Forumspil: Transforming Minds and

Hearts within Group Processes

Marie Delgado Ebbesen and Warren Linds

ABSTRACT

This article will introduce teachers of facilitators and group work to an application and further development of the Forumspil workshop method which, inspired by Augusto Boal's methods of Image and Forum Theatre, was created in Sweden. Two professors, one in Denmark, and one in Canada have used the Forumspil workshop method in classes in human relations programs to deal with group learning and facilitation. This article describes how they have applied it in working with students in order to develop awareness both of group process and the role of the facilitator in fostering group work. The authors describe how each has added to the original forms in these two different courses where the students involved are being educated for socially oriented professions. It is the authors' hope that readers can learn from their praxis and adapt it to their own context.

KEY WORDS

leadership development, group process learning, image and representation, values clarification, reflection.

Introduction

At a conference of Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed in 2007, Marie Ebbesen presented "Working in a Group: Exemplary Workshop Introducing Forumspil, a Scandinavian Variation". Dr. Warren Linds attended, and following the workshop, the authors both found that it would be useful to do some comparative work cross-continentally with different student groups in similar training programs - Dr. Warren Linds's in Canada and Marie Ebbesen's in Denmark. This article is a product of that collaborative reflection. A background to the approach is provided along with anecdotes of individual experiences with the method. A reflection on what has occurred is offered so that others may learn from the experiences and adapt the process to their own particular facilitation context.

Background

Forumspil is a Swedish variation of Augusto Boal's (1979) techniques of Forum and Image Theatre that is widely used in Scandinavia. As created by Boal, Theatre of the Oppressed (T.O.) is a form of popular community-based education which uses theatre as a tool for transformation. Originally developed out of Boal's work with farmers and workers, it has been adapted and is now used all over the world for social and political activism, conflict resolution, storytelling, community building and legislation (Babbage, 2004; Emert & Friedland, 2011; Schutzman & Cohen-Cruz, 1994, 2006; Thompson et al.,

2009; Vettraino & Duffy, 2010). Connected to the vision of Paulo Freire (1970) and his landmark book on education, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, T. O. invites critical thinking about people's lived experiences. It is about analyzing rather than accepting; questioning rather than giving answers. It involves 'acting' rather than just talking. In T.O., the audience members are not just spectators but 'spect-actors' who propose alternative strategies to deal with particular situations.

Forum Theatre, as described and developed by Boal, is the staging of a play which shows a problem or an oppression, and then re-running the same play, but now with the possibility for the spectators (who are thereby transformed into spect-actors) of going on stage and taking over the role of the oppressed person and trying out alternative ways to handle the situation. The Forum is a rehearsal for reality, enabling the spect-actor to act and giving him, or her, an arsenal of ideas for future encounters in life outside of the performance.

Influences from Katrin Byréus in Sweden

Swedish drama teacher Katrin Byréus had been working with socio-drama prior to learning about Boal's techniques. In socio-drama, a group improvises under the guidance of a facilitative-director to show problematic situations, and afterwards uses the improvisation as the gateway to reflection and socio-economic and systemic analysis; in Scandinavia, the method was

developed by Swedish doctor Björn Magnér (1976). After attending a course led by Boal, Byréus combined Image and Forum Theatre with values clarification, a method she came into contact with through John M. Steinberg's book, *Aktiva Värderingar* (1978). Her experiences were published in *Du har huvudrollen i ditt liv* (1990) in Sweden, and two years later, the book appeared in Danish. The book has had a profound influence on how people in the Scandinavian countries work with forum techniques.

Rather than dealing with larger societal oppressions, Byréus was dealing with the everyday, and to some extent situational, oppressions happening in schools and other environments within teaching. These were environments where calling a specific member of the small community 'the oppressor' would have a decidedly negative effect. Thus, in order to use Boal's methods for pedagogical purposes, Byréus made some changes.

One of the main differences in the method is that the aspect of a play being performed in public
is de-emphasized. This is why she chose the term Forumspil ('spil' is a versatile word that translates roughly as game/playing/acting, here in a forum), rather than Forum Theatre, to describe her process. This indicates a focus on learning through the process of playing/acting within the forum, and a choice to not have any intention of preparing a forum theatre play to be shown outside the group. The focus is practical and pragmatic, rather than artistic. While aesthetics are of course welcome, they are not part of the goal of the method.

Another major change is the combining of Forum with values clarification: giving participants time for both physically showing what they think (expressing their values) by moving their bodies to a specific place in the room, for verbalizing in smaller groups why they think this or that, and to explain their thoughts and feelings to the rest of the larger group without interruptions. Thus, there is a high focus on the participants' reflection process.

Forumspil is to a large extent a method for creating awareness and a positive approach within a group, and is, in the Scandinavian context, often used as a preventive measure, trying to teach children to be democratic and empathetic, and instigating change through the primary socialization of children in Scandinavian societies.

Image Theater

> Everything begins with the image and the image is made up of human bodies. Through
> perception of the body, everyday experiences become performance. (Auslander, 1994, p. 124).

Based on the idea that "a picture is worth a thousand words" (Jackson in Boal, 1992, p. xx), Image Theater enables participants to create collectively, with their bodies, static group images that represent their stories. Alternative ways to change relationships of power are discussed through an interactive process between facilitators and participants, thus enabling knowing to emerge. The process of the experience leads to reflection, which in turns leads to proposed solutions, which are ultimately tested in new images and thus leads to new experience and a new round of possible actions. This enables participants to try out actions in the workshop room so that they may see what might result from their actions.

Changing our view of the world "necessitates a language that speaks to the lived experiences and felt needs of students, but also a critical language that can problematize social relations which we often take for granted" (MacLaren, 1995, p.74). As forms of re-experiencing and transforming our lives, imagery opens up a space for potential exploration among bodyminds where body shapes in images enable thoughts to emerge as individuals step into the realm of the possible co-created worlds. Reflection within drama allows knowledge to unfold and emerge and to become more explicitly known. As Simon (1994) pointed out, "[o]ur images of ourselves and our world provide us with a concrete sense of what might be possible and desirable" (p. 381).

Values clarification
Values clarification as a method originated in the U.S.A., and was introduced to Byréus through John M. Steinberg's book Aktiva Värderingar (1978), where he adapted it to a Scandinavian setting. It has also been further adapted by Byréus since. The approach to teaching in the Scandinavian countries has been largely influenced by the thoughts of Paulo Freire (1970) and other exponents of liberatory pedagogies from the 1960's onwards. Therefore, the idea of using multiple choice surveys and listing things according to importance, used in traditional values clarification in the U.S.A., is a rather foreign concept, whereas discussing and reflecting in groups, or writing in your own words on a subject, is the more common approach in Scandinavia.

Values clarification, as further developed by Byréus, is nearly always combined with movement, involving changing places in a circle if you agree with a spoken statement, walking to the corner which most closely represents your thoughts, or finding your place physically on a spectrum. Once you are there, you will typically reflect in smaller groups, after which the findings of the group are presented to the larger group, who may have the possibility of changing their opinion based on the new input.

As further developed by Marie Ebbesen in the Danish context, values clarification in the Forumspil context involves a specific focus by the facilitator on active inquiry, as the goal is to make each participant aware of his or her own values. Thus, when the

small groups present to the larger group, the facilitator makes sure that each person in the group (rather than a leader or representative of the group) gets to voice an opinion or clarify something, and the facilitator shares what she thinks she hears back to them to let them correct any misconceptions, or clarify further should they think this is necessary. This makes both the general perception of the small group and individual variations become clear to the larger group.

Thus, participants are trained not only in defining for themselves what their values and opinions are, but also in communicating these values and opinions to others without relying on a leader within the group or silently accepting a stronger peer's opinions.

Forumspil Explored with Classes in Denmark

The original workshop, upon which Dr. Warren Linds later based his work, emerged from Marie Ebbesen's wish to explore whether using Forumspil to process the theme group work could create a better understanding among students at University 1 of:

- their own opinions about what is important when working in groups;
- their peers' notions of what is important in connection to working in groups; and
- how to solve problems in groups.

The workshop was tried out on several groups of students, and they participated in a survey in order to discover what they thought of the process and what they themselves deemed that they learned by participating. Ebbesen used a Freirian approach where:

> …educators have to work with the experiences that students, adults, and other learners bring to schools and other educational sites...the pedagogical experience here becomes an invitation to make visible the languages, dreams, values, and encounters that constitute the lives of those whose histories are often actively silenced. (Giroux in Freire, 1985, p. xxi)

Also, as will be apparent below, Ebbesen made some changes to the Forumspil format in order to create a workshop which was specifically suited to the participants and their theme.

The majority of the students (who are from 18-55 years old) were the first generation in their families to receive post-secondary education, and come from one of the poorest rural areas in Denmark. *Fatalism* is predominant among the students, and many fall into a category of individuals showing fatalistic optimism, as described by Rosatto (2005) as being:

> …a construct defined as an immobilizing acceptance of an alienating reality and dismal future, in one sense a kind of 'anti-optimism'. It is a belief that events are

fixed in time, resulting in feelings of impotence and inability to change the course of events. (p. 57).

Rosatto further wrote that a person showing fatalistic optimism "recognizes the problem of unequal power yet is without hope of changing it" (p.47). The fatalism in this case was a result of the local history of the particular part of Denmark, and in practice means that many students will both have chosen their line of study in order to prevent other children or youth or women from having the same negative experiences they themselves have had, while at the same time believing, and verbalizing in the classroom, that overall things cannot be changed.

These students are enrolled in a Bachelor degree in Social Education and aim to work in nurseries, kindergartens, and after school programs, as well as becoming the pedagogical caregivers of people with cognitive impairments, drug-abusers, and other groups with special needs. Therefore, how the students treat each other and relate to each other becomes of vital importance. These students will become models of adult behaviour for many children, so the development of humans who will, and can, work together towards positive goals begins with them.

Work in groups is used extensively in the University's program. In many of the classes, group work is essential to the process of learning. The students have three internship periods built into their 3½ years of study, and it makes sense to process the experiences they have from the internships in groups containing students who have been (or are) in the same type of internship - that is to say, taking care of the same age- or ability-group.

Also, these students are trained specifically for a job involving caring, and will be working closely with colleagues all their working life, so they need to be prepared for that.

The generative theme (one "that elicits interest from the participants because it is drawn from their lives, or, more particularly, from the limit situations that define them" [Peckham, 2003, p. 231]) in the workshops is 'working in a group'. Students brought this theme into the process, thus giving their facilitator the idea to create the workshop. The students defined an area of vital importance to them, drawn from their lives, which they felt put them in limiting situations. Their education draws extensively on group work, and it is within group work that most of the oppressions they experience amongst themselves occur.

While the students had talked a lot about groups and group dynamics in other classes, this apparently had not achieved the intended purpose of making them able to work well together in groups, nor to feel confident about handling problems that arose. They might have understood some things in principle but were to a large extent not able to actively use any of the methods or

knowledge they had attained in more theory-oriented classes. Abstractly knowing is not the same as doing. Thus the idea was to develop a workshop that could create the space for a physical approach, giving the students a chance to use their entire bodies, and move, talk, experience and learn, i.e. creating the space for an aesthetic learning process.

Processing the generative theme through Forumspil, while teaching the students something about working in a group, can also teach them on a more general level that they have choices and can generate change.

Workshop Format

The workshop format included warm-up games, image theatre, values clarification and forum, and those students who participated took part in all of these consecutively.

Warm-up games

The students begin with a number of short warm-up games. The warm-ups were designed by Ebbesen herself in order to specifically focus on enabling participants to feel secure, get a sense of space, and become physically warmed up, and in addition, to establish a comfortable relationship between participants.

Boal's (1992) games are deliberately avoided because so many of his exercises focus clearly on some aspect of oppression. Even though they will have spoken of problems singly or in small groups, it is Ebbesen's experience with students that, because they have a strong identity as 'nice people or caregivers', and because of peer pressure, they tend in the larger group to not want to openly admit to having any problems at all concerning working with each other. In addition, they tend to shy away from the term oppression. They need to feel very safe in order to openly admit to, accept, and then be willing to examine their problems.

However, Machine of Rhythms (1992, p. 94-96) is used; this is where the students build a human machine in groups of 6-8 people by adding one person at a time (each adding their own movement and sound). Afterwards, there is a debriefing on what they discovered, such as whether there was an unspoken consensus in the group concerning the form the machine took - there usually turns out to be so. In this way, the theme of groups is introduced, albeit in an abstract form.

Image Theatre

Theme: Transforming a group that does not function into a group that does function. In groups of 10 participants, each group shapes an image of a group that is dysfunctional. The groups are asked to remember their exact positions and bodily expressions. Then the groups look at one of these 10-person images at a time. The rest of the participants (everyone except the 10 people in the image) read the image following the

question of "What do you see?" Helped by further questions, focusing their attention but not guiding towards specific answers, they tell everything they see in the image of feelings, expressions, alliances, exclusion and group dynamics, and where in the image they see it, that is to say: in which people, and where in the body language, positioning, and facial expressions is the experience identified. The facilitator then puts their hand on the shoulder of each person in the image. As this is done, each person voices the thoughts of the role-person they are playing in the image. The other participants outside the image then physically reshape the image to what they think will show a functioning group. It is emphasized that they have to start with the people in their roles that they saw in the first image.

Once the group has completed the image, the facilitator again touches each person in the image in turn and the participants hear their thoughts. The group is asked if they are satisfied with their work, 'Does everybody in the image seem comfortable?' If the answer is 'No,' they get a chance to reshape and, if necessary again, listen to their thoughts until they agree that they have a satisfactory image with all characters feeling comfortable and willing to work together. This procedure takes place with each of the 10-person images. For the process facilitator, it is of utmost importance that all participants feel that their work is validated; therefore, using only a few images as representatives of the whole is not an option.

Enabling all the participants, with the exception of the 10 in the image, to work together on changing the image, is Ebbesen's particular contribution to the image process. In their image work, Byréus and Boal have only one person from amongst the spect-actors at a time changing the image. Often the group of participants having to work together is conductive, particularly because as they work together on changing the image, many astute comments are made. They discuss, for example, what the roles/persons in the image said when they gave voice to their thoughts, how they appeared to feel, and what would be better ways to accommodate a particular role's personality and need for space, another role's need for closeness, and so on. The combined empathy and experience of the whole group is used to find solutions.

Almost every time this exercise is conducted, the first idea of the group of participants is to get the roles or persons in the dysfunctional group (the image) into some kind of circle facing each other, often holding hands or shoulders. Nearly every time it turns out that hardly any of the people or roles themselves in the image feel comfortable like that. Very often someone in a role will say, 'I feel like I am in some kind of cult!' or 'This is much too close!' while others say things like: 'Now we can work' or 'I am happy'. Only then do the participants begin to be aware of individual differences and try to make a functioning group with real people with personalities rather than by creating a symbolic image of collaboration and unity.

Values Clarification in a Circle
The participants sit in a circle and move to a new chair every time a statement is read aloud with which they agree with. There is always one more chair than people, so there is always a chair free for participants to move to. This emphasizes a right to express an opinion even when no one else shares it.

The statements used in this exercise come from comments made by the students while working in groups prior to participating in the workshop. These statements included various (abundant) frustrations and some positive experiences. A list of these comments in a certain order is made in an attempt to create a balance so there is no obvious direction. In order to keep the Freirean approach, the statements are used with the original wording of the students. This differs from Byréus (1990; 1992) who described the facilitator making up the statements used in values clarification exercises of this type. She stressed the need to not make the facilitator's views obvious, but she also underlined the importance of keeping this in mind when paraphrasing the sentences of participants. As the sentences used come from students this point is less relevant, however, it is worth keeping in mind if one should decide to use the original Byréus method. Moreover, the facilitator should use a neutral tone for reading out the statements, thus giving space for students to discover their own values. The aim is to create a space for reflection where students can come to their own conclusions.

The overall starting point in this exercise is the statement: "I agree that…", and then at each mention of a statement, those who agree move to another chair in the circle. The process statements Ebbesen has gathered and use include:
- It is lovely to work together with others;
- It is wonderful to work alone;
- It is most fun to work together with people who know a bit more than oneself;
- It is hard to be in a group with a very dominating person;
- It is hard to be in a group with a very quiet person;
- It is important to be able to contact each other at home; and
- One only works well together if there is the right chemistry.

Structuring the statements is another addition of Ebbesen. Contradictory or seemingly opposed statements are coupled, placing them after each other on the list, in order to create the possibility for the participants to realise that sometimes they agree with both of the statements. It is a way of making evident the complexity of values and opinions. This is important because it is part of what makes group processes complex.

Finally, Ebbesen has changed the process in that all the statements are read out before opening the discussion. This is because of the specific groups she works with, i.e. adults, as they have a tendency to want to seem consistent, and are rather aware

of their image. In order to allow participants to realize their own inconsistencies, all of the statements are read relatively fast so most participants will not have the time to choose to answer in a way they think fits with what they answered before. They have to move straight away, following their gut reaction to each sentence, and therefore presumably answer more truthfully. Discussing each value after each sentence, as Byréus describes in her book, while particularly good in work with children, is less appropriate here.

The list contains 22 statements, and students always ask for more, but it can be useful to stop before they lose interest or become overwhelmed. By answering the questions according to their truthful reactions, most students have a chance to (and usually do when the group discusses what they noticed) become aware both of their values and opinions but also of the ambiguity that is often involved. They realize that their own opinions are to some extent situational, and that this might be the background of some of the misunderstandings within groups. There is also the realization that the things they take for granted are not necessarily the same as what their fellow students take for granted.

Four corner exercise
Here the students go to the corner which represents what they find most difficult about working in a group. The starting point here is the statement: 'The most difficult part of co-operating in a group is..."
- if someone feels isolated or left out;
- to make everybody do a good piece of work;
- to be in a group where the chemistry is not right; or
- something else.

The statements are again taken directly from students, and the three chosen statements are those that the facilitator has heard the most often in conversations with students. The open corner, 'something else', is important because for some students, none of the three common statements cover what they find most difficult about co-operating in a group. After having gone to the corner in which the students feel they belong, they talk over with their peers:
- why they are in that specific group;
- what they understand as the difficulties adhering to the chosen statement; and
- how they feel when they experience the problem/difficulty.

The facilitator quietly walks around, listening here and there so as to get an idea of where the conversations are going. When the first excitement has subsided, and after the groups seem to have discussed the three points mentioned above, (but before they have talked the subject to death), each group gets to present their theme to the rest of the class.

When all four groups have presented, the students are told that they have the option of moving to another group if something they have heard makes them feel that they belong in that group rather than in the one they initially chose. If any group consists of a single person, I take care to underline that the person chose the corner in question for a good reason, and then ask if, for the sake of the next piece of work, the person will please join the group that is his or her second choice.

Forum

The existing groups from the exercise above are asked to produce a small play which demonstrates the problem they have discussed. They need to show everyone a situation where the group process goes wrong. They choose either an incident that has happened to a person in the group or they create an exemplary incident based on the experiences of the people in the group. As Augusto Boal would say, the question is not if what you are showing is 'reality' (it happened exactly like this) but rather if what is being shown is true (this is what we experienced; this is the essence of the experience).

As facilitator, Ebbesen stresses that they are not expected to create great art, but to show everyone what they have experienced so that together, the participants can work on finding possible ways of tackling the problems. This tends to work well because they then focus on showing rather than acting.

Once they have created the plays, they perform their play for the other students. The facilitator asks the students who are watching what they see and who they feel sorry for/who they think would want a different outcome of the situation and why. This person/role becomes the one which can be changed by someone replacing this character. After this initial reflection, the same play is re- run, but now with the possibility for the spectators (who are thereby transformed into spect- actors) to go on stage and take over the role of the person everyone has agreed they can change (the protagonist). They then try out alternative ways to handle the situation. After each intervention, the students reflect on what changed in the scene with this particular intervention and why. Trying out several interventions is important to ensure that the students do not leave the room with the idea that there is only one right way to solve each individual problem.

When the group as a whole feels satisfied that the theme of one play has been processed to a reasonable degree, the next of the plays take place, and are processed in a similar fashion. The Forum is the rehearsal for the world outside the workshop, enabling the spect-actor to act and thereby giving themselves an arsenal of ideas for future encounters in real life. It is a relatively safe laboratory where the focus is not just 'What could I have done?' but rather 'What might be a good idea next time I find myself in a similar situation?' Done as Forumspil, where there is

no intention of performing for people outside the group, and no focus on theatre as such, the method becomes very accessible to people who do not like to be on stage.

Outcomes

The students with whom Ebbesen generally works tend to dread drama, having been raised strictly to conform (no nonsense allowed), but the combination of group Values Clarification work with Forum in workshop form i.e. Forumspil, and a process rather than product focus, has led to positive responses. All students in the initial experiment answered, in surveys, that they found the workshop to be good and would find it a good experience for other students. No one mentioned the drama approach as negative. On the contrary, they liked it. Finally, there were various reflections on what they had learned. The one Ebbesen was particularly struck by was: "I found out that I can say something".

Following the initial experiment, 'Working in a Group' has been used with students who are in the Bachelors of Social Education programme, and it has also been part of the education of the social work students that are studying at the University College Sjælland in Denmark.

Applying Forumspil in a Small Group Leadership Class in Canada

'Leadership in Small Groups' is a course in the Department of Applied Human Sciences at Concordia University in Canada. This class is taught in the second year of a full-time Bachelors program. There are also students attending who are taking a post-secondary certificate in a relevant discipline and others who are taking a minor along with a major in another subject such as Sociology, Business Administration, Dance, or Psychology. In this particular year's class, there were 34 students in this course from a wide range of ages (21-55). Since the course is taught at night, many of the students come directly from their day-time occupations. Although there are a few full time students with part-time jobs, a large percentage of the class are working full-time and studying part-time.

Students learn effective ways to observe and interpret the significance of group behaviour for the purpose of intervening effectively. The course assists students to identify their leadership styles and to foster flexibility in diverse group situations by:

- identifying group and leadership concepts, practices and qualities that either foster or undermine the health of groups and organizations;
- using theories of group development and leadership to inform practices;
- identifying their own skills in facilitation and process observation through opportunities to lead and observe groups in class;

- connecting process observation, group diagnosis and intervention from a leadership perspective;
- structuring meetings, seminars, and conferences to enable the full potential of group members to emerge;
- developing skills in communicating and relating to others across differences; and
- critically reflecting on experiences and plan for action.

The foundational approach to the course is based on John Heron's (1999) work on facilitative leadership. One key point he outlined is that ideally the responsibility for learning should rest with the learner, with the facilitator guiding. In order for this to happen, learning has "four interdependent forms, which in many different ways complement and support each other" (p. 3). These forms are, in order: experiential, imaginal, conceptual and practical learning.

Therefore, the course aims to use these four stages to help student-facilitators both understand and develop their own personal style of facilitation, providing the essential foundations for developing, through an experiential approach (Kolb, 1984), effective facilitative skills that suit both a facilitator's personality and then enable them to closely match their skills with the situations they encounter. An underlying assumption about this program is that accomplishing tasks within groups is enhanced when those giving leadership understand how groups develop and how their dynamics shift. The students go on to employment where group training, leadership and human relations skills are applied.

The pre-requisite course for this class is a course involves working in a group to understand a particular theory of group dynamics and then use that theory to analyze work together. Therefore, many of the students have experienced both positive and challenging group experiences, and they explore these experiences in this next class. Though students have reflected on their own participation in groups, they have not had the opportunity to question their own skills or roles as facilitators or leaders. Their experiences in the course, and their lack of experience at reviewing their leadership roles, provided a good transition to the Forumspil workshop which was integrated into the second week of their six months-long class in facilitative leadership.

The Forumspil Workshop
The workshop began with warm up activities, for example, walk together, one stops, all others stop, two starts, all others start. Then, in pairs, back to back, engage in greetings with a handshake, then in fours doing the same thing. Some people linked arms and then found it easier, so they made the link that it was easier if the group members were linked.

Because the course is on leadership, the lecturer had asked the students in the first week of class to complete the phrase *I lead...*

with a paragraph. They did not put their names on the papers. The paragraphs were then collected, shuffled and distributed randomly at the end of the class. Students then read aloud their classmates' sentences. The sentence 'I lead' was sufficiently ambiguous that it resulted in some surprising, and personal, statements. For example, one student wrote, "I lead because I know where I want to go and try not to let anyone get in my way". Another wrote, "I believe a good leader doesn't point himself out, but has a quiet, noticeable presence and that's how I try to lead". A third shared, "My sister is fifteen years old and since I can remember, she has looked at me as if I was her role model. Therefore, I try to give her a good example so that she can become a great adult". Then the teaching team took the statements home and grouped them into four categories of statements about leadership and brought them back to the class and posted them in different areas of the classroom. One of the groups of statements included sentences were identified (but did not name) as encompassing controlling or directive leadership; one for charismatic leadership; one for situational leadership; and one for collaborative leadership. Each student then looked at all four lists and chose the one which best fit their preferred 'leading' style

What happened in the class
A large number of people went to the charismatic leadership style, and smaller numbers went to the collaborative and situational styles. No one chose the directive style. (One supposition the teaching team made from this is that in the classroom and departmental culture, which is founded on the helping profession, to be directive or controlling is seen as a negative. This was also the teaching team's experience in previous classes. Students invariably had a negative view of 'directive' as being authoritarian and were often caught in the binary between authoritarian ("all determination of policy by the leader" [Lewin, Lippit, & White, 1970, p. 202]) and laissez-faire ("complete freedom for group or individual decision, without any leader participation" [Lewin, Lippit, & White, 1970, p. 202]) styles of leadership. One goal of the class was to help the students see another view where the two styles are equally useful at different times in the life of a group.

After choosing their groups, students then discussed what the style from the group of statements meant by giving it a title, prepared an image of a dysfunctional group, and tried to make the group function better. Following this, they discussed the role of group facilitation in making the group functional and the type of facilitator that would be needed in this case. The following is a summary of the observations of the workshop based on notes recorded during the activities by a teaching assistant.

Leadership Styles and Dealing with Dysfunctional Groups
The four groups were quickly taken through the basics of sculpting participants into images - arranging expressions on

faces, stretching limbs, pointing fingers, tilting heads, huddling people together or separating out individuals until each body, each group, becomes a visual depiction of a dysfunctional group.

Situational Leadership ('I lead when I feel the need to for certain situations')

The group summarizes these qualities by calling this leadership "according to what the situation calls for". They add, "When no one else steps forward, when I am asked to lead, when I feel like I have some experience and expertise".

An all female group sits comfortably, discussing before sculpting. The resulting tableau portrays most of the group as sitting in a semi-circle: some look away; one talks on her cell phone; a member is sprawled, legs outstretched, a hat pulled over her face; while another stands with an angry expression on her face.

The facilitator of the class tapped the shoulder of each individual in the image in turn and asked the character to speak from inside their characters. "I don't want to be here", says one. Another stated, "I'm so over the top". Yet another: "I'm pissed at you".

The facilitator asked the other students who are watching this image, "What is going on?"

 "No one is paying attention; people are doing their own thing," responds the class. Observing the woman standing, the class points out that "one member is reacting", and sees a potential leader in this because "there is nothing positive, but the expression of anger is at least something". The facilitator asks, "Why is she mad?" Someone reasons that it is because everyone is withdrawn, that there is a sense of rejection, particularly from the woman with the hat. The facilitator asked those looking at the image to try and change it so that it became a more functional group. "What needs to happen first?" he asked. The class wanted her to 'lose the hat', describing it as a 'blocker'. When her face was exposed, the class commented that she looked like she was crying and placed someone's hands on her shoulders in a gesture of 'empathy and concern'. They hung up the cell phone and moved another member into the middle of the group "so she gets everyone's attention; in order to create community".

Interestingly, the leadership of the group appears to represent a response to the group's need for cohesion by attracting everyone's attention, creating community. This is situational leadership, where "effective leadership is contingent upon matching styles with situations" (Rothwell, 2001, p. 141).

The facilitator asked, 'What type of facilitation skills were needed to change this?' The students responded with "Active listening; being present for the group; supportive environment."

Directive leadership ('I lead because I feel I have the power to control')

No students choose to stand beside this leadership quality. It is suspected that this is because this was only the second class of the term and there is insufficient trust developed for students to take the risk in choosing this leadership quality so early in the term. In previous years, this style was chosen, but the workshop was conducted in the third or fourth class, so there was a better atmosphere of safety for students to choose this highly directive leadership style as fitting a particular set of students' feelings about themselves.

Charismatic leadership ('I lead to inspire people to make the most of their experiences')

A large group of students stood beside the sheet outlining the above qualities. They define what appeared to resemble *charismatic leadership*. They did not choose the name *charismatic*; they called themselves 'leaders' and suggested that their personal power attracted people to follow them, which somewhat reflects the description of the directive leadership. One man was outspoken on this but someone else (a man) tried to add the idea of communication as being crucial. There was a definite sense of masculine power with the few women appearing to jockey for acceptance. The teaching team perceived one woman, for example, as presenting herself as 'being one of the guys'. The group's reasons were, "We are natural leaders; I take charge and initiate; I charm others into seeing things my way; I make it fun so people want to follow."

The large group then separated themselves into two smaller groups.

First group

The group had arranged themselves with a triangle of three angry men in confrontational poses while other group members had turned away. There are looks of frustration and disgust on their faces. The class named this "aggressive energy, anger, negative attitude", and some commented on the conflict "because people are trying to leave".

Interestingly, some had seen the reason for the conflict as the turning away of the other members (perhaps influenced from the prior image) while others saw the cause of the deserting members as the fighting stance of the three men at the centre of the image they had created.

Different members of the image group spoke: "I am really frustrated," "I am so fed up," "I am ignoring what's going on about me".

The facilitator asked, 'How can this change?' The class then changed the three men, lowering their arms, erasing the scowls. Several characters in the image group spoke: "This is scary"; "Guys, cut it out"; "I hope this gets calmer." Further changes were made, the image group was asked to sit, and a central

figure or man was in the central position with arms outstretched in an open gesture. "He's being a mediator!" someone in the class called out; another voice added, "Let's talk, come together." A woman previously considered disinterested was moved to the front of the action; this was unexpected and surprised the class.

When students were asked how to facilitate this change, different voices responded: "mediating; staying connected; not being afraid to act; flexibility."

Second group
The second group was arranged loosely in a circle, everyone seemed upset; someone was sticking their tongue out, with a man in the center shaking his fist. A crouched woman had covered her ears while another cried into her hands. "No one is paying attention; everyone is separated", the watching students called out. They moved the group members to face each other, saying, "They should be looking at each other". The class then sculpted smiling faces and decided that the woman sticking out her tongue was relating to the man with his raised fist.

Someone remarks that all the women had their faces turned away. The facilitator then split the class into gendered groups to discuss what to do. After a short period of discussion, the women moved the image group around to surround the angry man in the center, turning the women's faces inward; they left another man out to represent a victim. The men changed the group into three hugging couples, joking about how women reacted to the anger and solved the problem. This was met with a groan from several members of the group.

It is interesting to note that both groups that had identified charismatic leadership as a theme had overt conflict images portrayed, whilst the situational and collaborative themed leadership groups had portrayed issues with participation and disinterest.

Collaborative Leadership ('I lead most often by example and collaboration with my colleagues')
The group standing beside this list identified the leadership style as 'leading by example'. Reasons for choosing this were "it is very important to consider people's feelings; to include everyone; to lead from the heart".

The students in this group portrayed a group sitting facing in all directions; the image is crowded with individuals in pairs locked in distinct story lines, one member is crouched in front of another, others appeared to be arguing, a woman weeping. This was described as: "Different power relationships; too many people trying to lead at the same time; multiple hierarchies; all of them are isolated". The voices from the image group recount, "I feel inferior". Another character said, "I don't want to talk to anyone." Yet another shared, "I don't agree; get involved".

The class decided that some of the group should stand facing in, "inviting them to be part of the group". They took a woman's hands off of her hips, and turned to another, saying, "This member needs to see the group". The changed image had everyone circled around the woman who was weeping. The facilitator asked, "What is the main thing that has to happen here to get to a functioning group?" "Someone needed to initiate," the class answered. (In other words, in order to lead by example, someone needs to initiate.)

The class returned to their original image groups. The facilitator asked them to look carefully at each group's image and to choose the group member that they most resonated with. Thus four themes, four stories, and four groups had been formed.

Values Clarification
The group then engaged in the *values clarification* exercise with the whole class seated in a circle. The instructions were: "When you agree with a value you are to cross over to the other side of the circle". The facilitator then read out different group values while students crossed over in varying amounts. For example, the facilitator said, 'It's lovely to work with others'. Many of the students, but not all, crossed. The facilitator then said, 'It's hard to be in a group with a dominating person' and this statement made everyone move across.

In a large circle the group then reflected on what had happened. Some comments included: "I noted who didn't move for some things, and I thought, oh really, you don't want everyone to have their say!"; "Groups are complicated."; "People are complicated."; "All work no play people don't see eye to eye on that."; "Everyone wants to work with someone who knows more, except that there are situations for instance where you are playing a management role when it's hard to be with those who know more than you."; and "If you are strictly task oriented you might lose some people."

The facilitator then asked the class to go back into small sub-groups that formed earlier and talk about their values in those groups.

Facilitative leadership and how to deal with dysfunctional groups
The *Leadership in Small Groups* course is one focused on the leadership of groups, so it was important to conclude the workshop by adding in an element of Forumspil. We added the development of new images to an activity on dysfunctional groups so that the facilitator(s) would have a resource to help make these groups functional.

The following four images of facilitator were made and the students titled them as:

CONVENOR. The students interpret this image as: relaxed atmosphere – outdoor class under a tree – facilitator standing up – learning – team work – central person with key role – inviting – engagement – providing ideas and thoughts

DOCUMENTER. The students interpret this image as: class room setting – teaching - taking notes - paying attention – observing – the facilitator is the one with the paper – everyone is looking at her – motivating – instructing – directing – delegating - giving feedback –communication – guiding the group – working together

CONVENOR. The students interpret this image as: fishbowl – unity – connection – the link – women in center are facilitating are demonstrating – Ouija board séance – leading by example – checking on everybody else – modeling a task, a process, a way to relate to each other.

OBSERVER: The students interpret this image: enthusiastic – facilitator is in middle – he is standing back and listening – observing – talking it out – facilitator is listening –shouldn't play a practical role; we should be able to function without him – support the group when needed.

The facilitator asked that the four facilitators identified from the functioning groups stand in the center and asked the rest of the class to decide who they identify most with. Groups of students formed behind their class members. Thus, each student identified themselves with their particular facilitator style and began to think about how they could facilitate, using this stance or role, in a dysfunctional group.

Comments from students
An evaluation form with open-ended questions was handed out to students. They were asked to complete it anonymously in the week between classes (in order to provide sufficient reflection time on the experience).

Methodology

Interactive learning
Students found the interactive elements "very important to my learning", "body sculpting of positive/negative group experiences", and enabled them "to visualize a conflicting group in a fun way".

Experiential learning
There were several comments about learning by example and through experience. For example,

"I learn by doing, seeing, experiencing and feel most students felt the same way".

Physical learning about groups
Visual activities required students to be engaged physically. As one student commented, "I retained my learning and feeling more easily as I had a mental picture to refer to. Remolding negative experience snapshots showed that changing one aspect can change the experience…putting one person in the middle had a ripple effect in the entire group". Another added, "I was able to visualize a dysfunctional group and a functional group and **see** [emphasis in the original] the difference between both". "By using bodies as a medium I was able to visually create a reflection of our experiences in group, by actively posing I was able to demonstrate a feeling visually and ensure the class connected to the emotion I was portraying". "I liked the molding of a dysfunctional group, [learning] all about body language, [which is a] very important aspect of group interaction; non verbal cues have huge impact".

Themes about content and group work
Students were asked about how the content of the workshop, in terms of working in groups, came out through the visual methodology.

Learning about facilitation's role in a group's functioning
Students commented that facilitators have a major role in groups. One commented, "I need to determine values of fellow members in order to decide my level of leadership – some group members consistently choose the same roles in groups, followers reluctant to express thoughts for fear of conflict". This is linked to how another student viewed the responsibility of all group members: "I learned that repairing a dysfunctional group is a collective process. I could see from the tableau exercise that solving the 'obvious' needs to be discussed by everyone and not just those in conflict".

Enabling reflection
The method enabled students to engage actively in reflection. One commented, "I learned that I am passive, following the flow; if no flow I feel obligated to fill in, (situational) comfortable to connect with others that are the same. I no longer see it as lazy and simply as a way to function in a group". "I learned through reflection and got to know that I am a pro-active leader, eager to share as well as attentive and willing to listen".

The interactive method of image helped some students to see what needed to be done in dysfunctional groups. "It was comforting to share similar experiences, [and I] realized that sometimes it takes only a small or simple act to address problems or difficult moments".

The teaching team also asked the students for some suggestions on how the workshop process might be improved. Several asked to have more time to process each stage of the workshop, giving time to reflect on it and give feedback, and maybe discuss in small groups what they were going through.

Discussion

As can be seen above, using the Forumspil workshop on group work with different student bodies and within different class contexts created some interesting outcomes, which led to a discussion between the authors:

Ebbesen: "What is particularly noticeable in our accounts of the workshop is the difference in focus, where my workshop focuses on the individual taking responsibility, making their values clear to others, and yours is on leadership."

Linds: "Yes. As I mentioned earlier, I use Heron's 1999 model of learning in four inter-related stages. I see Forumspil as being both experiential (learning through experience) and imaginal (learning through the intuitive and image) forms. Through the experience of the workshop and the use of *Image*, students encounter the world of groups and identify patterns of form and process. The *Values Clarification* activity brings in concepts of working in groups and the discussion of types of facilitator brings in a practical or applied component. (So does your Four Corners exercise but I didn't have time to do that aspect in my particular class)."

Ebbesen: "What my students indicate is that they learn more on the personal level. They do, as a group, identify patterns, particularly when playing out the stories showing the kinds of dysfunctions in groups they find hardest to cope with, but it seems that what was the biggest revelation is that there is an impact, both when they do something and when they do not do something. Similarly, they realise that bad leaders only attain power because ultimately their choice to do nothing themselves allows the bad leaders to continue to lead."

"In the values clarification circle students begin to realize that other students cannot guess what they think, or what their values are, particularly when some of their values turn out to be circumstantial - as in 'sometimes I don't want small talk and other times I think it is wonderful'. Somehow it introduces more nuance into their perception, and opens the door to the concept of possible change."

"Interestingly enough, very few of my students would define themselves as leaders because in their terminology that refers to being authoritarian, so despite the fact that in their professional lives they are constantly in a leadership role in relation to the people in their care, very few will willingly acknowledge that they are leaders."

Linds: "My students also confront their own personal attitudes, but often this happens more deeply in the pre-requisite course which is, after all, entirely focused on group work. In my course they shift into how they might work better as facilitative leaders with and in groups."

"The students also initially define being a leader as being directive and quite authoritarian. As you saw in the workshop, they were reticent about identifying themselves with the directive type of leadership; a large majority and most of the men chose the more charismatic set of leadership qualities. Similar to your classes, our students generally tend to be 'helpers' and identify themselves as strong in empathy and feelings."

"Heron (1999) feels this reticence to identify as a leader comes from students being used to authoritarian forms of authority and, 'learners who emerge from it are conditioned to learn in ways that are relatively short on autonomy and holism. In a special way, they need leading into freedom and integration, when they enter another more liberated educational culture where these values are affirmed' (p. 24). So I consciously use the term 'facilitative leadership' instead of the word leadership alone. There are three modes of this kind of leadership: hierarchical, where the facilitator directs the learning process; cooperative, where power is shared with the group; and autonomous, where you 'create the conditions within which people can exercise full self-determination in their learning' (p. 17). Each one of these is appropriate in certain contexts. As a facilitator, one should be able to move 'from mode to mode and dimension to dimension in the light of the changing situation in the group' (Heron, 1999, p. 17). Forumspil, with its emphasis on helping groups move from dysfunctional to functional groups, helped students see how the type of facilitation mode used would help in this process."

Ebbesen: At least where my students are concerned, I believe they realize that leadership need not be static; that perhaps there need not be a single leader but that leadership can in fact be shared if all take responsibility. In this, it is my belief that Forumspil on group work develops empowerment.

It might also make the students realize that when they do their job well, they will quite often feel redundant to step in to lead because those in their care are taking responsibility for the process. I am not quite sure exactly how this works out, as the students tend to be dependent on external positive feedback. They might actually feel reluctant to lose the visible leadership role because they then lose their feedback and feelings of importance, which might in fact work contrary to the ideal that they have of working towards empowerment. So what happens to the caregiver identity if those they care for get to the point where they seem able to take care of themselves?

If we are to take this process further, it might be interesting to develop a Forumspil workshop that looks at the role as caregiver and which creates a space for examining the identity of the caregiver and possible conflicts involving leadership, empowerment and power balance.

Linds: Yes. I see this in my students too. They want to control the process. When I propose to them the possibility of the facilitator fostering the autonomy of the group, they take it to mean to completely leave the group to its own devices, without any guidance. This was brought to the fore for me once when a student guided me in a blind exercise, where I was blindfolded. The facilitator leading the entire group gave the direction to have the guide facilitate my movement over or around an obstacle by just stating what was in front of me and whether it was to the left or right. The student guiding me could not do this. She kept telling me where to go, which is the more directive mode. I asked the student afterwards why she did that, and she replied, "I was worried about you knocking into something".

The nature of the autonomous mode of facilitative leadership is giving space for the group to engage in self-directed practice. The best image I can think of this autonomous mode of facilitation was one of the facilitator standing outside the group, but with their body positioned so they could be there to support the group if anyone were to fall.

Ebbesen: I completely concur. It keeps spiraling back to the conflict between self-image and reflection. The question is how one can facilitate the examination of power structures among students whose self-image is centred on taking care of people, rather than being facilitators who help people gain their independence, and how their choice of this identity influences their space for reflection and consequently their way of interacting with those in their charge.

Linds: Our students concentrate inordinately on how a group functions, but are often unaware of how their own facilitation and participation styles affect the group. Through the Forumspil process, we were able to identify the different facilitative leadership styles and how they may be used in dealing with dysfunctional groups. The *Images* they created were of obvious problems in groups, but I find that it is the subtle issues in groups that are the most difficult to deal with. How might this process enable reflection on some of these difficult problems to resolve? I think one route we might explore is using reflective writing in bringing these issues to the surface.

Following our Forumspil workshop, I asked students to not only fill out evaluation forms, but also to write reflections about their learning by discussing the role of the facilitator when dealing with difficult moments in groups:

- Detail what you experienced in the class. Choose two activities and talk about the insights or questions that were raised.
- How are these insights important in terms of what you want to learn about facilitating in groups?

Due to ethical concerns I could not ask students for consent to use their writing while I was teaching the class, I cannot quote from these reflections, but from reviewing them, I see the students provided some profound insights into what they learned through the workshop about their own roles in groups. Several commented on how the values clarification exercise enabled them to look at their own values in working in groups and realize that, even though students came from different backgrounds, the majority of the class had similar values. On the other hand, it raised questions about how to work with the different values of the minority who didn't cross the values circle at the same time. Students also commented on how body language conveyed both startling depictions of groups in crisis as well as subtle hints of non-participation. The Images of dysfunctional groups enabled students to also wonder how these situations arose. Lastly, students commented on how the different situations that were portrayed required different interventions and the variety of physical stances (which represent a variety of facilitation techniques) a facilitator has to have available in order to bring about positive change. This enabled students to connect these stories as close to the 'real world' of working in groups as possible.

Ebbesen: Reflective writing is obviously an option, and I did get some interesting written comments from the students who participated in the survey about their learning. At the same time, I think one needs to be aware that the body may actually sometimes learn much more in the process than the mind is able to formulate afterwards. To my mind, this is the essence of why it is worth further developing the use of Forumspil within the education system. It creates a space for students to, through their bodies, understand parts of their own and others' ways of interacting. Parts to which they do not have access before the bodies are let into the room.

Conclusion

> Knowledge acquired aesthetically is already, in itself, the beginning of a transformation (Boal, 1995, p. 109).

The authors are teachers in programs which have an emphasis on group work, both as a way of learning and building collective knowledge, and as a process that students will need to be familiar with as group processes are often part of careers in the social service system. However, it has been noticed that students often vent their frustrations, fears, anger or sadness with working in groups. Several members of a group may be uncomfortable about the way their group works, but none of them may want to be the person bringing the problems out in the open within the group. These students generally like to be nice (that is, after all, why they chose to study to become care-givers), and shy away from conflict. At the same time, they show a clear need to process their experiences.

By the time the authors teach their respective students (Marie Ebbesen in their 3rd semester, Dr. Warren Linds in their second

year), they already have developed negative views of working in groups and, based on hearsay, even who they should or should not work with. Many firmly believe that this is just how life is, and that nothing can be done about it, so they choose to work on their own while working in groups, or go along with a process they do not have their heart in and which does not seem meaningful. Needless to say, this attitude is not conducive to learning.

The authors have found using Forumspil early on in their courses has helped address these attitudes and experiences. In a social situation like the Forumspil workshop, the students' experiences in groups were explored. As has been seen, this happened by activating the whole body through verbal and non-verbal expression. The workshop opened up a space for exploration between self and other as stories were told, both one-on-one and in the group. Transforming these stories through the Image Theatre process led to participants being able to write themselves into the stories of others. A dialogue was created. A new kind of knowing emerged from this process. The facilitators and participants began to see everything in new ways.

The process enabled reflection, which calls forth deep tacit knowledge held deep within. Reflection on past (both challenging and hopeful) experiences in groups became a process where students and facilitators both learned what they know and acted upon these new realizations.

Note: Any reader who is interested in further information on exact exercises and the Values
Clarification material or information on how one gathers and arranges material for Values
Clarification with a Freirean approach, can contact Marie Ebbesen at marigold @ mail.dk.

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AUTHORS

Dr. Warren Linds is an Associate Professor in the Department of Applied Human Sciences at Concordia University. He uses Applied Theatre in his teaching, research and community work and is a member of a research team which works on developing health decision-making with Indigenous youth in southern Saskatchewan, Canada. Dr. Linds has published in the areas of group facilitation, anti-oppression and anti-racism pedagogy, the fostering of youth leadership, and alternative and arts-based approaches to qualitative research and documentation. He is a co-editor of *Emancipatory practices: Adult/youth engagement for social and environmental justice* (Sense Publishers, 2010). (Photo credit: David Ward). Contact at Department of Applied Human Sciences, Concordia University w.linds @ sympatico.ca

Marie D. Ebbesen is Associate Professor of Drama at University College Sjælland, Campus Storstrøm, Nykøbing F., Denmark where she teaches drama, works on various developmental projects and is involved with structuring the learning-processes surrounding students practice-periods where they combine work in the field with study. Since 2002 Marie D. Ebbesen has been facilitating workshops using Boal-techniques coupled with values clarification in Denmark and a couple of times in the U.S., and has been incorporating drama-techniques in various courses in order to allow students to explore power-balances, physicality and non-verbal communication. Contact at University College Sjælland mae@ucsj.dk

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