

WARREN LINDS AND LINDA GOULET

13. (UN)INTENTIONAL SPACES

Co-Determined Leadership through Drama/Theatre

This chapter critically examines the interaction of theatre¹ and leadership in an anti-racism program that takes place in an urban public school division in Canada. The program works towards building school communities where individuals are safe from discrimination, prejudice, stereotyping and racism. The anti-racism program incorporates theatre techniques adapted by David Diamond (2007) for the Canadian context from Augusto Boal's (1979) *Theatre of the Oppressed*. In this chapter we draw upon Paulo Freire's (1998) concept of "democratic leadership" to reflect on the type of leadership used in the anti-racism program and explore the theatre process as it contributes to changed patterns of leadership. Because "aesthetic play needs space and freedom" (MacIntyre Latta, 2000, p. 380) to develop, theatre can create a dynamic space of possibilities where meaning emerges in interaction. Working in these spaces "helps those interacting with/in it to discover different, unknown, and unrecognized spaces about their world, bodies, or community" (Haskell & Linds, 2004, para. 12). In the anti-racism program, we use theatre to intentionally create spaces that both adults and youth "experience as vibrant, living, creative spaces providing opportunities for dialogue and growth" (Ibid).

The main goal of the anti-racism program is to develop the capacity of 12–18 year old youth for leadership in anti-racism and cross-cultural education in their schools. The program motto—*Together We Will Make a Difference!*—reflects a belief it is everyone's responsibility to work toward building communities where individuals are safe from discrimination, prejudice, stereotyping and racism. Such a safe space is created and modelled in one of the program components – an intensive three-day training retreat that brings together teachers, students and facilitators in a setting away from the city and schools. In these three days, *Power Plays* (Diamond, 2007) have been adapted to the particular needs of the program, so include community and trust building activities around issues of identity and power. At the end of the retreat, school teams of students and their teacher get together to design an anti-racism plan for their school. In this way, school teams take responsibility for adapting the program to suit the strengths of their teams and address the issues of racism and discrimination particular to the situation in their school.

The students who attend the retreat are a heterogeneous group. Each of the 10 high schools in the city select six to eight students to participate. Selection procedure varies from school to school. Some schools have students write essays. At others,

students simply volunteer, while in others, teachers approach students who they think would benefit from attendance at the retreat. So there is a range in age, ethnicity, race as well as those who have taken part in bullying or racist acts, those who have been subject of those acts, and those who have witnessed acts of bullying or racism.

THE PROGRAM

The school division's anti-racism program had existed for a few years before the co-authors of this paper got involved in it. We were asked to become involved due to our expertise in theatre work that the school division staff believed would improve student engagement with the anti-racism program. Working in collaboration with community partners and school division staff, we changed the structure of the existing retreat to use Forum theatre and theatre games as foundational to the design of the retreat. In the context of this program, risks are inherent in discussing what we want to de-normalize: racism and discrimination. It is a risky subject, partly because it is not often talked about in school, and partly because the issues are a complex interweaving of identity, attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, and institutional and cultural structures and practices: structures that support taken for granted white privilege (Kumashiro, 2001) and marginalization of minority peoples (Huff, 1997). Racism continues to be a reality of Aboriginal and other minority students' educational experiences in Canada (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003; Silver & Mallett, 2002). At the retreat, we use many experiential activities that involve themes of exclusion and inclusion, and link them through debriefing to life in school. Our goal is for all the participants (including the adults) to develop a familiarity with the language of discrimination and racism, to enable trust to be continually developed, and for stories to begin to emerge that help us, as facilitators and participants, understand the reality of the students and teachers.

We use several experiential activities including *warm-up games* and *trust exercises* that inform every level of the creative process, develop experiences of issues of power (exercises that embody leaders and followers) and enable a safe space to emerge. We begin with *Who is Here?* which introduces concepts of multiple identity and group membership. *Responding to Difference* explores how difference is constructed and dealt with both individually and societally. We engage in, and debrief, activities to focus on important aspects of racism. One game, *Discriminadot* (Selby, 1988), introduces the notion of exclusion through the random placement of dots on participants' foreheads then asking participants to group themselves. Another, *Sticky Labels* explores how we are 'labelled' by others in terms of negative and positive qualities that affect social interaction by placing labels on participants.

The theatre games we use contribute to a sense of community through Boal's (1992) *Knowing the body: feeling what we touch, listen to what we hear, and seeing what we look at*, working in small groups to develop a sense of common purpose as we become more aware of our senses and what they bring to actively living in our experiences.

The basis of our work with youth leaders is to have them share stories non-verbally through Image² as narrative by beginning with a simple handshake between two people, and having them look at each other; this brings about a transfer of grounded energy. One of the pair removes him/herself, leaving the other person standing, frozen in the body shape they had in the initial handshake. The person who left the pair is replaced by a participant who creates a new, different, static body shape in relationship to the person frozen in the handshake position which in turn creates a new representation or story of relationship between two body shapes. The person who was in the initial handshake then removes her/himself and is replaced by someone who creates a new, different, static body shape in relation to the other, and so on. This creation of the different body shapes in relationship to each other continues as students create many different images or 'stories' represented by the different body shapes in relationship to one another. Through this exercise, called *Complete the Image* (Diamond, 2007), we introduce students and teachers to the tool for creating a story through a static body visual representation. This is a drama activity first done in pairs and then in the large group. Anyone who has an idea can step in to replace one of the pair to add a new element, create a new image, a new story.

We then look at the stories that have been developed out of this activity, teaching students how to 'view' the images, demonstrating that when an action becomes frozen in time, it can represent many things. Students are encouraged to be creative and bring their experiences to their interpretation of the image. We reinforce that there is no one right answer; that your experience or perspective will determine what you see in the image and how you will interpret the image. After a few images of pairs, more people participate in one of the Images created by two people until there are six or seven participants who are making a story out of the original paired image. When the facilitators feel the image has enough 'characters' we ask those not in the image what they see: what the action is, who the characters are, who has power, etc. At this point we encourage multiple interpretations of the image, reinforcing the idea that there is no one answer. We often ask students to come up with a title for the image to help them interpret the image on another, more metaphorical level. When it seems the group has understood the method, we repeat the creation and interpretation process.

We conclude the large group work with Image by asking students to create images based on particular themes such as *the school dance*, *life in school* and *racism in school* or have students suggest themes from their lives. After students have developed some skill in creating and interpreting images, they are organised into small groups where many students can create a personal image which is then combined to create a composite image of their experiences with racism and discrimination in their lives. These composite images are then shared with the large group so all others participants can view and give interpretation to these Images based on their experiences. As leaders, we expand the language of the Image through 'activation' techniques, such as taking the image forward or backward in time, asking characters to express feelings or hidden desires and fears, or to get what they want in the scene. These activations often lead to insights and a deeper

level of analysis. As students develop different sets of images, they develop the capacity to give expression to experience. Students come to see their experiences reflected in those of others as they share common experiences. This forges bonds that engender empathy and trust among the participants. Our use of image work also prepares participants for learning in a way that is rarely used in schools. Imaging through performance invites participation through performance - embodied explorations of the interplay through body, mind, and imagination; we perform possibility and absence into being and becoming.

The anti-racism program also has a student leadership team made up of more senior students. As experienced participants of the program these students are familiar with and skilled in representing their reality through drama. We work with the student leadership team to develop a Forum play that incorporates the students' common lived experiences of exclusion, discrimination, prejudice, and racism. Each play includes various characters like antagonist, protagonist and, most importantly, bystanders, or potential allies of the antagonist and protagonist. The first time we perform the play for the education of participants in the retreat setting, we use it for discussion of the issues faced by the characters. Each audience member receives a card on which they record the character's struggle they identify with the most. After the performance, we ask the student audience to help us create a *Status Line-up* where we physically place the characters in the play in a line according to the power they have in the scene. This leads to interesting discussions about who has potential to use their power; who will not use their power, and who does not have power to change the outcome of the situation. Students begin to identify the potential for certain characters to take action.

We then do *Stand Behind the Character* where we ask the audience members to physically stand in a line behind the character whose struggle they identified with. Every time almost every character has people behind them, including the 'bullies'. The audience members then sit down with the character they have chosen and *Interview the character*, discussing the motivation for the characters' actions and to identify the parallels with their own experiences, the situation in their own schools, and what the character can do from their own standpoint. The student leadership team, as the characters in the play, facilitate this exploration of the characters, including eliciting related stories from the participants.

The second day of the training retreat we perform the play as a full Forum play where the audience members, now *spect-actors*, can intervene to replace and become any one of the characters that they see having a struggle to overcome power. Staying in character, the replacement or intervener strives to change the character's response to the situation to determine how it will affect the outcome of the conflict. Interventions are rich concrete instances of 'what might be possible'. We debrief each intervention asking both the actors as characters and the *spect-actors* what has happened. In order for the Forum to become a place of exploration and investigation there must be something below the surface for the *spect-actors* to encounter when they intervene in the drama. This is what is called the iceberg effect, as

on the sea only 10 % of the iceberg is visible - that's what we show of the character. However, there is 90% of the iceberg below - that is the larger part of the character that is only shown as necessary. The actor playing this part must know that 90% of what he *might do* if pressed (Johnston, 1998, p. 239).

CO-DETERMINED LEADERSHIP

As adult leaders in this anti-racism program, we strive to use what Freire (1998) calls democratic leadership. We have applied his concept of leadership in our theatre work with youth and reinterpreted it as co-determined leadership³. In examining issues of leadership, Freire explores the contradiction of freedom and authority, of developing voice and critical reflection within limits of respect for others, and the development of discipline and democratic practice or in our case, participation in action for social justice. Freire sees democratic leadership as the balance between freedom and authority. Freedom is the exercise of one's own power. With no freedom comes oppression where the self is regulated and restricted, creativity stymied, and development stunted. Freedom allows for self-expression to develop one's own voice, to tell one's story, and to make decisions about future actions. At the same time, Freire sees unrestricted freedom as self-indulgent, anarchistic and unproductive.

To learn the responsible use of freedom, authority is used to develop self-discipline in the exercise of one's freedom. In the use of authority, Freire makes the distinction between 'power' and 'not power over'. Too often adult-youth relationships are characterized by 'power over' where the adult retains control of the content and process. Authority can be the use of power that omits or silences students and imposes one's views upon them, or authority can be the use of power to set ethical or respectful limits on the exercise of freedom. One of the first things that the adults do at the retreat is to establish norms for being together in the retreat. We use the value of respect and talk about respect for self, others, and the space that we are in. For the adults, respect means that the leaders do not abuse power. We strive to act in a way that maintains the right of the students to develop their own voices. Adult power at the retreat is used to ensure that the voice is a respectful one that does not "falsify the truth" (Freire, 1998, p. 66) or is irresponsible in its expression and used to silence others.

IMAGE CREATES A SPACE FOR CO-DETERMINED LEADERSHIP

In the retreat, after students have played in pairs with Image creation, we divide into small groups where the students share stories and create images of their lived experiences with racism. The process of creating dramatic images develops co-determined leadership by adults and youth. As leaders at the retreat, the adults determine the structure of, and design the activities for, the retreat. We provide leadership and model how to create and view Images when we 'play' with Images in *Create the Image*. Since the theme of the retreat is racism (and oppression and discrimination), the theme of the images is set but it is the

students who decide what 'story' they will share in the creation of their images. Students' experiences also lead the interpretation of the image, since their perspectives, grounded in their lived experiences, of what they see, are accepted as 'truth'. The meaning that is made of the student-created images comes from their generative nature, where interpretations "contain the possibility of unfolding into again as many themes, which in their turn call for new tasks to be fulfilled" (Freire, 1970, p. 92).

Student voice is developed as the youth create, then view, and interpret the image. In this process, students are able to see themselves frozen in a moment of time, enabling reflection on and insight into their actions, and stimulating ideas for possible alternative actions. Because Images are a language of double seeing, where the image of the real is real as image (Boal, 1995, p. 44), the Image provides us with a language. Playing with the image means that we play *in* a vocabulary and aesthetic language, expressing things that cannot be said in other ways. We are playing with/in the ambiguity of the visual that allows everyone to write themselves into it. Johnston (1998) notes that once the visual language of the Image is learned, the paradoxes in a workshop between individual and collective experiences and surface/depth explorations become fruitful in-between spaces (Linds, 2006) that challenge a group in its exploration of a theme.

The process of the students viewing and jointly interpreting the Images becomes a form of collaborative inquiry which "is somewhat like crossing a veil into another world of knowing" (Lipson Lawrence & Mealman, 1999, Storytelling section, para. 8). The different perspectives of what an image means is an important factor in the work. A workshop group will often see many different, but connected, meanings within a single image, often seeing things that the people who crafted the image hadn't thought of. The individuals in the image fill the shapes with feelings and thoughts that come from the interplay between the shape and how they feel in it, and its relation to others in the picture. Thoughts and words initially emerge from the individual's awareness of the static body in the image and the people and the world around it. Images can also be put into motion by asking those watching to suggest the next scenes in a story, or by the facilitator clapping so that each person in the Image moves toward what they want. It is in this creation and activation of the images that the adult facilitator finds they have to choose methods, tools and approaches based on the particular context, theme and group response. The trajectory of action into the future is co-determined by the youth and the adults, with the youth determining the content and the adults designing and redesigning the process in response to the youth action, reaction and interpretation.

Both forum theatre and Image enable the creation of a community of practice where an intertextual object such as the story, play, or image becomes a focal practice (Sumara, 1995), creating a collaborative relationship that actively engages with a mutually shared field of interest (Emery, 1999) which, in our case, is racism in schools. This process develops an overlapping set of relations between person, activity and the world, enabling complex relationships (Sumara, 1996) between all who are witnessing, and engaging with, the Image or forum play.

POWER AND THE PROCESS

It is important for practitioners to be aware of and to address the ongoing role that power dynamics play as they build and sustain power-sharing relationships and structures with young people. (Libby, Sedonaen & Bliss, 2006, p. 22)

Sanguinetti, Waterhouse and Maunders (2005) introduce us to their findings from participatory research involving adults and youth in community education which point out elements they found to enhance the adult's role in community settings. These five elements are:

personal engagement with learners; self-reflection on one's teaching and one's own learning journey; improvisation and risk-taking; awareness of relations of power; and having patience and trust in the learning process. (p. 271)

These elements are useful in the analysis of the adult leadership in our anti-racism program and how theatre used as a pedagogical tool in the program, leads to co-determination in leadership.

Personal Engagement with Learners

The retreat takes place in a setting out of town where students, teachers and facilitators share a common space. This situation, combined with the trust exercises, fosters the development of personal relationships between the adults and students. The informality of a situation where students, teachers and facilitators share a common living space, eating together, participating in tasks of clean up and other housekeeping duties equally, creates the conditions where more equitable relationships between the adults and the student are possible. When we do theatre games and trust exercises, all the adults who are not leading the exercise, participate with the students. In this way, teachers, facilitators, and students all 'play' together as co-participants who develop trusting relationships with all other participants.

The informal atmosphere that we create and the trust building we develop [at the retreat] really got me into relating to kids in a whole different way. It becomes more real. Using the drama and using the kids own experience really says [to the student] that you have value and you belong. (Teacher, interview)

In addition to the informal setting and 'playing' together, as indicated in the above quote, theatre that draws on the lived experiences of youth impacts the relationship between the adults and the students. Youth have an opportunity to share their knowledge, their experiences, and their lives, from which the adults learn. Youth are as seen as contributors to the learning process, which validates their lived experiences and connects their reality to the learning. As O'Connor, Holland and O'Connor (2007) found in their drama work, youth are demonstrating their

commonsense knowledge of their emotional world, or their emotional wisdom... It works because the moment you give them the message they turn off. But it's about how we can set up a space where they can use their emotional wisdom, when they take off. In sharing this wisdom, they are giving, as much as receiving, powerful messages. Again and again, students brought this wisdom to sessions, sometimes astonishing adults. (p. 9)

Drama creates a space where students share aspects of their lives that teachers usually don't see in the classroom because the emotional domain is often not included as part of the curriculum that focuses on academic development.

The drama made me more aware of what the students are going through, as they share their experiences. As teachers sometimes, we see the academics and don't see the other dynamics that go on in the hallway and on the playground. (Teacher, interview)

Theatre provides an opportunity for the youth to develop a relationship with an adult whereby their 'stories' are listened to and valued, and their views are appreciated. "They often can't believe their luck that there are some adults who want to talk *with* them about their worlds rather than talk *about* them" (O'Connor, et al., 2007, p. 15).

Self-Reflection on One's Own Teaching and Learning Journey

Drama experiences that focus on perspective-taking, developing trusting relationships among participants, and working as a collaborative ensemble may foster psychosocial competence in the educators who facilitate the programs as well as in the students for whom they were designed. (Mages, 2007, p. 110)

The view of the student perspective provides a context for adults to develop 'shared authority' skills that enable them to better fit the educational experience to student interests and needs, and seek to better understand the student experience. As evident in the preceding teacher quotes, theatre gives the adults information about their students that is not usually shared through classroom discourse. Fabian (1990) claims that some types of experiences cannot simply be called up and expressed in words, but can only be represented through "action, enactment, or performance" (p. 6). Malchiodi (2002) adds that "when words are not enough, we turn to image and symbol to speak for us. They are a conduit to all we contain within and a way of reflecting and recounting where we have been, where we are, and where we are going" (p. 10).

In our work with youth, we have found that when discussing a complex concept, the youth sometimes have difficulty articulating an idea. For those who are familiar with theatre techniques, when we ask the youth to show us what they are thinking, they can readily create an image of the concept they are trying to communicate. A co-examination of the image often will give youth the vocabulary they need to talk about their idea.

As Garoian (1999) points out, performance incorporates processes that "recognize the cultural experiences, memories, and perspectives—participants' multiple voices—a viable content...to encourage participant discussions of complex and contradictory issues" (p. 67) and strategies of inclusion that involve the participation of the observer. The adult, as observer of the images created by the students, becomes the learner. As the adult is drawn into the lived experiences of students those experiences become incorporated into the adults' reality. They are called upon to respond to that revealed reality in their leadership with the youth. In our program, the teacher commitment to non-discrimination, in combination with the youth theatre work, means that teachers feel that they have to live by what they ask of their students: to be fair and self-reflective of their actions.

[Involvement in the program] has added a dimension to my teaching...As a person [the program] has been kind of like my rudder on course. If I feel I'm being unfair or if I feel like I've been overbearing as a teacher or even as a mother, as a person, I have no excuse. I've got much too much training and involvement with [theatre and anti-racism work] to give me an excuse not to be somebody who listens and somebody who allows for the other perspective. (Teacher, interview)

Improvisation and Risk-Taking

"Students are empowered only when they perceive themselves to be" (Gonzalez, 1993, p. 18). After the retreat, students often comment on how they were able to be themselves while there, to "take off their masks" (Student, interview) that they feel are necessary in their life at schools. The flow of the retreat activities designed by the adults draws students into a community where they feel safe to take the risk to be who they truly are.

It's a safe environment, where they can really put themselves out there, and not feel they will be judged. (Teacher, interview)

The development of community, a sense of shared purpose, means that students become open to take risks, to be willing to create representations of their lives to share with others. The opportunity for trying out new roles for themselves becomes available to students who often are denied that chance in their life at school.

For some of the students, [the retreat] is the first time they've felt completely accepted by a group of peers, where they feel completely safe. They can say what they want and how they feel and nobody is going to make fun of them or judge them – so that's a really positive experience for many of them. (Teacher, interview)

Monks, Barker, and Mhanachain (2001) outline how theatre provides opportunities for participants to test different relationships with the people around them. Participants can step out of their own bodies and try on others for size, providing a means of exploring the possibilities of other social relations (Auslander, 1994). Theatrical work becomes both symbolic and reflexive (Schechner 1985) as what

is shown is emotional, embodied, and based in the experiences of the participants. As such, it demands that the adults in the program improvise and model risk taking as leaders.

When students create their images, as leaders, we don't know what 'stories' the students will share with us so we have to improvise our response to the images. Some images are visually clear and the frozen action visibly concrete. In others, the action is more subtle while in others, it is more metaphorical and symbolic. As adult leaders, we also improvise when we have audience members respond to the image. For some we draw students' attention to aspects of the Image, for others we ask questions to lead a discussion, for others we activate⁴ the image. Different images are more conducive to particular activation techniques than others. Although through experience, we have several responses and techniques to draw upon, we are never sure how we will respond until we see the Images created by the students.

Forum theatre also involves risk taking in leadership because in the interventions, the audience members become co-leaders in the action and co-determiners of the learning. At the retreat, we explain what an intervention is, but then leave it up to the youth as audience members to volunteer when they feel they have an idea they would like to try out, to replace one of the characters, and change the flow of the performance. As leaders, we encourage student risk taking by telling them there are no right or wrong interventions. We learn from all interventions regardless of how it influences the actions in the play. Teachers sometimes find it hard to accept the direction set by students. Co-determination of the action can be difficult for teachers who are used to being more directive with students.

I [one of the authors] was joking (facilitating) a forum play at a retreat where the Grade 6 boys kept intervening in the play with physical violence or shouts, swearing and insulting the person exerting power. One of the teachers we were working with came over to me during one intervention and said, "Can't we just begin the performance by listing possible actions? The students would then try them out and then the students would see how these transformations work".

To determine possible actions for students is to control, to provide a recipe of what to do and what not to do. We operate out of the assumption that what is not expressly forbidden is permissible and we never say, no, don't do this, or don't do that.

I replied, "No. We don't say 'no', we say, 'yes, but' or 'yes' and through the characters we explore these interventions and then ask if there are other ways of dealing with the situation, keeping the space open for creativity, but we do not say 'no'. We let the spect-actors choose the alternatives and see what transpires." But this isn't a passive form of leadership. We asked the audience, "What kind of suggestions have been made through these interventions? Is violence or swearing the only way to deal with bullies? Where do we get these ideas from? Are there any other suggestions?"

We, as adult leaders in conjunction with our experienced youth actors, try to assist the spect-actors (interveners) to discover different alternatives, but, at the

same time, let them try out an action that they think has potential to change the situation so as not to stifle the process of co-determination of the action. In this way, we model that we are prepared to take risks, to have a co-created space where students can act out what they truly think and have it taken seriously, as topic for consideration, discussion, and reflection.

Theatre appears to have significant power when applied in the areas of educational and community development. Taylor (2002) writes of theatre's potential as "an applied theatre form in which individuals connect with and support one another and where opportunities are provided for groups to voice who they are and what they aspire to become" (p. xviii). Thompson (2003) adds that such programs

can be a vital part of the way that people engage in their communities, reflect on issues and debate change. [Programs that use theatre] can be central to different groups' experiences of making and remaking their lives. (p. 16)

Theatre enables students to explore ways of acting differently from those ascribed to by people in positions of authority. As Courtney (1982) proposes:

His [sic] drama makes him [sic] more aware of personal alternatives; he can imagine an ideal self separate from his present real self, and he improvises with both as well as with future social and occupational roles. He alternates the real with the possible; facets of symbols are tested against reality in the many possibilities of personality and identity. Becoming aware of the inconsistencies of adult behaviour, he can express them in improvisation...he tries out moral decisions of his own, or the inconsistencies observed in adults. (p. 17)

In our program, as adults create conditions for improvisation and risk taking, personal transformation can often be achieved by the youth who see themselves differently, as a different person, after they have been a participant in the program for some time.

The person I am now [after participating as a leader in the anti-racism program], I feel like my younger siblings can look up to me. I always wanted to be a good influence because everybody, at least once in their life, has been discriminated against. (Student, interview)

The transformation is evident in many students even though "little is known about how drama releases the imagination" (Taylor, 1993, p. 17), providing adults and youth with a voice that "perhaps they are not ordinarily invited to have" (Ibid). Performing for audiences and engaging in dialogue about one's view of anti-racism involves incredible risk-taking on the part of students, especially as they move out of the safety of the retreat setting to in-school performances and tours of plays to other schools and communities.

One of my students is very musically inclined, but he was very introverted. Recently he was speaking in front of audiences in [another town]. He will speak anywhere [now] because social justice is something he believes so

strongly in, but it was [the drama processes] that helped him. The program helped him come out of his shell. (Teacher, interview)

Awareness of Relations of Power

Youth-adult partnerships have been conceptualized as a way that youth and adults can work collaboratively for program or community action; they are characterized by mutuality in decision-making. (Camino, 2000, p. 75)

One of the issues identified by Camino is a lack of clear direction of what the role of the adult is. "Focusing only on youth and ignoring the developmental processes of adults, as well as the notion of adulthood, can pose some insidious challenges" (p. 77) to adult-youth partnerships. At the retreat, we involve our experienced student leaders in less complex leadership tasks such as leading a trust exercise or facilitating a small group discussion. Sometimes teachers, who are used to being in a position of authority and leadership, find it difficult to know what their role is when students take on leadership roles because they themselves do not have training or experience in co-leadership with youth. Although they see the benefit of having students in leadership roles, they are unsure how to support the development of more refined leadership skills in youth.

I think that's so positive to empower the [experienced] students to be facilitating at the retreat. Kids listen to kids, so I love that about it. I think not only does it work for the students on the receiving end of it, but those students that are in charge of it, they build amazing leadership skills, speaking skills, organizational skills. So I think it's very beneficial...[However when a student is leading a discussion] and someone's dominating the conversation, and kind of making really presumptuous comments about deep issues, I'm just sitting back thinking, whoa, are we going to just let this person dominate the conversation? But I left it up to the [the student leader]. So although I love the fact that its student run, I think those students need training on how to guide conversations so that people aren't monopolizing, or how to let people express ideas without letting them express inaccuracies. (Teacher, interview)

This teacher not only illustrates her ambiguous position in terms of leadership, but the problem of the lack of specific skill training for student leaders in the program.

Another problem of adult youth collaboration is that in the larger society, youths' voices are most often not considered. "Community arenas are governed not only by individuals, but also by a number of both overt and subtle established structures and relationships of power" (Camino, 2000, p. 18). This authority structure is accentuated in the school environment.

Some of the anti-racism program teachers embrace Forum theatre techniques and incorporate drama into their classroom teaching. Others find it difficult to work in the 'uncontrolled' space of theatre.

Although they do drama at the retreat, I think it would be difficult to put it on for the whole school because there isn't that support there by the student body for that kind of thing. You'd have kids saying really stupid things and doing really stupid things and crazy interventions. As a tool for the wider school audience I'm not sure that it would work. Like I don't know if you could sort of just weed out the kids, you know, who are going to cause grief. (Teacher, interview)

This teacher raises an important point in adult-youth collaboration. The structure of the adult-youth relationships in schools tends to create a hierarchical dichotomy between the students and their teachers, where teachers believe that they need to retain power and control of the learning so that students don't get out of hand. Students are aware, whether consciously or not, of this structure, and often resist against it with what adults deem as inappropriate behaviour. This student behaviour causes the adults to rationalize their need to retain power, to control student behaviour, and to avoid spaces where creative co-determination of learning is possible.

As Zeldin, Camino and Mook (2005) point out, "adults tend not to give up power until they have personally observed the competence of youth" (p. 129). During the initial work in developing partnership, there is, however, a paradox: "youth are unable to demonstrate their competence due to a lack of opportunity, and adults fail to prove the opportunity because they have not yet witnessed the youth competence" (p. 129).

Drama then becomes the site of opportunity: an opportunity to view student competence. When we as adults take a risk to let go of our control of the content of the learning, and ask the students to provide the content through their images, they inevitably come up with compelling stories. They demonstrate to us their creative ability to represent their lived experiences. Their representation goes beyond competence: students are the authority on their perspectives of their reality. In this way, shared authority is not only about power sharing; it is about shared expertise. Drama enables us as adults to use our authority to share with students the theatre tools to represent their reality and to create the space where students use the theatre tools to give voice to their expertise, their authority.

Sometimes, as leaders, the images that students create are harder to work with than others, but that is our responsibility in the co-leadership process. As students show us their competence in representing their lived experiences with oppression, it is up to us as adults to develop our competence in learning how to support students in their interpretation of that reality⁵. The intervention in the plays by the student spect-actors enables us to see their developing competence as interveners and problem solvers. Because the plays emerge from the lives of students, the content is based in student realities. When proposed solutions come from adults, they do not always 'fit' the reality of students. But over and over, youth in our program have shown us their competence to create solutions from a youth perspective to issues articulated by the youth.

MacIntyre Latta (2000) asserts that letting go of a controlled pedagogy, and shifting to one that is more flexible, creates the space for students to explore topics in a more open way. She argues that planning activities that widen the understanding of

concepts through creative means allows youth to establish deeper connections between theory and concepts to real life and vice versa. Some recurring themes which she lists are found within a place to play: attentiveness, personal, emotional, felt freedom, guided inquiry, self-identity, morality and fragility.

The "suspension of rules or formulas makes possible the creation or invention of meaning, positing alternative possibilities" (MacIntyre Latta, 2000, p. 374). Theatre involves working in an aesthetic space which "values individual interpretation, with dialogue and participation as a means to sense making which is inquiry guided" (p. 376). The role of the adult and youth changes as they "need to become players in this aesthetic space with these recursive themes folding, unfolding, and feeding back into each other and themselves, hence delaying intentionality. Delaying intentionality in teaching/learning situations of all kinds creates space for inventiveness and ingenuity-worthy pursuits" (p. 381, 382). Individual interpretation means students are free to express their ideas and perspectives while dialogue connotes a shared leadership in discourse rather than an interaction directed by the teacher alone. Power is diffused among the students and teacher as all participate in the direction of the action as it moves forward in the co-created, inventive space.

Having Patience and Trust in the Learning Process

Zeldin (2004) summarizes the various experiences of youth and adults in engaging young people in the governance of organizations and discusses the processes involved. After interviewing youth and adults from organizations that involve youth in their structures, he concluded that it was never just a decision that included young people, but each decision involved profound changes in organizational function and/or relationships. Youth were often sceptical of the adults' invitation to share involvement. When they did finally engage, they did so because there was a demonstration of respect for youth voices and competencies, a balance of power with adults, a feeling of belonging and, most importantly, a sense of "youth contributing on their own terms" (p. 80). Adults were often worried about their own personal and collective inexperience involving youth and about youth motivations and abilities. Once this phase passed, adults were impressed by the skills and benefits youth brought, including creativity, flexibility and adaptability to change as well as a capacity to find innovative ways to structure the organization.

To have youth contribute on their own terms requires a shift to guidance from instruction, "being consistent, yet flexible, having passion for the work, [and] being able to create a safe and positive environment" (Denner, Meyer & Bean, 2005, p. 97), an openness to experimentation, and acknowledgement of the limitations of the power relationship and "support shared purpose among diverse youth and adults" (Zeldin, 2004, p. 87).

When we first introduced drama into the anti-racism program, although students embraced some aspects of the theatre work, other elements were too laborious for younger students. We redesigned some of the activities and reorganised the format

in the first few years of implementation based on our observations, and the students' evaluation of and feedback to, the program. It took patience on our part and trust in the students because some of the teachers who had been involved in the original program were sceptical of the use of drama. Some of these teachers preferred to use more concrete forms to assess student learning about racism such as the ability of students to define racism and give an example of it. We persevered, in part because we believed in the power of theatre, and in part because we trusted the learning process. Mostly though, it was positive response of the students to the theatre work expressed in their actions and through their written, anonymous evaluations of the retreat. As a result, we now have theatre incorporated not just the retreat, but in the anti-racism program in all the schools in the city. As one teacher who was with the program from the beginning (before the incorporation of theatre), states:

I think the addition of the whole theatre and Power Plays changed the focus [of the program] for the good. I think that's been very instrumental in bringing out more involvement from the students, seeing how they can solve problems. It's more active. [Before theatre was used] we were creating somewhat of a passive situation in the past where we sat them down literally in a classroom kind of situation and we had them write definitions on discrimination. I'm not saying that's bad, but it was passive. The power plays and all the theatre involvement has added that active component that's part of [the program]. I mean, it's the root, so I think that's been a huge success. (Teacher, interview)

Forum Theatre and the Enactment of Co-Determined Leadership in Schools

To engage in dialogue and joint decision making means to be willing to change the adult ways and experiment with new solutions...Youth participation is not a technique; it is a way of conceptualizing youth development, a willingness to engage in an intergenerational dialogue. (Noam, 2002, p. 2)

In forum theatre dialogue replaces the monologue. The space for student expression develops shared leadership. In schools, when the teacher voice is dominant in the analysis of experience, learning is imposed externally. Deciding and defining what terms are important to the discussion of racism externalizes learning in the abstract so it is no longer situated in the lives of students. If a teacher imposes her view of oppression or interpretation of students' experiences, students don't have the opportunity to learn to describe, and make sense of, their own lives. When students are given the freedom to analyze their own experiences with the guidance of a 'democratic leader', the process is situated within the student and not externalized. Students develop the confidence to recognize and interpret the oppression in their own lives, building leadership capacity to solve their own problems, to address issues in their schools, and the power to make changes.

A difficulty with using Forum theatre in schools is that the transformation of teacher into facilitator challenges the traditional educational system, for both

teachers and students. In schools, teachers often exercise authority in ways that do not develop of the autonomy of the learners. Likewise, students immersed in this system are conditioned to learn in ways that do not develop their autonomy or democratic practice. "In a special sense they need leading into freedom and integration, when they enter another more liberated educational culture where these values are affirmed" (Heron, 1999, p. 24).

Anti-oppressive education works against commonsense views of what it means to teach. Teachers must move beyond their preconceived notions of what it means to teach, and students must move beyond their current conceptions of what it means to learn...[It] involves constantly re-examining and troubling the forms of repetition that play out in one's practices and that hinder attempts to challenge oppressions, desiring and working through crisis rather than avoiding and masking it...[and] imagining new possibilities for who we are and can be (Kumashiro, 2001, p. 9)

Theatre has the power to transform adult-youth relationships. For students to take ownership of their work, a participatory relationship is required that enables shared authority.

Many taken-for-granted school practices, such as grading, promote authoritarian relationships that obstruct the kinds of authentic participation sought in popular theatre...while any redistribution of power within the classroom is not easily achieved, often counter to the acculturated expectation of students, teachers and administrators, participatory relationships are worth striving for based on mutual respect and shared goals. (Conrad, 2004, p. 99)

Ginwright and James (2002) have proposed *Principles, practices, and outcomes of social justice youth development* to examine "how urban youth contest, challenge, respond to, and negotiate the use and misuse of power in their lives" (p. 35). They suggest that youth and adult allies work together towards a common vision of social justice, which means adults should also be engaged as part of a community committed to working against racism and oppression. This means capacity building should not only focus on youth but also the capacity to develop collaborative relationships between adults and youth. This is not a simple matter as the participants we are working with are also teachers and students embedded in a hierarchical educational system where leadership is often vested in the authority of one individual so adult and youth leadership is often envisioned as an individual action or quality. Leadership in confronting oppression and racism requires the development of notions of shared leadership because systemic change most often requires the development of collective action. We can begin by having adult leaders and teachers enact leadership that recognizes the students as knowers, modelling the practice of shared authority, collaborative empowerment, and co-determined leadership.

CONCLUSION

When examining issues of power differential between youth and adults, the socio-historical context of youth exclusion from power and decision-making is an important frame for adults to use. However, as with equity in other collaborative endeavours, sharing power does not mean that each partner participates in the same way in every task (Goulet, Krentz & Christiansen, 2003). In youth-adult partnerships, both the adults and the youth have skills, knowledge and perspectives to contribute. In co-determined leadership, the different strengths of adults and youth are recognized with each leading at different times. Collective empowerment occurs when people are able to take up their roles in relation to each other, fully with a sense of purpose, confidence, and authority. This happens best when there is mutual respect and recognition of the validity of all their roles, however large or small (Kirk & Shutte, 2004, p. 247).

Forum theatre enables students and teachers to enter into a dynamic relationship whereby the student determines the direction of the learning and the teacher offers learning opportunities needed for creative choices. The shift is then to the skills for engaging in the theatrical process. "Skills are not taught from some predetermined standards or program or when they are 'asked for'. The adult reads the sub-text of what is going on and supplies skills as they are needed" (Courtney, 1982, p. 70). In our program, this includes social skills such as trust and community building, confidence development as well as creative and analytical skills to create and interpret images from multiple perspectives. When students feel in a safe learning space, with their confidence developed, they will represent their reality, express their ideas and act out their ideas in the interpretation of images and the Forum theatre interventions. This discovery approach allows the youth to experiment and to explore solutions. The role of the adult is then changed to one of facilitator where the adult takes responsibility to create spaces where students can step forward, into the role of leader for a time, with the adult observing and participating, ready to step back into the leadership role to teach skills determined by the direction of the students.

Leadership and authority or power move back and forth from student to teacher in a dynamic flow of learning. As students experience this creative form of learning, they become more skilled at being a leader, of participating more and at a higher level of complexity with the adult. The role of the adult is to exercise trust in the youth: to believe that youth are the ones who know their reality best. Patience is practiced when adults learn to refrain from telling students what the answer is, to model acceptance of multiple realities and multiple interpretations in a way that maintains respect for others, and to step back when youth are ready to lead.

As Boal (1979) points out, "everyone has the right to speak, everyone has the right to question, and everyone has the right to be listened to...The power of creative representation becomes a democratic right for all" (p. 287). Forum theatre challenges us as adults to continually interrogate our actions, to ensure that the learning process is co-determined with youth; that is a "fully democratized form of

problem solving grounded in the lifeworld” (Houston, Magill, McCollum & Spratt, 2001, p. 292). It is this challenge that continues to inform our work in theatre, youth leadership, and anti-racism education.

NOTES

- ¹ We use theatre here to refer to the use of Forum theatre plays; drama refers to the processes in which the sharing of the experience of the participants is the goal.
- ² We will use the capitalized Image to refer to the concept of the body or bodies expression through static ‘photos’. We use ‘image’ to refer to the actual static ‘body photos’ used.
- ³ “Self-determination embodies the right for all peoples to determine their own economic, social and cultural development” (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2009, para 2). The concept of co-determination (Goulet, 2003) refers to the two self-determining entities coming together to share resources and expertise for decision making for both entities’ future directions and actions. For the purposes of this chapter we have adapted this concept to describe the nature of the adult-youth relationships in leadership in our anti-racism work.
- ⁴ By this we mean the frozen bodies in the Image move forward or backwards through time, to either what preceded this Image or what will follow it. To do this, the actors in the Image draw on the feelings and thoughts they have in themselves, and in relationship with, or responses to, others in the Image.
- ⁵ In creating the Forum plays, we as adults are working with the youth leaders to develop their competence as actor leaders. As Houston, Magill, McCollum, and Spratt (2001) point out, in the creation of plays, Forum Theatre offers the opportunity to see and work with commonalities of experiences among those involved. “The core commonalities of their experience of being bullied and to, in turn, express these in a piece of forum theatre...with the establishment of an agreed experience of oppression the group then explored the potential for turning their collective story into creative expression” (p. 288).

REFERENCES

- Auslander, P. (1994). Boal, Blau, Brecht: The body. In M. Schutzman & J. Cohen-Cruz (Eds.), *Playing boal: Theatre, therapy, activism* (pp. 124–133). New York: Routledge.
- Boal, A. (1979). *Theatre of the oppressed* (C. A. & M.-O. Leal McBride, Trans.). London: Pluto Press. (Original work published in 1974).
- Boal, A. (1992). *Games for actors and non-actors* (A. Jackson, Trans.). A conflation of two books, *Stop C'est Magique (Paris: Hachette, 1980)* and *Jeux pour acteurs et non-acteurs (Paris: La Découverte, 1989)* with additions by Boal. London: Routledge.
- Boal, A. (1995). *The rainbow of desire: The Boal method of theatre and therapy* (A. Jackson, Trans.). New York: Routledge. (Original work published in 1990)
- Camino, L. A. (2000). Youth-adult partnerships: Entering new territory in community work and research. *Applied Developmental Science, 4*, 11–20.
- Conrad, D. (2004). Popular theatre: Empowering pedagogy for youth. *Youth Theatre Journal, 18*, 87–106.
- Courtney, R. (1982). *Re-play: Studies of human drama in education*. Toronto: OISE Press.
- Denner, J., Meyer, B., & Bean, S. (2005). Young women’s leadership alliance: Youth-adult partnership in an all-female after school program. *Journal of Community Psychology, 33*(1), 87–100.
- Diamond, D. (2007). *Theatre for living: The art and science of community-based dialogue*. Victoria: Trafford Publishing.
- Emery, M. (1999). *Searching: The theory and practice of making cultural change*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Fabian, J. (1990). *Power and performance: Ethnographic explorations through proverbial wisdom and theatre in Shaba, Zaire*. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (M. Ramos, Trans.). New York: Seabury Press. (Original work published in 1968)
- Freire, P. (1998). *Teachers as cultural workers: Letters to those who dare teach* (D. Macedo, D. Koike, & A. Oliveira, Trans.). Boulder, CO: Westview Press. (Original work published in 1993)
- Garoián, C. (1999). *Performing pedagogy: Toward an art of politics*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Ginwright, S., & James, T. (2002). From assets to agents of change: Social justice, organizing, and youth development. *New Directions for Youth Development, 96*, 27–46.
- Gonzalez, J. (1993). Directing high school theatre: The impact of student-empowerment strategies and unconventional staging techniques on actors, director and audience. *Youth Theatre Journal, 13*, 4–22.
- Goulet, K. (2003, August). *Aboriginal people and education in Saskatchewan: An overview, 2003*. Paper presented at the Symposium on International Cooperation in Aboriginal/Minority Education, Saskatoon, SK.
- Goulet, L., Krentz, C., & Christiansen, H. (2003). Collaboration in education: The phenomenon and process of working together. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 49*(4), 325–340.
- Haskell, J., & Linds, W. (2004). Enacting a space of possibility in education. *Educational Insights, 9*(1). Retrieved from <http://www.ccfi.educ.ubc.ca/publication/insights/v09n01/articles/intro.html>
- Heron, J. (1999). *The complete facilitator’s handbook*. London: Kogan Page.
- Houston, S., Magill, T., McCollum, M., & Spratt, T. (2001). Developing creative solutions to the problems of children and their families: Communicative reason and the use of forum theatre. *Child and Family Social Work, 6*(4), 285–293.
- Huff, D. J. (1997). *To live historically: Institutional racism and American Indian education*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs. (2009). *What is self-determination?* Retrieved May 29, 2009, from <http://www.iwgia.org/sw228.asp>
- Johnston, C. (1998). *House of games: Making theatre from everyday life*. New York: Routledge.
- Kirk, P., & Shutte, A. M. (2004). Community leadership development. *Community Development Journal, 39*(3), 254–271.
- Kumashiro, K. (2001). “Posts” perspectives on anti-oppressive education in social studies, English, mathematics, and science classrooms. *Educational Researcher, 30*(3), 3–12.
- Libby, M., Sedonaen, M., & Bliss, S. (2006). The mystery of youth leadership development: The path to just communities. *New Directions in Youth Development, 109*, 13–25.
- Linds, W. (2006). Metaxis: Dancing (in) the in-between. In J. Cohen-Cruz & M. Schutzman (Eds.), *A Boal companion* (pp. 114–124). London: Routledge.
- Lipson Lawrence, R., & Mealman, C. A. (1999). *Collaborative ways of knowing: Storytelling, metaphor and the emergence of the collaborative self*. Retrieved September 17, 2008, from <http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca/aerc/1999/99lawrence.htm>
- Mages, W. M. (2007). Motivation, classroom management and pedagogical vision: An investigation of the psychosocial development of two actor-educators. *Youth Theatre Journal, 21*, 94–112.
- Malchiodi, C. (2002). *The soul’s palette: Drawing on art’s transformative powers for health and well-being*. Boston: Shambhala.
- MacIntyre Latta, M. A. (2000). In search of aesthetic space: Delaying intentionality in teaching/learning situations. *Interchange, 31*(4), 369–383.
- Monks, K., Barker, P., & Mhanacháin, A. N. (2001). Drama as an opportunity for learning and development. *Journal of Management Development, 20*(5), 414–423.
- Noam, G. G. (2002, Winter). The meaning of youth participation. *New Directions in Youth Development, 96*, 1–3.
- O’Connor, P., Holland, C., & O’Connor, B. (2007). The everyday becomes extraordinary: Conversations about family violence through applied theatre. *Applied Theatre Research, 8*. Retrieved December 12, 2008, from http://www.griffith.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/52891/03-o-connor-final.pdf
- Pike, G., & Selby, D. (1988). *Human rights. An activity file*. London: Stanley Thomas.

LINDS AND GOULET

- Sanguinetti, J., Waterhouse, P., & Maunders, D. (2005). Pedagogies on the edge: Researching complex practice in youth and adult community education. *Studies in Continuing Education, 27*(3), 271–287.
- Schechner, R. (1985). *Between theatre and anthropology*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Schissel, B., & Wotherspoon, T. (2003). *The legacy of school for Aboriginal people: Education, oppression, and emancipation*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- Silver, J., & Mallett, K. (with Greene, J., & Freeman, S.). (2002). *Aboriginal education in Winnipeg inner city high schools*. Winnipeg Inner City Research Alliance. Winnipeg, MN: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – Manitoba.
- Taylor, P. (1993). Research design in educational drama. *The journal of national drama UK, 2*(1), 16–21.
- Taylor, P. (2002). The applied theatre: Building stronger communities. *Youth Theatre Journal, 16*, 88–95.
- Thompson, J. (2003). *Applied theatre: Bewilderment and beyond*. Berne: Peter Lang.
- Zeldin, S. (2004). Youth as agents of adult and community development: Mapping the processes and outcomes of youth engaged in organizational governance. *Applied Developmental Science, 8*(2), 75–90.
- Zeldin, S., Camino, L., & Mook, C. (2005). The adoption of innovation in youth organizations: Creating the conditions for youth-adult partnerships. *Journal of Community Psychology, 33*(1), 121–135.

*Warren Linds
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada*

*Linda Goulet
First Nations University of Canada
Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was supported by grants from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Concordia University.