



Forum Theatre Effects on Beliefs about Business

The negative beliefs about business in rural Sri Lanka are well-attested; so are the negative effects this has on local economies and general well-being of the people of Sri Lanka. A unique field experiment was conducted to examine uses of an ILO Forum Theatre project to change this. The results indicate that the high degree to which this particular form of theatre involves its audiences, shapes their beliefs about the possibilities and benefits of starting a business. This involvement stimulates spectators to experiment, as it were, with roles and to imagine themselves in the shoes of someone who attempts to start a business. Thus they come to discover the possibilities of business and the ways in which potential obstacles can be overcome. The performances are clearly very effective in this. 41% of the sample felt strongly involved in the Forum Theatre performances. The results suggest that these respondents were significantly affected in terms of their beliefs about business. The result doubles the criteria set for project's success (20%). Considering the methodological problems of registering effects in field settings, it is particularly striking that statistically significant belief changes were found, not only among the people who were invited to the stage, but also for the audience as a whole. The project's Forum Theatre actors apparently found an effective way to stimulate creative thinking. The results of the study suggest that active participation strongly affected people's beliefs about business: the more the audience was involved, the stronger the effects on their beliefs. Especially hopeful is the finding that Forum Theatre significantly affected the audience's beliefs about business as a realistic option for their children. Furthermore, situations that meet the necessary conditions of starting a business (i.e., bank support) were considered more plausible as a result of the Forum Theatre scenarios. Also, as a result of the play, the audience believed stronger in the possibility that businesses are beneficial for their local community. The majority of the people who saw the performance (79% in the present sample) thought of ideas for a business themselves during the performance. Finally, the Forum Theatre events clearly create a buzz around town. The next day 87% of the participants indicated they talked to others about the performance.

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1. Theatre and the thinkable

Imagining oneself in the position of someone else is often considered to be an effective way of learning. Through imagination, it is assumed, one can explore the possibilities and risks of unfamiliar circumstances. This idea is widespread. For instance, it is the basis of some 'thought experiments', an important vehicle of philosophical inquiry.¹ Also, it is assumed to be fundamental for empathy and consequently also for moral development (Hoffman, 1987). Some argue that this form of imagining is typical of the games played by the young (both human and animal), and crucial to maturation (e.g., Huizinga, 1938).

The alleged effect of imagining oneself in the role of someone else may have very practical uses. In numerous situations people are stimulated to be involved in such activities, for instance in counselling and therapy contexts, as well as in training programs in which role-plays are used. An example central to the present report is Forum Theatre, an idea developed by Augusto Boal. Originally the purpose of Forum Theatre is to make audiences aware of oppressed-oppressor relations as well as the possibilities of avoiding its unsavoury consequences. The scenario of the play typically brings the victims to an unhappy ending caused by the oppressors. The play is performed twice. During the second time people in the audience are invited by a facilitator, called the Joker, to participate. When someone feels that he or she could turn the sequence of events in a positive direction, they are encouraged by the Joker to come to the stage and play the role of one of the characters (Day, 2002). It is through the active involvement of improvising in an imaginary situation that the participants supposedly change their attitudes and beliefs. Their practicing of alternative courses of action that would resolve the problem of oppression may add to the effect of Forum Theatre. In addition to the active mental effort of placing oneself in the position of someone else, participants have the bodily experience of actually being in situations unfamiliar to them. This is assumed to boost the effects of Forum Theatre considerably.

The present research aims to find out what the effects of such participatory theatre experiences are. Second, it will be examined which psychological processes are responsible for the effects.

2. Participatory responses

It is important to stress that what we know about the effects of participatory responses originates exclusively in controlled experimental research settings. Obviously such findings cannot be generalized to situations that may occur in society at large. Nevertheless, it may be argued that the results of experimental studies do make it seem very likely that participation in Forum Theatre changes audiences' perceptions.

Principally, the assumptions underlying Forum Theatre seem related to studies on the effects of role-playing. Experiments conducted by Janis and colleagues showed how improvising affects peoples' attitudes. This is why these studies may be relevant here, for it is exactly what the participants in Forum Theatre events do. The researchers compared the effects of reading out a prepared speech advocating some unpopular position with the effects of playing the part of someone who was actually in favour of the same position and who had to defend it publicly. The second condition was found to have a strong effect on attitudes (e.g., Janis and King, 1954).

In similar studies the effects were shown to affect behaviour as well. In a study conducted by Janis and Mann (1965) participants, all smokers, were randomly assigned to two conditions. In the role-playing condition they were asked to play the role of a patient who is informed that she has lung cancer, and that there is only a moderate chance that she will survive. In the second condition, the control group, participants listened to one of the role-playing sessions. Thus they obtained the same information but in a much more passive way. After the treatment, the role-playing participants expressed stronger beliefs about the dangers of smoking and indicated stronger intentions to stop smoking than the control group subjects did. Moreover, in a follow-up two weeks later the control group reported a drop in the number of cigarettes per day, but the experimental group doubled that effect. On top of that, six months later these effects were still evident. The experimental studies clearly suggest that role-playing can be a very effective tool to change beliefs and, ultimately, behaviour.

Two factors are thought to be responsible for the effects of role-playing. First, playing out the role in this scenario was likely to make the negative thoughts and emotions concerning smoking more prominent to the participants. Second, the mere fact that the participants in these studies create ideas and feelings *themselves*, made them more salient, personally relevant, and more memorable to them. This is exactly what participants in a Forum Theatre production do too, and therefore it seems plausible that their experience will influence both their beliefs and behaviour.

The effects do not seem to require a direct physical activity. Thus it may well be that an audience that merely watches the role-plays in a Forum Theatre performance also experiences the effects. It seems, however, that some effort should be made to stimulate spectators to identify with the persons on stage. The results of two studies may make this clear. First, experiments conducted by Gregory et al. (1982) showed that simply reading a scenario affected participants' probability ratings of the events described. This held for both positive scenarios (e.g., winning a prize) as for negative ones (e.g., being arrested for shop lifting). In one of their studies residents in a particular part of a town were informed about the advantages of cable television through a standard brochure listing all the facts that should persuade readers to subscribe. In another part of town a different brochure was distributed. Its text was written in the form of a scenario, inviting readers to imagine the pleasures of cable television. The researchers showed that in the second condition significantly more respondents subscribed. Thus, it seems that both beliefs and behaviour can be influenced through the exposure to scenarios. The experimenters assumed the effects were caused by imagination. The scenarios were written in the second person, allegedly causing readers to put themselves in the shoes of the characters. Direct evidence that this may indeed be the process responsible was offered by Hakemulder (2000). A number of experiments focused

on the effects of reading a story about an out-group member on readers' perception of that out-group. More in particular, it was examined whether role-taking behaviour during the reading of that story could be responsible for any effect. It was shown that instructing participants to imagine themselves in the shoes of the character made the scenario significantly more likely to them than to participants who had not received that instruction.

In sum, evidence suggests that role-playing leads to a number of effects. It may affect people's perception of out-group members, the estimated likelihood of certain events taking place, as well as actual behaviour. From this perspective it seems likely that participants in a Forum Theatre event would experience similar effects. Here too we have men and women acting out roles, and an audience attending an engaging performance. It should be stressed, again, that the studies cited above were experiments conducted in laboratory settings, aimed at controlling all possible intervening variables. Of course, the degree to which causal inferences can be made increases with the level of control. However, there is a trade-off with the degree of generalizability. In the field so many factors may play a role that it is very difficult to isolate the factors that we are interested in and establish beyond any doubt, that there is a causal relationship between 'treatment' (that is, participating in or attending a Forum Theatre event), and 'effect' (changes in attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour).

3. The present research

This study will be a first attempt, as far as we know, to establish the effects of Forum Theatre in the field through means of a quantitative approach. To do this we will concentrate on a Forum Theatre project in Sri Lanka sponsored by Enter-Growth (ILO). Its purpose is changing the predominantly negative attitudes toward business. One important value rooted in Buddhism is that one should be content with what one has, and not strive to obtain more material goods. It seems that the majority of Sinhalese place high value on white-collar jobs, and look down on business and manual work. They consider enterprise too risky, fear envy in case they should be successful and ridicule in case of failure (Enter-Growth, 2006; Reinprecht & Weeratunge, 2006). The theatre is part of a larger campaign called "Palama" (bridge), with the overall message that enterprise is a bridge to prosperity.

To change these attitudes, project performances typically start with the actors singing songs about business. This is usually followed by a short performance play, an inspirational comedy, that shows the success story of an entrepreneur, rooted in locally recognisable situations. Presumably this sets the audience's mind, stimulating them to come up with ideas in this domain when asked to respond to the play that follows. The scenario of the play presents a tragic story in which starting an enterprise, or supporting someone in that effort, could be a solution to the presented predicaments, without that solution being taken up by

the characters. There are several scenarios, which change from one night to another. One concerns a very poor family, a father, mother, and their young daughter. Desperate about their situation the wife goes to the Middle East to work as a maid, sending her earnings home. She is, however, extremely unhappy. Her employer ill-treats her, and she misses her family. In the meantime, the father wastes the money she earns on another woman and alcohol. Eventually one of his drinking buddies rapes his daughter. The tragic plot finds its climax in the intended suicide of the daughter. However, just before she commits the deed, the Joker runs onto the stage and stops the performance. He rhetorically puts the following question to the audience: how could this tragedy be averted? The actors start all over while the Joker and his helpers invite the people in the audience to stop the performance at any moment they seem fit, and to suggest a different turn of events. Those who do are asked to come to the stage and replace one of the actors who are a victim of the situation. While they act out their idea to solve the problems of the family, other problems may be raised concerning the attainability of the proposed solution. For instance, someone may propose to start a particular business. The Joker reminds the participant that one needs money to realize such plans. An actor playing the role of a banker then enters, and a scene is improvised in which the plan for a business is proposed by the person from the audience and accepted by the 'banker'.

The Forum Theatre project aims to make people experience alternative courses of actions that would avoid undesirable situations current in Sri Lanka. The theatre is a good medium to do this. It allows for interactivity (as opposed to film). In addition, the project draws large audiences, probably due to the popularity of theatre in general, but also because of the lack of other forms of entertainment available in the small villages the projects visits. Moreover, it is an easily accessible medium (as opposed to written sources or sources that require special skills, e.g., Internet and computer games). Finally, it strategically combines pleasure with information. To anyone who observes the audiences of these plays, it will be obvious that these are true 'happenings', events in which many feel strongly involved. The direct responses to both comic and tragic events are apparent from their faces. But of course, the question remains whether these responses lead to the desired belief changes.

Procedure

To put this to the test, the present study employs a so-called quasi-experimental design (Cook and Campbell, 1979): the responses and beliefs of a control group are compared to two experimental groups. Experimental Group 1 consisted of randomly chosen participants from a number of villages. They were asked to fill out a questionnaire (the pretest) before the show as well as the day after (the posttest). Experimental Group 2 consisted of a random sample of participants who only filled out the posttest the day after the performance. The

combination of these two types of experimental groups enables us to control for the possibility that conducting a pretest affects the workings of the treatment itself and/or the results of the posttest. The control groups consisted of randomly picked respondents from villages the project did not visit yet. All three groups consisted of respondents from a number of villages so that we can reduce the problem that differences between the control and experimental groups can be attributed to differences that already existed between villages.

Measures

A questionnaire was designed for the pretest and posttest. The pretest consisted of (1) a measure for beliefs about business; (2) background variables. In consultation with experts involved directly or indirectly with the project, eight statements were formulated.² The choice of statements was based on the project aims and the predicted effects. Participants were asked to respond by indicating the extent to which they agreed with the statements. For this they used five-point scales ranging from 0 (“Do not agree”) to 4 (“I totally agree”).

Statement	Valence
1. I imagine I could start my own business.	Positive
2. I think that starting a business is an option that my children could consider.	Positive
3. I think it is impossible to come up with a successful idea for a business.	Negative
4. I think it is unlikely that a bank will support good ideas from people like me.	Negative
5. I think small businesses from villages like mine can be very successful.	Positive
6. I think that businesses are not good for communities like mine.	Negative
7. I think it is important that others help you when you start a business.	Positive
8. I think that business people are only interested in their own profit.	Negative

Table 1. A measure for beliefs about business.

Table 1 lists the items that were used. The column to the right, under ‘Valence’, shows whether the statement expresses a negative or positive belief about business. The central hypothesis of this study was that the scenario presented during the performance would enhance participants’ likelihood ratings of comparable scenarios taking place in their own lives. The audience sees friends and acquaintances going on stage, proposing their own idea for a new business. Together with the project actors, they improvise in situations presenting them with solutions to the problems they might encounter when starting a business. It was expected that this would increase audience agreement with statement 1, 2, and 5. In addition, it will decrease agreement with statements expressing negative beliefs about business, that is, items 3, 4, and 6. Other elements of the performance were incorporated in statements 7 and 8. The plot illustrates that a person needs help from others and that others will benefit from his/her business as well.

The posttest questionnaire (see Appendix) consist of three parts. They were to assess (1) participants’ experience of the theatre play itself; items 4 through 10 were assumed to

measure the degree of participatory response; it was hypothesized that actual embodied practice or role-playing may have a deeper impact on the dependent variables than merely being a spectator. In addition, it was predicted that the stronger people from the audience felt involved in the performance, the stronger the changes in their beliefs; (2) their beliefs concerning business (same as in the pretest, see Table 1); (3) background variables that may be relevant in the analyses as covariates.

4. Results

Participants. The data were collected in eight randomly selected villages (Higurakgoda, Jayanthipura, Kadawalawea, Singha Udagama, Bediwewa, Girithalegama, Hathamuna, Nikawewa). 243 women and 201 men were interviewed. Men and women were equally represented in the three conditions. Experimental Group 1 consisted of 157 respondents, Experimental Group 2 of 133, and the control group of 131. Ages ranged from 16 to 83, with an average of 35.6 and a standard deviation of 13.5. By coincidence Experimental Group 2 turned out significantly younger ($M=31.6$, $SD=13.7$) than the two other groups ($M=37.2$, $SD=13.0$ for Experimental Group 1, and $M=37.5$ and $SD=13.5$ in the control group). These differences were taken into account in subsequent analyses. However, before testing the hypotheses central to the present study let us briefly look at some of the data that may already give us an idea about the reactions of audience to the Forum Theatre event.

Generating ideas. One of the aims of the performers is to stimulate the audience to generate ideas for starting a business. Of the 248 respondents who saw the show (Experimental Group 1 and 2 together), 39 went on stage. As described in the introduction, these participants were invited to the stage *because* they had an idea about changing the tragic course of the story, which could include starting a business. But of those respondents who did not go on stage, 199 (78.7%) indicated they did think of an idea themselves. This means that the performers were able to stimulate a large share of the audience in thinking about possibilities to start a business.

Discussions with others. Respondents were asked whether they had discussed the Forum Theatre performance with others. The following question was put to them: "Did you discuss the play with others (friends, family etc.). If yes, with how many people?" It was assumed that this too is a relevant measure for the impact of the performance on the communities visited by the project. One could argue that the higher the relevance of the issues of the play, the more people talk. 87.3% of the sample (Experimental Group 1 and 2) indicated that they had discussed the play with one or more persons.

Most of the data are measured on ratio or interval level (i.e., five-point scales ranging in this case from 0 to 4); this means they are not suitable for reporting frequencies (percentages); instead we can do much better than describing how many respondents gave one answer or another. Using so-called inferential statistics rather than descriptive statistics (e.g., the percentages mentioned above) allows causal conclusions and inferences about *the entire population* from which the sample randomly chosen. In other words, the statistical test will tell us whether the expected effects did occur and to which degree these can be generalized to people other than our sample. How to define the population here is a matter of discussion. One could say that the results pertain to the entire audience, so also the people who were not interviewed. However, since the research was conducted among a random selection of villages, it may also be argued that the conclusions pertain to all the villages visited by the project.

In any event, it may be clear that it is important to test the hypotheses using inferential statistics. The analyses will consist of three steps. First we want to establish whether the results of Experimental Group 1 show a change in beliefs from pretest (the test results right before the performance) and posttest (administered the day after the performance; see the next section, 4.2.1). Second, we also wanted to test whether these changes could be established when comparing the experimental groups with the control group (see section 4.2.2). As explained earlier, this will allow us to check whether Experimental Group 1 scores on the posttest were maybe due to the fact that respondents first filled out a pretest and as result they were more aware of the purpose of the researchers. In the third step (section 4.2.3) we will explore what the possible causes of the effects are. The frequencies for participants' scores on the main dependent variables can be found in Appendix 3.

4.2.1 Pretest versus posttest results

We will discuss the results for Experimental Group 1 first. Comparing the pretest and posttest results we see a significant change on three of the eight measures. Figure 1 illustrates the main effects that we see. Table 2 (Appendix 2) lists the results for all the variables.

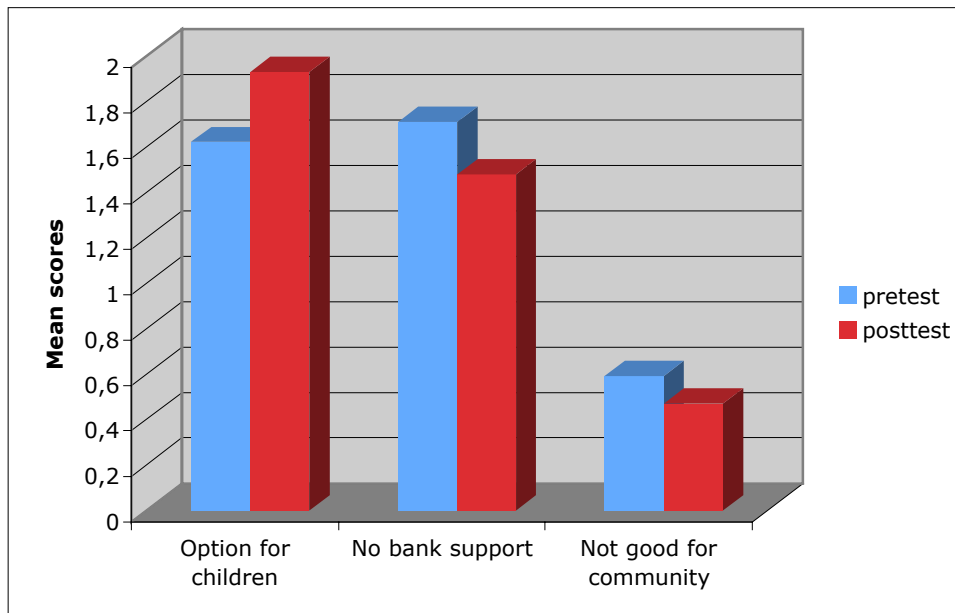


Figure 1. Changes in beliefs about business in Experimental Group 1, mean group scores for pretest and posttest.

An option for my children. The two bars on the far left hand side represent the mean scores for respondents' opinion about the statement 'I think that starting a business is an option that my children could consider.' The higher the score (represented on the vertical axis), the more positive respondents were about this possibility. As one can see, the difference is small, but the paired-samples t-test indicates that it is a significant difference ($t=2.29$, $df=148$, $p < .012$, one-tailed). This means that there is indeed an effect that cannot be attributed to coincidence and that we can generalize this effect to the entire population. In case we would run the same study again among respondents randomly selected from the same population there is 98.8% chance ($100 - 1.2$) that we find the same results. With the commonly accepted criterion of $p < .05$, we can safely assume that this result is statistically reliable.

Support from the bank. The two bars in the middle represent scores of respectively the pretest and posttest mean scores for 'I think it is unlikely that a bank will support good ideas from people like me' ($t=1.70$, $df=158$, $p < .045$, one-tailed). Comparing the two bars in the middle for respectively the pretest and the posttest we see that after the show participants considered it more likely that banks *would* support such ideas.

Good for the community. Finally, comparing the two bars on the right hand side in Figure 1 we see more optimistic responses to the statement 'I think that businesses are not good for communities like mine' on the posttest than on the pretest ($t=1.19$, $df=158$, $p < .013$, one-tailed). This means that the next day respondents thought it more likely that businesses *are* good for their community, a scenario that apparently was made more likely to them by the representations in the Forum Theatre performance.

Not all results indicate significant changes. As Table 2 shows, the changes for pretest and posttest scores on items 1, 3, 5, 6, and 8 do not suggest that audience beliefs were affected by the performance. It may be that these aspects deserve more attention from the project actors. On the other hand, the observed pattern in the results is also reassuring. It suggests that they were not influenced by social desirability: if respondents had a clear idea about the purpose of the study and had wanted to please the researchers, we would have seen an effect on all the items, especially the first. In addition, the items that did show an effect and those that did not are not exactly the same as those that do and do not represent positive beliefs about business (compare Table 1 and 2). This again suggests that respondents did not aim to please the researchers.

In sum, the results of the analyses suggest that Forum Theatre fostered positive beliefs about business. The performance enhanced positive beliefs about business as an option for respondents' children; it increased estimates of the chances that good ideas would be supported by the bank; it reduced negative expectations about the role of business in the community as a whole. Although we did not find any effect on the other five scales, neither did we find increased negative beliefs. On average the performance had a positive effect on participants' beliefs about business. Considering all the factors that are at play here, and the simplicity and reductionist nature of the instrument of a questionnaire, it should be stressed that in a field experiment like the present, these results are remarkable. The evidence strongly suggests that Forum Theatre is an effective tool to change beliefs.

4.2.2 Control group versus experimental group results

In an attempt to further put these findings to the test, we compared the results of both experimental conditions with those of the control condition. If similar conclusions could be drawn from such a comparison, this would bolster the idea that Forum Theatre does indeed affect participants' beliefs. This requires us to use a so-called Univariate Analyses of Variance (ANOVA), a test that allows us to compare more than two groups. This test has two important methodological advantages. First, all three groups can be compared in one run, limiting the possibility that we report changes that did not actually take place. Second, it allows us to take into account any differences that may be due to potentially intervening variables. In other words, the results may indicate that Forum Theatre affected beliefs, while keeping the influence of factors like respondents' profession, education, age, and gender constant. In this type of analyses, these factors are called covariates.

The data show that Forum Theatre had a significant effect on three of the eight belief scales, and these effects are independent of the variance due to the covariates. The results are illustrated in Figure 2. Table 3 gives a summary of all the results.

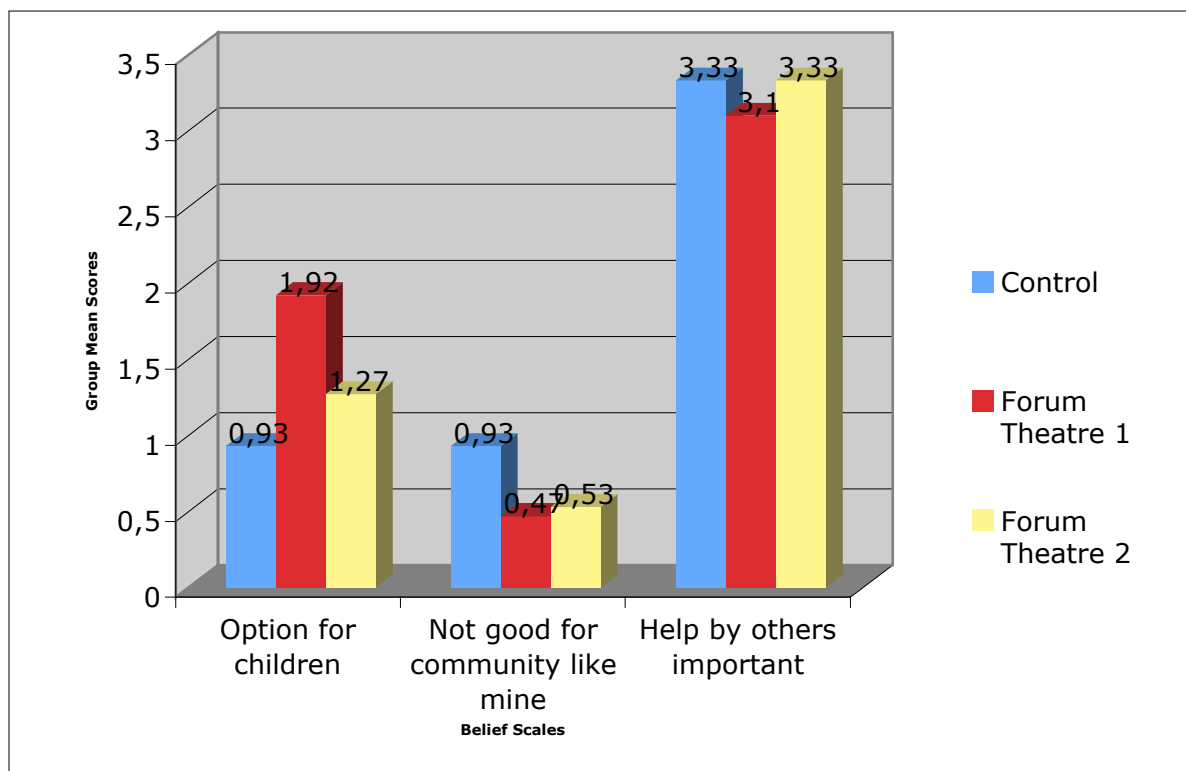


Figure 2. Comparing the three groups, mean group scores on belief scales.

An option for my children. First, we see that participating in a Forum Theatre event affected beliefs about the possibility that starting a business could be an option for respondents' children (see the three bars to the left in Figure 2). Comparing the mean scores on this item with those of the control group (the first of the three bars, counting from the left) we see significantly more positive beliefs in both experimental groups. In other words, after seeing the show, participants were more willing to consider that starting a business could be an option for their children. Moreover, the difference between the two experimental conditions is also significant. This suggests that filling out the pretest may have influenced the participants of Experimental Group 1. It may be suggested that the pretest made participants more aware of the purpose of the Forum Theatre performance. However, as we saw that *both* experimental groups differed in their responses from the control group, we can be relatively certain that the performance did affect participants' beliefs.

Good for the community. Second, comparing control group mean scores with those of the two experimental groups, the results seem to indicate a significant reduction of *negative* beliefs about the effect businesses have on communities. As can be seen in Figure 2, beliefs were not all that negative to begin with. The control group scored .92 on a scale from 0 to 4, with 0 indicating that participants totally disagreed with the statement "I think that businesses are not good for communities like mine." Even so, scores of the two experimental groups did differ significantly from the scores of the control group. Being part of the Forum Theatre

event made people more positive about the role businesses can have in communities like their own.

Importance of receiving help from others. The performance stresses that business can be made a success, the more so if one manages to do it together. Participants responded to the following statement “I think it is important that others help you when you start a business.” The last three bars to the right in Figure 2 show the results. The higher the score the more people agreed with the statement. As we can see, the first experimental group differed from the control group, but contrary to what was expected they assumed it *less* important that others help than the control group participants. It seems that the audience drew another conclusion from the performance than the actors had intended.³ This may be due to the particular performance play show in this case, in which an individual succeeds in spite of ridicule and resistance from his environment.

Table 3 again reveals that we did not register significant differences on all the items. Item 1 does show a p value of .043, but pair-wise comparison (Bonferroni) shows no significant differences between the groups at the .05 level of significance. As one can see, the main effect for item 8 approach significance (.052), but also here the Bonferroni test does not result in any significant differences between the individual groups. Thus, we see that on five (1, 3, 4, 5, and 8) of the eight items the treatment did not seem to have any effect. The project might investigate the aspects these five items relate to in the performances themselves, and see whether it is desirable to change the scenario's or stress certain aspects of the message more explicitly.

On the other hand, the results discussed till now do start showing a clear picture. We have put our hypotheses to the test in two different ways, first examining the differences between pretest and posttest results in Experimental Group 1, and second by comparing the average scores of the experimental groups with that of the control group. Both series of tests support the conclusion that Forum Theatre enhances positive beliefs about enterprise.

4.2.3 Possible causes

On stage, stronger effects. In the next step in our analyses we want to test our hypothesis about the causes of the effects. Knowing more about what made the respondents' theatre experience effective may help us to make it even more effective. As discussed in the introduction, theory and research suggest that the effects of Forum Theatre may be due to what we called participatory responses. Based on the idea that role-playing may resemble or even equal participating in a Forum Theatre performance we predicted that people who were actually *on stage* would be affected most by the scenarios. Figure 3 illustrates the significant effects.

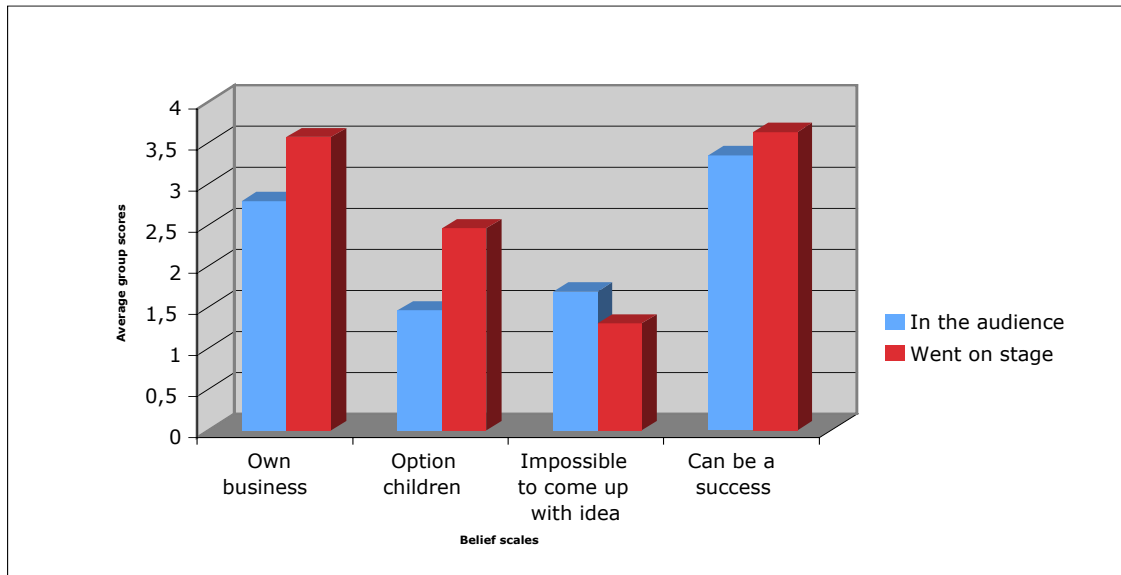


Figure 3. Comparing mean group scores for respondents that went on stage, and those that remained in the audience.

On four of the eight items we see that those respondents that were actually on stage held different beliefs about business than the rest of the audience. First of all, they scored significantly higher on the statement 'I imagine I could start my own business' ($F(1, 289)=9.64, p < .001$, one-tailed). It should be noted that the two previous series of analyses did not show an effect on this item. It seems likely that physically acting out the role of a character that ventures an idea for a business makes such a scenario relevant in a much more personal way. Rather than just considering it as an option for one's children, people who went on stage saw it as a likely option for *themselves*.

On top of that, we see higher scores for this group on the statement 'I think that starting a business is an option that my children could consider' ($F(1, 273)=8.13, p < .002$, one-tailed). As compared to the other people in the audience they seemed apt to picture their children starting a business.

Taking a look now at the two bars at the far right in Figure 3 we see that people who went on stage were significantly more optimistic about the possible success of such an enterprise than the other respondents in the audience ($F(1, 286)=6.23, p < .006$).

Contrary to expectations, however, the respondents who went on stage were slightly more careful in their responses to the statement "I think it impossible to come up with a successful idea for a business." Respondents who went on stage thought it *less* simple to come up with a good idea for a business than the other people in the audience ($F(1, 288)=4.04, p < .045$). To explain this we should maybe reason the other way around here: the participants who went on stage to act out their idea made it look easier to the others. On the other hand, it could also be that the people who went on stage realized it was not all that easy. In the light of the other results, the first option seems the most plausible one.

Moreover, the results of the group that went on stage does not differ significantly from the scores of the control group ($M=1.27$, $SD=1.32$ for the control group; $M=1.32$, $SD=1.25$ for the people in the experimental groups that went on stage, $p = ns$). So, we can assume that as a result of watching the show, it seemed significantly easier to the audience to start a business.

In sum, it can be concluded that people on stage respond stronger to the purposes of Forum Theatre than the rest of the audience. One of the aims of the project actors is (and should be, as the results show) to get as many people to participate as possible.

Participatory responses in the audience

To test the central hypothesis of this study we constructed a new variable from the questionnaire items that would indicate the degree of *imaginary* participation in the performance. We reasoned that respondents' enjoyment, feeling sorry for the characters in the play, feeling engaged, feeling part of the performance, and actively thinking of ideas themselves would make a good measure of a participatory response. This resulted in a three-point scale, ranging from 'low participation' (1), through 'middle participation' (2), to 'high participation' (3).

Univariate Analyses of Variance were conducted to test our assumptions. For these analyses we excluded those who had been on stage because at this point we were interested in the influence of *imaginary* participation rather than that of physical participation. In case we establish the role of this factor, we know how the project reaches more than just the participants who go on stage.

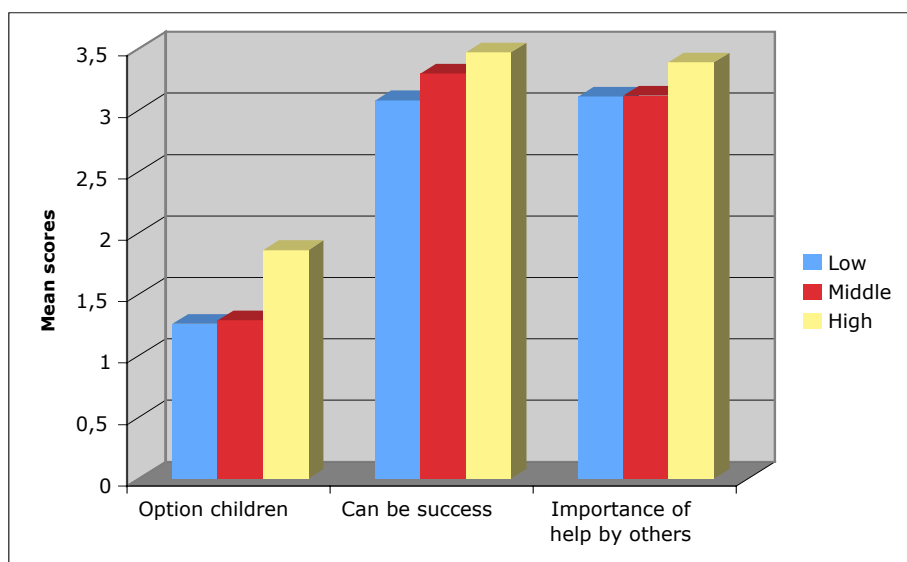


Figure 4. Comparing mean scores on belief scales for three groups of respondents (with either low, middle or high levels of participatory responses).

Figure 4 shows that in all three cases the highest level of participatory responses is associated with higher scores on the belief scales. The three bars to the left pertain to respondents' reactions to the statement "I think that starting a business is an option that my children could consider". The group with highest level of participatory responses scored significantly higher than the other respondents ($F(2,242)=5.65, p < .000$). Also, a similar pattern was found for responses to the statement "I think small businesses from villages like mine can be very successful." Again, the group with the highest level of participatory responses scored highest on this scale ($F(2,242)=3.78, p < .024$). Interestingly, and contrary to what was found earlier when comparing the effects on Experimental Group 1 with the control group, here we see that respondents with a high degree of imaginary involvement did produce the intended belief change in respect to the importance of help from others.

As to the causes of Forum Theatre's effects we can conclude that participatory responses are a likely candidate. It is a factor that does not seem to be intermediated by age or gender: we did not find a correlation between age and the degree of participation in the Forum Theatre event; men did not score significantly lower or higher than the women ($M=2.31, SD=.70$ versus $M=2.21, SD=.71$). This is a good sign. Since the performance shows the suffering of two women (the mother and her daughter) versus the alcoholic and abusive father, gender differences in the responses to the play might have been expected. However, the results suggest differently.

These results are crucial in the evaluation of the project. We see that the project actors strongly involved a large share of their audience: in our sample 41% ($N=102$) scored high on our scale for such responses, 44% ($N=108$) middle, and a mere 15% ($N=30$) low. The analyses have shown that it is this group that scored highest on participatory responses that was group in which we saw significant changes in beliefs concerning business. With 41% of the sample thinking more positive about business as a direct result of the performance, the effects of the project seem well within the criterion (a minimum of 20%) for success that were formulated previous to the study.

Other potential factors

In all the analyses reported here a number of background variables were used as covariates. This means that we kept the influence of these factors constant, while focussing on the effects of Forum Theatre and the audience's involvement in the performances. It may be, however, that some of these explain the results better than the spectators' participatory responses. Here we will look at two: gender and age. Using full-factorial univariate analyses we found no main effects for gender nor any interaction effects between gender and condition. This means that men and women did not differ significantly in their beliefs about business; neither did they respond differently to the Forum Theatre performance. Second,

looking at age differences, we distinguished two groups: respondents between 16 and 30 (N=150) and those between 31 and 83 (N=260). On two items we found a significant main effect. The younger group was significantly more likely to consider business as an option for themselves (M= 3.2, SD=1.19) than the older respondents (M= 2.8, SD=1.45; $F(1, 432)=10.9, p < .001$). However, it was found that both young and old respondents were equally affected by the performance (in other words, there was no interaction between treatment and age group). Also, we found a main effect for age on respondents' beliefs about business as an option for one's children. Here we find significantly lower scores for the young (M= .89, SD= 1.22) than the older respondents (M=1.69, SD=1.50). This does not necessarily mean that the older were more positive about this belief; it may simply have to do with the fact that we find more parents in this group. On this item we did find an interaction effect with the treatment; but because we cannot control the influence of parenthood, and because the mean age for experimental group was significantly higher than for the two other groups, this result is uninterpretable. For none of the other items did we find any effect nor interaction with the group. Hence, we can conclude that neither gender nor age are likely candidates to have interfered with the effects of participatory responses.

Conclusion

The results of the present field experiment suggest that Forum Theatre affects beliefs about business. It was argued that its influence is caused by a strong involvement of the audience in the scenarios that are presented. The data of the people from the audience who are invited to participate in the acting show the strongest changes in beliefs. In addition, the findings confirm the hypothesis that the effects of Forum Theatre can be explained in terms of the degree to which the audience felt involved in the event. The project actors were effective in doing so. During the performance 78.7 % of the audience felt stimulated to think of ideas for starting a business themselves, and 87.3 % discussed the show with others. Our measure for participatory responses indicate that many people felt strongly engaged. The responses of this group, 41% of all spectators, showed significant changes in their beliefs about business. The project is clearly a success. Its aim was formulated as "the number of women and men, including youth and officials, who consider enterprise an attractive way to make a living increases by 20 percent among those who have participated in project initiated activities to promote enterprise culture." The results show that the number of spectators that were affected is twice as much.

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APPENDIX 1. Questionnaires

PRETEST-QUESTIONNAIRE

We are very interested in your personal opinions on some matters. Please indicate to what degree you agree with the following statements.

1. I can imagine I could start my own business.

Do not agree	0	1	2	3	4	I agree fully
--------------	---	---	---	---	---	---------------

2. I think that starting a business is an option that my children could consider.

Do not agree	0	1	2	3	4	I agree fully
--------------	---	---	---	---	---	---------------

3. I think it impossible to come up with a successful idea for a business.

Do not agree	0	1	2	3	4	I agree fully
--------------	---	---	---	---	---	---------------

4. I think it is unlikely that a bank will support good ideas from people like me for new businesses.

Do not agree	0	1	2	3	4	I agree fully
--------------	---	---	---	---	---	---------------

5. I think small businesses from villages like mine can be very successful.

Do not agree	0	1	2	3	4	I agree fully
--------------	---	---	---	---	---	---------------

6. I think that businesses are not good for communities like mine.

Do not agree	0	1	2	3	4	I agree fully
--------------	---	---	---	---	---	---------------

agree

7. I think it is important that others help you when you start a business.

Do not	0	1	2	3	4	I agree fully
agree						

8. I think that business people are only interested in their own profit.

Do not	0	1	2	3	4	I agree fully
agree						

For this research it is very important that we have some more information about you.

9. What is your age?

I amyears old

10. What gender are you?

Woman

Man

11. What is your religion?

.....

12. Which school did you finish last?

.....

13. How many years were you in school?

.....years.

14. What work do you do?

.....

Thank you very much for participating in this study!
POSTTEST-QUESTIONNAIRE

We would like to ask you some questions about the performance that was on (yesterday), and ask you about your opinions.

1. Did you see the play?

- Yes (go to question 3)
- No (go to question 2)

2. Why didn't you see the play?

..... (go to question 18)

3. Did you go on stage?

- Yes (go to question 6)
- No (go to question 4)

4. Would you have liked to go on stage?

Not at all 0 1 2 3 4 Very much

5. Did you think of an idea to solve the problem depicted on stage as well?

- Yes
- No

6. Do you know one of the people that went on stage?

- Yes
- No

7. Did you enjoy the performance?

Not at all 0 1 2 3 4 Very much

8. Did you feel sorry for any of the characters?

Not at all 0 1 2 3 4 Very much

9. Did you find the play engaging?

Not at all 0 1 2 3 4 Very much

10. Did it feel as if you were part of what happened on stage?

Not at all 0 1 2 3 4 Very much

11. Did you discuss the play with others (friends, family etc.). If yes, with how many people?

.....(0 or the number of people).

We are very interested in your personal opinions on some matters. Please indicate to what degree you agree with the following statements.

12. I can imagine I could start my own business.

Do not 0 1 2 3 4 I agree fully
agree

13. I think that starting a business is an option that my children could consider.

Do not 0 1 2 3 4 I agree fully
agree

14. I think it impossible to come up with a successful idea for a business.

Do not agree	0	1	2	3	4	I agree fully
--------------	---	---	---	---	---	---------------

15. I think it is unlikely that a bank will support good ideas from people like me for new businesses.

Do not agree	0	1	2	3	4	I agree fully
--------------	---	---	---	---	---	---------------

16. I think small businesses from villages like mine can be very successful.

Do not agree	0	1	2	3	4	I agree fully
--------------	---	---	---	---	---	---------------

17. I think that businesses are not good for communities like mine.

Do not agree	0	1	2	3	4	I agree fully
--------------	---	---	---	---	---	---------------

18. I think it is important that others help you when you start a business.

Do not agree	0	1	2	3	4	I agree fully
--------------	---	---	---	---	---	---------------

19. I think that business people are only interested in their own profit.

Do not agree	0	1	2	3	4	I agree fully
--------------	---	---	---	---	---	---------------

Finally for this research it is very important that we have some more information about you.

20. What is your age?

I amyears old

21. What gender are you?

- Woman
- Man

22. What is your religion?

.....

23. Which school did you attend last or are you currently attending?

.....

24. How many years have you been in school?

.....years.

25. What work do you do?

.....

Thank you very much for participating in this study!

Appendix 2. Tables.

Table 2. Results of the t-test, comparing the pretest and posttest scores for Experimental Group 1.

Belief	Pretest		Posttest		T-test results		
	M	SD	M	SD	t	df	p (one-tailed)
1. I imagine I could start my own business	2.95	1.39	2.99	1.34	.37	159	.357
2. I think that starting a business is an option that my children could consider.	1.62	1.62	1.93	1.54	2.29	148	.012
3. I think it is impossible to come up with a successful idea for a business-	1.37	1.48	1.31	1.25	.40	158	.34
4. I think it is unlikely that a bank will support good ideas from people like me.	1.71	1.46	1.48	1.37	1.70	158	.045
5. I think small businesses from villages like mine can be very successful.	3.43	.85	3.33	.70	1.24	157	.109
6. I think that businesses are not good for communities like mine.	.59	1.11	.47	.86	1.19	158	.117
7. I think it is important that others help you when you start a business.	4.32	1.00	3.10	.83	2.23	159	.013
8. I think that business people are only interested in their own profit.	2.00	1.36	2.14	1.23	1.15	157	.126

Table 3. Results of the univariate analysis of variance, comparing experimental group 1, 2 and the control group. * and + indicate pairs of values that differ at the .05 level of significance.

Belief	Group 1		Group 2		Control		F-statistics	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F	p
I imagine I could start my own business	2.98	1.35	2.82	1.39	3.05	1.36	3.17	.043
I think that starting a business is an option that my children could consider.	1.93*	1.54	1.26*	1.41	.93*	1.21	17.26	.000
I think it is impossible to come up with a successful idea for a business-	1.32	1.26	1.38	1.32	1.27	1.34	.69	.50
I think it is unlikely that a bank will support good ideas from people like me.	1.49	1.37	1.79	1.35	1.53	1.36	1.52	.220
I think small businesses from villages like mine can be very successful.	3.32	.71	3.47	.65	3.27	.87	2.08	.126
I think that businesses are not good for communities like mine.	.48*	.87	.52 ⁺	.88	.92* ⁺	1.04	8.99	.000
I think it is important that others help you when you start a business.	3.11*	.82	3.33	.73	3.36	.79	3.92	.020
I think that business people are only interested in their own profit.	2.13	1.22	1.76	1.21	1.82	1.19	2.97	.052

Table 4. Results of univariate analyses, comparing the effects of the three groups of respondents with resp. low, middle and high levels of participatory responses. * and + indicate pairs of values that differ at the .05 level of significance.

	Level of participative responses						F-statistics	
	Low		Middle		High		F	p
Belief	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
I imagine I could start my own business	2.83	1.32	2.63	1.44	2.94	1.41	1.44	.239
I think that starting a business is an option that my children could consider.	1.26*	1.39	1.29+	1.39	1.86*+	1.49	5.65	.004
I think it is impossible to come up with a successful idea for a business-	1.17	1.11	1.42	1.27	1.25	1.36	.52	.599
I think it is unlikely that a bank will support good ideas from people like me.	1.53	1.40	1.60	1.31	1.75	1.43	.39	.679
I think small businesses from villages like mine can be very successful.	3.08*	.74	3.30	.64	3.47*	.71	3.78	.024
I think that businesses are not good for communities like mine.	.58	1.00	.57	.84	.45	.87	.78	.458
I think it is important that others help you when you start a business.	3.11	.82	3.12	.80	3.39*	.72	3.58	.029
I think that business people are only interested in their own profit.	1.75	1.13	1.98	1.18	1.98	1.22	1.11	.332

APPENDIX 3. Frequencies

Statement 1: "I imagine I could start my own business."

Condition	Level of agreement									
	0		1		2		3		4	
	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%
Group 1	16	34.8	10	37.0	18	30	32	44.4	84	37.0
Group 2	15	32.6	9	33.3	24	40	23	31.9	63	27.8
Control	15	32.6	8	29.6	18	30	17	23.6	80	35.2

Statement 2: "I think that starting a business is an option that my children could consider."

Condition	Level of agreement									
	0		1		2		3		4	
	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%
Group 1	47	25.5	10	31.3	33	36.7	28	50.9	32	65.3
Group 2	63	34.2	5	15.6	32	35.6	16	29.1	11	22.4
Control	74	40.2	17	53.1	25	27.8	11	20.0	6	12.2

Statement 3: "I think it is impossible to come up with a successful idea for a business."

Condition	Level of agreement									
	0		1		2		3		4	
	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%
Group 1	60	35.1	29	46.0	37	33	26	46.4	7	24.1
Group 2	54	31.6	10	15.9	43	38.4	17	30.4	10	34.5
Control	57	33.3	24	38.1	32	28.6	13	23.2	12	41.4

Statement 4: "I think it is unlikely that a bank will support good ideas from people like me."

Condition	Level of agreement									
	0		1		2		3		4	
	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%
Group 1	56	43.1	27	36.0	35	31.8	25	36.8	16	33.2
Group 2	35	26.9	19	25.3	38	34.5	25	36.8	17	35.4
Control	39	30	29	38.7	37	33.6	18	26.5	15	31.3

Statement 5: "I think small businesses from villages like mine can be very successful."

Level of agreement

Condition	0		1		2		3		4	
	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%
Group 1	1	33.3	1	11.1	13	52.0	73	38.4	70	34.7
Group 2	0	0	3	33.3	2	8	58	30.5	70	34.7
Control	2	66.7	5	55.6	10	40	59	31.1	62	30.7

Statement 6: "I imagine I could start my own business."

Level of agreement

Condition	0		1		2		3		4	
	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%
Group 1	116	42.8	18	26.1	18	25.0	7	50.0	0	0
Group 2	93	34.3	16	23.2	21	29.2	3	21.4	1	20
Control	62	22.9	35	50.7	33	45.8	4	28.6	4	80

Statement 7: "I imagine I could start my own business."

Level of agreement

Condition	0		1		2		3		4	
	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%
Group 1	3	50	4	40	18	58.1	84	40	51	29.1
Group 2	2	33.3	2	20	3	9.7	70	33.3	57	32.6
Control	1	16.7	4	40	10	32.3	56	26.7	67	38.3

Statement 8: "I imagine I could start my own business."

Level of agreement

Condition	0		1		2		3		4	
	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%
Group 1	22	27.2	21	40.4	50	32.1	42	42	23	56.1
Group 2	33	40.7	10	19.2	53	34	31	31	7	17.1
Control	26	32.1	21	40.4	53	34	27	27	11	26.8

¹ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thought_experiment, last visted 21 September 2007.

² Let me take this opportunity to thank Nireka Weeratunge, Karin Reinprecht, Chris Seeley, Ramesha Balasuriya, Gemunu Wijesena, and Roel M.P. Hakemulder for their useful comments during the developmental phase of the study, and their feedback on a previous version of this research report.

³ Because this effect is contrary to our expectations all effects in this section are reported two-tailed rather than one-tailed.