands of an active research program may result in feelings of stress, guilt, and a chronic sense of underachievement (Wisker & Robinson, 2016).

The challenges and tensions that arise within supervisory relationships are further complicated by equity and inclusion related barriers perpetuated

within academia which marginalize and oppress particular groups of graduate students, faculty, and staff. As dire as the previously mentioned rates of mental health conditions among graduate students are, analogous rates for marginalized faculty and graduate students are even more alarming. A 2019 study of undergraduate and graduate students across 71 U.S. campuses found that transgender and non-binary students were over four times more likely to have at least one mental health condition compared to their cisgender peers (Lipson et al., 2019).

Another recent study of graduate and professional students found that 98.9% of racial minority participants had recently experienced race-related microaggressions (Lilly et al., 2018). Crucially, this exposure was associated with 2.46-fold increase in the odds of experiencing depression. Similarly, the degree of distress caused by microaggressions was significantly associated with 2.14 times higher odds of depression, even after controlling for subjective social status (Lilly et al., 2018). Finally, on a more intersectional note, a 2021 study of students in graduate and law school found that 46% of law students and 36% of doctoral students had experienced a hostile environment (Boyle and McKinzie, 2021). Multiracial students had the highest rates of depression (22%) and LGTQA+ women had the highest rates of anxiety and depression (Boyle and McKinzie, 2021).

While there has been a general increase in efforts made by post-secondary institutions to address these and other salient issues, current attempts to create respectful, equitable, and inclusive working and learning environments have thus far been inadequate. One component of the problem relates to the lack of appreciation for the ways in which mental health and equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) issues often overlap or intersect in unique ways. Consequentially, mental health and EDI concerns are nearly always examined in isolation from one another. Likewise, discussions of the pressures faced by faculty and staff are isolated from discussions of key challenges faced by graduate students when, in reality, the two are often deeply intertwined. Failure to see the whole picture may drive a wedge between the two sets of interests, thus obscuring common goals and strategies that might make universities more equitable and hospitable for everyone.

A related concern with existing EDI initiatives stems from the lack of significant consultation with and inclusion of representatives from oppressed communities during the process of developing and implementing these initiatives. Further, when members of relevant communities are included, an unfortunate yet persistent trend is that the

labor of addressing these barriers tends to fall majorly on those individuals most heavily impacted by inequity. This then exacerbates barriers and deepen negative impacts on wellbeing. For instance, there is an emotional and psychological toll endured in the incessant recounting of personal experiences with inequality and marginalization. This may be intensified when such experiences are challenged, minimized, or ignored.

As co-authors, each of us has in various ways recognized an urgent need to prompt awareness of, and create meaningful dialogue about, the challenges inherent to graduate supervisory relationships and their complex entanglements in EDI and mental health related issues. As a Professor and Graduate Program Director, Cox has supervised – or overseen the supervision of – many graduate students and has become acutely aware of the need to challenge the taken-for-granted assumptions and biases that shape how faculty and graduate students relate to one another. She is also attuned to the need to further support junior faculty through mentorship and guidance in acquiring necessary supervisory skills.

As a queer, nonbinary, multiply neurodivergent PhD candidate in Philosophy, Smithdeal has witnessed and experienced firsthand the ways in which inequitable and oppressive systems within academia impact mental health. Likewise, they have become starkly aware of the scope and prevalence of related issues across departments through their work co-coordinating the Graduate Student Wellbeing Network, a grassroots organization that advocates for structural changes to address these issues.

As a Professor of Teaching, Associate Head of Educational Affairs of a graduate program, and a BIPOC who has firsthand experience with race-related microaggressions, Lee has worked with many students and colleagues experiencing mental health concerns arising from the academic environment. This experience has reinforced the fact that wellbeing is intimately entwined with issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

It is often challenging to have an open dialogue about commonplace but sensitive issues arising in graduate supervision. The stark power differences between participants – and high stakes for graduate students, particularly the risk of being seen as ungrateful or difficult – mean that much of importance may go unsaid.

Drawing on our collective experience of graduate supervisory relationships, and shared commitments to creating respectful working and learning environments, we worked with a playwright, Scott Button, and professional actors to research and produce an open educational resource

called *Rock the Boat*. This resource is freely available through Pressbooks and includes four dramatized scenes (available on video), scripts for each scene, and a facilitation guide designed to provoke discussion through in-person or online workshops with graduate students, faculty, and/or staff.

In what follows, we describe the process of using Research-based Theatre (RbT) to create *Rock the Boat* and, in particular, some of the key decisions informing how we adapted the initial live theatre workshops (associated with its precursor *Don't Rock the Boat*) to become an online resource that can be deployed in various ways to support and sustain respectful graduate supervisory relationships. Even before the constraints that were suddenly imposed on live theatre by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in spring 2020, it was a part of our plan to make the move from live theatre to a sustainable open access digital resource. We realize, however, that our journey is not unique and that many theatre productions had no choice but to move online. This has in many cases led to highly creative adaptations. It is our hope that our work will further contribute to the growing appreciation of the new possibilities that such a transition entails, as well as acknowledge the forced constraints.

#### RESEARCH-BASED THEATRE: A CREATIVE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

The origins of our project arose from a general concern with how pedagogy affects student wellbeing and, in particular, the growing recognition of graduate supervision as a centrally important but neglected form of pedagogy. Because supervisory relationships are a highly sensitive topic for many students and faculty, we adopted an innovative approach to creating space for difficult conversations. Building upon the methods of Research-based Theatre (RbT), we collaborated with multiple stakeholders (including the University of British Columbia's Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (G+PS), Graduate Student Society (GSS), Ombuds Office, Equity and Inclusion Office, Health Promotion and Education office, as well as graduate students, faculty, and graduate program support staff) to research and develop *Don't Rock the Boat*. The resulting live theatre piece consisted of a series of six short dramatized scenes about the challenges inherent to graduate supervisory relationships.

RbT is an innovative methodology that brings research to life as a mode of inquiry and/or knowledge mobilization. As a mode of inquiry, the approach supports researchers in finding creative ways to collect and analyze data. For knowledge mobilization, RbT uses dramatic performances to translate research findings. Both pathways aim to provide deep analysis and stimulate dialogue to foster new

understandings about the social experiences explored.  
(<https://rbtlab.ubc.ca/about-us>)

One benefit of RbT is its propensity for “enhancing understanding of lived experience in different groups and communities” (Mitchell et al., 2006, p.198). Another is the unique opportunity it affords to create dialogue around sensitive topics (Belliveau, 2015). Our project employed a workshop style setting, where participants viewed a live theatre scene together and then engaged in a facilitated, small group discussion lasting about 10 minutes. Having experienced the scene together, participants were able to discuss sensitive issues in light of the shared experience, commenting on the characters and situations rather than needing to divulge possibly traumatic aspects of their own experiences. This may lessen the psychological toll of participation and leads to in-depth unpacking of important aspects of supervisory relationships that might otherwise be difficult to articulate (Belliveau, 2015). A further benefit is that participants can experience the situation from both first and third-person perspectives, allowing them to witness challenges faced by other parties that they would not typically be aware of (Bird et al., 2019).



FIGURE 1. *Creative collaborative process for Rock the Boat*

**(DON'T) ROCK THE BOAT: EVOLUTION OF OUR APPROACH**

*Rock the Boat* evolved through a three-phase process (see Figure 1). During the initial phase of background research to inform script writing and development, we conducted an extensive literature review (including over 150 documents published since 2000), held 4 peer facilitated story sharing sessions with graduate students and faculty, and consulted widely with a range of campus stakeholders (see Figure 1). Rich in detailed first-person narratives, the story sharing sessions offered the most evocative material yet also presented the greatest challenges in terms of how to use the material without risking identifying those who shared their stories. This was of particular concern for graduate students, so we worked with playwright Scott Button to ensure that any identifying details from the stories informing script development were significantly altered.

During this time, we also created a diverse project Advisory Board who worked alongside Scott Button to identify and prioritize script ideas, decide which issues to highlight in various scenes, and balance the emphasis given to the perspectives of faculty, students, and staff so that the resulting production would be both provocative and inclusive. We wanted the characters and situations in *Don't Rock the Boat* to be realistic enough to resonate yet retain the aesthetics of a live theatre experience. We also wanted the scenes to generate nuanced discussion and avoid any semblance of preachiness. One thing that helped enormously in accomplishing this was developing a list of "must haves" that provided our playwright with a concrete set of parameters for script development (see Table 1). These parameters reflected our commitment to linking wellbeing with EDI, ensuring that the resulting resource resonates with multiple audiences without privileging the voices or perspectives of any one group, while also balancing artistry with content that raises awareness of collective strategies for addressing challenges in supervisory relationships. They also reflect pragmatic considerations related to budget, available resources, and time constraints.



TABLE I

Parameters guiding script development for <i>Don't Rock the Boat</i> (live theatre)
Must maintain a focus of wellbeing in supervisory relationships
Must create an awareness of existing resources at the University of British Columbia
Must present issues from multiple perspectives (i.e., faculty, staff, students)
Must have an emphasis on the wellbeing of students, faculty, and staff (which can be presented in multiple ways)
Must open up questions and discussion, allow for ambiguity, embrace multiple perspectives
Must include humour
Must resonate in a way that feels real
Must consider different intersectionalities
Must not run more than 30 minutes
Must be able to stop dialogue (3-5 times)
Must include reference to informative literature
Must be able to be performed in the centre of a room with minimal props/equipment/lighting
Must adopt an appreciative inquiry lens, that will uphold what is working well in addition to identifying challenges

We also held several script development workshops where graduate students, faculty, and staff participated in arts-based and embodied activities that elicited role play evocative of the tensions we sought to unpack. The collaborative nature of this work required our team of researchers, writers, directors, actors, and others to work closely together, exploring the nuances of the topic and developing a production that would integrate varied perspectives (Lea, 2012). The collective creation (Barton, 2008; Filewod, 1987) consisted of six scenes with a loose narrative structure that emphasized the tenuous feeling of being in an uncomfortable situation while not wanting to cause trouble by rocking the

boat. Three professional actors played the central roles on a simple elevated stage with a minimum of props and, at the end of each scene, one of the actors (who also had extensive experience as a professional radio host) stepped out of character to pose provocative questions that would initiate discussion.

Although this use of theatre to address systemic forms of oppression derives much from Augusto Boal's Forum Theatre (1995), we elected to have professional actors rather than community members perform *Don't Rock the Boat* and to invite audience members to respond to each of the scenes in small group discussion. While we recognize there can be considerable benefit to adopting a conflict theatre approach such as Forum Theatre wherein audience members are invited on stage to stop the action and step into the role of a character to enact a possible resolution, we diverged from this approach, in part, due to our commitment to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the participants. We recognized that having audience members intervene in the scene may require them to relive negative and/or traumatic past experiences on display for an audience. Their own deeply personal experiences may then be discussed at length or debated by other audience members, further alienating and negatively impacting the original audience member. Our approach allowed a playwright and trained actors to convey realistic scenarios without disclosing the specific experience of a participant, while also allowing participants to discuss relevant issues through the lens of the scene and characters rather than their own personal experiences. This emphasis on dialogue was a somewhat novel element in our use of the RbT methodology and required that each of the 6 scenes be interspersed with short periods (approximately 10 minutes) of small group discussion. In order to pilot this approach, evaluate the impact of the production for different audiences, and surface ideas about how to enhance the effectiveness of *Don't Rock the Boat* as a means of prompting dialogue, we held 2 live performances for graduate students, 2 for faculty and staff, and 2 mixed groups in which graduate students, faculty, and staff could participate together. During the small group discussions, our trained facilitators encouraged non-judgmental listening and stressed the importance of confidentiality. Participants chose the tablemates they would like to sit with to maximize interactivity and safety during discussion. In particular, graduate students were always given the option to join graduate student only groups or mixed groups. To signal the end of the time allotted for discussion, a gentle bell sounded, and viewers were invited to focus on the next scene. Each scene was 6 to 8 minutes long and the entire workshop ran for about 90 minutes. Performances attracted

anywhere from 4 to 26 audience members and light refreshments were provided at each table to enhance the social dimensions of the interaction. A [short documentary](#) was produced to introduce the project to a wider audience and illustrate the use of Research-based Theatre.

## **EVALUATION OF THE LIVE THEATRE WORKSHOPS AND DECISION TO CREATE NEW FILM SCRIPT**

Debriefing with the facilitators of the small groups and analyzing survey data from audience members about each scene provided valuable input for the identification of any points of confusion, clarification of scene content, and the assessment of the levels of faculty, students, and staff engagement. This enabled us to adjust time allowed for discussion and other production decisions made during each live theatre workshop. Overall, the input we received was remarkably consistent and emphasized the relevance of the content and appreciation for the format.

I definitely felt engaged throughout. I thought the scenes were a fantastic entry point into conversation with my group – they were clearly resonant with us all and much more fun than “case studies.”  
(Faculty)

Made me think about ‘where’ to get help. Yes there are lots of help being offered to students but as a graduate student I don’t feel comfortable sharing my experiences with these ‘official programs.’ (Student)

I have never attended or participated in this type of format before. I enjoyed each performance and getting a chance to chat about each scene. (Staff)

Specific suggestions from viewers about the content and delivery of each scene directed our attention to points of confusion or neglected issues and provided us with ideas for how the script could be modified in subsequent iterations.

I wish we could have touched on issues of harassment, discrimination etc. a great format for provoking discussion...some of the scenarios felt a bit repetitive. (Faculty)

Would have loved to see a positive relationship on stage. (Faculty)

Piloting the live theatre process also provided new insights into how best to develop the facilitator guide for the next phase of the project, which was initially intended to involve producing a high-quality digital recording of the performance for archival and to be used in future workshops or shared more widely. As we learned, facilitators relied heavily on the questions and scripted advice supplied in the facilitator guide to ensure that participants in the small group discussions were prompted to identify and consider

their cognitive and emotional responses to key moments in each scene. Feedback from facilitators included advice on optimal size of group, choice of language (e.g., disability terms), and the point at which participants tend to get fatigued. Around the time we were evaluating responses to the live theatre workshops, we were fortunate in securing additional funding for the project and this enabled us to rethink the project and entertain the more ambitious idea of creating an entirely new script that would make prominent the important but often overlooked intersections between wellbeing and equity, diversity, and inclusivity. Drawing upon the expertise of our playwright Scott Button (who has also worked in film) and guidance from the staff at our on-campus production studio, we began formulating an approach that would translate effectively to both online and in-person audiences. The full significance of the decision to shift to creating an entirely online theatre-based resource was not, at the time, entirely foreseeable, as the first outline for the new script emerged about a month before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### FROM LIVE TO ONLINE: SCRIPT DEVELOPMENT AND PRODUCTION

Having learned the value of piloting our approach with the live theatre workshops, we elected to produce one new scene for film and trial it with an online audience before committing to creation of additional scenes. Given that everything had moved online by this time, it was fortuitous that we had already ramped up for this possibility. Operating with the knowledge that the first scene would have to be filmed in studio according to strict COVID-19 public health measures, Scott Button created the [script for Zoom Fatigue](#) a scene in which Erika (a woman of colour), meets Sandra (her new graduate supervisor, also a woman of colour) online to assess how they will work together. Erika is nervous but determined, and Sandra, like many female faculty, sometimes underestimates herself due to imposter syndrome. The scene is both awkward and humorous, using texting and other techniques to capture the essence of the ‘new normal’ as so many experienced it once in-person meetings were curtailed. The scene also highlights how EDI issues affect wellbeing through the interactions between Erika and her more senior white, cis male colleague Markus.

Zoom Fatigue was extensively piloted with online synchronous discussion groups that were facilitated by members of our project team. Groups were either homogeneous (i.e., graduate students or faculty/staff) or mixed, and typically lasted about an hour. During this phase of the project, we learned a great deal about creating a comfortable, safe, and dynamic online environment and integrating the shared experience of watching the live-streamed scene with the same emphasis on provoking dialogue that we had

in the live theatre workshops. Following the online workshop, participants were invited to complete a short online survey to solicit their experience and comments. This feedback affirmed our intuitive sense that it was ethically important to allow participants to choose whether they wished to be part of a mixed or homogeneous group and moreover, that the facilitator be adept at managing subtle power dynamics in mixed groups. We also learned that it was important to check in about what resonated most strongly with participants after viewing the scene so that ensuing dialogue would focus on the most salient issues for each group.

Applying insights from the piloting phase of Zoom Fatigue, we invited our playwright to create three additional scenes that would work well with the online workshop format and support virtual, synchronous discussions. We sought input on this plan from the on campus Ombuds Office and the Equity and Inclusion Office and asked for advice in identifying and prioritizing the related EDI issues. As we did with in the live theatre phase, we also drafted a set of parameters to guide in script development and production (see Table 2). These parameters specified the scope and tighter focus of the work, and reflected our emerging insights on what would or would not translate well from the original script.

TABLE 2

Parameters guiding script development for <i>Rock the Boat</i> (filmed scenes)
Must integrate a focus on wellbeing and EDI related topics in supervisory relationships
Must present issues from multiple perspectives (i.e., faculty, staff, students) and enable new awareness of experiences of others.
Must open up questions and create ambiguity about possible resolution of situation
Must balance gravity of issues with some moments of humor
Must resonate in a way that feels real yet still employs a theatrical experience
Must consider different intersectionality and build script around actors who identify with the role
Must have similar look and feel to <i>Zoom Fatigue</i> so that the collected scenes would have an overall coherence

Must not run more than 8 minutes for each scene and scenes must not have to be chronological
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Must adopt an appreciative inquiry lens, that will uphold what is working well as well as identify challenges
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The resulting three scenes were filmed in studio in 2020 and all COVID protocols were followed carefully. This meant that we had to observe social distancing and masking precautions. The actors who played Erika and Markus, and Sandra and Paul were, however, in the same respective household bubbles so we were able to shoot some scenes without the otherwise strictly adhered to distancing requirements. In other cases, strategic placement of the actors and use of creative camera angles meant that we could create the illusion of the actors being closer to one another than they were.

Below is an excerpt from the scene *Contentious Authorship*. In this scene, the same two graduate students featured in *Zoom Fatigue* (Markus and Erica) discuss co-authorship on a paper involving their supervisor (Sandra) and another graduate student. Their hidden assumptions quickly become a source of tension, and it is up to Sandra to step in and resolve things.

MARKUS                      Hey, before we get back to work on the grant, awesome work on the intro to the article. It looks great, and I know Sandra's pleased, too.

ERIKA                        Thanks a lot! I spent quite a bit of time on it, so that's good to hear.

MARKUS                      Oh, really? Not too much, I hope.

ERIKA                        Why? It was worth it. I've only got two authorship credits in journals,

and both were excerpts from my thesis and, frankly, (*playful*) I'm a different person now.

*Some sort of SHIFT within MARKUS... He goes quiet.*

MARKUS                    ... Did Sandra say you'd get authorship on it?

ERIKA                     No, but, I assumed that-

MARKUS                    Because I think it will just be Jaspreet, Sandra, and me.

ERIKA                     You're getting authorship?

MARKUS                    The data was from a conference presentation that I helped Jaspreet on last Fall.

ERIKA                     Okay but did you actually *write* any of the article?

MARKUS                    I did a lot of the data collection and analysis.  
(*pointed*)  
Do you want a word count or something?

ERIKA                     No, I'm just saying. Sorry, I

didn't mean to be blunt, I just  
didn't know you worked on it.

MARKUS

Well, I did.

Two additional scenes round out the resource. *No Other Choice* features an exchange between an international graduate student (Ingrid) and her supervisor (Judith), centering on the student's request to take leave from her studies so she can return home to be with her ill mother. Things do not go smoothly, and Ingrid feels threatened by Judith's veiled suggestion that a leave may negatively impact future reference letters.

*Disclosures* portrays the fallout from the actions of a graduate supervisor (Terry) who shares personal information about the mental health condition of another student to Terry's student Daniel. Daniel is uncomfortable with this and turns to Paul, a staff member in their institution's accessibility and diversity unit, to discuss how he feels and to explore possible resolutions. In this scene, Daniel articulates his wish to ensure that "this sort of thing stops happening."

Highlighting the need to address EDI issues at both systemic and individual levels, we slightly altered the title of the original script for *Don't Rock the Boat* and titled the completed resource *Rock the Boat*. Coupled with an extensive facilitator's guide, scripts for each of the scenes and suggestions for supplementary readings, the scenarios in *Rock the Boat* are intended to make waves and foster dialogue that will bring about greater awareness of the challenges inherent to graduate supervisory relationships, as well as generate concrete behavioural shifts. This is necessary at all levels and the resource is therefore designed to be used in many different ways.

As the scenes moved from the script into production, we sought to add additional elements that would enhance and support flexible use of the resource. One feature that enables this is the loose narrative structure of the four scenes. They can be shown individually or in any sequence since the characters and situations do not follow a linear plot line. Two scenes also feature alternative endings. *Contentious Authorship* has a long and short version with the former including an extended monologue by Ingrid that makes a number of subtle issues more explicit to those who may be new to graduate supervision. The monologue can be very powerful and elicit strong emotional responses in participants, and this must be factored into the selection of which version to use. *No Other Choice* also offers two alternate endings which present different strategies taken by the supervisor



Sandra to manage the conflict about co-authorship. Depending on the goals of the workshop, this scene could be used with one or both endings.

Our process of piloting continued with the full roster of all four scenes, and participants in the online workshops offered valuable feedback that enabled us to hone questions for discussion and ensure that the final version of the facilitator's guide reflected our best advice on how to use the resource with homogeneous or mixed groups of graduate students, faculty, and staff.

## **CREATING AND IMPLEMENTING AN OPEN ACCESS EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE**

From the beginning, we knew that we wanted the final resource to be as broadly available as possible. Positioning the resource as an open educational resource (OER) allowed us to ensure open access, while also supporting our goal of making the resource sustainable. Hosting the resource on Pressbooks enabled us to avoid on-going financial costs, such as hosting fees and domain registration, while also ensuring we didn't rely on a service with questionable stability and longevity. We were able to access invaluable assistance in the creation and maintenance of the resource, as well as financial support, from UBC's open education community. This method of hosting ensures that the resource is accessible in perpetuity and does not require that members of the team be available to respond to requests for access beyond the completion of project funding.

While the decision to create *Rock the Boat* as an OER was straightforward, many of the resulting logistics and questions were far less straightforward. One of the most complex and pressing questions was determining the most appropriate licensing of the resource. While we wanted the resource to be available freely and for users to feel free to adapt the facilitator's guide to their context, it was also crucial to us to preserve the artistic integrity of the filmed scenes and scripts. Though Creative Commons licensing offers a significant range of flexibility for different circumstances, we ultimately decided to register the videos and scripts under a more traditional All Rights Reserved license to ensure that the videos and scripts could not be altered or reshared. However, for everything other than the videos and scripts, we concluded that a Creative Commons Attribution, NonCommercial, ShareAlike (CC-BY-NC-SA) license would be ideal. This allows users to freely use and modify the resource, as well as redistribute the resulting modified resource. However, users are required to attribute

the resource to the original authors, retain the original license on modified resources, and restrict the use of the resource to non-commercial contexts.

## INSIGHTS

In hindsight, we recognize several key decisions that we made both in developing our unique approach to using of RbT to create a live theatre workshop and later transitioning it to the online environment with the open educational resource *Rock the Boat*. The first is that dialogue amongst the audience can be just as crucial as the theatre performance itself. Hence, the transition from live to online emphasized throughout that the resource is not simply a video to be watched alone; there needs to be a synchronous discussion to create a feeling of community and peer support, hear about other perspectives, and collectively imagine solutions to challenges (Belliveau, 2015). This commitment to using the resource to create dialogue had implications for script writing and production that were not always immediately apparent. Questions had to remain unanswered, and conflicts had to invite multiple understandings.

Second, with the transition from live to online, we also had to think carefully about the contrast between our expectations of the artistry involved in live theatre versus video. In the live theatre workshops, there was an intensity and sense of drama that could be imparted by live actors on stage. This enabled a different aesthetic wherein the use of metaphor or a chorus of voices seemed natural and effective (Rossiter et al., 2008). With the move to filmed scenes that were shown online, it was necessary to adopt a more realist approach which emphasized the kind of dialogue that workshop participants could readily imagine themselves having. However, this shift also necessitated greater explicit emphasis on the theatrical nature of the scenes. The increased realism may lead to the mistaken perception that the scenes are intended as demonstrations of how to or how not to engage, rather than as theatrical scenes to elicit discussions and behavioural shifts. The shift to online also affected the way that humour could be deployed, as it had to be made more explicit and less reliant on subtleties than in a live theatre experience.

Third, the creation of a resource such as *Rock the Boat* requires the collective commitments of a great many artists, technicians, community members, and researchers. It was, therefore, essential to recognize at the outset that we did not have the creative skills and expertise to pull off a project such as this on our own. The inclusion of an acclaimed playwright, professional actors, and a production studio, as well as the support of our colleagues in the Research-based Theatre lab was integral. Together we

were able to conceptualize and execute the work in a way that was inclusive of everyone's talents and that did not privilege the norms of research over those of the arts (Beck et al., 2011). We are aware that this is not always the case when academics seek to include artists and yet do not budget appropriately or enable truly meaningful collaborations. We were also extremely fortunate in obtaining several grants that supported the work from its inception through to the current implementation of the resource. It probably cannot be overstated that the work of creating a resource such as *Rock the Boat* is only half-way completed when the video is ready for release. There are still a myriad of decisions to be made about online platforms, licensing, and publicity. Though somewhat less glamorous, these are all essential aspects of production that must be followed through.

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SUSAN M. COX is Chair in Biomedical Ethics and Director of the W. Maurice Young Centre for Applied Ethics in the School of Population and Public Health, University of British Columbia. [susan.cox@ubc.ca](mailto:susan.cox@ubc.ca).

MATTHEW SMITHDEAL is a PhD candidate in the Department of Philosophy at the University of British Columbia. [matthew.smithdeal@gmail.com](mailto:matthew.smithdeal@gmail.com).

MICHAEL LEE is a Professor of Teaching and the Associate Head of Educational Affairs at the Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, University of British Columbia. [michael.lee@ubc.ca](mailto:michael.lee@ubc.ca).

SUSAN M. COX est titulaire de la chaire en éthique biomédicale et directrice du « W. Maurice Young Centre for Applied Ethics » à l'École de « Population and Public Health » de l'Université de la Colombie-Britannique. [susan.cox@ubc.ca](mailto:susan.cox@ubc.ca)

MATTHEW SMITHDEAL est candidat au doctorat au Département de philosophie de l'Université de la Colombie-Britannique. [matthew.smithdeal@gmail.com](mailto:matthew.smithdeal@gmail.com)

MICHAEL LEE est professeur d'enseignement et directeur adjoint de « Educational Affairs » au Département de « Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy » de l'Université de la Colombie-Britannique. [michael.lee@ubc.ca](mailto:michael.lee@ubc.ca)