A PHENOMENOLOGICAL OBSERVATION OF TWO THEATRICAL LEARNING
ENVIRONMENTS

by

RAYMOND FREEBY

B.S., Kansas State University, 1969
M.S., Kansas State University, 1998

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Educational Leadership
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2013

Abstract

This modified qualitative study focused on observations of learning procedures and performance outcomes of two theatrical learning environments (TLE), using a select set of phenomenological observation and recording procedures to ensure minimization of researcher bias. Observational results were compared to previously published observations of a large lecture hall learning environment at a Midwestern university. Observational results were also compared to a select set of learning theories to determine similarities in observed learning procedures to those theories. This study reveals differences in methods of acquisition of knowledge and skills in a TLE and the acquisition of same in the lecture hall environment. In the large lecture hall descriptions, the individual learner's preset learning measurement options of ABCDF or Pass/Fail, individual option of choice to be present but non-interactive within the learning environment, individual option of choice of when to learn material and in what manner (for instance, cramming for a final), option of choice of attention level when physically present in the learning environment, and other options all affect the individual learner's achievement level while minimally impacting the learning and achievement options of other members of the lecture class. This contrasts with a TLE, where failure is not a pre-listed option, maximization of learning and skills development is a constant goal individually and severally, interactivity with other learning environment members is mandated, material must be progressively learned and mastered by all members at essentially the same rate of progress, attention level must remain high, and there may well be multiple 'final exams' wherein virtually 100% of text materials must be transmitted verbatim in a meaningful way to a third party (an audience) through skills learned. Comparisons of learning theories reveal this process to be most closely allied with, but still significantly different from, collaborative learning theory.

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Acknowledgements

Dedication

I wish to dedicate this to all people who refuse to give up. Good for you. And to my very patient and supportive wife Joyce, a Terry Pratchett fan as am I, who knows the meaning of these two words: Rincewind lives.

Chapter 1 - Introduction to the Research

"All the world's a stage…" William Shakespeare

As You Like It Act 2, Scene 7 Jacques

(Proudfoot et al, eds., 2005, p. 173)

Introduction

This chapter begins with a basic explanation of a strict phenomenological observation and recording process, and an explanation of the modified form of phenomenological observation and recording methodology that was utilized by the researcher in this dissertation.

There follows a general description of the two plays observed (a musical and a drama), the length of observations of those plays, and the recording formats used by the researcher during and after the observational process.

The role of the researcher is discussed and defined. Researcher bias is discussed, including the normalcy of judging theatrical results without accounting for the learning effort involved, and the need for neutralizing the inherent judgmental nature of the theatrical environment in order to reduce bias in the observational process. The background of the researcher's interest in and experience with the topic of theatre is discussed as a probable source of observational bias.

There is a discussion of the differences in learning and performance goals, evaluation procedures, and participant obligation in a theatrical learning environment versus an 'ordinary' classroom learning environment (as generically defined by the researcher). These differences include the option of failure and/or poor performance in the two environments.

This chapter contains a statement of the problem, a statement of the purpose of the study, and the significance of the study. There are sections concerning research questions, methodology, assumptions, and limitations of the study. There are statements about delimiters to

the phenomenological observations, a discussion of the population sample, and comments on data analysis. There is a list of definitions of terms. Rounding out the chapter is a summary of the topics mentioned above.

Phenomenological Observation and Recording

This study involved phenomenological observation and recording. In the purest form of an explanation of phenomenological observation, this study observed and recorded the phenomena occurring during the rehearsal and production of two plays without including researcher bias in either the observations or the recording of those observations. Groenwald, (2004), refers to this as simple descriptive phenomenology.

The statement in the previous paragraph is about as far as a phenomenological purist can go in the descriptive process. The process is devoid of any other goals. One cannot include any other purpose for the study other than the purpose of unbiased observation and recording of phenomena, and therefore the usual methodology of a pre-research list of assumptions, research questions, and focus of research observations do not apply. To have prior assumptions about an observation in a purist sense is quite literally out of the question. Prior assumptions imply prior and current bias. To have research questions thought out and written down prior to an observation or observations implies having an agenda that negates the neutrality of the observation (Flesher, 1997). To concentrate on particular phenomena during an observation is to commit observational focal point bias. Friedman (2010) named this latter observational shortcoming the 'streetlight effect' in a published research critique titled *Why Scientific Studies Are So Often Wrong: The Streetlight Effect*.

Similarly, significance of findings and research goals are excluded from the methodology of a purist approach to phenomenological observation. To look for 'significance' in the sense of

importance is to make comparisons to extra-observational opinions or data. To look for 'significance' in a statistical sense is to assign a probability level of an observed event being either "true or due to chance" (Krathwohl, 1993, p. 415). Significance and chance do not enter into a purist observation; nor does the concept of an observation being 'true.' At a particular point in time and in a particular environment, the phenomenon is either observed or it is not. That is the extent of a purist observation. The research goal of a purist observation, if the term 'goal' is even a proper identifier, is simply unbiased, unfiltered observation and description of phenomena. Edmund Husserl, known as the 'father of phenomenology' (Feist, 2004), believed that attaining this purist state of observation was possible. Husserl also believed that an observer can achieve a pure and totally unbiased transcendental ego, and that an individual can then observe without presuppositions (Moustakas, 1994).

Modified phenomenological observation and recording.

This study is not of a phenomenologically purist nature. It consists of a limited amalgam of phenomenological observational procedures chosen by the researcher. It uses predetermined areas of observational focus, specifically concerning learning processes that may or may not be present and may or may not be utilized in an environment that the researcher arbitrarily termed a 'theatrical learning environment' (see definitions section). This study has a comparative aspect, involving comparisons to extra-observational opinions and data specifically concerning previously published observations, descriptions, and videotaped recordings of a large lecture hall learning environment at a Midwestern university. In these three ways (delimited observation, predetermined focus, and comparison) this study departs from strict phenomenological observation and recording.

The research goal (a predetermined focus) of this study is to ascertain whether or not the

learning processes that occur in a theatrical learning environment differ somehow in intensity, direction, emphasis, presentation, individual learner involvement, group commitment, and measurement(s) of competence from the learning processes that occur in an 'ordinary' large lecture hall classroom environment as described and videotaped by a Midwestern university professor of Cultural Anthropology. In Chapter 5, researcher-observed data from the theatrical learning environment are compared and contrasted with non-researcher-observed references from that other research source (extra-observational opinions or data).

A final point of demarcation: in his *Introduction to Phenomenology*, Moran states that there are many scholarly works by authors including Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Hegel, Heidegger, Ricoeur and Sartre that extol phenomenology as a philosophy, and there are many different branches of philosophy that use the term phenomenology as part of their titles (Moran, 2000, p. 8).   Phenomenological observation and recording is used in this dissertation as a limited and modified research tool only, not as a disciplinary creed amounting to a philosophy.

Plays observed.

The study uses long-term phenomenological observation and recording of the development and production of two plays that were brought to fruition on stage before live audiences in Kansas in 2011. The first theatrical production observed was *The Wiz* (the full but rarely used title is *The Wiz: The Super Soul Musical "Wonderful Wizard of Oz"*), a 1974 musical adaptation of Frank Oz's novel *The Wizard of Oz* by the playwright William Ferdinand Brown, with music and lyrics by Luther Vandross, Charlie Smalls and Quincy Jones. The current observed production was comprised of an all-volunteer unpaid cast involving the participation of local residents from two Midwestern towns, and transient students from an education and career technical training program administered by the U. S. Dept. of Labor, focused on providing career

technical and academic training for ages 16 through 24). *The Wiz* was presented to live

audiences at a community theatre in nine performances, September 23, 24, 25, 30, and October

1, 2, 7, 8, and 9 in 2011.

The second theatrical production observed was *The Adding Machine* (the full but rarely

used title is *The Adding Machine: A Play in Seven Scenes*), a 1923 play by Elmer Rice that is an

expressionistic drama, often cited as a landmark of American Expressionism (refer to definitions

section of this chapter for a detailed definition of Expressionism). It was presented to live

audiences as a main stage production at a large university Auditorium on the campus of a

Midwestern university in three performances, November 10, 11, and 12 in 2011.

Most rehearsals for both plays were attended and video-recorded by the researcher.

Extensive written field notes of observations were also taken and later transcribed. Some

scheduling conflicts prevented the observation and recording of 100% of the rehearsals. All live

audience stage performances of both plays were observed by the researcher, and one live

audience performance of *The Wiz* was videotaped. Due to rules against taping live performances

at the university auditorium, no live audience performance of *The Adding Machine* was

videotaped. Post-production interviews of actors and directors in both productions were

videotaped.

The Role of the Researcher

This researcher sought to be an unbiased observer and unbiased recorder of phenomena

concerning the two plays in general, and of the learning processes involved in those theatrical

environments in particular, by following certain basic observational tenets of phenomenology.

This is not an easy thing to do on a consistent basis. It involves the phenomenological process of

bracketing, which means not indulging in comparative descriptions or analyses of observed data

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with previously developed personal opinions or beliefs concerning similar phenomena, and not allowing any such existing and previously developed opinions or beliefs to influence, color, or slant those observations and descriptions (Bednall, 2006, p. 2).

This does not mean the researcher cannot have a priori opinions or beliefs. It's virtually impossible not to. Part of the bracketing process (see definitions section) is a matter of control and vigilant attention to rewriting or 'perfecting' hastily taken field notes in a timely manner (Bednall, 2006, p. 3). In other words, bracketing means the conscious, rigorous effort at exclusion of any preconceptions or predeterminations an observer may have previously developed into an opinion or belief system concerning the observed phenomena when the observer is in the process of observing and recording observations about that phenomena (Idhe, 1986, p. 17). It precludes the common practice of using descriptive and often tangential analogies, such as 'the dancer leapt like a gazelle' or the use of descriptive names or nouns that imply a wide range of meaning, such as 'the actor employed the Stanislavsky method'. Thus, such quick and ambiguous entries in field notes must be rewritten post-observation to provide clarity and remove bias. A detailed explanation of Phenomenology, its history and phenomenological methods of observation is presented in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

Researcher bias.

This researcher does, of course, have previously formed opinions and a certain belief system concerning aspects of the theatrical learning environment. This researcher has a Master's Degree in Theatre, with an emphasis in playwrighting. Attaining the degree required intensive study of theatre history, lore, processes, and philosophy. This researcher has written twelve full-length plays, three of which have been adjudicated at regional American College Theatre Festival (ACTF) events. ACTF events are judging events. Any critique of a play, its writing or

its performance, is a judging event. Theatrical judging events are rife with comparison, opinion, and personal beliefs (Idhe, 1977, p. 123). Ordinarily, the very nature of observing a theatrical event is to judge it, compare it, and express personal beliefs about theatre in general and the observed phenomena in particular.

Even the process of creating the text of a theatrical event (playwrighting) involves a series of judging events, especially when it is done in a classroom environment. Part of experiencing a classroom environment devoted to playwrighting is the involvement of the participant in a fairly constant critical review of written material submitted by other classmates. It also involves fairly constant critical review of the participant writer's own work by other classmates.

Analysis and criticism are part and parcel of the entire creative theatrical process and environment, from writing script to content delivery, from basic stage blocking and choreography to the addition of finely crafted physical nuances such as facial expression, vocal intonation, and body positioning and gesturing. In all aspects of the process, from the beginning judgments of selecting actors for the roles to be played through to the endgame of the external evaluative reviews penned by amateur and professional observers of the finished product of the craft, criticism abounds; judgments are made. Associations with other works are comparatively weighed and balanced. Personal prejudices and proclivities about what constitutes success or failure are frequently and sometimes unfairly assessed. And to paraphrase William Archer (1886) in his essay *The Ethics of Theatrical Criticism* written over a hundred years ago, this criticism and judgment of observed phenomena has been entertwined with theatrical performance since the earliest forms of theatre existed.

In other words, biased observation of theatrical phenomena in all of its different phases

is the norm. And consideration for the amount, type, and quality of learning necessary to produce the phenomena observed and judged is rarely if ever taken into account.

Another mode of researcher bias: The normalcy of judging theatrical results without accounting for the learning effort involved.

When presenting a live performance of a theatrical production, the end result of weeks or months of preparation may be a performance or performances judged as a failure by individuals or groups (critics and audiences) external to and unassociated with the production effort (Bailes, 2010). A judgment thus imposed may be buttressed by detailed critical review, or merely be a 'thumbs down' judgment call without additional comment. In either case, such a judgment rarely if ever accredits the necessary effort put forth by the actors individually and communally at learning and mastering the production, except to judge individual performers 'inadequate' or lacking skill.

During the time-frame of preparation for the production, the actors and director in all likelihood will have extensively researched the material presented, undergone several concentrated discussions about the meaning or various meanings of that material, morphed through various interpretations of presentational technique, literally memorized the entire text of the material to be communicated to others, and rigorously devoted many hours of rehearsal time toward perfecting the technique of presenting that memorized information to others. They have done this as a team, as collaborators, engaging in a long-term group effort toward competency.

An external judgment of failure by individuals not connected with the production process may be the end result of all that time and effort spent in readying the production, but that external negative decree is not likely to be assessed due to a lack of trying on the part of the director and actors, or a lack of learning and skills development, or a lack of interest in and

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mastery of the information presented. A snarky critic may insinuate all of those claims, but they are very rarely true. For the theatrical presentation to take place at all, a great deal of effort, learning, and skills development must occur. A bad review is more likely to be based on an esthetic value system, a comparative judgment linked to associations with past performances observed, or personal proclivities of the critic that are only tangentially relevant to the actual observed results experienced by the observer. A good review, or even a neutral review, is also assessed on much the same basis of biased observation and externally-focused comparative judgments.

Neutralizing the inherent judgmental nature of theatre.

Thus, if the interest of a researcher is in neutrally observing the processes of learning taking place in a theatrical production, rather than assessing an arbitrary judgmental decree about performance outcome based on the researcher's background in theatre, or personal proclivities about what constitutes 'good' theatre, then a serious and constant attempt must be made to make the researcher's observations as neutral and devoid of personal prejudice as possible. More information on how this was accomplished can be found in the Methodology section.

Background

This researcher noticed years ago when in the process of obtaining his master's degree in Theatre that there was a definite and pronounced difference between the learning that took place in a theatrical learning environment (see definitions section) and the learning of associated information that took place in a 'regular' classroom environment that disseminated information devoted to theatrical performance subjects, theatrical history, plays as literature, etc.

As a sub-group within the 'regular' classroom environment milieu, there was also a noticeable difference between 'regular' classes as listed above and 'creative' classes, specifically

playwrighting classes wherein a play or plays were written by the researcher during the coursework time-frame of the semester. In such classes, new script material must be generated by the individual. It is critiqued both by the individual writing it, and also by the class members. Class members' work is similarly critiqued by the individual (the researcher). This correlated with the researcher's previous experiences in novel writing classes taken in the English Department at KSU, wherein an entire first-draft novel (120 pages minimum) must be created within the coursework time-frame of the first semester (Novel Writing I), and be thoroughly re-written during the coursework time-frame of the second semester (Novel Writing II). The necessary amount of time and effort devoted to a 'regular' classroom environment and a 'creative' classroom environment were markedly different.

Differences in theatrical learning environment goals, evaluation, and participant obligation.

There were differences the researcher noted between goals, evaluation, and participant obligation for a 'regular' classroom environment and a theatrical performance environment. To illustrate this, a very brief sketch of an 'ordinary' classroom environment syllabus might look something like this:

1. Class will meet MWF from 10:30a.m. to 11:25a.m. in Room X for the duration of a regular semester.

2. Class will read and discuss Chapters 1-7, 11-19, and 21 to 25 of textbook X.

3. A midterm test will be given on Date X, covering lecture material and textbook material to Chapter 19.

4. A final exam will be given on Date Y, covering lecture material and textbook material from Chapter 21 to 25, plus a general review of all course

subject material. Both tests will be graded with 94-100 points = A, 86-93 points = B, 77-85 = C, 70-76 =D, below 70 = F.

5. Regular class attendance is expected but not graded. You will receive 3 hours undergraduate credit for successful completion of this course, which will be recorded on your college transcript.

Contrast this with a realistic, if rarely written out, syllabus for participation as a major role actor in a university stage play. The following is fairly close to the requirements that existed for participation as an actor in *The Adding Machine*:

1. Class will meet every evening from 7:00p.m.to 8:30p.m. M-F in Room X from August Y to November Z. This time-frame will be compressed into approximately 60% of the temporal length of a regular semester.

2. Background, philosophy, and interpretation of play script will be discussed at length, as will the history and philosophical leanings of the playwright and the predominant cultural values extant in the country at the time of play's conception and original production.

3. Your assigned sections of the script will be memorized. Verbatim.

4. All other speaking parts of the script will be memorized. Verbatim.

5. You will be expected to have the skill and ability to begin quoting text verbatim at any point within the play, and to readily move backward or forward within the text of the play to other starting points as needed during rehearsals.

6. You will be expected to devote extra hours in addition to the ones mentioned above at the director's discretion if necessary for the successful

presentation of this play.

7.   During the two weeks prior to live stage presentation of the play you may

be expected to attend rehearsals every day, seven days a week, for

approximately two hours per session. Longer if deemed necessary by the

director.

8.   You will have three final exams (in the case of *The Wiz*, nine final exams!).

Each exam will be subject to individual and group performance critiques,

and also critiques by critics external to the performance and utterly

unfamiliar with the amount of work you have devoted to presentation of the

performance. Exams two and three may require intensive last-minute

modification of performance requirements, based on critical review of exams

one and two.

9.   There will be no class credit given for this endeavor. There will be no

indication on your college transcript that you have participated in this

learning experience.

Seeing the requirements of the two learning ventures written out like that begs the

question of why anyone would agree to participate in the second learning venture on top of and

in addition to a presumably full semester course load of 'ordinary' college classes that will, in

fact, be graded and recorded on a permanent transcript for college credit. And yet it's done all

the time, usually on a competitive basis (tryouts or auditions) to get admitted to such an intense,

potentially extended, and definitely demanding learning environment.

The option of failure and/or a self-designated goal of poor performance.
The most noticeable difference between the two course illustrations above is the lack of

numeric performance measurement in the second syllabus. In the first, 'regular' course, the option of failure is built right into the numerical measurement system, as are options (sometimes viewed by the learners as goals) for less-than-stellar individual performance. It's common enough for many students entering a new class to rationalize that a final grade of A would be a great outcome, but a B or C would be acceptable.

It is also important to point out that the degrees of lesser performance measurement (B, C, D) are variably-designated numerical/alphabetical judgment options built into the 'regular' course structure that ordinarily do not affect the overall success or failure of the course as a whole, if they appear to follow a normal bell curve graph pattern.

Individual failure of a student after remaining in the 'regular' class for its entire duration is an option that does not affect overall success or failure of the class either, unless the cumulative occurrence of individual failure is quite prominent (thus possibly implicating the instructor in the failure). Not so in the second course description. Unwritten but certainly implied in the second course description is the expectation that the highest possible level of success is expected, if not demanded of every actor/participant. Maximum mandatory (course-designated) time spent and additional voluntary extra time spent in group (class) and individual active goal acquisition is expected as well. A high level of interactive participation with other actors is an unwritten given. Group goals are weighted as being as important as individual goals. And the success or failure of the director/instructor figures prominently (and as a matter of reputation) in the overall evaluations, internal and external, of the theatrical learning experience.

There are additional functional and outcome differences in the two types of learning environments that will be explored in detail in the comparative analysis found in the Results section of this dissertation.

Statement of the Problem

Although different learning theories are comparatively discussed in Chapter 5, this study is not about discounting or upholding the value of particular learning theories. The statement of the problem as observed by this researcher in past personally-attended classes concerns the apparent discrepancy in the level of individual and collective learner involvement and learner commitment to goals in the two differing learning environments mentioned previously. Perhaps a single defining descriptor of the Statement of the Problem would be 'level of engagement'. There seems to be a difference in the level of, and duration of, engagement in the learning process in the two learning environments.

The quote that follows is from an essay posted online February 16, 2012 by Dr. Michael Wesch, a professor of Cultural Anthropology at Kansas State University. It perhaps best explains what this researcher means by 'level of engagement':

This is a quick little essay about why a teacher can employ all the "right methods" (pick your buzzword: student-centered, learning-centric, participatory, collaborative, problem-based, etc.) and embrace all the most rich, compelling, and engaging technologies, and still fail. The problem of why good classes fail has become a bit of an obsession for me lately. … At worst, I see people feeling disengaged, disconnected, and alienated, and that's just the professors. At best, I see rooms full of people dutifully playing the game of school, listening carefully, taking notes, etc. … which is okay as far as it goes, but I rarely see people getting lit up, inspired, excited, upset, or even a little uncomfortable (which would be a pretty good place to be for a breakthrough learning moment). The apparent levels of disinterest are astounding … To be clear, these are not all, or even mostly, straight "sage on the stage" lectures, and that's what inspires this little essay. In fact, the few truly fantastic classes I have stumbled into were just as likely to be "sage on

the stage" lectures as they were to be based on more participatory methods. And the disheartening reality has been that a really bad lecture doesn't fail as badly as a really poorly executed participatory class. Many of these professors seem to do everything "right." They ask their students questions, pause and let them discuss with their neighbors, show YouTube videos that relate to their own experience, and invite discussion. But disinterest and disengagement still reign. Why? (Wesch, 2012, p. 1)

Although this researcher has to this point been juxtaposing theatrical learning environments with a depiction of lecture class environments, clearly Dr. Wesch is not limiting his viewpoint of "good classes failing" to lecture hall class environments alone. Nor does this researcher. It is simply that, unlike the lengthy quote above, most of Wesch's observations quoted elsewhere in this dissertation come from Wesch's descriptions of his own large lecture hall classroom environment, some of which have been famously published on YouTube, accessible via search tags such as Wesch, M. Wesch, Wesch Video, and many other identifiers. Several quotes concerning that particular large lecture hall learning environment will be found in Chapters 2 and 5.

Therefore, for purposes of simplicity in making comparisons, this researcher chooses to make Wesch's description of a 'large lecture hall environment' the general identifier of, and interchangeable with, the default descriptor of an 'ordinary' classroom learning environment, in other words a non-theatrical learning environment.

As to the answer to Wesch's "why" question about disinterest and disengagement appearing disturbingly frequently in those 'ordinary' classroom observations described above, this researcher agrees that Wesch's observations concerning the levels of learner involvement, learner interest in subject matter, and learner commitment are some of the weak or missing

ingredients that lead to 'good classes failing', as he puts it. Lack of a collaborative mandate via group involvement in a 'regular' classroom environment seems to be another missing ingredient, although this researcher does not presume that all classroom environments will benefit from such an arrangement. Lack of an impact of individual learning outcomes on the overall functional success of the 'regular' class seems to be a third missing ingredient. This is evident from the built-in measurement system (grading) of individual achievement that extends all the way to the inclusion of a predetermined acceptance of individual failure to meet even minimum class requirements.

What accounts for these differences in the two environments, a theatrical production and a traditional classroom? In part, the theatrical learning environment is uniquely different than traditional higher education classrooms in that all actors actively choose to be there, all actors must maximize their learning in order to create a successful play, and all actors must collectively work together to produce a successful play by transmitting the learned content of the play to a third party (the audience) through the collective communication skills of the actors. All of these conditions have the possibility of existing in a regular lecture hall learning environment also, but they rarely do.

Nevertheless this dissertation needs a concise and simple Statement of the Problem. The researcher chooses the following general statement: the problem with 'good classes failing' in the learning environment found in a 'regular' classroom appears to be in part an inadequate and inconsistent level of engagement in the learning process, by some or possibly all parties involved in the process.

Determining why that happens is more difficult. What factors present in a theatrical learning environment raise the level of engagement beyond that of an 'ordinary' learning

environment? Essentially the research question explores what those factors are, although some are obvious. Inadequate and inconsistent learning is not an individual option in a theatrical learning environment. There is a collective mandate to succeed, and there are no acceptable individual options to fail.

Statement of the Purpose

As stated above, for purposes of simplicity, from this point on references to an 'ordinary' learning environment generally refers to the descriptions of the large lecture hall environment published by Dr. Wesch, even though the learning environments of smaller and diverse classroom configurations and the learning theories and practices applied therein are also relevant to the discussion.

Additionally, before describing the Statement of the Purpose of this dissertation, it is also necessary to describe the *positive* physical aspects of a large lecture hall learning environment. This author does not mean to imply that the physical environment itself (not the 'ordinary' learning environment depicted therein) is without merits, or that a theatrical learning environment cannot be brought into existence within such a large physical environment. This researcher does not imply or suggest that universities do away with such large physical environments either.

 A physical learning environment such as the large lecture classroom environment depicted by Dr. Wesch has many elements of efficiency. A large lecture hall environment has the potential to amass several hundred students in one place at the same time, thus assuring cost savings over the alternative of having many smaller groups of students spread out over many individually expensive classroom environments while learning the same curriculum material from many different instructors. Energy savings and building maintenance savings also result.

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Employee salary costs are reduced. Given these various financial and logistic advantages, it is

unlikely that the large classroom environment will become a thing of the past on college

campuses anytime soon.

The Statement of the Purpose, then, is more of a question than a statement: Is it possible,

through an understanding of how a theatrical learning environment works, to improve the

potential for learning in a large lecture hall environment?

It is, of course, possible to change the internal physical environment of that type of

classroom somewhat, improving the seating arrangements or the visual projection apparatus to

create a different and more accommodating environment. But will that necessarily change the

distractions, the non-involvement, the indifference to the material being presented, the lack of

interactivity that such a structured environment promotes?

A better question to ask would be the following: what else is going on or not going on in

this large lecture hall classroom situation, besides the general physical environment of the

classroom, that also affects the learning potential of the students who are in it? A vast amount of

published material exists concerning the numerous ways to improve, tweak, refine, or adjust

classroom teaching techniques. Books are written about it, academic journals are devoted to it,

academic seminars are centered around it. Teaching techniques from the past and present are

entertwined, examined, dismantled, and analyzed to project, promote, and predict what new

teaching techniques should be adopted for the future.

Significance of the Study

Dr. Wesch (2009) speaks of turning the classroom emphasis from making students

knowledgeable to making them knowledge-able (see Chapter 2). Knowledge-able means to

make students more proficient in the skills needed to acquire and disseminate knowledge. This

is a clear distinction from the 'ordinary' process of imparting information for the purpose of testing the retention of that information sometime within the framework of the duration of the class.

It is the opinion of this researcher that a theatrical learning event is inherently a 'knowledge-able' event. It is insufficient to simply memorize the data contained in the text of a play. That data must be discussed, researched externally to the text itself, interpreted both singularly and collectively by the participants engaged in bringing the play to fruition on a stage, committed to memory, formatted into a deliverable sequence of events and scenes, practiced earnestly until a high degree of proficiency in both understanding and imparting the memorized information is attained, and ultimately the data must be successfully transmitted from the text of the playwright through the efforts and skills of the actors and director to a collective third party, the audience-recipient of the live performance production of that play.

Thus, the goal of a theatrical learning environment is more than the endgame test-measurement and subsequent documentation of each participant's singular retention level of information and/or acquisition of skills.

The practical significance of this study cannot be determined in advance. This study is designed to observe, not to implement. If anything, the significance of this study may be its use as a steppingstone for further study, study that may well test the implementation of theories and practices to determine their effects on learning environments.

A Statement about Research Questions

The physical research portion of this dissertation effort (as opposed to the external research literature quoted in the Literature Review) is primarily concerned with observation and recording of observations in a certain manner following selected rules of phenomenology.

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Complying with that discipline means that there were no a priori research questions as such. Observation that is unlinked to previous prejudices, beliefs, opinions, etc. about how learning takes place in a theatrical environment cannot be pre-linked to specific questions and still remain neutral.

Timing and presentation of comparative questions or statements.

Unlike a traditional research design involving research questions and/or null hypotheses, ideas resulting in comparative questions or statements (similar to research questions) found in this dissertation were formed *after* the observational data collection and recording process was complete, and these are expressed as differences between observed phenomena in the recorded research and external (non-researcher) previously published or videotaped research material. These comparisons appear throughout the dissertation, including sections preceding this paragraph. In other words, these comparative ideas and statements are not presented in a linear fashion of 1) research questions/null hypotheses, 2) collection of research data, 3) observation and recording of experimental data, and then 4) comparative discussion. There are two exceptions to this: the Background section, which lists the researcher's previous experiences and thoughts about those experiences that were incurred in theatrical learning environments and 'ordinary' classroom environments, and the historical and functional literature review of phenomenology and phenomenological observational processes that appear in Chapter 2.

Timing and presentation of published learning theories.

In a similar manner, in the Discussion section of this dissertation direct comparisons of the researcher's recorded observations appear juxtaposed to a lengthy list of published learning theories that first appear in Chapter 2. All of those comparisons were researched and written after the experiment's collection and recording of phenomenological observations. Therefore,

although the initial descriptions of those learning theories do appear in the Literature Review of Chapter 2, they do not constitute a priori research. Trying to intentionally match observed phenomena to previously researched learning theories would have likely resulted in a great deal of bias in observations through selective focus. Additionally, for the same reasons certain other comparative material in the Literature Review of Chapter 2 was researched a posteriori to the actual observations that took place.

In other words, the researcher did not go looking for justification to support preconceived ideas about the behaviors observed or authentication either supporting or refuting pre-researched material or preconceived hypotheses (even if null) about what those observations would reveal. The researcher did not attempt to pre-establish a bias toward selecting learning theories that would explain or help to explain the process of learning to be observed. Doing so would essentially bias how the researcher might perceive and/or record those observations. Assumptions are another matter. A list of assumptions is provided later on in this chapter. There was only one assumption made in advance of the physical research that comes close to being the premise of a research question or research pre-focus of interest - namely the assumption that learning does in fact take place in a theatrical learning environment and that such learning is observable.

Methodology

The methodology for this study is a form of qualitative research design that incorporates a phenomenological method of observation and recording. A detailed description of the design can be found in the Methodology section of Chapter 3. The actors involved in the production of two plays presented in Kansas in 2011 were observed and recorded from the time of beginning rehearsals and exploratory learning sessions through the time of live stage performances of those

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plays.

The two directors of the plays were also observed, recorded, and interviewed. All interviews were post-production. Observations were recorded on videotape, as were interviews of actors and directors. Notes were also taken in conjunction with the observer's review of the results of the videotaping process. Epoche and bracketing (see definitions section) were employed by the researcher to minimize researcher bias.

As discussed before, no research questions, null hypotheses, or pre-observational research designed to be primarily of a comparative nature occurred. There was, however, a focus of interest that the observer maintained, as opposed to randomized observation and recording of all available physical phenomena (walls, windows, floors, etc.) occurring within the selected environment.

The focus of interest was established prior to observations being conducted, even though ideally phenomenological observations have no particular focus of interest. That focus of interest in the observed environment was in observing the actors and director, and how the actors learned the material necessary for successful accomplishment of presentation of the plays, and in addition how they learned physical aspects of the play such as blocking, gestural movement, etc. Similarly, the focus of interest on the directors concerned how they were able to facilitate learning, impart information, and provide motivation.

Assumptions

The following list of assumptions are made by this researcher concerning the conduct of research for this dissertation, the subjects and material observed, concerns about confidentiality, concerns about subjects' accuracy of information provided, and the time required for completion of the research project.

1. It is assumed that observation of a theatrical learning process is relatively comparable to observing a semester-long standard classroom situation, and that the theatrical process may well meet or exceed the requirements of a regular classroom environment as pertains to the amount of material learned and the amount of time spent in learning it. The learning time involved in the theatrical process is compressed into the equivalent of two months' classroom time. The actual hours spent in the 'theatrical learning environment' may well exceed the number of required hours spent in a regular classroom teaching environment. The amount of written material to be read, analyzed, and memorized may far exceed the requirements of a standard classroom situation.

2. It is assumed that observation of a theatrical learning process is a valid undertaking of observation of human subjects engaged in the activities of the learning process. It is further assumed that this theatrical learning process has been around at least as long as the standard form of teaching to a student 'audience'. Theater from ancient times has been used as a tool or learning mechanism for the purpose of recording history, making social statements, imparting human wisdom, addressing political issues, delivering opinion, delivering facts, and delivering fiction. Prior to a certain point in the past 'recording' would be defined as rote memorization, rather than a physical process of symbols recorded on stone, clay tablets, papyrus or sheepskin. In other words, very early theater precedes the written word. Theater has also been used as a tool or learning mechanism for preserving cultural values, norms, and rituals. Mythologist Joseph Campbell cites theater as a very important mechanism for disseminating cultural myth, as opposed to strictly factual history. Mythological 'history', Campbell argues, is often interlaced with religion or religious beliefs, thus providing and preserving a cultural cohesion. (Campbell, 1990)

3. Typicality is not a term ordinarily found in the definition lists of Phenomenology. Essence, yes. Typicality, no. Nevertheless, it is this researcher's assumption that the selection of actors from a particular Midwestern university for *The Adding Machine* will net subjects that are as 'typical' as any found on similar State University campuses, and that it is not necessary to pick a location other than this from which to conduct an observational experiment. It is this researcher's further assumption that the selection of actors chosen for *The Wiz* are typical of the population of the surrounding community at large, and that it is not necessary to pick a location other than the small Midwestern city community theater from which to conduct an observational experiment.

4. It is this researcher's assumption that the particular type of theatrical event that happens to be associated with this study (comedy, tragedy, exposition, revue, etc.) is not significantly relevant to the results of the research on learning being conducted. The two types of theatrical events chosen for this study, one a musical and one an interpretive drama, were chosen as much for their convenience to the time-frame of observations as for their theatrical differences. It is assumed by the researcher that learning will take place in either theatrical venue.

5. It is this researcher's assumption that the length of time necessary for production of the two theatrical events observed is a sufficient length of time for gathering data.

6. It is this researcher's assumption that recording methods employed in the study will not violate the confidentiality of any research subjects, or that written recording of data for purposes of publication in a Dissertation format will not violate the confidentiality of any research subjects. Research subjects were not named in this study.

7. It is this researcher's assumption that written material and oral statements offered by subjects to the researcher will be true and accurate representations of their observations and reflections.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to the observation of two theatrical events. The first is a musical, *The Wiz*, rehearsed and performed in a community theater building in a small Midwestern city. The second is an interpretive drama, *The Adding Machine*, performed in a large, 800-seat auditorium at a Midwestern university, and rehearsed variously at that theatre and also in classrooms and rehearsal studios located in a building devoted to the study and production of theater on the campus of that same university.

Exterior comparisons of non-theatrical learning environments to the observed theatrical learning environments is limited to published and videotaped information, rather than live physical observations of other learning environments. Specifically, an exterior comparison was made to published and videotaped information about the large lecture hall classroom environment experienced and observed by Dr. Michael Wesch.

Four additional observational delimiters.

An important delimiting, or bracketing (see definitions section) process at this point would be to discuss what the researcher did not attempt to observe and record in a phenomenological manner. There are four listed below:

1. Quality of teachers.

There are all sorts of teachers with all sorts of teaching philosophies, methods of content delivery, and teaching skills. Some achieve spectacular results, some not so much. This dissertation includes observations of teachers (directors) and direct quotes from them, but it is

not about observing the quality of teachers.

2. *Quality of students.*

There are all sorts of student learners with all sorts of learning abilities, disabilities, attention

issues, performance issues, etc. etc. etc. This dissertation includes observations of students

(actors) and direct quotes from them, but it is not about observing the quality of students.

3. *Typical physical classroom environment.*

In this researcher's opinion, there is no such thing as a typical physical classroom environment.

There are all sorts of classroom environments and classroom sizes, with some classrooms being

brand new and ultra-modern, and others that are essentially relics left over from the last century

or two. There are class sizes that range from internet singularity to a small group of students in a

single classroom to an ocean of seats in a huge lecture hall.

There are statistics for average spatial areas and other factors of physical classroom size

that are used by classroom designers, according to DimensionsInfo, a statistical measurements

website, but these standardized measurement guidelines do not describe much else about the

'typicality' of the physical classroom environment:

> For large classrooms a tiered floor is the norm. Entrances are set at the room's front or
>
> rear. Usually there is 20 sq ft for every seat. The floor is either tiered or sloped. The
>
> seats are fixed tablet arms. There are labels indicating the number and row. When
>
> designing large classroom sizes, most designers ensure the room can accommodate at
>
> least 100 students. (DimensionsInfo, 2013)

The DimensionsInfo webpage goes on to describe standardized acceptances for

instructors' tables, door kickplates, types of glass for doors and windows (if any), projection

screens, floor elevations, etc. It describes the idealized maximums and the legal minimums for

the physical environment. It does not describe, at all, the learning that takes place in the particularized environments.

This dissertation is not about observing and recording particular physical classroom dimensional environments. There is one important matter, however, to note in the quote above describing a large classroom seating 100 or more: the classroom seats are fixed. They all face forward. Subdividing a large student population into smaller interactive groups would be difficult under these physical circumstances.

4. *Typical classroom learning environment.*
In this researcher's opinion, there is no such thing as a typical classroom learning environment. There is no single all-encompassing definition of a classroom learning environment, for that matter.

Like the process this researcher has termed a "theatrical learning environment" that has been described previously, a classroom learning environment can exist in any sort of physical environment, including outdoor environments.

Instead of a "typical classroom learning environment" the general descriptor chosen by this researcher for comparative purposes with a theatrical learning environment is an "ordinary learning environment." This descriptor is meant to refer to the "ordinary" way, perhaps "common way" would be better, of going about the business of learning within the physical environment of a large lecture hall that is described by Dr. Wesch, a physical classroom environment that is similar to the one described in the DimensonsInfo quote above.

Population Sample
The populations used for this study consisted of 16 actors and one director involved in the production of *The Wiz*, and 12 actors and one director involved in the production of *The*

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Adding Machine. All were adults ranging in age from 19 to 59. More information about the characteristics of these populations can be found in Chapter 3.

Data Analysis

Data Analysis consisted of data mining for content as per the processes outlined in *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, Sixth Edition, by Bruce L. Berg. (2007)

Some data keywords are listed with corresponding frequencies of occurrence, but no statistical analysis of those frequencies were performed on the data. The frequencies were part of the deep data mining process outlined in Berg, and were used in the discussion chapter of this dissertation for purposes of expressing observed trends of behavior.

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions were used for the purposes of this study:

Apodictic. That which is present in such a way that it is experienced as certainly present. As opposed to a symbol, representation, assumption, distortion, substitution, misrepresentation, or approximation of something that is not 'certainly present.' (Oxford Dictionaries Online, 2012)

Bracketing. Suspending, setting aside biases, everyday understandings, theories, beliefs, habitual modes of thought, and judgments. The term "bracketing" was borrowed from a procedure in mathematics by Edmund Husserl (1911/80), the father of phenomenology, who himself was a mathematician. (Oxford Dictionaries Online, 2012)

Epoche. A Phenomenological term coined by Edmund Husserl to describe the following process: Learning to look at things in a way such that we see only what stands before our eyes, only what we can describe and define. This attempt to suspend any and all beliefs as we observe and listen is an attempt to minimize interpretation. Epoche is related to and sometimes substituted for the term "bracketing". (Oxford Dictionaries Online, 2012)

Expressionism. The observed play *The Adding Machine* is in part an expressionistic play. Expressionist theater seeks to display strong emotion. Expressionistic plays often dramatize the spiritual awakening and sufferings of their protagonists. They depict the struggle against bourgeois values and established authority. Expressionism reflects a revolt against some of the dehumanizing aspects of modern, urban culture. The angst that it expresses is born of the inability of modern society to meet real human needs, which are spiritual as well as material. (Oxford Dictionaries Online, 2012)

Hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the theory and practice of interpretation. The word derives from the Greek god, Hermes, whose task it was to communicate messages from the gods to the ordinary mortals. Hermeneutics is necessary when there is a possibility of a translational misunderstanding, or of changes in language format over time. (Oxford Dictionaries Online, 2012)

Immediacy. The fundamental characteristic of all actual experience, of experiencing. Immediacy is spatial and temporal: here and now (Collins, M., 1980, p. 118).

Learning environment. As used in this dissertation in a phenomenological description, a 'learning environment' refers to the observed milieu of a learning experience, rather than simply a physical space. (See also theatrical learning environment).

Ontological. Ontological inquiry is concerned with what it means to *be*, with the Being of things or entities. Heidegger (1962) calls ontology the phenomenology of being. (Oxford Dictionaries Online, 2012)

Phenomenology. There are two very basic definitions of phenomenology quoted in the American Heritage Dictionary:

1. A philosophy or method of inquiry based on the premise that reality consists of objects and events as they are perceived or understood in human consciousness and not of anything independent of human consciousness. (American Heritage Dictionary Online, 2012)

2. The name of a movement based on this philosophy, originated about 1905 by Edmund Husserl. (American Heritage Dictionary Online, 2012).

A much more detailed examination of various fields and concepts of phenomenology can be found in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, as well as a history of its beginnings, growth, and worldwide influence.

Phenomenological observation. Phenomenological observation is defined as the process of observing events, people, processes, objects, etc. while actively avoiding the attachment of the observer's prior prejudices, opinions, associative memories, filtering mechanisms, dogma, etc. to those observations. Stated simply, it is observation without prejudice or limitation or associative focus (associative focus infers that an observed phenomenon is associated with and/or affected by other phenomena, without also concurrently observing the supposedly associated phenomena). Phenomenological observation also involves the recording of those observations without similar prejudices or tangential attachments being added to the recording process. (Oxford Dictionaries Online, 2012)

*Phenomenology and theatre***.** Phenomenology has a lot of definitions, some philosophical, some practical, some investigative, some analytical. The particular definitions used here are taken from two quotes listed below by writers connected to or concerned with the theatrical process and how Phenomenology fits into the observation of that process. Wilshire (1982) states:

Phenomenology has been described as an exercise in seeing. We need this exercise

because often we look but cannot see. Our seeing is limited by prejudices so habitual that

we have no awareness of them as prejudices. Phenomenology links the senses with the

imagination in an effort to destroy constricting and distorting shells of prejudicial fault.

But with a matter as complex and encrusted with prejudice as is theater, our surprise can

be great when we disclose what we mean by it. Theater is the art of involvement.

(Wilshire, 1982, p. 12)

Rayner (1997), speaking about the phenomena of theatre, states:

Phenomenology is the systematic attempt to unmask the obvious. Human life is theater-

like, and to understand the theater-like we must understand the theater. Theater - from

the Greek word theatron - means literally a place for seeing. (Rayner, 1997, p. 15)

Semiotics. Semiotics is the science of interpretation of texts and/or signs and their

structural relationships. According to semiotics, there is no innocent, pure or pristine experience

of a real external world. There is no such thing as neutral text. (Oxford Dictionaries Online,

2012)

Theatrical event. For the purposes of this study, a theatrical event is described as the

process of taking a play from the pages of the script all the way through to the performance of

that play on a stage before a live audience.

Theatrical events observed. Except for brief comparative references to other plays,

theatrical events observed refers exclusively to the two theatrical productions titled *The Wiz* (a

musical), and *The Adding Machine* (an expressionistic drama). More information about these

two plays may be found in the Plays Observed section of this Chapter.

Theatrical learning environment. For the purposes of this study, a theatrical learning environment generally means learning that takes place while engaged in the historical study of, the rehearsal procedures of, and/or the performance of a theatrical event, by actors and a director whose common intention is to impart learned information to a third party (an audience).

This is a descriptive term not found in other literature devoted to learning processes. It is a descriptive term coined by the researcher of this dissertation. The researcher has devoted a significant amount of time and thought into how to exactly word that definition. That definition is key to this study. That definition is generalized, as opposed to being specific.

There is no specific, measurable, singularly definable theatrical learning environment in terms of an actual existing physical environment. It is argued that "there is, in fact, no physical or experiential theatrical environment that can be recreated twice" (States, 1987, p. 24), due to the number of variables involved. It does not matter. The particular physical theatrical environment in which learning takes place, and the particular number of participants involved in the learning process taking place in that environment, is minimally important. What is important is the gestalt experience, the totality of events taking place, and the learning and transmission of knowledge that is occurring in that environment.

As further defined by the researcher of this dissertation, a theatrical learning environment includes among the actors and director a number of expectations, a number of motivations, and a state of common purpose. A theatrical learning environment contains all of those additional parameters, to varying degrees, but not equally and certainly not unchangingly. A theatrical learning environment is a vibrant and ever-changing mix of events and behaviors and variable results, observed and interpreted in various ways individually and severally by the active participants and distanced observers of those events and behaviors and results.

More specifically for purposes of this dissertation, a theatrical learning environment refers to the observed learning that took place during the observed spans of time devoted to the production of *The Wiz* and *The Adding Machine*. This nomenclature serves to distinguish the two specific environments from descriptions of a generalized 'common' learning environment chosen for comparative purposes by the researcher from published descriptions of a large lecture hall learning environment at a Midwestern university.

Being able to observe this gestalt experience dubbed a "theatrical learning environment" without clouding the observation with personal bias about the actors or the theatrical material being addressed, without judgmental criticism of events witnessed, without getting lost in the weeds of particular occurrences as opposed to the general flow of events that impart knowledge and information, requires a specific sort of observational method (see definition of Phenomenological Observation).

Summary

This dissertation is concerned with the phenomenological observation of two theatrical events. Comparative comments to external data are found in the discussion section in Chapter 5, but otherwise the focus of this dissertation is the recording of phenomenological observations without prejudice toward or interpretation of those observations. A statement of the problem has been linked to the classroom depiction put forth in published media by Dr. Michael Wesch concerning the shortcomings of a modern-day classroom environment and the possibilities of student apathy and disengagement from the learning process taking place in that classroom environment. The assumption was made that the focus of this study is a valid approach to the comparable observation of a semester-long regular classroom environment. The study was limited to the observations and recording of the learning events of two theatrical productions.

The population sample was limited to the actor and director populations of those two groups. The significance of the study was to provide a phenomenologically descriptive record of learning activity in a theatrical event environment that may possibly be used to change or enhance the potential for achieving 'knowledge-able' status of students in future classroom environments. A definition of terms section described the particular nuance of phenomenology used in this study, as well as general phenomenology definitions and a researcher-coined definition of a theatrical learning environment. The research design used in this study was a form of qualitative research coupled with phenomenological observation methods. Data analysis was consistent with procedures outlined in a qualitative research manual.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

"The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose".

William Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice*

Act 1, Scene 3, Antonio

(Proudfoot et al, eds., 2005, p. 934)

This chapter contains an introduction followed by a brief account of historical origins and contributors to phenomenology, an explanation of the researcher's exception to one basic tenet of phenomenological observation that was not utilized in the research procedure, and a discussion of hermeneutical phenomenology as it applies to this dissertation. Following are sections on theatre utilized as an educational device and theatre utilized as a therapeutic educational device.

Also included is a review of selected existing learning theories that have some initial commonalities with a theatrical learning environment as defined by this researcher. These selected learning theories will be revisited in Chapter 5 and compared to observations recorded in Chapter 4 in order to further define and accept or reject their actual relevance to what occurs in a theatrical learning environment.

A section on selected published material of Dr. Michael Wesch, a Cultural Anthropologist at a Midwestern university, is included in this chapter to provide background for a second comparative section found in Chapter 5. This published material concerns observations of a large lecture hall learning environment at a Midwestern university as described and observed by Dr. Wesch. The comparisons made in Chapter 5 are between this observed and recorded lecture hall learning environment and the processes occurring in a theatrical learning environment as defined by this researcher.

A summary reviews and concludes this chapter.

Introduction

The literature review of phenomenology preceded the observations recorded during the course of the research. This is the normal course of events for a literature review in a dissertation. During that study of phenomenology and phenomenological observational procedures, the researcher selected from that part of the literature review a certain set of observational procedures to be used in the subsequent observational process and recording process. Those procedures precluded researching learning theory before the observations were recorded. The reasoning for this is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 1. A brief reasoning is this: The researcher did not wish to be biased a priori by any particular learning theory. Any such bias has the potential to influence the observational process, thus affecting the neutrality of the processes of observation and recording of those observations.

There are several areas of learning theory that will be explored following the section devoted to phenomenology in this literature review. This researcher does not attempt to cover every aspect of the general field of learning theory, nor is it assumed that all of the theories which may have some pertinence to this study are included. The theories selected for inclusion are the result of searching for valid comparisons and similarities with the data obtained in Chapter 4. Thus the learning theories discussed here are mirrored in Chapter 5 Discussion, at which point first comparisons were made.

Phenomenology

The field of phenomenology has many contributors, critics, and branches. One problem with dealing with the various scholars in the historical field of phenomenology is that it is very easy to get 'lost in the weeds' of the many philosophies pertinent to, tangential to, and critical of phenomenology. Exploring all these areas will not add significantly to the eventual argument for

the use of a particular set of phenomenological observational methods in the pursuit of research and transcription of observed phenomena for this dissertation. This chapter provides a very limited scope of phenomenology, devoted to a brief history of the field, this researcher's exception to the arbitrary limitations of one of phenomenology's basic tenets, and brief explanations of interrelated fields of study such as hermeneutics and semiotics.

Frequent reference to the definitions section in Chapter 1 may be necessary, as phenomenological definitions used in this chapter or mentioned in context in referential quotes from sources are not re-defined or repeated.

Historical origins and contributions to phenomenology.

Chamberlin (1969) states that the practice and philosophy of phenomenology grew from the relative isolation of its infancy into a quickly spreading and developing field during the lifetimes of its principal founders. They tended to influence and criticize each other's works, and brought different fields of thought into the framework of phenomenology. The principal founder is the mathematician Edmund Husserl (founder of the phenomenological philosophical method and school), whose publication of *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* in 1913 introduced a methodological concept called phenomenological reduction, or "eidetic" reduction. Eidetic reduction focuses the observer's attention on uninterrupted experience and the quest, thereby, for the essences of things.

The German philosopher Martin Heidegger (a contemporary student and often a vocal critic of Husserl) included some of Husserl's new philosophy in his own major philosophical work titled *Being and Time* (1927), which subsequently influenced Jean-Paul Sartre and other existentialist philosophers. The shortest explanation of existentialism, namely that existence precedes essence (Sartre, 1948), is in conformity with the phenomenological concept of

observing what exists without predetermination.

Other influences on the field of phenomenology are Brentano and Merleau-Ponty. The German philosopher Franz Brentano's work *Psychology From an Empirical Standpoint* (1874) stated that psychology should focus on experience as an activity rather than on experience as a structure. In other words, experience is initially 'lived' in the moment, rather than somehow predetermined via lineage. Brentano is the founder of Act Psychology, or Intentionalism, which concerns itself with the mind's 'acts' or processes of observation and interpretation rather than its contents (Moran, 2000). The French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, author of *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), was greatly influenced by Husserl but rejected Husserl's theory of knowledge of other persons, opting instead for a theory of bodily behavior and perception (Moran, 2000).

Phenomenology changed and grew over time, and gave influence to other philosophical structures such as Existentialism, Structuralism, Deconstruction Philosophy and Continental Philosophy (Ricoeur, 1975). During this extended developmental phase various scholars argued about what should and should not be included and excluded from the philosophy of phenomenology. Some differences have been resolved, others have not. Phenomenology today continues to be a philosophy with a wide variety of philosophical viewpoints and a host of in-house critics. It is, in other words, actively eclectic.

Phenomenological Terms.

Many of the operating terms and identifiers used in the philosophical discussions and written works on the topic of phenomenology are of German origin (plus a few French, and Latin terms), due to the particular authors' principal language. Husserl is essentially the founding philosopher of phenomenology, and though born in Czechoslovakia, he wrote and published in

German. For example, terms like *ideen* (ideas that constitute the 'reality' of phenomena, as posited by Husserl), *epoche* ('bracketing' of the 'natural attitude' so that one can attend to a phenomenon as it shows itself), *erfahrung* (life experience), *erlebnis* (lived experience), *lebenswelt* (life world), *noema* (that to which we orient ourselves), and *noesis* (the interpretive act directed to an intentional object), can become overwhelming to someone not familiar with the language. A complete, exhaustive list of all phenomenological terms would be exactly that – exhaustive, and unnecessary. Therefore only a truncated list of some phenomenoligical terms are included within the overall list of terms in the Definitions section of Chapter 1.

Researcher's exception to a basic tenet of phenomenological observation.

There is one tenet of phenomenological observation that this researcher chooses to modify. Husserl states that phenomenology is a discipline that endeavors to describe how the world is constituted and experienced through conscious acts, and that one of the primary conscious acts of phenomenology is to bracket out everything an observer might ordinarily relate to an observed phenomenon (a thing), and concentrate only on that particular thing in order to be able to observe and describe it correctly. Husserl refers to this as *Zu den Sachen* (to the things themselves).

According to Husserl, phenomenology must describe what is observed (the things themselves) in immediate experience without being obstructed (mediated) by pre-conceptions and theoretical notions. This in and of itself is fine. However, describing only the immediate experience of a phenomenon is to distance it, indeed to divorce it, from that which surrounds it. Describing only the immediate experience of a phenomenon is to disregard its effect on its surroundings, and the effect(s) of surroundings on the phenomenon being observed. In other words, the environment the observed phenomenon exists in is relevant to the observation of the

phenomenon. This is at odds with the strict interpretation of phenomenological observation.

There is another problem with this strict interpretation of phenomenological observation: to describe only the immediate experience of a phenomenon is to disregard the reality of the phenomenon as it exists *in the passage of time*. Describing only the immediate experience of a phenomenon is to disregard its history, which may be a vitally important thing to consider.

Husserl was a mathematician. The concept of bracketing (or *epoche*, or reduction) is first a mathematical concept (interestingly, in mathematics it's a concept of grouping, as well as isolating, although Husserl never used it in that manner), that Husserl borrowed from mathematics and subsequently applied to his developing philosophy of phenomenology. In Husserl's phenomenological definition, though, the term 'bracketing' is used to describe the voluntary act of suspending one's various beliefs in the reality of the natural world in order to study the essential structures of the world. Observe only the phenomenon before you. Do not color it, taint it, or distort your observation of it by inclusion of preconceptions about it. Just observe.

That bracketing concept of Husserl's cannot be employed when the phenomenon observed is theatre. In theatre, everything on the stage (and everything on the page) is related to everything else. The scenes are related, the actors are related, the 'nesting' of themes and stories and subplots are related. The lighting (or absence of lighting) is related to the action. The sounds (both purposeful and ambient) generated, onstage and off, are related. The music, if any, is related. The costuming is related. The choreography, if any, is related. Everything is related and all woven together. Audience participation (overall observation of the phenomenon) is dependent on a cogent linking together of all these interrelated themes and actions and interactions of characters, plot, staging, blocking, lighting, sound, and script. Even the physical

makeup of the theatre itself is related (for example: proscenium style, forward-thrust stage, theatre in the round, and multi-stage) to the effects, the phenomena, being observed.

Thus bracketing, in the sense used in this dissertation, refers to the elimination of prejudicial thoughts and opinions about an observed phenomenon, but does not imply the elimination of tangential and possibly interactive phenomena existing simultaneously at the same time and place (environment) of observation of a particular phenomenon.

Hermeneutical phenomenology.

Hermeneutics is a philosophy/procedure unto itself. The root concept is Hermes, the messenger god, and originally hermeneutics is a study of religious symbolism and interpretation of religious texts. In hermeneutical phenomenology, though, it means a study of descriptive processes. It is combined with phenomenology in order to help understand and facilitate the descriptive process involved in the phenomenological method of observation, especially with the phenomenological interpretation of text (Stanford Encyclopedia, 2012).

The keyword is 'interpretive', which is in addition to descriptive. To describe a phenomenological observation is to 'paint' it into words, with as little external baggage as possible, via bracketing. Nevertheless, this descriptive process is also an interpretive process, in that the observer must interpret what he or she sees into words he determines to be appropriate descriptors of that which is observed. Therefore, to interpret a phenomenological observation is to draw a conclusion (or sometimes just an opinion) about it.

Interpretation is re-explaining in a symbol-string what has already been observed and assuming, rightly or wrongly, that you have done so accurately. Heidegger argues that any descriptive act at all was prima facie an interpretation (Seeburger, 1975). This seems logical to this researcher, since the observer is assigning a symbol-string to a phenomenological

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observation, and the symbol-string is composed of symbols that carry their own 'un-bracketed' baggage with them, thus muddying up the description.

Theatre as an Educational Device

The purpose of this dissertation is not to establish whether or not most of the various practices of information transfer known collectively as "theatre" can be classed as educational devices. Clearly, they are that. A few examples will suffice.

The earliest forms of theatre were concerned with the transfer of, and also the preservation of, information through oral recitation of stories, songs and poems. Those same basic oral forms of theatrical information transfer still occur commonly in some cultures today, as evidenced by the very recent anthropological study of storytellers and story-listeners in Madagascar:

> At the outset of my project, I intended to collect information from both
> storytellers and story listeners on the subject of angano or tafasiry, Malagasy
> verbal tales, so as to examine the state of this ancient aspect of daily life in the
> modern Malagasy world. An elder, such as a grandparent or parent, usually tells
> the tafasiry in Malagasy to the children of the family, historically in front of the
> fire while waiting for dinner. Before formal schools were instituted, tafasiry were
> used as a form of education to teach children morals, information they might need
> for future experiences, and how to use their imagination. (Stroud, 2011, p. 2)

All of the advances in theatre from that early point of oral recitation on to present day multi-million dollar Broadway extravaganzas can essentially be defined as technical improvement. The basic functionality remains the same – information transfer. Even theatre that is classed as pure entertainment involves information transfer.

Theatre as an instrument of formal educational system information transfer is used today in a limited extent in some primary and secondary school environments in the United States. It is much more extensively used in the school system in Britain than in the United States, where traveling professional theatrical companies are regularly employed to broach subjects such as bullying, anti-smoking campaigns, road safety, and health issues. An example follows:

Theatre in Education started as a separate art form and educational activity in Coventry at the Belgrade Theatre in 1965. A group consisting of actors, teachers and social workers were brought together to create a community outreach team. The outreach team created a project called Pow Wow who (sic) took a group of children and first introduced them to an actor playing a Cowboy. Later the children were introduced to an actor playing an Indian kept in a cage as a prisoner by the Cowboy. The children were given information about both characters and their opposing views in the situation and given the choice of whether or not to free the Indian. The project had successfully merged theatre and education for the first time. Theatre in Education has progressed from this point and although it differs from its original form its primary aim is to use theatre and drama to create a wide range of learning opportunities across the whole curriculum. TIE companies will take a particular curriculum subject or topic and build a show or workshop around it. TIE works on a fundamental level because it is interactive. All the shows, even the ones to larger groups, involve audience participation on some level and this encourages an emotional connection to the work, making it more memorable. As well as learning about subjects and issues through drama by participating the pupils are also developing other social and interactive skills such as communication, public speaking, negotiation, awareness of themselves and others, teamwork, improved

concentration, and self-confidence (Croft, 2012, p. 1).

The methods described by Croft above are known as focused interactive theatre, otherwise named by Augusto Boal as Forum Theatre:

> Forum theatre was created by the innovative and influential practitioner Augusto Boal as part of his "Theatre of the Oppressed." Originally the technique was developed by Boal as a tool for political change but since then it has been widely adapted and used for training and education. (Paterson, 1995, p. 1)

> Different genres of focused interactive theatrical information transfer abound. They concentrate on, to name a few things, politics, human rights, ethics, sexuality, globalization, interculturalism, and social action. Most of these involve the basic practice of Forum Theatre, a technique of theatrical presentation of the current events or current status of a subject that involves the audience in a participatory manner and that allows 'rewriting' of scenes following a forum discussion (Boal, 2000). The 'rewritten' and re-acted scene is then presented as a better outcome, or at least as a different outcome, from the ostensibly less desirable current reality. Often, scenes will be modified repeatedly until a group consensus is reached on the desirability of the new outcome.

Theatre as a therapeutic educational device.

Clinical and semi-clinical offshoots of Forum Theatre are known as Psychodrama and Sociodrama. Briefly, both fields use versions of the Boal technique. Psychodrama participants can revisit past emotional traumas or other memories of personal difficulties in a non-threatening way, and use other group participants as stand-ins for situational confrontations. Properly trained supervision is required for this, since there is potential for negative results. Only certified Psychodrama Directors are authorized to conduct these practices.

Psychodrama is an action method, often used as a psychotherapy, in which clients

use spontaneous dramatization, role playing, and dramatic self-presentation to

investigate and gain insight into their lives. Developed by Jacob L Moreno, M.D.

(1889-1974) psychodrama includes elements of theatre, often conducted on a

stage where props can be used. By closely recreating real-life situations, and

acting them out in the present, clients have the opportunity to evaluate their

behavior and more deeply understand a particular situation in their lives. (Felber,

2012, p. 1)

Sociodrama, as the name implies, deals with social situations. It is similar to Forum

Theatre, except that the social issues explored generally are focused on the lives of the

individuals in the group workshop, and therefore tend to be more intra-group oriented.

Sociodrama was also developed by Jacob Moreno (1932). Sociodrama involves experiencing a

social situation as if it were happening in the present. Like Psychodrama, an enacted social

situation can then be discussed and hopefully emotionally diffused, and then re-enacted in a

modified manner that involves conflict resolution.

Sociodrama fosters critical questioning and helps students recognize how some

people feel alienated and dislocated in a world where people are more transient,

cultures are mixing, and old norms, values, and implicit social arrangements no

longer offer the sense of security they once did. Sociodrama's praxis, its dynamic

interplay of theory and practice, resonates with recent writings in fields such as

social philosophy and humanistic psychology, especially those seeking to promote

greater interpersonal freedom. (Blatner, 2009, p. 1).

There are many more examples that could be presented to illustrate how theatre is

employed as an educational (and therapeutic) device. The question pertaining to this research effort, however, is not to reiterate that this is so, but to observe the theatrical learning environment itself. There are many learning theories that may account for the learning activity taking place in that environment, or at least part of that activity. The subject of learning theories is explored below.

Learning Theories

It is very easy to get lost in the weeds when discussing learning theories. There are so many. A selection of learning theories follows that reflect at least some of the major ideas of learning theory that may apply to the learning behavior observed in the two theatrical learning environment observations conducted for this dissertation. Emphasis is put on the word 'selection', rather than 'analytical comparison'. This researcher makes no attempt to insert an opinion about which theory is best, or to implicitly rank learning theories via the order of their appearance on the pages to follow. Comparisons of certain of these learning theories to the results obtained that are described in Chapter 4 appear in the Chapter 5 Discussion of results.

Although the presentation of these learning theories occurs here in Chapter 2, the research on these theories did not chronologically occur until after the completion of the phenomenological observation and recording process described in the Methodology section of Chapter 3. It was not this researcher's intent to go looking for specific learning theories in advance to help explain what might or might not be going on in the theatrical learning environments, or to present them as hypotheses for what might or might not be going on, before the observational results were in. The point of this research endeavor, as stated before, is to make observations without prior prejudice, proclivities, or theoretical positions interfering with those observations. With that said, a selection of learning theories appear below.

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A selection of learning theories.

The learning theories below are presented in alphabetical order. They are not ranked or otherwise judged via their presentational position.

Adult learning theory.

Part of the problems Wesch attributes to his depiction of a large lecture hall class learning environment may be explained by Adult Learning Theory, specifically the model known as CAL, or Characteristics of Adults as Learners, developed by K.P. Cross (1981). Some students in the class may be perceiving the learning process as part-time voluntary learning with minimal overall consequences, thus the learning environment is subject to more of a laissez-faire attitude than those students viewing the process as full-time mandatory learning with high-end consequences. Thus personal characteristics of the students prevail over the situational characteristics of the learning environment, no matter the rules of the learning environment.

Andragogy.

Knowles, in 1975 published *Self-Directed Learning*. In 1984 he published *Andragogy in Action*. Both of these works deal with the motivational aspects of an adult learner, although the learning principles could apply to most ages except very young children. It certainly applies to Wesch's lecture class. The process of learning is considered to be more important than the specific content of what is being learned:

> Andragogy makes the following assumptions about the design of learning: (1) adults need to know why they need to learn something, (2) adults need to learn experientially, (3) adults approach learning as problem-solving, and (4) adults learn best when the topic is of immediate value. In practical terms, andragogy means that instruction for adults needs to focus more on the process and less on

the content being taught. Strategies such as case studies, role playing, simulations, and self-evaluation are most useful. Instructors adopt a role of facilitator or resource rather than lecturer or grader. (Knowles, 1984, p. 12)

ATI (Aptitude Treatment Interaction).

This theory was developed by Cronbach and Snow in 1977. The theory generally states that teaching should be tuned, or perhaps attuned, to the individual learner. This may not be a practical approach in a large lecture hall learning environment, but it is included here because of the explanation of tailoring of the learning environment that resulted from research on Cronbach & Snow's part. Briefly, it is:

1. Aptitudes and instructional treatments interact in complex patterns and are influenced by task and situation variables.

2. Highly structured instructional environments tend to be most successful with students of lower ability; conversely, low structure environments may result in better learning for high ability students.

3. Anxious or conforming students tend to learn better in highly structured instructional environments; non-anxious or independent students tend to prefer low structure. (Martinez, 2004, p. 1)

Attribution Theory.

In 1974, B. Weiner published *Achievement Motivation and Attribution Theory*. Essentially it deals with the attributes of the individual learner that may influence success or failure in the learning process.

Attribution theory has been used to explain the difference in motivation between high and low achievers. According to attribution theory, high achievers will approach rather than avoid tasks related to succeeding because they believe success is due to high ability and effort which they are confident of. Failure is thought to be caused by bad luck or a poor exam, i.e. not their fault. Thus, failure doesn't affect their self-esteem but success builds pride and confidence. On the other hand, low achievers avoid success-related chores because they tend to (a) doubt their ability and/or (b) assume success is related to luck or to "who you know" or to other factors beyond their control. Thus, even when successful, it isn't as rewarding to the low achiever because he/she doesn't feel responsible, i.e., it doesn't increase his/her pride and confidence. (Daly, 1996, p. 1)

Collaborative learning.

Collaborative Learning involves at least two learners and usually groups of learners working together to solve a problem or problems, complete a task or series of tasks, or possibly to create a product. There are several definitions of teaching that all more or less fall within the general category of collaborative learning: cooperative learning, collective learning, learning communities, peer teaching and learning, study circles, team learning, reciprocal learning, and study groups (Dillenbourg, 1999). In a basic definition, collaborative learning happens when groups of learners choose to help each other in the learning process. The most important aspect of collaborative learning is that it creates a positive interdependence among learners. Positive interdependence means that learners who are engaged in a collaborative endeavor interact with each other with a common goal in mind, namely that they will all succeed together (Dillenbourg, 1999, p. 33).

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Communities of practice.

Developed by Lave and Wenger (1991), Communities of Practice theory falls within the scope of social learning. First mentioned in their book *Situated Learning* (1991), the learning theory defines CoP as "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (p. 21). A necessary component of a community of practice is that members in a specific group or domain interact and engage in shared activities of learning, help each other to learn, and share information with each other. They seek successful attainment of an agreed-upon set of group goals, usually within a set time frame (Lave and Wenger,1991).

Community learning.

Brookfield (1983) states that community learning is learning that generally takes place outside of conventional education practices.

> The requirements: it must be deliberate and purposeful learning, seeking to acquire knowledge and skills; learning does not ultimately have to be successful – it may be haphazard and fail to reach a predetermined goal; it occurs outside of classrooms and designated educational institutions; it does not necessarily follow the strict timetable of a regular academic institutional year; there is no academic institutional accreditation or validation; the learning is voluntary, self-motivated and self-generating; and it is practical, in that it is focused on the process of acquiring skills and knowledge, rather than seeking an internal change of consciousness. (Brookfield, 1983, p. 12).

Constructivism.

Constructivism is concerned with conditionalized knowledge. The main premise of the term 'conditionalized' is that knowledge acquired is information paired with an experiential event,

environment, activity, or all three. (Duffy & Jonassen, 1992, p. 3).   An idea connected with

Constructivism is that independent problem solving is more difficult than problem solving in

collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86), especially if a learner is within

the zone of proximal development (ZPD) of a somewhat more capable peer. This is sometimes

known as 'scaffolding,' although Vygotsky never used that term. Scaffolding (Wood &

Middleton, 1976) refers to help in the form of support from others already capable of a task.

Once the student masters the task, he or she can repeat completion of that task without the initial

outside support (i.e. scaffolding).

Constructivism is dynamic, rather than passive. Constructivist ideas have been used

extensively in adult education. Mutual planning of learning events, assessment of learner needs

and interests, the establishment of a learning environment that is cooperative rather than a group

of individual learners, the establishment of sequential activities for achieving objectives, and

learning objectives that are based on needs and interests of learners, are all concerns of

constructivism.

Experiential learning.

Carl Rogers'(1983) theory is likely very important in reference to the learning

observed in the research section of this dissertation. A theatrical performance requires

just what the name implies – a performance. It is academic in the sense that an academic

approach is necessary in the beginning when the play to be performed is first read,

discussed, analyzed, blocked out, and memorized. After that the learning process is

essentially experiential.

Rogers lists these qualities of experiential learning: personal involvement, self-

initiated, evaluated by learner, and pervasive effects on learner. To Rogers,

experiential learning is equivalent to personal change and growth. Rogers feels

that all human beings have a natural propensity to learn; the role of the teacher is

to facilitate such learning. This includes: (1) setting a positive climate for

learning, (2) clarifying the purposes of the learner(s), (3) organizing and making

available learning resources, (4) balancing intellectual and emotional components

of learning, and (5) sharing feelings and thoughts with learners but not

dominating. According to Rogers, learning is facilitated when: (1) the student

participates completely in the learning process and has control over its nature and

direction, (2) it is primarily based upon direct confrontation with practical, social,

personal or research problems, and (3) self-evaluation is the principal method of

assessing progress or success. Rogers also emphasizes the importance of learning

to learn and an openness to change. Roger's theory of learning evolved as part of

the humanistic education movement. (Adkins, C., and Simmons, B. 2003, p. 4).

Situated learning theory.

Situated Learning Theory is another form of collaborative learning theory

concerning knowledge acquisition in specific environments or locations that was also

developed by Lave & Wenger (1991). In part, it states that what is referred to in this

dissertation as an 'ordinary' large lecture hall learning environment is actually an abstract

learning experience. It concentrates on the establishment of a 'learning community'

rather than a room full of individual, minimally-connected individual learners. It

emphasizes that many types of learning should ideally require social interaction and

collaboration. (Anderson, J., et al. 1996, p. 5)

Social learning theory.

In Social Learning Theory people learn through observing others' behavior, including attitudes, opinions, beliefs, etc., and the outcomes of those behaviors (Bandura, 1977). It is chiefly concerned with real-world, real-time human interaction. Social learning theory explains human behavior in terms of continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences. Necessary conditions for effective modeling are attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation (Bandura, 1977).

The influence of Michael Wesch.

Michael Wesch teaches cultural anthropology at Kansas State University. He received the U.S. Professor of the Year Award in 2008, the K-State 2011-2012 Coffman Chair for Distinguished Teaching Scholars, and is internationally recognized for his lectures on culture, technology, education and digital media information (KSU News and Editorial Services, 2012). He has YouTube videos with view-counts that number in the millions. One of those extremely popular videos concerns the recording of and exploration of a large lecture hall learning environment at a Midwestern university, made in cooperation with the students who were busy with the process of learning in that environment. It can be found online at the YouTube site under the following YouTube title: *TEDxKC - Michael Wesch - From Knowledgeable to Knowledge-Able*. It is this particular observation of a large lecture hall learning environment that is used for comparative purposes in Chapter 5.

Wesch's ability to see that lecture hall learning environment for what it is, rather than what 'conventional wisdom' says it is supposed to be, is of special interest to this dissertation. Essentially, he regards that learning environment as a class full of human beings, rather than a class full of adult students. He expresses this attitude most succinctly when describing the observations of another educator, Gardner Campbell, in an article Wesch wrote in February of

2012 titled *Gardening on Solsbury Hill*, wherein he states the following:

> More than anything, Gardner was inspired by the opportunity to see his students as
> complete human beings, full of their own specific insights, talents, questions, longings,
> worries, foibles, and all the other little things that make us all who we are that somehow
> seem hidden when we treat students as nothing but detached little heads processing our
> assignments in class. (Wesch, 2012, p. 1)

In other words, this type of learning environment has the possibility of hobbling, rather
than maximizing, the learning process. A type of disenfranchisement can set in, wherein the
participants can become semi-interactive or non-interactive if they so choose, without violating
the perceived parameters of the learning environment. Students relating to and interacting with
the instructor becomes an option. Students relating to and interacting with other students also
becomes an option. Students focusing on and staying current with the material presented
becomes an option. Failure of the educational process becomes an option.

Wesch's classroom environment.

In adult education, as in any other educational realm, there is no one particular format or
learning theory used for engaging the educational process. Nor is there one particular classroom
environment that is considered ideal. Nevertheless, for the purposes of comparison in this
dissertation, this researcher chooses to select one idealized classroom environment, described in
detail by the teacher who worked in it, as a working model. That would be Wesch's large lecture
hall classroom environment of adult undergraduate students at a Midwestern university.

Wesch argues that many students come to a classroom environment for reasons other
than the strict interest in the learning of and mastery of the particular educational material
presented in that classroom. Some are there merely to fulfill a degree requirement, or to

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otherwise comply with the mechanics of the academic system in which they are enmeshed. Some are there to play what Wesch refers to as a game that they have been practicing in other classroom learning environments for many years, a game in which points are given for answers correctly regurgitated in mass testing situations. Some are not physically there very much at all, except on test days. Some are physically present on most class days, but mentally elsewhere. The degree of student interest in the subject material being presented in Wesch's classroom environment thus ranges from formidable to minimal, and occasionally to zero.

Wesch's connectivity problem.

> *"We wait. We are bored. No, don't protest,*
> *we are bored to death, there's no denying it.*
> *Good. A diversion comes along and what do we do?"*
> Samuel Becket, Waiting for Godot (1982, p. 41)

Dr. Wesch states that the students occupying his modern very large classroom with a seating capacity for 200 have entered into a new era of communication (Wesch, 2012). Access to the World Wide Web and all of its available data has immeasurably increased the availability of information, and thus the potential for knowledge. But the information delivery mechanisms such as e-mail, texting, on-line videos, on-line access to television, radio, and recorded music, that are all available in mobile apparatus such as video phones, laptop computers, iPads, and other portable electronic devices can also lead to what is popularly referred to as information overload. This information can be a distraction, as opposed to useful information. For example electronic gaming is potentially addictive as well as distracting. This would be electronic information exchange in the form of 'chatter' (texting) that is distracting, mundane and time-wasting. All of these are examples of information acquisition and dispensation that is going on within Wesch's classroom environment that is unrelated to the subject material being presented

in that classroom environment (Wesch, 2012).

The physical classroom environment itself, as Dr. Wesch explains, especially a large auditorium classroom such as he depicts in his video, is generally an academically archaic and limiting experience. The environment of forward-facing uncomfortable chairs bolted into place in row after rising row, extending sometimes for many dozens of yards, bordered by basic concrete walls, the sterility and rigidity and enormity of the environment thus making one-to-one personal contact difficult, is not an ideal learning environment. The current technical improvements made in that large lecture hall learning environment as opposed to how it would have looked and felt 100 years ago, improvements such as augmentation of sound, adequate if sterile lighting, air conditioning, etc. do not offset the lack of interpersonal communication and interpersonal involvement that such a large and impersonal environment begets. As far as the latter are concerned, the teaching and learning environment is very similar to how it was 100 years ago.

This physical teaching environment, coupled with the various potential electronic distractions of the modern world, can create attention and retention problems for the students that occupy it, which the students graphically expressed through hand-held signs in the video description of the classroom environment and activity.

Wesch redoux.

Wesch's catchphrase is "From Knowledgeable to Knowledge-able", indicating that merely absorbing knowledge is not as important as becoming skilled in how to seek out knowledge and apply it effectively. Seeking to make students 'knowledge-able' means that classroom tactics such as multiple tests, long lectures, and rote memorization of facts are all archaic and inefficient ways of attaining the skills of knowledge acquisition. Since 2007, Wesch

has been receiving feedback from teaching professionals indicating that his ideas for solutions that included high utilization of technical gadgetry, while innovative and popular, often do not work. Teachers often had trouble replicating Wesch's successes in the classroom (Young, 2012).

It is difficult, of course, to define what processes, procedures, or instructional proclivities actually induce 'wonder' into the process of learning. And even if adequately defined, it is doubtful that 'wonder' is sufficient to induce the required motivation that is necessary for an individual learner to perform at his or her highest potential in a sustained manner over the time-frame of a semester or other fixed window of learning opportunity. There are clearly other factors involved as well. And there are clearly learning theories that do not include the factor of 'wonder' in their descriptive formats.

Summary

Chapter 2 provides a background for the study to follow. Part of this background was established after the completion of the phenomenological observations described in Chapter 4, due to the researcher's attempt to not prejudice the observations.

Phenomenology has a long and involved history, with many branches evolving from the original premises put forth by Husserl. The researcher took exception to the strict definition of one facet of phenomenological observation – bracketing. In a theatrical learning environment, it is not possible to so severely bracket the observation from tangential factors that the observer ends up seeing only one part of the operation of the learning environment. The process of learning in a theatrical learning environment is necessarily interactive and complex. All factors connected with the learning process - actors, play, props, lighting, stage, audience, etc. are interrelated. The phenomenological observer must take that into account – the entire learning

process is a complex and interrelated phenomenon. Hermeneutical phenomenology is the closest branch of phenomenology that describes the particular method used by the researcher.

Theatre is an educational device. Theatre can also be a therapeutic device. At its most basic definition, theatre is a method of transmitting information.

This chapter included a lengthy review of learning theories. Not all learning theories were reviewed, only ones considered by the researcher to have at least some relevancy to the theatrical learning environment (as defined in the Definitions section of Chapter 1).

This chapter contained a review of published material by Dr. Michael Wesch, concerning his observations of a large lecture hall learning environment.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

"Though this be madness, yet there is method in't." William Shakespeare

Hamlet, Act 2, Scene 2, Polonius

(Proudfoot et al, eds., 2005, p. 305)

Introduction

This chapter details a description of the research design utilized by the researcher, including an explanation with examples for the inappropriateness of and thus the elimination of statistical analysis within this research design. There are notes on the particular methods of phenomenological observation used, and a section on the limitations of the study, including the limits and length of the observations of the theatrical learning environment and the limits and length of actor interviews and director interviews.

This chapter contains additional notes on the method of phenomenological bracketing used in the research. There are sections concerning the population of the study, collection of the data, analysis of the data, and protection of human rights procedures that were used in the study. This information is followed by a summary of the chapter.

Research Design

A phenomenological research design is used for this study. Phenomenology encompasses both qualitative and quantitative data. Though some quantitative data in the form of tallies of repeated words, statements, or themes were data-mined from notes and observations using procedures outlined in *Qualitative Research Methods* (Berg, 2007), these data were not subjected to statistical analysis. The data thus represented in the tables shown in the results section in Chapter 4 are merely tally sheets that help illustrate "forms and antecedent-consequent

patterns of form" (Berg, p. 175).

This research therefore is primarily concerned with qualitative data obtained through observational recording. It is important to comment on this researcher's choice to forego the process of statistical analysis. There is a valid reason why the researcher has chosen to do so, that is in compliance with the chosen method of phenomenological observation.

"Quantitative research refers to counts and measures of things, and statistical descriptions fall loosely into three general categories: mathematically numerative, associative, and inferential" (Berg, 2007, p. 3). Regarding associative and inferential descriptions, it is in conflict with the process of phenomenological observation involving bracketing to include associations or inferences in the descriptive process, especially in field notes (i.e. 'the dancer leapt *like a gazelle*, therefore *I infer* that he is very limber'). To do so involves making comparisons of and/or inferences about observed phenomena with non-observed phenomena. It is, additionally, often unwise during the process of phenomenological observation and description to associate frequency or lack of frequency of a particular observed phenomenon with relevance or significance. It implies a pre-observational bias that the observed phenomenon *should have* a certain frequency of occurrence, and if that frequency of occurrence or something close to it is in fact observed then a designated significance applies.

An example of an incorrect phenomenological assumption would be as follows*: X behavior was observed 180 times in a three-hour time span, therefore it is significant.* Significance depends on more than just frequency. It depends on the totality of the phenomenon observed. Observing an old wind-up alarm clock tick 180 times in three hours might indicate significant problems with the clock. Observing the time readout on a mobile phone 'ticking' new numbers 180 times in three hours might be normal. 'Significance' of frequency depends on

how you define and describe the totality of the phenomenon itself. Phenomenological research does not seek significance, rather it is observed or not observed and is unique and specific phenomena.

A reversed, or negative example of an incorrect phenomenological assumption would be as follows: *X behavior was not observed at all in a three-hour time span, therefore the absence of that phenomenon is significant*. A literary example may help to clarify the incorrectness of this statement. Consider an American novel published in America in English in 1936, by an American author that had published four novels in total from 1896 to that date. In other words, the author's fourth published novel. That novel is picked off a library shelf at random and read (observed) by a researcher who then statistically analyzed it as a randomly-picked example of the written English language in order to determine the particular 'relevance' or 'significance' of the letters used in English language text via frequency of usage. The letter X would be found to be relatively rare but not necessarily unimportant; Q would be similarly infrequent in usage but again not considered unimportant or irrelevant. The letter E would presumably have a statistically high percentage of usage, and therefore a correspondingly high percentage of statistical relevance. Look, for example, at the number of E's that appear in the words on this page.

And yet the process of phenomenological observation holds that the number of E's observed in that novel is observationally specific to the phenomena being observed, not generally measurably (statistically) applicable to generally similar phenomena that is - not - also observed by a researcher. Thus the number of E's observed in a particular phenomenon (book) may be descriptive, but it is not associative or inferential or generalizable to other observations of other books.

If the above paragraph seems a bit observationally rigid, consider that the novel was written by Ernest Vincent Wright in 1936. It is titled *Gadsby*. Its story concerns the life and times of a gentleman named Gadsby, a community organizer and later Mayor of a town named Branton Hills, from 1906 through World War I, Prohibition, and W. G. Harding's administration. The novel is 50,110 words long, and divided into two parts. There is not one word containing the letter E in it anywhere. And yet it is perfectly lucid, descriptive, and readable. A brief example (part of the author's forward) is below:

> Now, naturally, in writing such a story as this, with its conditions as laid down in
>
> its Introduction, it is not surprising that an occasional 'rough spot' in composition
>
> is found. So I trust that a critical public will hold constantly in mind that I am
>
> voluntarily avoiding words containing that symbol which is, by far, of most
>
> common inclusion in writing. (Wright, 1939, p. xi)

Thus the novel as an observed phenomenon may inappropriately have a statistical analysis of the frequency of the letter E applied to it, in which case the statistical validity of the occurrence of an E in the text is nil. And this statistical inference of the relevance of the letter E cannot be generalized to other novels. It is specific to the phenomena observed and recorded.

Phenomenological Observation

The observational method of this qualitative research design is a simplistic form of phenomenological observation. It involves a lengthy and contiguous unobtrusive and non-invasive series of observations of actors learning and rehearsing plays from beginning to end in a theatrical learning environment (see definitions section), and eventually performing in live-audience stage presentations. Interviews with actors and directors (arguably an invasive technique) are also observational events, but were conducted after all other non-invasive

observations had taken place.

Phenomenological studies, as a research method, are noticeably infrequent in the research literature (Sanders, 1982, p. 1). In the historical sense of research practices, phenomenological research is a fairly recent form of qualitative research technique, as detailed in Chapter 2. Nevertheless, phenomenological observation is an accepted and approved procedure for study in the field of Education, as well as in most other fields of academic inquiry. The particular form of phenomenological observation chosen for this study constitutes a personal decision on the part of this researcher. As Chamberlin states: "There is no orthodox procedure which can be held up as the authoritative phenomenological method. …A precise methodology does not exist for phenomenological researchers" (Chamberlin, 1969, p. 126). Thus the personal decision on how to proceed is based upon the need to accomplish the observations and recording of observations and interviews within a realistic time-frame while minimizing possible researcher bias. Consequently, all research decisions were made to limit the amount of time devoted to post-observational interviews (an observationally invasive process likely to include at least some researcher bias) in favor of start-to-end observation of the theatrical learning environment (minimally invasive and minimally subject to researcher bias). Both observational stages are augmented via use of videotape recording of observed events.

Phenomenology concentrates on general and unbiased observation, as opposed to selective observation chosen for a predetermined purpose. Its practical results in the field of educational research are summed up concisely by Chamberlin (1969, p. 127) as follows: "Most educators fail to understand what they do because they are preoccupied with what they should do. Responsible educational decisions can be made when careful description comes before prescription. Description cannot solve all the problems of education, but hopefully it contributes

to their clarification."

Phenomenological research in particular may be fairly new in a historical sense, but qualitative research methods in general are not new. A form of qualitative research can be seen in the writings of the ancient Greek philosophers, who spent much time observing the world around them and trying to come up with answers which explained what they saw. This is quite similar to what the modern-day philosophy of phenomenology seeks to accomplish, while taking great care to strip opinion, prejudice, and associated historical baggage from simple observations of phenomenon (Chamberlin, 1969).

Qualtitative research is useful when a researcher is simply seeking information, as opposed to seeking specific information. It is useful when the general subject chosen for study, such as a dynamic theatrical event, is too complex an event to be examined via a set of simple yes or no hypotheses. It is also important to take into account the fact that a dynamic theatrical event is essentially a more or less constantly changing environment, as opposed to a sterile, tightly controlled laboratory situation.

In comparison with quantitative research, which attempts to gather data by precise and measurable objective methods which tend to remove the investigator from the investigation (Key, 1997, p. 1), qualitative research takes into account the fact that the investigator, as an observer, is very much a part of the investigation. Phenomenological observation techniques also recognize that the observer is part of the process, but the phenomenological observation process seeks to minimize the bias the observer brings to bear in the process of observation and recording of observations.

The key word above is minimize. Not eliminate. In other words, the qualitative research process, moderated and disciplined by the tenets of phenomenological bracketing of the

observer's 'baggage' of associated opinions, historical perspectives, etc. is still a bit messy. The researcher's written text describing observations is, essentially, an interpretation of events. Anyone reading the researcher's written text is essentially performing an exercise in hermeneutics - in essence re-interpreting the transcribed interpretation, which is a symbolic expression (written words) of the observer's original interpretation.

The ideal result of qualitative research is to have a research design that gathers "real, rich, and deep data" (Key, 1997, p. 1). The actual result of this dissertation is the gathering of the researcher's self-moderated interpretation of real, rich, and deep data. That is as close to 'reality' as this researcher can get, even when using the phenomenological process known as bracketing. Observations must be transcribed, and the transcription process involves interpretation, approximation, and symbolism.

Limited observations.

A limited form of phenomenological observation was chosen for purposes of recording and observing events. Phenomenology as described and discussed in Chapters One and Two is a wide and varied field, involving many doctrines and procedural processes. From this extensive field the researcher chose the following limited procedure: a non-invasive, non-interactive recording process of note-taking and audiovisual documentation of observed events. Actors and directors were not interviewed during the observation process. Interviews took place only after the theatrical events had run their course. Not all of the possible observational encounters were attended by the researcher, due to scheduling conflicts or other impediments. Actual dates of observations were recorded for the events observed.

Actor interviews.

Actor interviews were recorded on videotape. Interactivity in actor interviews is a fairly

standardized event with regard to how the questioning is presented. It was controlled by

presenting the actors with a written standard interview question (see appendix C), with the

observer offering to clarify that question minimally, and generally asking the actor if he or she

had anything additional to add to their response when it became apparent that the voluntary

response to the question had been exhausted. The observer additionally offered the actor the

chance to comment on any other factors that he or she might have found relevant to the learning

process they had undergone. The rationale for this interviewing procedure is as follows: the

observer did not wish to individually bias results by asking additional or more complex questions

selectively, based upon the observers' conscious or unconscious perception of the particular

value, significance or importance of the role played by the actor.

Director interviews.

Director interviews were recorded on videotape. Interviews with directors took a

different course. Directors were generally asked to comment on the play itself, how the actors

performed and interacted with each other, how the directors perceived the success of their own

efforts and inputs, how they viewed the theatrical process as a learning process, how that process

differed from a regular classroom learning process, and other general questions about theater as a

learning event. The observer conducted these interviews in an interactive manner, responding to

points brought up by the directors, initiating new questions prompted by the development of the

ongoing interview, and asking for clarification of various points. The reasoning for this change

in interviewing style is as follows: the observer considered the directors to additionally be

observers, teachers, manipulators of events, and otherwise active influences on the observed

behaviors of the actors.

Phenomenological bracketing.

Bracketing is a mathematical term which describes the process of isolation or containment of a number or an equation. First adopted for use as a phenomenological term by mathematician/philosopher Edmund Husserl in 1891, the term bracketing in a phenomenological sense essentially means to consciously endeavor to contain and control (bracket) prejudices and preconceptions, excluding them from the mind of the observer, in order to lay open the way toward experiencing the 'essence" of observed phenomena.

The observer endeavored to bracket out his own background knowledge of theater and theatrical events, including his own background accomplishments in the field of playwrighting. As detailed in Chapter 2, the phenomenological practice of bracketing involves a determined effort on the part of the observer to simply observe and record events without mentally attaching extraneous thoughts, feelings, emotions, opinions, tangential facts, etc. that might otherwise manifest a bias to what is being observed in the present moment of observation. It is a discipline that demands a continuously concentrated effort, because to simply observe still requires the observer to select what is being observed.

Phenomenology places an emphasis on observing 'the thing itself", which is relatively easy when a single 'thing', such as an apple, is being observed. The phenomenological observation process is a significantly more difficult goal to pursue when observing a long series of dynamic events, which is one way of describing observing actors interacting with each other and with a director in a theatrical environment.

Limitations of the Study

Two theatrical productions were observed, from beginning rehearsal read-throughs to performances of the theatrical production before a live audience. Observations were limited to

the actors participating in the theatrical performances, and the directors of those performances.

Procedural limits of theatrical productions observed.

The creation of two separate theatrical productions, involving the timelines from 'cold reading' through rehearsals to final performances, were observed and recorded from start to finish on videotape for this study. Casting calls, which predate the beginning 'cold reading' process, were not observed or recorded. Casting calls are a personnel selection process. As such, casting calls are a procedure used by the directors as a pre-evaluation of 'talent', but not as an indicator of the type, duration, intensity, or effectiveness of the learning processes that take place within the theatrical learning environment.

Individual interviews with actors were recorded after the final performances, as were individual interviews with the two directors of the theatrical productions. Not all of the actors were interviewed, for various reasons discussed elsewhere below.

Description of theatrical productions observed.

The theatrical production named *The Wiz*, a musical adaptation of *The Wizard of Oz* originally produced in 1975 on Broadway in New York, was rehearsed and produced entirely at the small Midwestern community theater, beginning with read-through rehearsals on August 29, 2011, and ending with the last scheduled performance on October 2, 2011.

The Wiz is primarily a musical production, with a great deal of choreography involving dancing, eleven songs, two song reprises, and eight scenes. The roles of Dorothy, Tin Man, Lion, Scarecrow, Addaperle, and The Wiz are single roles throughout. The term 'single roles' means that only one actor is assigned to that role, and that actor does not play any additional roles in the production. The other eight actors are required to learn multiple, albeit minor, roles. *The Wiz* falls under the category of Community Theater as it was performed at the small

Midwestern community theater. Community Theater refers to volunteer actors who are generally residents of the surrounding community in which the play is performed. Admission is charged for performances, but the actors and other production staff are unpaid. The director is also unpaid. Costuming and stage set design are provided by unpaid volunteers. Any other participants in the production, such as stagehands and gaffers are also volunteers from the community at large.

The second theatrical production observed was *The Adding Machine*, a drama/tragedy originally produced in 1929 on Broadway in New York. *The Adding Machine* was rehearsed and produced at a Midwestern university, beginning with read-through rehearsals on September 19, 2011 and continuing through its last stage performance at the university auditorium on November 12, 2011. All recorded observations of both *The Wiz* and *The Adding Machine* were at least one hour long each (the length of a single cartridge videotape). Many observations were longer than this, from a few minutes to an hour longer, and were recorded on a second videotape cartridge.

The Adding Machine was originally written in seven scenes, although one scene was deleted from the K-State performance. It involves some choreography, no dancing, and no singing. The roles of Mr. Zero, Mrs. Zero, Shrudlu, and Daisy are single roles throughout. The other twelve actors are required to learn multiple, if primarily minor, roles. The Midwestern university theatre production is a University-sponsored learning experience. Admission is charged for performances, but the actors and other student production staff are unpaid. The director is a paid assistant professor at a Midwestern university. Costuming and stage set design are overseen by paid professors and other professional personnel at that same Midwestern university, but are primarily the work of unpaid university students.

The Wiz is essentially a performance product. As such, the context of the play's written words are important, but in the opinion of the director and actors arguably less so than the performance delivery of the songs and choreographed dance numbers. *The Adding Machine* is an interpretive play. As such it was examined in-depth by the students concerning overt and covert meaning, historical placement (1920's writing about then-current 1920's issues, slang language, religious issues, racial issues, impact of then-current technology on occupations, etc.), and inter-generational applicability of meaning.

Both productions were considered to be successfully presented on stage to live audiences, as determined from actor feedback, director feedback, and (from the researcher's judgment of audience reaction) by the viewing public. This researcher observed two paid-admission stage performances of *The Wiz* and two paid-admission stage performances of *The Adding Machine*.

Population of the Study

Observations of *The Wiz* included a total population of 21 actors and one director, although the final stage presentations of the theatrical production had a cast of 14 actors. Seven actors dropped out of the performance process at various points prior to the final stage productions (see Chapter V: Results, Observations and Interviews of the Actors) and were replaced by other actors. All actors were adults ranging in age from 19 to 59.

Observations of *The Adding Machine* included a total population of 16 actors and one director. No actors dropped out or were replaced. All were adults ranging in age from 19 to 26.

Not all actors were interviewed. Total number of actors observed: 37. Total number of actors observed who were present from beginning to end of the theatrical processes: 23. Total number of actors observed who participated in some percentage of the total number of hours devoted to the theatrical learning experience, as opposed to being present from beginning to end

(7 dropouts and 7 replacements): 14. Total number of directors observed and interviewed: 2.

Collection of the Data

Collection of data was accomplished by written field notes recorded by the observer in situ, and also by videotape recording. Field notes were reviewed and modified post-observation to remove observer bias. Videotape recording observations were transcribed upon post-observational review of the videotapes.

Length of individual observations.

All videotape recorded observations were at least one hour long (the time length of a single cartridge videotape). Most observations were longer than this, from a few minutes to more than an hour longer, and were recorded on a second and possibly a third videotape cartridge or were recorded on memory chip when the video camera in use on that particular day supported video chip technology.   Videotape memory chips had a recording capacity of four hours, thus allowing recordings exceeding one hours' duration without interruption. Some videotape changes resulted in minor loss of observational continuity, usually less than one minute. Videotape equipment was reserved and retrieved on an as-needed basis from the university library Audiovisual department from their mixed pool of equipment.

Recording apparatus.

All recording devices were the property of the university, and were requisitioned on a week-to-week basis from the Audiovisual Department of the university library. The department has several different models of video cameras, some with tape-recording capacity and some with memory chip capacity. Both types of recording hardware (tape and memory chip) were utilized as availability of video cameras permitted.

Cameras were mounted on a tripod and left in a static position on the tripod during

recording sessions. Normally this position was in a corner of the practice room. During the final

theater auditorium stage rehearsals of *The Wiz* the camera was centered 15 rows back in the

audience seating area of the community theater auditorium. No final theater auditorium

rehearsals of *The Adding Machine* were recorded due to recording policies of the Midwestern

university theater auditorium. Two live-audience performances of each play were observed by

the researcher but not recorded on videotape.

In both sets of observations the observer did slightly manipulate the camera in its static

position from time to time in order to focus and to follow the actions of the actors around the

practice room or stage area. The observer was seated behind the camera during all observations.

The intent of the observer was to make both the observer and the camera appear to be a part of

the general background as opposed to a focal point for the actors. It is the opinion of this

observer that the actors did exhibit some minor attentive behavior toward the researcher and

camera on the first day of recorded observation, and then on all subsequent occasions ceased to

regard the observer and recording equipment as a focal point of interest.

Analysis of the Data

Data collected were in two formats: written and audiovisual. Written data in the form of

notes taken by the observer were analyzed as described in *Analysis of Written Notes* below.

Audiovisual data were analyzed as described in *Observation and Comparison of Recorded*

Material below. Written notes of observed audiovisual data were also taken during the many

playbacks of videotaped recordings in the researcher's office, so in effect those notes were also

analyzed in the same method as described below:

Analysis of written notes.

The observer took written notes during the audiovisual recording of observations, as well

as notes when reviewing those audiovisual recordings in the researcher's office.   Some notes

were revised in order to minimize or eliminate initial observer bias. All observer notes were

later transcribed to computer text documents in the researcher's personal computer.

Content analysis of written notes taken by the observer were subjected to certain

qualitative data mining procedures recommended by Berg (2008) in *Qualitative Research*

Methods for the Social Sciences, including open coding, manifest content analysis, and latent

content analysis, defined by Berg as "…analysis extended to an interpretive reading of the

symbolism underlying the physically presented data" (p. 176). This definition of latent content

analysis is very closely in line with the hermeneutic (interpretive) aspects of phenomenological

inquiry. Interpretive analysis transcribed in the Chapter 4 Results section of this dissertation was

kept to a minimum by the researcher in a further attempt to keep researcher bias out of the data.

Only in the Discussion section in Chapter 5 of this dissertation is more extensive interpretations

of observed phenomena found.

Observation and comparison of video-recorded material.

Video-recorded observations and interviews in either videotape form or memory chip

form was downloaded into a university library computer equipped with software commercially

known as Vegas Pro 10. Vegas Pro 10 is an audiovisual software program specifically designed

for processing, editing, comparative viewing, and splicing of audiovisual material. This program

specifically allows positioning and switching of up to thirty-two video sources of recorded

segments of audiovisual material, although this researcher only utilized two sources of video at

any one time for the purposes of comparing observations.

Two extensive videotapes of interviews with the directors were recorded: one hour 57

minutes for the director of *The Wiz*, and one hour 32 minutes for the director of *The Adding*

Machine. Both of those interviews were transferred to CD disc and copies were given to the directors respectively for their personal use. No copies of any recorded material were given to any of the actors. The videotapes of the director interviews were reviewed and subjected to qualitative procedures as outlined in *Analysis of Written Notes* above.

Protection of Human Rights

Permission to conduct this study was obtained from the university Institutional Review Board, or IRB, which at this particular university is named the Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects. Subjects' anonymity were protected by elimination of any personal identifiers in the transcription of recorded material to this dissertation document.

Sample copies of documents distributed by the researcher to actors and directors for their signatures are found in Appendices A and B. A photocopy of the approved Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB) Application for Approval Form can be found in Appendix E.

Summary

The research design for this study was a qualitative design coupled with selected aspects of phenomenological observation. The researcher utilized a non-invasive, non-interactive recording process of note-taking and audiovisual documentation of observed events, coupled with post-event interviews with actors and directors. Self-imposed phenomenological bracketing enabled the researcher to minimize but not eliminate bias from observations and transcriptions of observations. The study was limited to observations of rehearsals and full productions of two theatrical events. Observational notes were taken by the researcher and transcribed for further study and qualitative analysis. Video recording apparatus was situated in such a way as to minimize actors' ongoing awareness of the recording process. Video recordings of observed

events were used for comparative observations of actors' behavior. KSU standards for

protection of human rights in conjunction with the videotaping, observation, and interviewing of

subjects were strictly adhered to at all times.

Chapter 4 - Results

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the phenomenological observations transcribed, interpreted, and recorded using the methodological procedures described in Chapter 3. The presentational order of these results is non-linear for comparative purposes, whereas the recording of raw data was linear.

A case is made for selective focusing, a departure from strict phenomenological observation protocol and a limitation to the total amount of described events. There is a discussion of other Chapter limitations, including observer bias and researcher awareness of observer bias. Notes on observations of the actors seek to clarify these biases.

Following these caveats are a limited number of abbreviated interviews of the actors, selected for comparative purposes and therefore non-linear in temporal occurrence. Not all transcribed actor interviews appear in Chapter 4. The original interviews appear in linear temporal order and are merely transcribed, not compared. Abbreviations in these interview transcriptions are for elimination of redundancies, filler material, and comments not specific to or related to (in the opinion of the researcher) the theatrical learning process.

Interviews of the directors are similarly edited, but are much longer in content, given the fact that there were only two lengthy (in excess of one hour) director interviews. Those two interviews were essentially non-structured, whereas the actor interviews were all in response to a predetermined set of questions.

There are common keywords and themes mentioned by actors and directors, although these keywords are included for illustrative purposes only. They do not constitute a statistical representation of themed words or ideas, and should not be interpreted as a mathematical

analysis of any observation.

Phenomenological Results, and The Presentational Ordering of Phenomenological Observations in Chapter 4

Strictly speaking, there are no 'results' associated with a phenomenological observation in the sense of obtaining results of an experimental outcome. Nothing is manipulated, nothing is tested. Null hypotheses are not accepted or rejected. There are only recordings/transcriptions of observed phenomena.

These recordings/transcriptions were obviously originally made in a chronological order. However, a strict chronological listing of these observations and interview transcriptions would be technically accurate but minimally useful in the practical sense of looking for behavioral similarities, patterns or other commonalities as well as behavioral singularities that bear further scrutiny and comment in the discussion section of Chapter 5. Therefore the presentation of observations in this chapter will be non-linear and grouped by similarities where possible, with the observations of the two theatrical productions being represented in both inter-production and intra-production groupings. A linear format was used in the larger transcription of raw data from field notes, interviews, and video tape transcriptions that were associated with this chapter.

Selective Focusing

A phenomenological observation takes place in either an arbitrary or a predetermined point or bracketed window of time, or a series of points and/or bracketed windows of time, during which supposedly unbiased observation and recording of events within a selected environment is practiced.

The descriptors 'unbiased observation and recording of events' are overstatements. It is not humanly possible to observe and/or record all events within an environment in the manner

that this researcher has chosen for recording purposes. The recording of a 'selective focus' of

events is a better term, which implies bias. But 'selective focus' also implies a reasonable

attempt on the part of the researcher to focus on and record appropriate data at the expense of

attempting to record *all* data. For instance, within the confines of the practice rooms at KSU's

Nichols Hall, where a good deal of videotape recording took place, it was the choice of the

researcher to devote most of the videotape footage to selectively focusing on the active learning

process of the actors and directors, rather than to constantly and randomly pan around the room

looking for facial or body reactions from actors not involved in the immediate interactive

process. Random panning did take place when actors were repeatedly reenacting the same scene,

but only infrequently. In other words, a great deal of the observable environment and the people

in it were regularly unobserved, by selective focus of the researcher.

Within the environment that *was* primarily observed, instead of a constant wide and

distant (all-inclusive) focus of events the researcher regularly chose to selectively zoom in the

video camera on individual events, actions, and interactions that the observer judged to be

appropriate for video recording at the moment (subsets of the subset of observed subjects). The

observer further chose, arbitrarily and inconsistently, what observational field notes to record on

the fly. Not all observations could be scribbled down in situ. Not all unwritten observations

could be recalled later on and written down after the fact.

What is left, then, is an approximation of a description of a partial and selective

observation of the totality of actual events. Furthermore, not all of the recorded description that

was generated is presented in this chapter, due to arbitrary decisions concerning redundancy and

relevancy of selected parts of the complete and lengthy unedited bulk of recorded information.

Thus this chapter becomes a partial description of an approximation of actual events. At

the risk of some redundancy at this point, the shortcomings of this chapter are discussed in further detail prior to detailing actual observations, under the following heading of chapter limitations.

Another aspect of selective focusing needs to be discussed. Active learning almost certainly occurred outside the observed confines of the practice/rehearsal areas that the researcher was present in when making observations and recordings. Although this can be loosely considered as part of the 'street light effect' that has been discussed elsewhere, it differs in the following way:

The results of active learning directly concerned with the theatrical production process (memorization, practicing, interacting) that took place outside of the observed and recorded environment was learning that was *brought to* the observed environment later on for further incorporation, demonstration, and general use. David Freedman's use of the term 'streetlight effect' was in reference to unobserved information outside of the easily observable streetlight 'halo' that is *never* brought to light as a result of not searching for it and not having it become available for observation at a later date.

Chapter Limitations

This chapter presents limited examples of the information obtained from the long-term observations of two theatrical learning processes and post-process interviews using the research methods described in Chapter 3. This Results chapter also includes selected partial post-observational direct quotes from actors and directors, which are included principally to coordinate with and elucidate points of discussion that appear in Chapter 5

In terms of strict phenomenological reporting, *all* collected observational notes, all collected transcriptions of observational videotapes and full transcriptions of interviews should

be reproduced here. Practically speaking, this is not a possibility. The full interviews alone amount to thousands of words, and the transcribed field notes and videotape observations many thousands more. Therefore, not all interview quotes are included, not all of the observers' notes are included, and not all descriptions of videotaped behavior is transcribed and reported. The researcher has taken great care to eliminate redundancies, non-relevant observations, and quoted material from interviewed actors and directors that wander off subject. Generally, the researcher has made reasoned decisions about what's redundant and irrelevant and, in the case of actor/director interviews, which words or statements are connective 'filler' embedded within or attached to relevant material, or determining when an interviewee has temporarily meandered away from a relevant point.

Observer bias.

Phenomenologically speaking, observer bias has been reintroduced to the descriptive phase of the observation process through the use of this selectivity. Perhaps reintroduced is not the proper word. In the strictest sense of the definition of phenomenological observation, observer bias has been *increased* due to selectivity, since it was never entirely absent.

This selectivity implies two forms of researcher bias: first is the implicit but unproven belief that the researcher is capable of deciding what material is necessary and pertinent to present a fairly accurate description of the events observed using the selected observational data transcribed in this chapter. Secondly, it is also unproven but implied that the researcher is capable of deciding what material contained within the total volume of transcribed data recorded is unimportant or irrelevant. In short, the data contained in this Chapter is biased both through inclusion and exclusion.

Researcher awareness of observer bias.

Researcher bias obviously exists to some degree in all phenomenological observation and transcription. This observer has maintained a constant awareness throughout the research process of the likelihood of bias showing up in recorded observations, and has tried to minimize that bias in this Chapter 4 section. Plain explanatory sentences are the norm when referring to researcher observations. Thus the researcher's recorded observations may look a bit sterile when compared to the samples of actor and director interview quotes that appear later in this chapter. The actors and directors interviewed were under no such constraints of observational neutrality. The actor and director quotes are, however, edited and truncated due to the aforementioned researcher selectivity to eliminate redundancy and irrelevancy, as are the quotes transcribed in this chapter. Even so, some of those quotes tend to meander a bit. In such cases, the researcher has arbitrarily determined that the individuals quoted were 'on the road' to specific points and thus the full quote was necessary to prevent ambiguity. When researcher deletions have occurred, they have been indicated with a space followed by three dots and another space, as in "The quick … fox jumped over the lazy dog." Great care has been taken to avoid elimination of words, phrases, comparative juxtapositions, or other identifiers which might change the general meaning of the recorded sentence or statement, such as quick, fox, jumped, lazy or dog.

Observations of the Actors

Following a brief introduction of the researcher to the actors by the respective directors, including an explanation of the researcher's observational methods and intentions and a general description of the intent of the study, IRB forms were passed out to the actors. All actors signed the forms. No further instructions were given except to the replacement actors in *The Wiz*, as those actors individually came into the learning environment later on in the theatrical learning

process. This ended essentially all direct verbal contact with each actor until the time of post-production interviews. Only short informal exchanges of recognition were occasionally made in passing or greeting.

Observations of individual actors and corresponding interviews of those same actors were not directly correlated one-to-one in all cases of the study, due to a variety of reasons.   Six actors dropped out of the first observed theatrical production, *The Wiz*, during the first third of the production schedule. One more actor dropped out of *The Wiz* during the second third of the production schedule. All of those actors were replaced with other actors. None of those original seven actors who dropped out were interviewed, although all of them were observed until their point of departure.

This resulted in a total of 21 actors being observed in *The Wiz* for a production that was limited to a final stage presentation of 14 actors. Only seven of those actors were present for the entire length of the creative process from the beginning tryouts all the way through stage presentation. The seven replacement actors all participated from their various points of origin clear through to the final stage presentation, but were of necessity required to speed up their learning process as compared to the seven actors who were present from start to finish.

Of the 14 actors present at the final presentation of *The Wiz* on October 2, 2011, eleven were interviewed. Two declined to be interviewed, and one left the State of Kansas for a job before an interview could be arranged.

No actors dropped out of the production of *The Adding Machine*. Of the 16 actors present at the final presentation on Nov. 12, 2011, a total of eleven actors were interviewed. One declined to be interviewed, and four did not respond to repeated e-mail requests (4 requests each) for interviews.

None of the actors in either play were professional actors. This was established through the lack of a show of hands in response to a verbal question when the IRB forms were handed out. This was the only question put to either group prior to the beginning of observations. No other background information was established concerning prior experience in acting. No background information was established concerning educational level or educational background of actors. No background information on occupational status was established. Both male and female actors were included in each play's cast. However, no gender information was recorded in field note observations. Although gender source is obvious when observing video tape recordings of actors, no references to gender are mentioned in video tape transcription notes used in this dissertation.

Since one play was a musical and one a drama, certain types of learning procedures were unique to the individual play, for example learning musical scores (*The Wiz*) and learning a physical stage technique called Viewpoints (*The Adding Machine*). Other learning procedures were common to both theatrical productions. These appear below under the titles of observed common actor traits and learning procedures and observed singular actor traits and learning procedures.

Observed common actor traits and learning procedures.

The following list of selected observations concerning actor traits and learning procedures can be categorized as having occurrences in both plays:

A. Volunteerism.

All actors in both plays volunteered to commit themselves to the necessary production work, scheduling, and time devoted to achievement of goals. Obviously, volunteerism alone is not an indicator of achievement of goal, as several actors dropped out and were replaced in the

production of *The Wiz*. The production process of both plays also involved a recommitment in the form of additional hours of practice necessary for final goal attainment as re-defined by the directors. The recommitment was also voluntary, albeit under a commonality of pressure and persuasion to maximize overall performance of the group.

Several different instances of volunteerism were evident in the form of a first actors' willingness to help with a second actors' struggles with line learning during the beginning weeks of play development. Usually this involved two actors repeatedly rehearsing the interwoven dialogue of their particular characters, although three observed instances were of actors prompting lines or words from the playbook for another actor's long soliloquy at some point in the text. No observed acts of this sort of volunteerism were at the request of a director, or otherwise ordered or requested by a party other than the willingness of the volunteers involved to undertake the task.

In both productions, set-building was done by volunteers other than the actors. In both productions, however, volunteerism on the part of the actors was apparent in the continual moving of scenery during pre-live-performance stage changes. Although directors would call for the scene change, no director was observed needing to call on individual actors to move scenery around. Eventually, certain actors were assigned the tasks of moving certain objects in situ (in scenes that they had either just completed or were just starting) for practical reasons, but this was not the case in the beginning stages of development. In fact, actors not involved in a particular scene were observed to volunteer ideas on positioning of scenery by physically moving it around. (Note: the finalized version of actor and scene placement is called blocking, and is normally the final judgment of the director.)

B. Level of commitment.

There were no uncommitted actors in *The Adding Machine*, in the sense that they were uncooperative, unmotivated, or 'wallflowers' (see discussion of wallflowers in Chapter 5). All of the actors in *The Adding Machine* participated in the theatrical learning process from beginning to end.

In comparison, there were several instances of lack of commitment on the part of certain actors that led to termination or self-termination of participation in *The Wiz*. This lack of commitment was readily apparent upon review of the videotapes. Certain actors exhibited inattention, chatting, reading non-text material, doodling on paper, and in several instances sleepiness. The director seemed to be occasionally aware of these behaviors but disinclined to address them, except to call for 'quiet' when scenes were being played out. In addition, two of the actors sometimes displayed an argumentative nature when asked to take part in group activities, whining and/or looking disgusted or somehow wrongly put upon. All of these 'problem' actors were replaced after they eventually dropped out of the production with other actors who did show sincere commitment to the success of the theatrical production, a commitment that continued on through the culmination of the live performances. It should also be noted that these replacement actors had to 'make up time' in the learning process in order to achieve parity with the current level of progress of the other actors. All replacement actors did so without complaint.

Although this researcher cannot quantify levels of commitment for any of the non-problem actors in both plays, it was observed that participative effort was generally high but also variable over time, and tended to peak at or near the onset of the live stage performances. In general, inattention among non-problem actors occurred after they had achieved text mastery to the level of competent memorization (known as being 'off book') when they were not actively

engaged in a scene. Some general inattention was also noticeable during the middle-third of the timeline of the theatrical learning process. In other words, all non-problem actors were more attentive during the early or beginning phase of learning and also before the impending live performance phase of the learning process, and then of course at a very high level during the live performances.

C. *Reading and clarification of text.*

In both productions, a lot of time was devoted at the beginning to discussion of the meaning of the text (script). This is similar to a regular classroom procedure of reading and discussing a text. If the regular classroom were, say, an appreciation of literature class a second similarity would be evident: namely that the personalities of the various characters within the text and how those personalities interact with each other would also be discussed and clarified. It is obvious from observation that this sort of understanding of an actor's adopted character is necessary to create a believable performance and thus, to be able to pass on information about that character to a third party (audience).

A radical departure from the 'regular classroom' format occurs when the actors and director then begin to collaborate on how to delete, change, or interpret the apparent original meaning of the totality of text material in order to customize the theatrical production for their own purposes. In both *The Wiz* and *The Adding Machine*, two scenes were deleted from the final production. In *The Wiz*, the scenes were never rehearsed at all. In *The Adding Machine*, the scenes in question were cold-read (called in theatre jargon a 'stumble-through'), and then later deleted. In *The Adding Machine*, the role of the ruthless, uncaring corporate boss was given to a female actor, thus altering the original culturally-rigid 1920's format. In the 1920's, a female head of a corporation would have been extremely rare. The cast of *The Wiz* had several white

actors, whereas the original version of the musical was written for and appeared on Broadway as an all-black cast. In either case, it was apparent that the directors did not feel that these departures from the original script and format altered the overall message or intent of the playwright.

D. *Role-interpretation and determination of character interaction.*

The approach to text interpretation begins to differ markedly from that of a traditional appreciation of literature class when decisions about character personalities and interpretations of their interactions with other characters begins to be discussed and implemented. Roles are assigned to the individual actors. Sometimes more than one role is assigned to a single actor. A fair amount of interactive director/actor time is then spent on interpreting a character role or roles, deciding how a particular character will interact with other characters in the play, and determining through mutual class agreement *why* a particular character will interact in a particular way. Following that a good deal of time is spent in planning how the actor will present this character or characters to a third party, namely the audience(s) in the upcoming live productions. The important thing to note here is that this is a creative process, and several actors mentioned that this creativity and especially the freedom of creativity helped in the learning process, resulting in a deeper understanding of the subject material.

E. *Text presentation and interpretative presentation to a third party (audience).*

A fairly common regular teaching practice in a traditional classroom environment is to assign particular chapters of a textbook to individual students or groups of students with the intent of having those students assume the role of teacher (conveyor and interpreter of information) concerning the presentation of that particular chapter to the rest of the class. The theatrical learning experience is different from this sort of standard presentational format in that

all of the actors and the director collaborate to determine how to convey the entirety of the theatrical presentation, not just a few individuals deciding how to present an individual chapter to the rest of a class. The intense study of a few individual students concentrating on just one particular chapter is replaced by the intense study of all of the 'class' participants (the actors) on the entire text.

The researcher observed many instances of initial disagreement in both productions concerning presentational format of particular scenes, as well as of the entirety of the production. Another fundamental difference is that all of the actors and the director quite literally learn *all* of the text to be presented to the third party audience – verbatim. It does not matter if an individual actor is only responsible for the on-stage presentation of the standard classroom equivalent of, say, Chapter 3 of a textbook. Each actor still memorizes the entire text. This became overtly obvious to the researcher in observations of the pre-live performance stages of the productions, because if an actor would blank out or scramble a line, the other actors not involved in that scene would immediately react to the mistake.

The level of commitment to accomplishing this much memorization, not only of text but also blocking (movement), facial and body gestures, and in the case of *The Wiz* singing and dancing, is not to be taken lightly. It is often the word-volume equivalent of memorizing a short novel. In the case of a Shakespearian production, it is the equivalent of memorizing a short novel in a little-used variant of your own language. It borders on the impossible to memorize Shakespeare phonetically. The actor should not only know the lines, but know what the lines mean within the context of the play.

F. *Pushing the limits of actor performance as a learning exercise.*

In both productions the directors repeatedly chose to have the actors push the limits of

what they were capable of initially providing in the way of presentational skills. Actors in

singing roles in *The Wiz* were repeatedly made to practice increasing scales to a point of failure.

They were repeatedly made to sing their assigned parts as loudly as possible, even though they

were going to be miked (wearing high-sensitivity cordless microphones) for the live

performances and could have been heard if they were merely whispering. There was a fair

amount of grumbling about this, but the director insisted on pursuing it over a time span of

several weeks. The reasoning the director gave was that actors thus pushed to essentially

unreasonable (and often embarrassing) limits would feel much more comfortable when singing

safely within their individual ranges of ability.

Actors in *The Adding Machine* devoted an average of 15 minutes of each group meeting

to various processes of an overall set of acting techniques called *Viewpoints*. They were

involved in *Viewpoints* exercises that eventually enabled them to walk, run, crawl, and roll

around on the floor in unison in pairs and en masse, with actors randomly assuming the role of

leader of the exercises at random points during the dynamic execution of the exercises. They

were encouraged to increase stage awareness and body-awareness by backing up (without

looking) as close to another actor as possible without touching. They were encouraged to

spontaneously react to facial and body expressions of other actors. There are many additional

verbal and non-verbal exercises involving mimicking, anticipating the actions of others,

coordination of movement and reactive expressions that the *Viewpoints* system utilizes.

Observed singular actor traits and learning procedures.

The following list of observations can be categorized as pertaining to one play only:

A. *Maximization of singing potential.*

As mentioned above, actors in *The Wiz* were pushed to, and often past, the limits of their

singing ability. The best singer in the group of actors was far from professional, but the intent was to produce a community play, not a Broadway-level play. The singers did improve from their beginning performance levels. An important point here is that the director never gave the impression that the performance level of the reasonably good singers was good enough. Every actor/singer was essentially pushed to do better. The most notable observation concerning this was of the actor portraying the Tin Man. This actor was by the observer's standards a very poor singer, quite aware of it and as a result reticent about singing at volume, and also very reserved in stage movement. By live production time, this actor was not only much improved at singing, holding forth loud enough to not really need microphone assistance at all, but was strutting around the stage without a visible trace of reticence.

B. Incorporation of serendipitous events.

During one taping of *The Adding Machine* the researcher observed an actress slip at a point where she had been running across the stage and end up flat on the floor. After initial surprise and some embarrassment, the actress made a plea for incorporating the pratfall into the scene. Following a discussion about safety, the director agreed to it. Similarly, near the beginning of the first scene of *The Wiz*, a clothesline was strung across the stage to help simulate the back yard environment of Dorothy's farmhouse. One of the actors ran into it and pulled the clothesline down along with an assortment of clothes hung upon it. This was not in the original blocking, but was incorporated into the blocking with the actor twirling so as to get wrapped up in the clothes, thus adding a shade of humor to an otherwise hectic scene of actors running around in response to the tornado's arrival.

C. Dealing with an individual handicap.

In *The Wiz*, the part of the Lion was played by a young male from the Flint Hills Job

Corp. The researcher was informed by the director during the post-production director interview that this person essentially was not able to read the script, either due to a learning disability or some other learning deficit. Nevertheless, this actor wanted very badly to play the part. According to the director, the young man had other people from the Flint Hills Job Corp (not any of the other actors, even though 4 of the actors in the final production were from that institution) interact with him off-set, and memorized his lines through having those people read the part to him over and over and interact with him by playing the other parts he needed to respond to. The actor never revealed this to the researcher during the actor's interview session.

The researcher has no basis for attributing this phenomenon strictly to the influence of a theatrical learning environment. However, it does seem that the intense desire of the actor to be a part of a learning/performing experience had a great deal to do with the outcome of that actor's performance.

D. Overcoming shyness.

Although shyness has been represented somewhat in the description of the reticence of the Tin Man, one incidence of shyness that occurred in *The Wiz* was on par with what will be described in Chapter 5 as *The Wallflower Effect*. A young female actress, also from the Flint Hills Job Corp group, was observed by the researcher to interact only minimally and when called upon to do so. In other words, no initially manifested behavior of voluntarism.

She had no singing part, but had been assigned three minor-role parts, two of which included dancing. She was very shy about participating in the dance numbers, possibly due to a concern about being overweight. At first, another female member of the Job Corp group would voluntarily take her hand and essentially drag her around through the execution of the dance numbers, which involved group dancing in circles and more complicated group movement. She

had difficulty in following along despite the help of this individual. Eventually, other group members would reach out a hand to touch her lightly on the shoulder to guide her around, in a friendly manner, not an authoritative manner.

This actress never showed a tendency to want to drop out of the process, but she did constantly exhibit behavior of hanging around the edges of the group when not practicing onstage, not interacting or engaging in conversation. This shyness, or 'wallflower behavior', never really went away. But because of the necessity of group interaction in the theatrical learning environment, the actress did improve her dancing skills to the point of acceptability of performance requirements, and eventually became able to interact with other group members when called to do so onstage.

Interviews of the Actors

All interviews of actors occurred at some point after the final performances of their respective theatrical events, generally within a week of the final performance. Due to cast parties, only two actors each from *The Wiz* and *The Adding Machine* were interviewed immediately following the final performance. All other interviews were scheduled by previous arrangement through direct contact, phone contact, or via e-mail, the last recorded interview for *The Wiz* occurring 11 days after the final performance, and the last interview for *The Adding Machine* occurring 17 days after the final performance.

The average length of an actor interview was approximately 14 minutes. The longest single interview was 22 minutes, the shortest single interview was 8 minutes. This researcher opted to ask the same interview question-set of each actor/participant, in order to help standardize the observer's impact on the interview process. The question-set was delivered in the form of a written paragraph handed to the actor/participant to read, so that they could refer to it if

necessary instead of asking the observer to verbally repeat it or restate it in a different way. Questions that were asked by actors concerning the written paragraph were answered briefly and as neutrally as possible by the researcher, so as to minimize random researcher bias. Prompting questions by the researcher were limited to: "Could you expand on that?" and, at the apparent end of the interview, the follow-up question: "Do you have anything to add to what you've commented upon?"

The interview paragraph was as follows, and was production-specific in that it did not contain the names of both productions:

How does the theatrical learning experience you underwent in the production of (either *The Wiz* or *The Adding Machine*) and the theatrical learning environment you were immersed in differ from your learning experiences in other 'ordinary' or conventional classroom environments? You may define 'ordinary' or substitute some other descriptor if you wish, in order to make definite comparative points. Feel free to discuss similarities as well. Feel free to discuss any other points you consider to be important or informative about your interactions with the director and the other actors, and whether or not the same sort of interactions take place in an 'ordinary' learning environment.

Interview responses by the actors appear in truncated form as previously discussed. These quotes are selected segments of the larger totality of response that the individual actors gave to the question. By 'selected segments' it is meant that the researcher has selected these segments, and thus some researcher bias may have entered in to the selection process.

Actors are identified by the nature of the part they played, not by the actor's name

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or name of character(s) played (which could be linked to the published playbill or still-extant online links to the performance, thereby identifying the actor by name).   Thus, the identifiers are P, for principal character role, and M, for multiple-character roles. This researcher did not assign a difference in 'importance' to either a Principal role or Multiple roles actor. All of the actors were participants in the theatrical learning environments of their respective productions, and all of the actors engaged in the learning process that took place in those environments.

Actors are additionally identified by the theatrical production they were engaged in, either W for *The Wiz*, or A for *The Adding Machine*. So for example the identifier WP would indicate an actor in *The Wiz* with a Principal character role.

Each paragraph in the direct quotes constitutes researcher-selected segments from the complete response of one individual actor. The segments are linear in nature from beginning to end of response, and will usually contain researcher-selected omission breaks in the linearity of the response that are represented by a space containing three … dots.   Occasionally a recorded interview word or words proved to be unintelligible to the researcher, in which case the unidentified data will be indicated by a question mark as a parenthetical omission (?), or a like-sounding guess with a question mark (word?). All responding actors are represented. Responses are grouped by theatrical performance – *The Wiz* first and *The Adding Machine* second.

Common keywords mentioned by actors in both performances.

Data mining by the researcher for common keywords recurring in the various interviews of actors resulted in the following keyword list, presented in order of frequency of repetition. This data mining was performed via simple computer word-search of the interviews, and does

not necessarily indicate a ranking of importance of the words, or a ranking of value of meaning

of the words. It simply indicates that these words were used by the actors in the descriptions

given during their interviews about the theatrical learning and performance process that they

experienced.

1. learning experience (43 times)

2. positive (34 times)

3. team effort (31 times)

4. community (27 times)

5. help others (26 times)

6. stay on focus (21 times)

7. up to speed (17 times)

8. stay current (14 times)

9. competent, or 'have to be competent' (14 times)

10. difficult (11 times)

11. shape up (9 times)

12. same page (8 times)

13. didn't work together (7 times)

14. lost (6 times)

15. didn't keep up (6 times)

16. boring (5 times)

Common interview themes mentioned by actors in both performances.

Other themes observed in data mining of actors' comments that were expressed in various

ways other than exact matching keywords are listed below. Since these statements are not exact

matches, there is some interpretation on the part of the observer/researcher as to what constitutes

a theme.

These themes are not ranked in order of frequency. They are accompanied by select, anonymous quotes from the actors. These various anonymous quotes from the actors are identified only by generic indicators: WP – classified as principal actors from *The Wiz* (actors having a singular role); WM –actors from *The Wiz* with multiple roles; AP - principal actors from *The Adding Machine*; and AM – *The Adding Machine* actors with multiple roles. The quotes are not presented in chronological order of recording.

The themes are as follows, lettered A through M and individual supporting quotes are numbered underneath each theme:

A. Commitment.

Commitment of the actor and other actors to the project at hand, despite various difficulties or personal conflicts, was mentioned by many of the actors in various ways. For example:

1. WP: "*I wanted this part. Bad. I was afraid I wouldn't get it. When I did get it I was just overjoyed. I worked and worked at this, and I'm really proud of what turned out*".

2. AP: "*I think there's a definite difference in how you learn in a classroom and how you learn when you're going to be a part of a play. There's a whole lot more time commitment in a play. Seems that way anyway. You spend a lot of time on a play. I mean you're there to either practice or soak it in*".

3. AM: "*This is a hell of a learning experience. I mean, you're involved, really involved in the whole process. The amount of time you spend on it is just incredible. I'd do it again, don't get me wrong, will do it again, but I mean it's a full boat. I don't devote nearly this much time to regular classes, sorry to say. Maybe I should. Probably should. But that's not how it pans out*".

B. Knowledge.

Knowledge of the entire play, not just an individual actor's personal responsibility for his or her role. Frequent interpretive discussions to determine why an actor does or says a particular thing helps greatly in the attainment of that overall knowledge. This has been referred to as 'deep understanding' by the director of *The Wiz*, as opposed to mere memorization. Also, knowledge (in the sense of mastery of a subject) has to be determined as sufficient by the individual actor/student and also by the group.

1. AM: "*You know you've got it at some point, but you want to do better. I remember this rehearsal the week before we went live and (the director) wanted a show of hands about who thought they had their parts down, thumbs up or thumbs down, and (one of the principal actors) raised her arm straight up with her thumb down, and I thought no, you've got it, what are you thinking? I just saw you do it. And then I thought she's saying yeah, I got it, but it's not good enough. I think that's the difference between what you call a 'regular learning situation' and what goes on here. You study for a test until you think yeah, I got it, and then that's it. Or you study and think to yourself no, I don't have a handle on this at all, I'm really lost. Either way, you go take the test and it's done with, it's over. You don't have to mess with it anymore. Here, you worry about it right up until the last show*".

2. AM: "*We spent so much time discussing the philosophy of this and the background. Why Shrdlu does what he does, why the boss is like he is, so heartless about replacing Zero. The symbolism. All the characters, really, have symbolism. Even when you're just shouting stuff like 'damn this, damn that' it's symbolic of the time period of the play. And it still works for today. ... You don't get this level of understanding, I don't think, in normal classes*".

3. AM: "*As far as remembering things, I've been in three other major plays, two in high school and one other here, and I can remember just about everything about all of*

them. Probably not all of the lines any more, but certainly the plot and the reasoning for why the characters do what they do. How the scenes play out. I've got classes on my transcript, I look at some of those titles of the classes and I honestly really don't remember that much about what went on there".

4. AP: *"In this play, you have to know everyone's part. You have to know where they stand, where they go next. You have to know why, not just where. You have to know everything about this play. I think in a classroom you have to prove you know facts by taking the test, but you do not have to prove why you know facts"*.

C. Competency.

This indicates a need to be continuously competent in the learning process, to not 'fall behind' and thus be a burden on the other actors in the ongoing rehearsal process.

1. WP: *"It's been a while since I was in school. I liked it fine, but this isn't the same. This is performance art, not a class. Here you have to know everything, and be on it all the time"*.

2. WP: *"... The ones that dropped out didn't keep up, didn't try. You got to stay focused if you're gonna get it done, up to speed ..."*.

3. WP: *"... I also have a background in ballet so I really liked the physicality of my part in The Wiz. You absolutely have to rely on others in ballet – on their basic competency in what they're doing and also in their ability to learn to coordinate in a timely manner with what everyone else is doing. And the same goes for you. You as an individual dancer have to keep up with the performance curve, the learning curve, or it causes real problems. Plus it's embarrassing. So you can't just slide by – you have to be on top of it all the time"*.

D. Memorization.

Rote memorization is not an easy process, but actors helped other actors by providing cues and 'prompts' and by also knowing your part as well as theirs.

1. WM: "*I have trouble with memorization, which is why I wanted one of the minor roles. Then it turns out I get to play four different characters in this one play. Oh well. Worked out all right*".

2. WM: "*This play was a lot of hands-on work, you know? ... The memorization's not so bad as I thought. I don't know why. I guess because it's you practice it with other people. You say somethin', they say somethin', it sort of fits, you know? Not like readin' it out of a book and tryin' to memorize it. It's different. I don't know. I did read it out of a book to begin with, but it's different*".

3. WM: "*... I don't know how you get to where you memorize lines, you know? It just happens. You start off just readin' a book together, and then at some time, at some point you just can say it, but it's easier if you say it to the other guy, not just like you're by yourself*".

4. AM: "*There's so much that you have to memorize here, but the cues you get and knowing the meaning behind what's being said, that helps a lot with the memorization. I was really afraid at first that the memorizing would be a big problem for me, you know sort of flop-sweat about not being able to do it, but it turned out to not be a problem. I got all nervous again, really nervous, before the first performance, but once I got out there it was like no, I've got this down, it's okay, it's not a problem. ... You know you've got it at some point, but you want to do better*".

5. WP: "*You've got to learn everything, you know. Your part, his part, everybody's part. And you've got to know you've learned it. You can't be unsure about it. It becomes a part of you, I think. It's just now over, and already I miss it*".

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E. *Repetition.*

Repetition provides practice and insight and competence. It is sometimes a boring thing to do, but it is a vitally necessary thing to do.

1. WM: *"When you think you got it and you blank, you're going 'line, line, line' all the time, or somebody else is, that's frustrating as hell. Especially if you know it, know that part and the other person's going 'line, line'. You just want to fill it in for 'em".*

2. AM: *"You have to be committed to this. From day one. I knew it was a really big time investment going in. ... You've got a hell of a lot of memorization to do, and you spend a lot of time going over it and over it until you get it down, in practice I mean, with others".*

F. *The role of the director/facilitator.*

The role of the director (i.e. counterpart to the 'instructor' or the 'teacher' in a classroom situation) is not so much to provide raw information for a future test (a future stage performance) as it is to provide ongoing and persistent personal and group direction, define the possibilities and limitations of scope of the project at hand, engage in an ongoing interpretation of intent, provide encouragement, chastisement, demand coordination and timeliness of the learning process with the other 'class' members, provide motivation to continue to do your best, and all of this on an ongoing, repetitive basis throughout the learning process.

1. AP: *"Jennifer was highly, highly competent. The best. You need that to drive you, you know, (to) stay current and competent at all times because you don't want to look bad in front of someone like that. You want to do your absolute best. It was a great experience."*

2. WP: *"I like the director a lot. Pushy, man, but you gotta be pushy to get things done. All the dropouts we had in this, had to make that up again, make that time up again, you know. Lotta pressure on the director".*

3. AM: "*A director is everything, because she's the one steering the boat. A strong director can make a good production out of a crap script. This thing, this was so esoteric it could've got lost, easy. I mean you had to really go there to pull it off, and she did. In spades. I mean, we knew the history, we knew the philosophy, we knew the playwright, we knew the political environment in which it was first produced, we knew everything about this before we got into the production end of it. Immersed in it. And the Viewpoints exercises, that was my first time for that. You get this physical presence for where things ought to be, the actors, the sets, how you move around. It got to be where if you saw a rolling prop a little bit off, like the tree, you'd want to go over and move it into just the right place. You saw in those exercises how we could get to moving around pretty fast and not run into each other, right? Without looking at each other. You just know where people are supposed to be. It's amazing. ... You don't get that kind of kinesthetic knowledge just sitting around in a classroom. And it's important. It ties you in, just as much as the lines do, to what's going on. It's like body memory. I can get up now and imagine myself standing in a certain spot in a certain scene, and come up with the lines easy. It's just all connected*".

4. AM: "*You're way more hands-on with a director than a regular teacher. I mean the access is just a lot more. And they're coaching all of the time. Like a sports coach, only not negative or bullying. More like instructive*".

G. Interactivity.

Interactivity with others in the learning process is more or less consistently occurring, although there are variations in intensity and duration of interactivity, and there are certain processes (like memorization) that can be done individually.

1. WP: "*I liked this a lot. It makes you feel like you're in a family when it all comes together*".

2. WP: "*When you're in the process, it's like you're a family. Now granted, not everybody in a person's family has to be well-liked. I've worked with some real prima donnas. But still, most of the time it's a joint effort where everybody gives their best.* "

3. WM: "*It's funny that you say 'theatrical learning experience' because I think it's kind of unique, you know? It's not like a classroom. A classroom's not a team effort, really. But this is. Theatre is so vibrant, so alive. Even the rehearsals, which can get pretty tedious, you know, way preferable to what goes on in a classroom. You get to feel like a family after a while, not just a bunch of people trying to get something (worked?) out*".

4. WM: "*Um, I guess it's similar in that you're learning stuff. But where it says 'interactions' here, that's where it gets a lot different. You got to interact all the time, and you got to know what the other guy's doing, and what you're doing too, or it just gets (hinky?), you know? I mean you got to coordinate or it's just a mess. … I don't know what an 'ordinary' classroom means, right? I mean I've been in all kinds of classrooms. This is not a classroom type situation*".

5. WM: "*I like the challenge of all the different parts. I didn't know before the auditions that I'd end up playing more than one part. But it's neat. You really have to stay alert to pull that off and you have to work together. If you didn't work together it wouldn't work at all. So that's different from a class, because you don't have to work together if you don't want to unless it's a lab or something. Even then, it's not so much of the time*".

6. AM: "*Interactions, this last part here (referring to the written question), you don't get that much in a regular classroom environment. Not like theater. You interact*

all the time in theater".

7. AM: "*Everybody helps everybody else out, as much as they can. ... So that would be how it's different, one way, from a regular class. You can get behind in a regular class and as long as you catch up before a test it's okay. In this, if you get behind it can affect everybody. Because it's a team effort, you know, everybody has to pitch in and be there. For everybody else*".

H. Minimum goal attainment.

'Sliding by' is not an option. In theatre, this is called 'phoning it in', and results in direct and indirect pressure from other actors and the director to improve personal performance. There is also strong personal motivation to push one's own limits, to exceed expectations, to strive for a 'personal best'.

1. AM: "*... If you try to phone it in the other cast members will get in your face, if the director doesn't do it first. You have to have a lot of commitment to what you're doing*".

2. AP: "*... is there a difference – yeah. In a play you have a total involvement in what you're doing. It's 100% interactive. In a regular class I suppose you can have 'total involvement' too, but I don't, not usually. It's more like how can I ace this class, like how much work do I have to put in to ace it. It's more like a game situation, you know, score these points. Except you're not competing against another team, you're just racking up points for yourself, like a computer game. Bing, high points, game over*".

3. WP: "*A live theater presentation, after you've put your best into it, is just such an adrenalin rush. It's hard to describe it. It's just that you know that all that hard work and effort paid off. It's really a great feeling. You don't get that from a classroom. From that environment, I mean. When it's over, it's over, you go on.*"

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I. Relevancy of the 'final exam'.

The end of the performance run is not the same as the end of a final exam in a regular classroom situation. A final exam is followed by a sense of relief and finality (and possibly grief if you know for a fact that you did badly on the final exam). At any rate the process is over and done with. A final performance of a theatrical experience is almost always followed by a sense of personal loss, even if a joyful cast party follows. There is a sense of wanting to have done better, to have done more - a sense of having to lay something down and leave it, just when you were getting good at it.

1. WM: "*After the performance is when you feel like you done something, you know? It feels good, really good, but it feels like you didn't quite get it at the same time. You want to do better next time, you know? I think everybody does. That's definitely not like school. School, you get the test done, you just want to get the hell out.*"

2. AP: "*It's really apples and oranges. A play is all performance. That's your goal. All the learning, the memorizing, exercises, standing and blocking, all the rehearsals, it's all for the end result. The end result of a classroom is you take a test and you pass it or you don't. End of effort. A play lives on past the last performance. You don't get over it that fast, and you look for the reviews, and you talk about it afterwards for weeks, and it gets on your list of things done*".

J. Variation, interpretation, and re-learning.

A theatrical learning process is not simply the retention and regurgitating (test-taking) of specified learned information, such as you would experience in a lecture hall learning environment. Information must not only be learned and understood, but be open to the interpretive process, subject to modifications, which sometimes leads to re-learning and approaching the general theme of what's been previously learned in a different way or different manner of presenting that information to a third party (audience).

1. WP: "*The thing that gets difficult, you know, is that you have to re-learn a lot of stuff. Alter it. You learn how to move one way, get the feeling right, and then the director changes it. Move a different way. Especially with the Tornado dance. We must have changed that five or six times*".

K. Inattention, lack of focus.

Inattention and lack of focus was observed in both plays by various actors, but with the exception of the actors who dropped out of the production of The Wiz, it was minimal. The researcher observed no real lasting instances of daydreaming or boredom.

1. AP: "*When you're just sitting there watching say two of the mains running lines back and forth you can phase out a little, but not so much. I see other people maybe sneaking a read in a book or the Collegian, but they're still in, still have one ear on what's going on. I mean, somebody forgets a line and you can see them look up before the line gets called, you know. They know it's wrong if a line gets flubbed. You have to know it, all of it*".

L. Pride of accomplishment.

Arguably, pride of accomplishment is a factor in any sort of learning situation. But pride in participation and accomplishment in a theatrical learning environment is present at a very high level.

1. AM: "*This is a new experience for me. I don't quite know how to equate it with regular classes because it doesn't really seem like a class at all, except for the first couple of meetings where we sort of intensely discussed the background of the play and what the various meanings were. Otherwise it was more like a, I don't know, a project. I used to be involved in these church projects where we would go in the summer to impoverished places and help with projects. The play isn't like that but the feeling is like that. You're all working together, and the*

work is hard and long hours and sometimes you don't like it much. But you keep on at it because

you're in this group, and it's important to be part of the group. To work as hard as everybody

else to get something done. There's a self-pride in it. You don't see that in a classroom. Well,

there's a self-pride that you can have in a classroom, but it's not group pride. Self-reward in the

success of the group effort, is what I mean. Everybody feels it, at least I think so, in this group".

M. Comparison to a traditional classroom.

This is a part of the general question asked of all actors. Some responses to this

particular question are imbedded in answers to other interview themes in this section.

1. WM: "*This is not nothin' like a classroom. I wouldn't do this much work in a*

classroom"

2. WP: "*This isn't what you'd really call a classroom event, whatever 'ordinary' means.*

You don't just sit around learning facts. You have to be involved. Everybody has to be involved.

... You have to learn everything, sure. Your lines, your blocking, the (singing) numbers, the

cues. We all do. But I wouldn't call it a classroom. ... Let's see (reading): '...same sort of

interactions take place in a traditional learning environment.' No, I wouldn't say that. In the

early part, where you had the people who didn't keep up, the ones who dropped out eventually,

they sort of screwed it up for the rest of us. We had to play catch-up with the replacement

people, although a couple of them turned out to be real troopers and got up to speed in no time.

But we all got there. ... In a regular classroom it doesn't matter if not everybody gets it. Just as

long as you do. ... So no, it's different".

3. WM: "*It has to be a team effort. If you don't have that, you've got problems. ... I*

don't think this is much similar to a class, like a school class. Not really."

4. AP: "*This is the first time I've used Viewpoints in a production, and that I*

think points out to me another difference in the class situations. There's a real

physicality in theater that just isn't there in a static classroom. It forces you to be in the

moment. You pretty much don't have a choice. You're up and running around and

you're in the moment. You're not just sitting there vegging out. … As far as interactions

go, with the director and actors, you're pretty much doing it all the time. It's just a

natural part of it".

5. AP: *"I don't really think of theater as a classroom experience, unless it's*

history of theater or something like that. You don't just sit on your butt and drink it in".

6. AM: *"This was really a positive learning experience, as opposed to some*

classes where you just try to live through it. I would much rather go to something like

this than a regular class, even though the amount of work you have to put in is just

unbelievable. It's totally worth it. It's definitely not boring. … You have to stay current

throughout the process or it'll just overwhelm you".

Interviews of the Directors

Each director was both observed and interviewed. An introductory meeting took place

between the researcher and each director prior to the beginning of the observation process. The

purpose of the study was explained, the non-intervention status of the researcher was addressed,

and an agreement was reached for the director to hand out the required research disclosure

statements (IRB signature forms) for the actors to voluntarily either sign or refuse to sign. One

IRB form was also given to each director to sign. This ended essentially all direct verbal contact

with each director until the time of post-production interviews. Only short informal exchanges

of recognition were occasionally made in passing or greeting.

Both directors were interviewed separately and at length (approximately 1 hr 30 min

each) concerning the play, its history, the perceived effectiveness or success of the play as presented in the final performances, comments on various problems encountered with the production of the play, the history of the director's involvement in theater, the directors' opinions as to the relevancy and effectiveness of theater as a learning experience, and how that experience differs from an 'ordinary' classroom learning experience. Both directors commented specifically on certain cast members concerning their competency, cooperation, and enthusiasm in relation to those cast members' learning ability and performance level. Both directors were interviewed approximately one week after the conclusion of the final theatrical performance.

A note on phenomenological observations of directors.

Both directors were interviewed after the last stage presentation of their respective theatrical productions had taken place. They were of course also recorded on videotape during the course of the theatrical production, as were the actors. The most prevalent behavioral generality that can be said of those day-to-day observations is that both directors were highly interactive with the actors. There was observable selectivity on the amount of time spent interacting with specific actors, but it is the observer's opinion that this selectivity had more to do with the importance of the actors' specific role in the production than with the actors' individual ability to master the 'course material.' This is somewhat at odds with the actors' thematic comments about 'team effort' and 'community', but it is possible that the actors had a different interpretation than the researcher/observer did about the concentration of individual attention on the part of the directors.

The director interviews contain a good deal more in the length of quotations than appear in the actor interviews. Mainly this is due to the researcher's decision to explore the directors' general history of teaching methods and viewpoints, rather than a series of short direct answers

to specific questions. Thus if some transcribed answers tend to ramble a bit, it is because the researcher believes the rambling is inclusive of and ultimately directed to a specific point, or perhaps a series of interconnected points. The quoted answers below are probably less than 10% of the total volume of the two interviews.

Common keywords mentioned by directors.

Data mining by the researcher for common keywords recurring in the various interviews of the two directors resulted in the following keyword list, presented in order of frequency of repetition. This data mining was performed via simple computer word-search of the interviews, and does not necessarily indicate a ranking of importance of the words, or a ranking of value of meaning of the words. It simply indicates that these words were used by the directors in the descriptions given during their interviews about the theatrical learning and performance process that they directed.

1. participation (47 times)
2. motivate or motivation (46 times)
3. repetition (45 times)
4. learning (43 times)
5. interpretation (25 times)
6. schedule, or on schedule (22 times)
7. creativity (22 times)
8. learning experience (19 times)
9. overview (14 times)
10. confrontation (12 times)
11. choreography (12 times)
12. conflict (11 times)
13. address the situation (10 times)

14. background (8 times)

15. pushing the limit (8 times)

16. difficult (7 times)

17. competent (7 times)

18. readiness (6 times)

19. focus (5 times)

Common interview themes mentioned by directors.

Other themes observed in data mining of actors' comments that were expressed in various ways other than exact matching keywords are listed below. Since these statements are not exact matches, there is some interpretation on the part of the observer/researcher as to what constitutes a theme. These themes are not ranked in order of frequency. They are listed randomly. They are accompanied by select quotes from the directors. The quotes are not presented in chronological order of recording.

The themes are as follows, lettered A through G and individual quotes related to those themes are numbered underneath each theme. Theme quotations are preceded with either WIZ to indicate the response of the director of *The Wiz*, or ADD to indicate the response of the director of The *Adding Machine*:

A. *Actor/student participation, investment, and commitment.*

Student participation in a regular classroom format is normally fairly passive. 'Investment,' in the sense of time spent, resources devoted, and commitment in the sense of dedication to effort, may all be dependent on the perceived value of the classroom subject(s) to be explored, the perceived difficulty of taking the class, and whether or not a particular class is required instead of elective. In a theatrical learning environment also, investment, participation, and commitment are not necessarily a sure thing, although the volunteerism of the actor/students

makes the likelihood of those positive elements greater. But in a theatrical learning environment these elements *need* to be present, and it is partially up to the director to ensure that they are present from the beginning of the collaborative effort.

ADD: "*… I think one of the big things for a director is to get a buy-in from everybody at the beginning*".

WIZ: "*As for the term 'investment', yes it is an investment, from the second that you start looking at people, and actually even further back than that, from the second that you start reading the script, and you start realizing how much this is going to take to get this (musical) to a living, breathing creature – what's that gonna take? You start looking at the logistical side of it. How do you use your time economically, because you know as soon as you get into it that there are going to be conflicts. Even the best laid plans always get screwed up by things like that. … It's also an investment for the actors in the show, because a lot of them don't live in (Midwestern city), so they have to invest time and gas just to get to the rehearsals and the productions*".

WIZ: "*As for me, I was also the musical director, the costume adviser, the technical director, so for me there was quite a bit of investment too*".

B. Directing is similar to teaching in terms of preparation.

Directing is similar to teaching in that there must be a significant amount of background reading and research prior to the startup process of the theatrical project. The director must be thoroughly prepared and thoroughly versed in the subject matter beforehand.

ADD: "*… I also allow myself to say I don't know, when I don't know. But you really have to stay observant, because then eventually you will know. It will come to you. But you have to stay observant and, I think, be impartial. By that I mean not cloud your observation with a*

predetermined theme. But that doesn't mean to not know the subject matter. When I go into a situation, I know the material backwards and forwards, so it's not like I'm being lackadaisical. It just means I'm open to suggestion and opportunity".

C. *Directing is unlike teaching.*

Directing is also somewhat unlike teaching in that you (possibly) have the option of picking your own 'students', and also to a limited degree there is an option in picking your classroom environment. Furthermore, regular teaching may or may not involve a state of collaboration with students. It is possible to just teach in a top-down lecture fashion in a regular classroom format. It is not possible to do that, at least not effectively, in a theatrical learning environment. In a theatrical learning environment, group collaboration is a necessity.

ADD: "*I strongly believe that a director's position is a leadership position. You cannot be a successful leader –well, you can be, but it's much more difficult – you cannot be a terribly successful leader without willing followers, and I use the term 'followers' only in counterpoint to leaders. I think a better term would be 'collaborators'. Theater is a collaborative* art".

ADD: "*There's a difference between being a controlling force and being a guiding force*".

ADD: "*... Well I think you offer some ingredients and some support and some trust, and a lot of encouragement, and I believe in 'yes you can' instead of 'no, don't do that'. I don't know if you noticed it, but I hardly ever said no outright, or if I did it was in a joking format or in an environment where there was so much trust built up, and the environment was so enthusiastic that I could say 'no, no, that was better'. But I would usually offer an alternative to a no, or I would try my best to. It is trying to get rid of the things that don't work, but the vocabulary that you use has to maintain a creative, lively, supportive environment. If it's 'no, do it this way, no,*

do it that way', the message eventually becomes 'nothing I bring will be right, and therefore I'll bring nothing'".

D. Actor/student ownership of the goals and learning approaches to a theatrical learning environment.

Unlike a regular classroom environment where all of the curriculum planning takes place outside of the learning environment, a theatrical learning environment inspires creativity and leadership on the part of the actor/students. The students/actors can develop a sense of ownership of the material learned and/or the skills mastered.

ADD: "*And now my job becomes editor like the audience's outside eye, and so I say okay that can work, and that can work, and maybe we need to modify this, and so what happens is, they have ownership of it. They created it. I've directed it, but in the sense that I have led them, I have inspired them, I have provided them with material with which to work. And then they create it. And I've heard some of them say that it was very freeing, and that they were surprised at being allowed to take that kind of control. And I said to the group in this forum class that I was observing, I said you know the American educational system, which is I think what you're interested in exploring here, I said the American educational system teaches you to sit back and learn to the test. Or to wait for the instructions, and you follow the rules and you learn to the test. But when you're asked to do something, and the teacher says 'here are the parameters, here are the ingredients, now create something' they get all 'now wait, are you sure I'm allowed to do this'?   Yes, what you as an individual bring to the piece makes it better than if I just said 'do this, do that'. You know, any time somebody feels like they have ownership of something, they commit to it and they invest in it more fully*".

E. Differences from a regular classroom learning environment.

A stage is unlike the front of a classroom in that the interpretive format (scenery) tends to change significantly within a single 'class' presentation. Similarly, the learning format can change through the process of interpretation of text and relevant background and/or historical material associated with the principal text (script). Also, the students' eventual audience-observers are more or less required to add their imaginative capacity to the actual content of the final analysis and development of the material presented to them as third party observers. The effectiveness of this transmission of learned and interpreted information to a third party (audience) is crucial to the goal attainment of the theatrical learning environment. A theatrical learning environment is also unlike a regular classroom learning environment regarding volunteerism, interest in the subject matter, and general classroom participation.

WIZ: "… *I think that the biggest difference I've seen in an establishment like a school, you do tend to get students who are maybe not really focused on 'this is what I really want to do.' Maybe it's more like this is what will fit into my schedule, or it's just something they thought it would be easy enough for them to get through. So in the classroom there I thought the students were not very focused, their questions were just kind of all over the place. There were a couple of people who seemed like they really cared, and there were others who didn't necessarily seem to be engaged in it*".

WIZ: "… *the final result is a whole package. When you finally see it all come together, it's the result of a lot of cooperation among all of the individuals responsible for the production to produce a common effort. And I don't think you see that in a regular classroom. There, it's a lot of individual people striving for individual goals, you know, and they may be in a community of sorts and I guess you could say that what they're doing is a kind of a community effort because they're all in the same place, the same classroom, listening and debating about the same*

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material, but in the end it's still individuals with individual goals".

ADD: "*So, if I were teaching to a class, I would try to alleviate the idea of teaching to the grade. I don't know how you do that, exactly, but that seems to be something that's important to let them know that they are capable of succeeding. I don't care about grades, and I've said to them, 'do you think I've ever seemed like someone who fixates on grades? I have to give you grades because I have to give you grades, I could care less about that, what I care about is I care that you're learning something in this class. So I think it's important to lessen the stress about a grade, encourage creativity, and stress ensemble work. I think if I had to teach a traditional class I would break them into groups as many times as I could and get them to be creative. Have them doing and moving and thinking, not just sitting and absorbing, spending a ton of time pontificating about a subject*".

F. Teaching to the individual.

Even in a collaborative effort, the role of the facilitator is not limited to facilitation of the collaborative group as a whole.

WIZ: "*You can't say the same suggestion to different actors of the same ability and expect to get the same result, at least not right off the bat. And it's the same for actors of different abilities. Sometimes you can't even say the same thing – you have to tailor your answers or your coaching to the individual*".

G. The student as an individual.

In a traditional classroom situation, a student can be 'an island,' in the sense that he or she can choose to sit in a sea of other individuals and not interact with them at all. The person to the left or right of the student is immaterial to the outcome of that student's classroom achievement. This is fundamentally not the case in a theatrical learning environment.

ADD: "*… this theater work emphasizes that the human being is the instrument. That's what you use. So, to ignore the human being on either side of you is counterintuitive to what it is to be a theater artist*".

ADD: "*I think it doesn't work well when a professor thinks 'I am a teacher and I know more than you so you will take what I know and you will learn it'. Instead, you should say 'I am a human being and I have more life experience than you and I might be able to teach you something but you know what? You might also be able to teach me something'. So if we operate on that idea that we're human beings with differing amounts of knowledge …*"

H. Understanding the context of the material.

The learning of and theatrical delivery of a script may be an interpretation and an approximation, but it nevertheless involves a competent understanding of the content of the text. Every actor involved in the process needs to achieve this competent understanding in order to maximize the potential of the theatrical event. This involves more than just the simple retention of facts presented through text or lecture.

ADD: "*So I'm teaching this fundamentals class primarily with non-majors who are freshmen taking it as a requirement for rhetorical arts or something, and they want to know from me the answer. They want to know from me 'how do I do this'? And I say you have to use yourself to find the answer to this. … One girl has been in tears in my class a few times, she keeps saying 'I can't think of anything'. I say that's your job in this class, to think of something. So go home and figure it out, this is material you know because this is about human beings, and you know human beings and you know yourself. … That's, you know, extremely difficult for some of these kids. They want to know 'what's the answer, how do I do this to get an A'. And I won't give them that*".

I. Interactivity.

An actor/student cannot be a 'wallflower' in a theatrical learning environment. The more interactivity there is taking place, the greater the likelihood of success in goal attainment.

WIZ: "*As far as Lion, Tin Man, Scarecrow, Dorothy, they would get together on their own to get their lines and interaction down. They would also get together just to be sociable, so that they would have a stronger bond with each other, and I think that showed by the final scene*".

ADD: "*Yeah, I think the word you use in theater is ensemble. To create an ensemble, which is solidarity. And this gets back to Viewpoints (holds up book) by Anne Bogart and Tina Landow. The Viewpoints were developed for three reasons: one is to train actors, two is to develop ensemble, and three is to create composition for work. And Anne Bogart says specifically that this is in the interest of collective artistic endeavor. … Thus you see a freedom and enjoyment out of the human connection*".

J. Volunteerism.

Volunteerism normally implies a high level of commitment, but this is not always the case. In certain instances volunteerism can also be escapism, in the sense of an individual choosing what they consider to be the lesser of two evils, or choosing what they at first perceive to be an 'easy' outcome for the amount of perceived investment required. When reality sets in concerning the actual amount of investment necessary for goal achievement, behavior may change. The director of *The Wiz* experienced both kinds of volunteerism in his production efforts.

WIZ: "*So my usual venue is at a school setting or workshop or theater that is already set up for students who are saying 'I want to learn about this', I want to come and do production, I want to learn about how to do certain things in the theater, in the arts. They are voluntarily*

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there. … For the students who do want to get engaged with it, it's a lot of fun and it's

rewarding".

WIZ: "*Even though I cast the show, once we got into rehearsals a few persons started*

dropping away. As you know, we had a number of students from an organization called (name

deleted). From initial auditions through the opening of the show, I saw nine of them drop out,

three or four after just the initial meeting. Generally it was the realization for them of the

investment of time, although in a couple of cases it was because of personality conflicts or just

not wanting to participate at the level necessary to pull things off. They were just freaking out

about how much time they were putting in. And part of it is that the government sponsored

training program has no consequences for agreements. They decided they just didn't want to

participate any more, the actors, and there were absolutely no consequences for their actions.

And it's sad, because I was really hoping that either I or someone from the (theater) could come

to their organization and do workshops with them. I think they even earn points or something for

their organization to participate in community service things, community activities, that sort of

thing. So I was kind of surprised when there were no consequences, when they could just leave.

Part of me wanted to have that teacher moment that they romanticize in every movie about

education, where some teacher goes into a rough school. I wanted to have a kind of 'scared

straight' kind of moment. But I had to stop and realize that there were a whole other group of

people right here and now with me that wanted to be here and wanted to finish the show. … In

a collaborative art, it's hard to watch someone say 'no, I don't want to do this anymore', and not

really care what it does to the others".

WIZ: "*Getting back to your question about the differences, yeah, the (training program)*

people in my opinion needed more of my coaching and one-to-one time than the more

accomplished actors. And I tried to do that. I tried to reach out to them. But some of them,

frankly, didn't seem to want to be reached out to. I'm not sure what it was. It was, especially

with the ones who quit, it was like my reaching out to them was somehow offensive to them, or it

invoked an automatic challenge to authority. I don't know. I hesitate to use the word 'broken',

and I don't mean that they were broken, but it was like the unwritten contract that humans enter

into all the time when they choose voluntarily to work together, it was like that unwritten

contract was broken, or not ever really formed in the first place. I'm not sure how to put it".

K. Actor/student limitations.

Not all students are equal, not all students operate at the top of their game. Facilitation

often involves just convincing a student/actor that he or she has permission to explore and

express performance, knowledge, or level of achievement without fear of reprisal. In other

words, facilitation can mean freedom of permission.

WIZ: "*… And in open auditions you don't know what body types you're going to get,*

what accents you're going to get, but because it's community theater you have to work with it.

And so I've learned to embrace flaws, because flaws are a part of life and you have to deal with

it, and if you understand that in teaching, then you don't beat yourself to death and beat the

other person to death trying to achieve the impossible. The thing is, how do you set actors up for

success, so that they believe they are contributing to the overall success of this production" .

WIZ (regarding performance of The Lion): "*Sometimes an actor, or a student for that*

matter, just needs permission. They honestly need someone to say, hey, you can go ahead and go

to the next level here. I think part of the initial problem was that he was there with his friends

from (the government sponsored training program), and he didn't want to appear stupid in front

of them, or even stand out, especially. And that happens in educational settings, too, where an

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individual doesn't want to take a chance of being in the limelight for fear of messing up. But as soon as I said "you do it, you know how that Lion's supposed to sound", he did it. He just went for it".

L. Differences in teaching a regular class.

Both Directors have also taught 'regular' classes. They have perceived differences in the student expectations concerning a 'regular' classroom environment.

ADD: *"Yeah, I'm dealing with it right now, it's a smaller class, fundamentals of acting, sixteen students, only three of them are theater majors, most of them freshmen, so they're coming right out of that school system, that American school system, that's like I sit at my desk, in a row, and I listen to my teacher, and I do what they tell me to do, I don't have an original thought of my own, I just regurgitate information, learn for the test, take the test, do well on the test …".*

ADD: *"And, you know, if you're thinking and you're creating in my class you're probably going to get an A. And I'm also a firm believer that everyone has the potential or the opportunity to get an A. I mean, the attitude where 'well, only two people in this class are going to get an A based on the curve', I mean that's ridiculous to me. Why couldn't they all get A's if they're all working at that level? You've got to at least be there to learn in the moment, so that's part of getting an A, being there, but just as a matter of statistics, no. … What if you said, 'everybody here will get the grade of the weakest person in this class'? I'd love to do that as an experiment, and see how the community comes together to lift that person and also raise all of their grades as a group".*

Field Notes

The transcription of field notes into this dissertation has already occurred extensively in the previous sections titled *Observed common actor traits and learning procedures* (p. 96) and

Observed singular actor traits and learning procedures (p. 105). What appears below is a

general description of what constituted field notes and how they were recorded, modified, and

applied. There are also some examples of field notes that were historical or biographical or

simply questions posed by the researcher in situ, that were not applicable in the above two

categories but which are nevertheless deemed pertinent to the overall understanding of the

observations recorded.

Field notes defined.

Field notes are the written observations recorded in notebooks that the researcher carried

in addition to the videotape equipment. Field notes were recorded on site, although review and

correction of those notes took place in a post-observational setting. The beginning field note

observations were of *The Wiz* at the community theater. At this beginning point the researcher

was essentially learning how to approach the observation and recording process. A great many

early pages of field notes were devoted to general descriptions of the actors – what they were

wearing, how they stood and walked around, how they looked, how they appeared to interact

socially with one another before the learning sessions began. More description was devoted to

the physical environment of the Theater itself. On later reflection, after some degree of

observational experience had been attained, the researcher determined that the vast bulk of these

early notes were essentially irrelevant to the observational transcription process, although in a

phenomenological sense of total observation, they were as much a part of the observational

record as anything else. Practically all of these 'filler' field notes have been eliminated from the

final records that appear in this dissertation.

Some additional comments about field notes.

The term 'field notes' is somewhat of a misnomer, since many of the 'finished' notes

recorded below were the result of reviewing and modifying field notes after the fact, rather than trying industriously to scribble down every researcher comment or descriptive sentence during the live time observations of the phenomena.

Several researcher field note transcriptions are in the form of questions rather than statements. While ideal phenomenological recording of observations is devoid of questions, this researcher found it next to impossible to adhere to that restrictive technique on a consistent basis in 'live time' field note recording. Also, the speed of transcription necessary to scribble along in real time made unbiased objectivity a goal rather than a consistent reality.

The original versions of field notes tended to be choppy, incomplete, abbreviated and truncated. The field notes seen below have been reviewed post-observationally and re-written to appear as complete thoughts and sentences rather than fragments. However, the researcher has concluded that an intermix of unedited real-time field note questions and post-real-time editing of notes should be presented here, because in a strictly phenomenological sense the unedited live-time field notes written as questions are part and parcel of the totality of the overall phenomenological observation experience.

Many videotapes were reviewed multiple times. After-the-event reviewing of the videotaped material was far less demanding, and thus those transcribed notes are closer to the phenomenological observational ideal.

Select (edited) examples of the Researcher's field notes on actors in The Wiz.

Note: These field notes listed below are generally not usable for strictly comparative purposes concerning identification of the actors' specific behavior that have been entered into the descriptive process of previous sections of this dissertation. Nevertheless, they help to enrich the overall description of the theatrical learning environment. They have been edited from brief,

choppy original field notes into full sentences and paragraphs. They also include questions written in situ by the observer.

The director of the show *The Wiz* had a hard time pulling the show together. Ordinarily this is not a problem for him (according to him), but this cast had several members from the government sponsored training program in it, and they gave him problems. One government sponsored training program person who got the part of The Lion did extremely well, despite his limited reading ability. However, there was another actor who was essentially the Lion's polar opposite - surly, uncooperative, not a team player. He missed four rehearsals entirely and was late to four others, despite the fact that he was hauled over to the community theater on the same bus as the other government sponsored training program actors. He just wandered off somewhere around the small town until he felt like going to practice. It is too late in the production schedule to replace him.

A valid comparison to a decision in a traditional adult learning classroom would be this: what does the instructor do about a seriously negative student - one that slows down the entire class and leads to irritation and unrest among class members? In this particular case of a theatrical event scheduled for a performance run, the learning experience is an interactive team effort. The problem individual is more than "the weakest link," he is a potential chain-breaker (in terms of the chain of events leading to a successful performance run for the entire group).

In a traditional adult learning classroom situation one decisive event would be for the instructor to remove the problem individual from the classroom permanently. However, in an interactive team learning event this must be done early on, and a replacement "student" found, in order to minimize damage to the final performance presentations of the learning event. In this particular case, it is getting seriously late in the game to do this.

Other government sponsored training program members have varying degrees of acting and singing competence, with one individual in particular being marginally able, albeit willing, to fulfill the assigned singing role. Again, comparing this theatrical event to a traditional adult learning classroom, ordinary class individuals being graded on a curve or other hierarchy measurement system generally do not affect the overall classroom environment, unless they are disruptive. They are essentially singularities, with their individual performance issues of concern only to themselves and possibly to the instructor. Some degree of interactivity may be present in a traditional classroom situation, but it is generally not a crucial factor in individual performance.

Question: does interactivity in an adult learning environment generally improve individual performance results?

The preparatory stage environment is one big multi-faceted and dynamic adult learning experience. Learning occurs via reading, reciting, interacting, body movement, facial expression, a certain amount of improvisation, and a good amount of repetition. Learning doesn't occur at the same rate despite the fact that in many instances the actors are ostensibly learning the same material at the same time. At times the stage environment appears to be a sort of controlled chaos, with sub-groups practicing subsets of the play's dynamics. In other words, learning is not necessarily linear, in terms of achieving a goal.

Question: in my personal learning history, classes involving a textbook generally *are* linear in their learning format, with the exception of possibly eliminating certain chapters along the way. Is one format more effective than the other?

Unlike a traditional classroom situation where it really doesn't matter to the class as a whole if one or two individuals flunk out or perform poorly, in this situation any poor performer ultimately affects the evaluation of the entire student 'body' of actors. On the other hand, there is

an easily observable trend by several actors to make the errant, recalcitrant, or just plain slow individuals learn and improve, generally through supportive help but sometimes via judgmental statements and actions (gestures, facial expressions).

Question: do classroom situations where graded (or judged) outcomes are dependent to some degree on overall class performance generally tend to lift the level of success of poorly-performing individuals?

Select (edited) examples of the Researcher's field notes on actors in The Adding Machine.

Note: These field notes listed below are generally not usable for strictly comparative purposes concerning identification of the actors' specific behavior that have been entered into the descriptive process of previous sections of this dissertation. Nevertheless, they help to enrich the overall description of the theatrical learning environment. They have been edited from brief, choppy original field notes into full sentences and paragraphs. They also include questions written in situ by the observer.

The director of *The Adding Machine* has an extensive background in theater. She came to the Midwestern university this fall semester from Florida State University. Prior to that she worked on Broadway in New York as an actress and singer, and has also performed internationally.

Approximately two weeks of meetings were spent on the background of the play, including the history of the time period in which it was first presented, the playwright's other dramatic works, possible interpretations of the play's intent, and discussions of various ways of interpreting the characters of the play. An initial cold read-through of the play was followed by several partial read-throughs during which the actors were asked to come up with different

interpretations of their characters and perform those interpretations spontaneously.

There is an absolute in-depth analysis of this play. Part of the play involves reincarnation after suicide, which was a generally taboo subject at the time of the play's first presentation in the 1920's. A fair amount of time is spent by the director in class on the social and religious aspects of this subject.

The director employs theatrical techniques called *Viewpoints* from a book by the same name (Bogart, A., and Landau, T., 1995). *Viewpoints* is a systematic approach to coordinating the delivery of text material in concert with physical movement, specifically interpretive physical movement. The actors spent many hours engaged in exercises that involved non-verbal ways of expressing ideas. These exercises involve gesture, facial expression, body language, spontaneous interactive movement such as walking in groups, making group formations such as multi-person human statues, and other non-verbal forms of interpersonal communication. This is done, according to the instructor, to develop temporal, spatial, and kinesthetic response to the material being presented in the play.

Question: does coupling kinesthetic activity with the learning process actively augment that learning process? Apparently the director thinks so.

Question: in a regular classroom, would you openly criticize the performance of another classmate? This is a common part of interactivity in this theatrical learning situation. Occasionally an actor will take this criticism inappropriately, but most of the time the actors see this as positive feedback.

Question: to what degree would you be inclined to devote the same amount of time to reading and rereading a textbook like a script for a play? Are most textbooks even read through completely a single time?

Question: would this physical activity be beneficial in a traditional classroom situation?

Question: improvisation plays an important part in these exercises. How would improvisation help a traditional classroom situation? How does spontaneity figure in to the learning process?

It seems apparent to this observer that the actors quickly become invested in both the script and the play itself. "Invested" implies commitment. How is this different from a traditional classroom situation? Does a student become invested in a textbook and a class? If not, how could an instructor establish investment in the class?

This theatrical learning experience is not linear. Bits and pieces of the play are rehearsed independently by the appropriate actors, and then those individual parts are brought together into larger parts. At the same time, there's a constant overview discussion of what is necessary for the entire production. Many times, multiple trains of thought can be rehearsed in the same classroom situation.

This tendency to be able to handle multiple trains of thought, to be able to pick up at virtually any point within the text of the play and run with it, is interesting. In the Habima theater in downtown Tel Aviv Israel, because of conservation of actors, some actors may have 2 to 6 costumed parts in a single play. The same actors generally appear in three different plays per week, simultaneously, and then shift to three other plays for the next three weeks. Thus, one stage actor may have as many as 18 different character parts in six different players per month. Plus, he or she will also have rehearsals that are typically scheduled during the daytime within the regular weekly schedule in order to flesh out the next set of six plays that are coming up for production. This information comes from personal observation of the researcher during time spent researching Israeli Theatre in Tel Aviv in 1995.

Question: How is this enormous amount of memorization by actors, as observed by this researcher in the Habima Theater in Tel Aviv, humanly possible? How far beyond the general scope of a traditional classroom environment and ordinary classroom requirements does this amount of memorization go?

Physical warm-ups. They are done every time once the rehearsal phase began. How important is this? It is common knowledge that companies like Toyota and certain other major corporations devote daily time to warm-up calisthenics prior to work (Tagliabue, J., 2001). There must be a payoff for this, because over a year's time these corporations devote big bucks to this activity. These exercises promote a heavy emphasis on group consensus.

Question: How much difference would five minutes of exercise make in a lecture classroom situation?

Question: How often do ordinary classroom students end up working in teams?

A traditional classroom doesn't easily allow for innovation from the students in it. How much leeway is there for the capacity to question, challenge, interpret, and ultimately fully understand the material being presented?

Summary

Results obtained in a qualitative research design are not hard facts. From the phenomenological perspective, results are an interpretive exercise in recording observed phenomena. Observations and interviews of the actors resulted in a list of common keywords mentioned by actors in both performances. Many of the keywords were about learning. Others were about persistence. Still others were about motivation. All of these are factors are necessary for successful completion of a task. Common interview themes mentioned by the actors in both performances included understanding of the subject matter, being able to interpret that

knowledge, the need for continuous competency during the learning process, the necessity of repetition, and the necessity of interactivity.

Directors made comments similar to the ones above, and in addition spoke about performance levels, learning ability, competency, enthusiasm, and the relevancy of the effectiveness of theater as a learning experience. Keywords were schedule, or more accurately keeping to a schedule, interpretation, creativity, overview, pushing the limit, repetition, motivation, and persistence.

Observations by the researcher, transcribed either in written field notes or videotaped for later review and transcription, indicate behaviors related to the following: volunteerism; level of commitment; reading and clarification of text; role-interpretation; investment in the learning process; ownership of common goals; interactivity, and differences in the observed theatrical learning process and teaching a 'regular' class.

Select field note examples not used in the description of actor and director behaviors were included to help to enrich the overall description of the theatrical learning environment, and to indicate questions posed in situ by the researcher during observations.

Chapter 5 - Review, Discussion, Conclusions & Recommendations

This chapter contains reviews of the material in previous chapters, including a review of the intent and purpose of the study and an explanation of the modification of the intent and purpose of the study in order to compare the observations described in Chapter 4 to non-theatrical data that was not directly observed by the researcher.   There is also a review of the methodology and data-recording procedures used, and a review of the merits of phenomenological observation.

This chapter contains a discussion of the semiotics and hermeneutics of verbalization and memorization in a theatrical learning environment, a discussion of the currentness of competency and the coordination of competency as it applies to any learning progress, and a discussion of continuous feedback versus endpoint feedback as it applies to attainment of knowledge.

There are also discussions of investment, return on investment, benevolence and inclusiveness, and the wallflower effect. All of these terms refer to the learning process, both theatrical and non-theatrical.

There follows a discussion of how Chapter 4 results can be compared to and explained by a selected list of the existing learning theories cited in Chapter 2, including constructivism, community learning, social learning theory (Bandura), communities of practice (Lave and Wenger), and collaborative learning. The researcher makes a determination (based to some degree on opinion and bias) of which learning theory most closely matches the observed learning procedures described in Chapter 4.

There is a concluding discussion of how certain Chapter 4 results might make a useful impact on lecture hall learning environments; and a section on other general conclusions and a

list of general opinions reached by the researcher concerning observations recorded in Chapter 4. There is a final opinion of the researcher's view of the status quo in education, and how theatrical learning environments fit in and influence that status quo.

Intent and Purpose of the Study

The *basic* intent of this study is to simply observe and transcribe the observations of two plays produced in Kansas in the later part of 2011, using the modified phenomenological observation method that is detailed in Chapter 3. The *focused* intent of this study is to search for data contained within those observations that might relate to how learning takes place in a theatrical learning environment.

The original intent of choosing two different theatrical performances to observe, one a musical and one an interpretive drama, was to provide the opportunity to assess whether or not different theatrical modalities are learned in distinctively different manners. In keeping with the tenets of phenomenological observation detailed in Chapters 1 and 2, no comparisons of phenomena observed during the two observational time frames were to be made with data from an event or events that had - not - been observed by the researcher before, during, or after the duration of the observational time frames. In other words, it was to be strictly unbiased observation and recording of observations.

At what might be called in the vernacular 'the eleventh hour,' the intent and purpose of the study was modified.

Modification of the intent and purpose of the study.

Near the very end of the post-observational interview process, during the video recording of comments by the director of *The Adding Machine*, a question put forth by that director prompted the researcher to consider the inclusion of an additional comparative process. Up to

that point in the research, the observational parameters chosen for this dissertation study did not include utilizing published external observations by another observer of a non-theatrical learning environment for comparative purposes, for the simple reason that to do so invites external bias.

The question posed by the director was whether or not the researcher was familiar with a TED lecture by Dr. Michael Wesch, a Cultural Anthropologist at a Kansas State University, concerning his observations of student behavior in a large lecture hall learning environment at KSU. (TED is an acronym for Technology, Entertainment and Design, a global set of conferences owned and disseminated by the private non-profit Sapling Foundation, whose mission is to "disseminate ideas worth spreading").

Following the director interview, the researcher sought out this new information and, after viewing this TED lecture on YouTube, determined that comparison of the observed data obtained during the dissertation process to this new non-observed data (Dr. Wesch's published observations) that was external to the dissertation's phenomenological observation process *would* provide additional insight.

Additional study of selected published commentary on large classroom environments by Dr. Michael Wesch was undertaken by the researcher. The researcher found not only that certain statements by Dr. Wesch were valuable for comparative purposes, but also that the method of observation employed by Dr. Wesch was roughly similar to the research procedures being utilized by this researcher. Dr. Wesch, in simply looking without associative bias at student behavior in a large lecture hall environment and then asking those students to comment about their own behavior, employed an observational process similar to the phenomenological observation method used in this research.

Timing and placement of comparison of observations to non-theatrical data not observed by the researcher.

Some general references to descriptions of Wesch's large classroom environment can be found in Chapter 2. It is important to reiterate that the Chapter 2 descriptions do not constitute literature research conducted *before* the observational process, as is usually the case with the procedural chain of events in a dissertation process. Additionally, those Chapter 2 general descriptions of Wesch's classroom environment do not constitute all of the valid comparative data necessary for the comparative discussion to follow here in Chapter 5. Additional specific data mentioned at this point in Chapter 5 are gleaned from published descriptions of Wesch's classroom environment that would be seemingly irrelevant references to a theatrical learning environment in an a priori search of data about that topic. Therefore, to 'salt' that information back in Chapter 2 in order to now make use of it here in Chapter 5 would amount to stacking the deck with information that could not reasonably have been perceived to be useful or relevant back at that point in the research process. It would make the researcher seem to be omniscient.

Therefore the researcher is taking the liberty of introducing additional data here in Chapter 5 that pertains specifically to comparisons of Wesch's classroom environment with particular observational results of the two theatrical learning environments. What follows next is a short refresher section concerning Wesch's results, with more of a direct focus on pertinent data. Additional Wesch comments and quotes will also be found in the Conclusions section of this Chapter.

Refocusing on Wesch data.

A very general description of a large lecture hall learning environment is introduced in Chapter 2. According to Wesch (2011), today's 'modern' large lecture hall classroom is not much different than classrooms of 150 years ago, if you take away the modern lighting and

sound systems. The lecture hall learning environment is usually one long, boxy-looking

rectangular structure with blackboards at the front end of a gradually sloping terraced

configuration of individual chairs all facing forward and usually locked in place. If a particular

student is seated in one of the back half of rows in this lecture hall configuration, the instructor

visually appears to be a great distance away, and figuratively appears to be interactively

distanced from the student.   A way to deal with such a large space is of course to sit in front.

Unfortunately, not everyone in such a large class environment can do that.

Attempts at inducing or increasing student interactivity with other students or with the

instructor are physically limited by the environment described above. It is uncomfortable to turn

around in a seat for an extended period of time in order to view someone speaking from one of

the rows behind, and often the student speaking may be a great distance away, making one-to-

one interactive discourse awkward. Despite the use of audiovisual equipment, it is often difficult

for students at the back of the classroom to clearly discern activities at the front of the room.

And the sheer volume of students present can make it difficult to adequately and efficiently

answer inquiries (Wesch, 2011).

Pitfalls of the large lecture hall learning environment.

One of the most potentially harmful aspects of this type of environment is that an

individual student can become lost in a sea of faces, and thus become essentially invisible to the

instructor and other class members. The resulting anonymity may be an enabling factor for poor

performance. There is little chance that inattention to current class details will have an

immediate negative impact in the form of personal embarrassment resulting from the potential of

being called upon to answer a pertinent question (Wesch, 2009). The student can thus opt to be

physically present and minimally attentive, but not participatory. Worse, he or she can opt to be

mentally absent (in other words distracted by various irrelevant stimuli Wesch lists such as I-phones, computer games, texting, chatting with neighboring students, reading non-related material such as novels or newspapers, daydreaming, etc.). In other words, the primary reason for being in the lecture hall learning environment in the first place, i.e. to learn, becomes one option among many.

There are also behavioral pitfalls in the choice of teachers to rely on the lecture method of teaching as a primary means of information transfer. The following quote from an article titled "*Rethinking the Way College Students Are Taught*" helps to clarify the commonality of such an environment:

> Research conducted over the past few decades shows it's impossible for students to take in and process all the information presented during a typical lecture, and yet this is one of the primary ways college students are taught, particularly in introductory courses. It's a tradition going back thousands of years. … A lot of the information presented in a typical lecture comes at students too fast and is quickly forgotten. … But lecturing is still the dominant teaching method in large classes at the college level, and also at many high schools – especially in the sciences. (Hanford, 2013, p. 1)

One obvious reason for lecturing being "the dominant teaching method in large classes" is that it is one of the most financially prudent methods of disseminating information to large numbers of students. But financial prudence comes at a price other than a monetary price. In a November 2, 2011 online blog by staff writers that can be accessed at Online Universities.com, there is an assembled list from blog contributors titled "*10 Big Problems With Lecture-Based Learning*" that lists the following:

1. The lecture method is largely passive.

2. The lecture method doesn't engage every learning style. Visual/verbal and

   auditory/verbal learners get the most out of lectures. Tactile/kinesthetic

   and visual/nonverbal students can end up falling behind.

3. The lecture method facilitates rote learning above all else.

4. It's often biased. The instructor generally stands as the highest authority in the room.

5. It either precludes discussion or severely limits it.

6. It's not the right fit for dissemination of information for every subject.

7. There is minimal student feedback.

8. Not every teacher excels at public speaking. Poor communicators, including those

   who have limited English skills and/or difficulty being easily understood due to

   accents, pronunciation difficulties, or other speech communication factors, can limit

   the quality and effectiveness of information transfer.

9. Typical attention span of learners. The average attention span is variously thought to

   be from 10 minutes to 25 minutes for university students.

10. The lecture method only nurtures a limited range of skill sets. As a passive format,

    creativity, critical thinking, analysis, and other more active ingredients in a valuable

    education receive little attention. Lectures certainly fortify memorization and note

    taking, but they aren't the only abilities students need to succeed.

    (http://www.onlineuniversities.com, 2013)

Validity of comparisons.

Arguably, there is a great need for procedural remedies for the shortcomings of this

generalized lecture hall environmental situation described above, based on the premise that

despite its 150-year old practices the large lecture hall environment is not anecdotal but is a

currently operational educational environment, widespread and here to stay, and that therefore the endemic problems of the lecture hall environment should be somehow addressed, if possible.

The large lecture hall environment has had plenty of examination elsewhere. A great deal of published literature exists on how to teach 'effectively' in such an environment. The purpose of adding in this eleventh-hour modified comparative process is to *compare* the lecture hall learning environment to the theatrical learning environment, arguably an alternate type of learning environment with different types of learning processes and an elevated level of student involvement in the learning process, one in which interactivity of the participants in the learning process is maximized, one in which a very high level of commitment to the success of the learning process is shared by all of the class members plus the instructor (director), and one in which the information learned is communicated to others external to the learning group (audience) as an active, skill-developed part of the 'final exam' process.

All of the above - elevated involvement, interactivity of participants, shared success, and ability to re-communicate learned material - can be thought of as patterns of engagement in the learning process. A publication in the *Australian Journal of Educational Technology* in 2003, titled *Patterns of Engagement in Authentic Online Learning Environments* lists ten such desirable teaching activities:

1. Authentic activities have real world relevance.

2. Authentic activities are ill-defined, requiring students to define the tasks and sub-tasks needed to complete the activity.

3. Authentic activities comprise tasks to be investigated by students over a sustained period of time.

4. Authentic activities provide the opportunity for students to examine the task from

different perspectives, using a variety of resources.

5. Authentic activities provide the opportunity to collaborate.

6. Authentic activities provide the opportunity to reflect.

7. Authentic activities can be integrated and applied across different subject areas and lead beyond domain specific outcomes.

8. Authentic activities are seamlessly integrated with assessment.

9. Authentic activities create polished products valuable in their own right rather than as preparation for something else.

10. Authentic activities allow competing solutions and diversity of outcome.

(Herrington, J., Oliver, R., and Reeves, T., 2003, 19(1), p. 62)

Granted, not all of these learning activities are universally applicable to all subject matter. But in general, wherever a theatrical learning environment can be applied, these learning activities could also be applied.

Brief Review of Methodology and Data-Recording Procedures Used

A study of two theatrical events was conducted. The intent of the study was to observe and record the process of taking those theatrical events from the symbolic state of written words to the equally symbolic but additionally dynamically interactive state of a live stage performance. The initial focus of observation was non-specific, but one of the intents of the analysis of the observed and recorded results was to concentrate on the learning environment that was utilized in order to achieve the ultimate goals of these events.

The particular mode of observation chosen by the researcher was a form of phenomenological observation. Phenomenological observation seeks to be non-invasive, in the sense that the observer seeks to *observe* phenomena, not to manipulate phenomena. The

observer additionally seeks to strip away or 'bracket' associated thoughts, opinions, prejudices, etc. that might influence his or her objective recording of observed events.

Data was collected in three ways: the researcher recorded extensive written notes of observations in real time, videotaped recordings were made of observed phenomena with extensive researcher notes being recorded after the fact concerning the multiple viewings of those videotapes, and videotaped recordings were made of post-theatrical event interviews of actors and directors, with extensive researcher notes being recorded concerning the multiple viewings of those videotapes also.

The original Methodology was modified post-observationally to include comparisons of observed data to non-observed published data.

Discussion

Discussion is an addition to the basic phenomenological process of observation and recording. It necessarily reintroduces to some extent the prejudice and bias that was so meticulously culled from the original observational/recording process. In a sense all discussion is arbitrary. The researcher chooses what to discuss, what to omit, and what to emphasize based on criteria that may be overt, covert, or a combination of both. Said criteria may not even be all that clear or defensible to the researcher, or to the reader. Hopefully, the information discussed below will bear merit with respect to the importance of the phenomena observed. The first point of discussion concerns the overall merits and the inherent limitations of the process of phenomenological observation.

The merits and limitations of phenomenological observation.

Phenomenological observation is a useful tool, but also a limiting tool. There is a fairly high degree of rigidity in the process, necessary in part in order to avoid altering or

contaminating the phenomena being observed by interfering with it while it is in process. There were many times in the course of observation that the observer wanted to follow up a rehearsal session by going over to an actor or the director and asking: "Why did you do that particular thing, or react in that particular way? What was your motivation, your reasoning, your intent?" To do so is to ask the observed person to concentrate on or focus on an activity he or she might otherwise not have been consciously aware of, and thus risk the possibility of artificially altering his or her behavior in the future to accommodate or emphasize some expected focus of behavior the researcher is supposedly looking for. It risks the observed thinking the observer has made a judgmental statement or request about some particular behavior the observed has engaged in.

It was possible to ask those questions during the endgame interviews, when a verbalized interpretation of the subject's behavior by that subject would stand no chance of altering future behavior via focusing on it, but of course by that time the proximity of the moment is lost and the recollection of the event may be faded or no longer subject to recall. That is the price to be paid for non-interference. In lieu of individually-structured questions related to recall of past events, a standardized question was asked of all actor participants.

With the stricture of non-interference being the operative norm, the phenomenological observational technique of singling out observations or parts of observations as independent events has its advantages. Strictly non-invasive observation (phenomenological observation) allows the observer to concentrate on minutiae that may be unrelated to the actual performance delivery of the playwright's text material that is going on during the observation. This type of observation happened frequently once this observer was able to overcome the implied necessity of following along with the verbalized text.

Additional and varied learning is simultaneously taking place during the activity of rote memorization and repetition of text. The simple disregard of the textual meaning on the part of the observer opens up the possibility of observing non-verbal learning from the interaction taking place. Indeed, a large part of the meaning of the action and interaction taking place onstage among and between actors can be inferred without *any* accompanying text, as is evident from observing silent movies with their infrequent use of explanatory flashcards. On a 1995 trip to Tel Aviv and Haifa to study Israeli theatre, this researcher found that a great deal of meaning could be derived from plays presented entirely in Hebrew, a language which this researcher was and still is unfamiliar with.

This does not mean that text can be discounted; what it means in terms of the observations that were conducted in this research is that observation of learning can take place without concentrating on textual meaning, especially when observing repeated segments of textual meaning taking place during the memorization of a learning process. Observation should involve the entire milieu of events taking place.

For the most part, mere verbalization of the message(s) of the playwright's text is not the principal reason for undertaking the theatrical endeavor anyway. Verbalization of rote-memorized text is usually insufficient in and of itself to effectively transmit the actual and implied meaning that the playwright intends to convey. Therefore the interpretation and delivery of text is just as important, if not more so, than the transmission of mere information. Hermeneutics, the formal process of interpretation of the textual material, is a vital part of the process of effective communication of that meaning. An explanation of hermeneutics and the associated field of semiotics, and how these concepts relate to the observations recorded in this dissertation, appears below.

The semiotics and hermeneutics of verbalization and memorization in a theatrical learning environment.

Reading a text is a different mode of learning than verbalizing that same text, or listening to a verbalization of that text. Both reading and verbalizing text, repeatedly, and listening to others verbalize parts of that text until a functional level of memorization takes place, is different from either of the first two modes. Adding physical and visual cues, coordinated interactive responses, and integrated physical movement to text material additionally changes (and ostensibly enhances) the learning process.

But what is the meaning of 'enhances'? Variously, it means to rise to a higher degree, intensify, magnify, to make greater, to augment. Do these things happen to the written text or script in a theatrical presentation? Yes, they do happen, but the more appropriate question to ask is what is meant by the very basic definition of the word 'text'. What is this phenomenon called 'text' that is at the heart of it all?

The theatrical process begins with and is based upon text, upon a playwright's words transcribed to and preserved upon a written page. The American Online Heritage Dictionary (2013) defines 'text' as "something, such as a literary work or other cultural product, regarded as an object of critical analysis". Fair enough, but how is that literary work or cultural product communicated from author to receiver? And who is the receiver? The ultimate receiver can be defined as the observing audience, which receives the textual meaning via the efforts of the actors, director, etc.

What then is the actor? The actors are also receivers of the textual information, in that they receive it from the written page. But the actors are more than that. They are also interpreters. They are practitioners of hermeneutics, in that a hermeneutic interpretation requires the individual to understand another's point of view (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,

2005), in this case the point of view of the playwright. Is this hermeneutical interpretation simply an extended form of textual communication? No, it is not. It is beyond that. It is beyond that because it is a dynamic form of communication, an interactive form of communication, and an interpretation of the original text requiring more than mental interpretation of symbols and/or the rote repetition of symbols that is involved in basic memorization. It requires an interpretive understanding of the text as well as a competent knowledge of the text.

This definition of the hermeneutic communication form is highly important regarding the understanding of the theatrical learning process, and it is just as important not to misinterpret it. It is a dynamic and interactive process. In this modern day and age, the phone-related phenomenon known as 'texting' is an interactive process. A texts B, B texts A right back again. Interaction takes place, even though both instances of interaction are merely written text. A conversation is taking place, however brief and/or truncated. Interpretation (or possibly misinterpretation) of that conversation is also taking place. Misinterpretation and misunderstanding can be corrected in a timely manner via follow-up texting.

The phenomenon of the textbook is quite different. The symbols are printed in ink which dries upon a page. In this format, "text" is any message preserved in a form whose existence is independent of both sender and receiver. This is important enough to bear repeating: the physical existence of the printed textbook is independent of both sender and receiver. A textbook is a finished product. It is not a work in progress. It is a collection of symbols contained within a physical object. Its interpretation by a reader may be dynamic, but its contents are static. It is not interactive.

An argument can be made that a physics textbook is interactive because the author includes a selection of 20 questions at the end of each chapter, ostensibly requiring the reader to

interact with the authors' queries. But the author is shaping these questions, guiding the reader toward a specific answer or a limited set of answers. Thus the author is seeking a guided response only, which is surely an active process, but not essentially an interactive process. It is one-sided. Interactivity implies dialogue. Answering an exercise question or test question is not dialogue, it is more like a monastic call-and-response. The answer sought is a standard answer. This is generally true in textbooks that are concerned with factual material.

Another argument could be made that a similar section of 20 questions at the end of each chapter in a literature anthology might require essay answers as opposed to specific factual answers. Would this not be an interactive process? Only if the essay answers are read by and subsequently discussed interactively with a third party, in this case the teacher of the course. If the teacher merely 'grades' or critiques the essay answer, even to the point of providing written comments about the essay answers, the format thus pursued still fails to achieve the status of interactive dialogue. It is still call and response, or in this case primary question, then call and response. Interactivity implies the opportunity for dialogue, dispute, digression, speculation, and opinion, followed hopefully by reconciliation and agreement, or possibly an agreement to disagree.

The overall point to be made here is this: This researcher observed and videotaped many lengthy observations of actors progressively learning lines (text) and committing those lines to memory. After the first read-throughs of text from beginning to end, the actors were observed learning short segments of text, generally in a non-linear fashion with respect to the overall presentational flow of the text. But eventually they were observed assembling the non-linear bits into larger and more coherent subsections, thus leading eventually to an ability to recite the entire body of text in a linear presentation. This did not amount to an overall observation of mere

progressive rote memorization on the part of the actors. The slowly memorized snippets and

packets and portions and eventually the individual segments that were known as the Acts of the

plays (Act One, Act Two, etc.) that are memorized out of the necessity of forming the individual

parts of the text of the play into a gestalt functional whole, are all learning behaviors that amount

to *dialogue*. It involves dialogue with the other actors, dialogue with the director, and dialogue

with the playwright through progressive interpretations of the static written text of the play. In

other words the basic static symbolism (semiotics) of the text, the unchanging written words

printed on the page, are made dynamic by the particular interpretive memorization process

(hermeneutics) constantly implemented in a theatrical learning environment, from beginning

interpretive discussions right through to the final live stage performance.

The theatrical learning environment is thus in general terms fundamentally different from

the traditional learning process of the large lecture hall environment, where measured data recall

(through testing) is translated into percentages or letter grades representing degree of learning

achievement. Even if that lecture hall environment is essentially an interpretive environment,

such as Literature Appreciation that may well involve a great deal of commentary and dialogue,

say of a selected work of William Cuthbert Faulkner, it is highly unlikely that essentially every

sentence, paragraph, section and chapter of that work is subjected to both repeated interpretive

scrutiny and actual rote memorization. That is not how a traditional classroom approach to

reading and discussing Faulkner's novel works.

Faulkner wrote three short novels, *Spotted Horses*, *Old Man*, and *The Bear*, all of which

have roughly the same basic semiotic content (number of individual word-symbols) as an

average play. It is unlikely that anyone has tried to memorize them verbatim. This research

shows that, given the interactive nature of a theatrical learning experience, coupled with the deep

background search for meaning and interpretive discussion normally associated with a theatrical learning experience, and additionally the active use of the associative physicality of the Viewpoints system discussed elsewhere, a group of student actors could, in fact, memorize those novels verbatim and transmit the information gained to a third party (audience).

In addition to this extremely high bar of individual student commitment to learning, there is the inherent necessity in a theatrical learning environment for the individual students to achieve levels of mutual competency at more or less the same time throughout the learning process. The interactivity of the theatrical learning process demands it. Any individual failure to constantly maintain this coordinated method of progressive learning and/or skill acquisition begets an immediate individual prompting for improvement of the learner by either the director in charge or the other learner/actor/students who are also in the process of currently learning and interpreting that material. In *The Wiz* and *The Adding Machine* the phenomena of currentness of competency and coordination of competency are observed repeatedly.

The currentness of competency, and the coordination of competency.

When learning in a theatrical format, actors can't settle for attaining an 'all-nighter" competency, meaning last-minute competency. "All-nighter" cramming might suffice for a final exam in a lecture class, although the long-term level of retention is debatable, but it definitely does not work in theater. A theatrical performance is a long-term, goal-oriented, competency-attaining learning process that demands coordinated effort and a more or less continual effort to maintain a currentness of competency, i.e. progressive degrees or levels of competency, simultaneously and in concert with all other members engaged in the learning process.

Theatrical competency means attaining various competencies and improving on those competencies throughout the entire process of the reading, rehearsing, staging, blocking, and

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production of a play, and further means that the people involved in that learning process have to be relatively continuously and contiguously competent at nearly all points of the process. An actor has to operate as part of a competently coordinated group in the evolving learning process, even if the actors are split into sub-groups for some or much of the process. The actor can't just individually and independently pull it all together at the very last minute through some herculean effort that should have been spread out throughout the course time of the semester, as "an all-nighter" implies.

To be continuously and contiguously competent, the various actors, directors and stage managers have to all: 1) individually continuously strive to a high level of competency, and 2) be contiguously competent, meaning that they must achieve certain levels or stages of competency at the same time in order to effectively rehearse, block, and reach repeated consensus concerning stage activities. Actors cannot concentrate on perfecting nuances and variations of a chorus dance number, for instance, if three or four of the dancers don't know what they are supposed to be doing. The ones that don't know what they are doing (aren't contiguously competent) will seriously inhibit the current learning process of those who do know what they are doing (are contiguously competent), even if they don't yet know all of what they are doing or have yet to achieve endpoint competency. Even a manifestation of incompetence in a bit part or "filler" part in a group rehearsal can seriously hobble the group effort. This was observed several times in the unfolding production efforts of *The Wiz*, wherein the six originally cast players who later on dropped out of the production for various reasons and at various points in the rehearsal process, caused significant rehearsal problems for the remaining cast members until those parts were re-filled by other players.

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Continuous feedback versus endpoint feedback.

Being continuously and contiguously competent as individuals and as a group is more or less mandatory in theatrical learning situations. Individual and group feedback on the ongoing competency level is also more or less continuous, and is often adjusted by group or sub-group efforts at helping individual motivation and competency. Contrast this with an 'ordinary' large lecture classroom learning environment, where at any given point during the semester it is arguable that the individual levels of competency manifested by the students are all over the map, progress unevenly (and in some cases possibly do not progress at all), and at the endpoint of the learning process are measured artificially and individually through standardized testing methods. The *evaluation* of competency (feedback) within that traditional lecture classroom situation is endpoint feedback, or intermittent feedback in the form of endpoint feedback plus a couple of other tests during the semester.

The factual material learned in this latter learning environment, or possibly just the factual material temporarily retained for purposes of fulfilling the test requirements in this latter learning environment, may or may not be material that is considered personally relevant and therefore worthy of long-term retention by the individual learner. There may have been no personal interest on the part of the student/learner in becoming familiar with the subject matter to begin with. The class may have been taken solely because it was a curriculum requirement to do so. In other words, there may have been no a priori and/or a posteriori investment in the material covered in the class.

Contrast this possible scenario above with the likelihood of an a priori and continuing investment in the material covered in a theatrical learning environment. This researcher's choice of the descriptor 'likelihood' stems from the fact that no quantitative percentages are reported in this phenomenological study, and none were reported in the comparative large lecture hall

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environment described by Dr. Wesch. Additionally, 'likelihood' does not mean 'certainty'.
While a great deal of what this researcher chooses to describe as actors' personal 'investment'
was observed in the two plays, this researcher also observed that, in the case of *The Wiz*, that
initial personal investment can also falter and fade away.

Investment.

It was observed in both theatrical learning environments that actors became invested in
the script and the play very early on. By investment it is meant that the actors show personal
interest in the proceedings, active and continuous participation levels in the ongoing processes,
and a determination to maximize outcomes both individually and collectively. It was also
observed and recorded that this was not a guaranteed outcome for all participants. In the case of
The Wiz, several actors failed to either achieve or maintain the necessary investment to see the
project through to completion.

This is vaguely similar to the correlation between motivation and 'grading' in a traditional
classroom situation, in that the student must motivate himself or herself to become engaged in
the classroom learning process in order to do well in the course, and must find ways to maintain
that motivation through to completion. There may even be a similar sense of collective
accomplishment in a small classroom situation. There is less likelihood of experiencing a sense
of *collective* investment and accomplishment in a traditional large lecture hall situation. In fact,
the individual student is better off with regard to a grading curve if a significant amount of other
classmates perform less well than he or she does.

Investment and grading.

Investment is thus more than a mere correlation between motivation and grading.
Investment (in the observed behavior of actors in *The Wiz* and *The Adding Machine*) implies

ownership, pride, self-worth, interactive obligations to the other actors, and achievement of a 'personal best' as opposed to achievement of a particular grade of A,B,C, D or a numerical test evaluation of performance. The actors 'owned' the play, and 'owned' their particular part or parts in it. The play gained value directly from their individual efforts. The play also gained value from the actors' group efforts, and the outcomes (success or failure of the performances) were dependent upon group efforts to succeed. By investment it is meant that the actors devoted a serious and continuing effort toward mastering the material and the overall concept of the play, as well as developing the skills necessary to transmit those materials and concepts to others.

Investment and ROI.

Investment also implies an eventual return on investment (ROI). In the case of the two plays observed, this ROI takes the form of recognized appreciation as opposed to a monetary return on investment. The actors know, from applause response to the various songs in the musical *The Wiz* as well as the curtain call applause at the end of *The Wiz* and *The Adding Machine* just how well or badly they have been 'graded' by the audience. They were observed to take this into account very seriously as a feedback mechanism, and alter their subsequent performance efforts as a result of it. They volunteered ideas for changes in future performances to the director during short post-presentational meetings, and the director volunteered ideas for changes also. They followed up on these changes and modifications in a serious way. In the case of *The Wiz,* the researcher observed the actors and director making last-minute performance changes backstage just prior to the final performance on Oct. 9, 2011. They were still rehearsing. They were still perfecting, with only the one last performance to go. That's investment. Return on investment comes in the form of 'owning' the material thus learned.

In one-on-one interviews with the actors of *The Wiz* this feeling of being invested in the performance, of 'owning' the performance, was brought up in different ways by 10 of the actors. This observer asked them to expand on that statement, and most of the replies were to the effect that they needed to do, or try to do, their best. Although the word 'needed' was most often used, it is the researcher's opinion that the correct descriptor is 'desired', in that the actors had an inner motivation to achieve as much as possible in the way of competency and performance. It seemed to be highly important for them individually and collectively to do their best.

Questions concerning investment.

A question for future research arises at this point: Is it possible that an observer would get the same sort of response as above about individual students' motivation in a traditional lecture classroom - that they 'needed' to do their best, to turn in their most effective performance? As opposed, for example, to saying that they needed to get an A in the class, a recorded incremental measurement on a college transcript. Is this the same thing?

Other questions for future research: What percentage of students in a traditional lecture classroom environment either are a priori or eventually become 'invested' on their own in the textbook and the educational content and process of a class? Is this investment likely to occur in the same manner that it has been previously described as not only possible but intrinsically necessary for the successful production of a play? How might an instructor establish or help to establish a high level of investment in a traditional classroom situation, investment in the knowledge to be gained there? How can an instructor strive to make the ongoing goal or goals of the learning effort a continuously competent group effort? How can an instructor strive to make the final outcome of the class a group goal, or if not a group goal, a shared set of individual goals to make the educational outcome an inclusive 'personal best'?

Benevolence and inclusiveness.

This researcher's doctoral studies have been in the field of Adult Education, and it is possible at this point in the discussion section to tie some observations recorded in the research on the two theatrical learning situations specifically to this field. This researcher is of the opinion that this research is important in adult education, especially in the circumstance of adults returning to a traditional educational environment when in the past they had significant problems of one sort or another with a traditional educational environment, to see their current educational environment as safe, benevolent, and inclusive. This is augmented when there is a sense of group cohesion, group acceptance, and group effort at goal achievement (Eikenberry, 2012, p. 1). But there are additional factors that help to create this aspect of a safe and benevolent learning environment: 1) how the instructor is viewed by the students; 2) group inclusion; 3) group support; 4) eliciting or establishing in a student the 'need' to strive for a personal best; and 5) the minimization of anxiety. All of these factors have been observed in one manner or another during the observational/recording phase of the two theatrical learning environments. These five factors will be discussed more fully below.

1. *How the instructor is viewed by the students.*

One chief aspect of a positive learning environment involves regarding the teacher or instructor as being safe and benevolent, instead of as being some sort of perceived threat (Blake & McCanse, 1991). This is a generalized statement. There are certain learning situations wherein the instructor is quite likely to be a perceived threat - a military basic training setting comes to mind - and yet the classification of a 'positive learning environment' is still correct. However, in a 'regular' non-military adult education environment it may be problematic, and therefore the following should be considered: Is it possible that a returning adult student might

perceive the teacher or instructor as a potential source of personal embarrassment, if that individual actively calls on the student to respond in class? Or is it potentially threatening to a returning student if that teacher or instructor is viewed by the student as a primary source of negative judgment? Is it potentially threatening or frustrating if that teacher or instructor is perceived as biased favorably toward certain class members but not the particular student who might be concerned about that potential bias? Is the general environment of the classroom a perceived threat because of negative memories of similar past classroom learning environments, or even memories of course failure in similar past classroom environments?

In the observations of *The Wiz* and *The Adding Machine*, the director in each case was generally seen by the various actors who stayed with the project until completion to be a director who was caring and benevolent. (There is no data for the perception of director characteristics among the actors in *The Wiz* who dropped out of the production prior to completion of the performance). The directors were also perceived as goal-oriented, certainly, as well as a source of more or less constant motivation. But they were not perceived to be a militaristic, punishment-oriented or humiliation-oriented threat. Each director was seen to be a facilitator and enabler, not a dictator. Certainly there are directors in the world who do exhibit the negative traits mentioned above, but the two observed in this study were not like that. It was observed that, ostensibly as a result of the non-threatening environments in both productions, the actors felt relatively unrestrained about making procedural comments, suggestions for improvement or alterations, and general (positive and negative) critical feedback about the learning process. Both directors made statements to the effect that they were available for one-on-one consultations in addition to group discussions, that they were open to constructive criticism of the project, and that no green-light ideas were prima facie 'bad' ideas.

Both directors made it clear that they were open to new ideas that might present themselves as a result of serendipity, unforeseen opportunity, and mutual reassessment. As one example, in *The Adding Machine* one group scene being practiced had the relatively minor accident of a cast member being pushed (an action already extant in the blocking) and falling down rather unceremoniously in front of the other actors as a result of that push (definitely not in the original blocking). The actors thought this was funny. The cast and the actor who had accidentally fallen petitioned for inclusion of that event in the play. The director had concerns about safety, but after repeated requests and assurances that the particular actor could "roll safely" with the push, agreed to the procedural change. The event became a part of the project and continued to be included all the way through to the final performance.

2. *Group inclusion.*

Group inclusion is also a part of a benevolent learning environment (Pearpoint, 2012). Group inclusion is mandated from day one in a theatrical environment. Every actor is made aware, going into that environment, that the overall process is a group process, not a collection of individuals that are primarily concerned with trying to obtain individual goals at individual rates of progress. Likewise, the overall goals are group goals, even though individual goals are also included in the process and are also highly important. Rehearsing can be equated to group practice, or group study, even though individual rehearsals can also take place. Actors know that those individual rehearsals must be eventually integrated into a group effort.

3. *Group support.*

Group support is somewhat different from group inclusion in that it is partly a learned effort. There is no particular reason to believe that a recently-assembled group of people will immediately be a socially cohesive group, and that certainly wasn't the observed case regarding

the cast members of *The Wiz*. Part of the reason for the dropout problem observed in that theatrical learning environment involved personality clashes and negative criticism of certain individuals due to their attitude and performance or lack thereof.

Part of group support may well involve individual criticism and group criticism, viewed by the director (or teacher) as a corrective procedure necessary for group advancement. This may initially be perceived as a negative experience by the actors (students). It cannot be assumed that the beginnings of group and individual support that includes criticism will be perceived as benevolent before a consensus has been reached that criticism is a necessary component of the learning process. In fact, this was not the case in *The Wiz*. Negative criticism among actors and actor/director interchanges was partly to blame for six of the actors quitting the performance at various points in the production process. It requires due diligence on the part of the director to ensure that the process of criticism develops in a positive manner. Correctly applied, group guidance and support partially achieved through constructive criticism becomes a very positive part of the theatrical learning process. Incorrect, inconsistent, and/or (perceived) biased criticism can create ongoing problems.

4. *Personal best.*

It is arguable that in a traditional lecture classroom situation, a "personal best" effort is pretty much left up to the individual. Some students may consider a C+ effort in a classroom situation to be a worthy goal from day one. Others may revise their initial goal downward and eventually consider a C+ grade to be a mark of survivability, and thus acceptable in the larger scheme of the eventual goal of degree attainment. In either case, the concept of maximization of personal effort, especially on a day-to-day basis, may not be an operational goal.

In a theatrical group dynamic that will eventually lead to some sort of group performance evaluation, however, there is a good deal of motivation applied in one way or another during the entire theatrical learning process to maximize not only individual effort but overall effort as well. One interesting thing observed about this goal in a theatrical learning environment is that due to the multiple "final exams" of on-stage live performances the various personal definitions provided by the actors describing their expectations of a 'personal best' tend to get revised and moved higher with repetition of communicative effort to a third party (audience) that does, in fact, provide feedback on perceived performance.

Even a self-perception of excellent performance may be revised upward by the actor. Some of the cast interviews included statements to the effect that the individual actor thought he or she had 'knocked it out of the park' in the first or an early performance, but that their goal in subsequent performances was to "really" knock it out of the park.

Other actors essentially expressed the reverse attitude by bemoaning the opinion that their performances, while progressively better, nevertheless failed to reach their desired level of personal achievement by the time of the last live audience presentation. A very interesting response mentioned by several actors was a sense of disappointment that the fixed number of performances didn't allow for true maximization of potential, and they wished there had been more scheduled performances. Stated another way, these were students engaged in an active and ongoing learning process who were expressing a desire to have more final exams.

5. *Anxiety.*

Anxiety is a part of any theatrical performance. Anxiety is also quite often part and parcel of a traditional classroom learning situation, both in-class and in conjunction with testing procedures. One major difference is that anxiety related to a theatrical performance situation is

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almost always *managed* anxiety. It is verbalized. It is discussed. It is shared openly. It is dealt with, as much as possible, and is dealt with on a continuing basis. There is no guarantee of any of that sort of anxiety management happening in a traditional lecture classroom situation.

One result of personal anxiety in a classroom learning situation is non-involvement of the student in the interactive and cooperative dynamics of the learning process. The student seeks to be present but 'invisible'. This researcher chooses to call this phenomenon the wallflower effect.

The wallflower effect.

Interactive and cooperative learning have been previously mentioned in this discussion chapter, but it is important to distinguish and focus upon the particular type of learning environment that has been noted in the two plays observed and how that learning environment differs from other learning environments. The theatrical learning environment does not lay claim to exclusivity in the use and practice of interactive and cooperative learning procedures. What is different is the degree to which these processes are applied to the theatrical learning process. That degree of application approaches, for lack of a better descriptor, a persistent maximum.

Interactive and cooperative learning is possible to various degrees in almost any learning environment, even in a large lecture hall environment. Nevertheless, it is possible in a traditional lecture class situation, especially if it is a large lecture class, to experience the class environment from beginning to end and yet seldom or never interact with that environment other than to passively observe it and take one or more tests concerning the material covered in it (Wesch, 2011). Unless the instructor has a program structure that somehow mandates that every student at least asks one question or responds to one question during class time (other than written tests), or that the student must mandatorily participate in group or lab discussions outside of the lecture environment, it is possible for a student to just be a 'wallflower' in the learning experience. It is

entirely possible in a learning environment of that nature that the instructor will never directly address, challenge, or otherwise interact with a particular student one-on-one, even if the opportunity for doing so is presented in the alternate forms of personal instructor access through office time, e-mail access, or other modes of instructor-student contact external to the classroom environment. It is generally up to the individual student to decide whether or not to be a 'wallflower'.

Contrast the above with a theatrical performance learning environment. In a theatrical performance environment, if you are part of the production it is not possible to be a wallflower. Interactivity with others is more or less a constant. For actors engaged in playing significant roles, interactivity is consistently maximized. For actors with non-speaking roles, chorus roles, or 'crowd scenery' roles, interactivity may be less intense or even minimal, but it is still present. The theatrical environment, to coin a reasonably accurate phrase, mandates interactivity with others who are learning interrelated information and are engaged in a common goal.

In a theatrical performance environment the individual actor/participant may have a certain amount of time devoted to individual learning efforts conducted away from group interactivity, similar say to homework, but that actor cannot maintain the passive role of a non-interacting student (wallflower) when physically in the presence of the group during the group's interactive learning process. Even if not currently called upon for interactivity in a particular scene, each individual student/actor is fully expected to be able to "jump into" a participating scene if required as a rehearsal backup for a missing performer even if they have to rely on reading a script to do so, and to be able to verbally provide the appropriate "prompt line" if another performer has a temporary mental blank while rehearsing his or her lines. In other

words, each individual actor is expected to know all of the text of a play, not just his or her lines in it.

Group participation and interaction is fundamentally what a theatrical learning environment consists of, even to the extent of eventual interaction with an outside group (the audience), a group which must hopefully be made to understand what the theatrical group has learned and is trying to convey and accomplish through its coordinated effort at dissemination of learned information.

Actors are in effect learners/interpreters/instructors/disseminators of information. As such, a mark of success in those various roles is that they must be individually and collectively effective at their task. Any good director will tell you that an actor must perform to an audience, not for an audience. There is more than just a semantic difference in the words 'to' and 'for'. The theatrical slang for that difference in reference to the word 'for' is called 'phoning it in,' which means being distant from the immediacy and intimacy of the present moment. A competent actor will try his or her best to convey information in the most effective manner. A competent actor cannot afford to be disengaged from the information transfer process. A competent actor will perform 'to' an audience.

A competent teacher, in this researcher's opinion, must also teach 'to' a class, interactively, and be earnestly and constantly engaged in the information transfer process. A competent teacher will not teach 'for' a class in the sense of just 'phoning in' the information. And an interactive, effective classroom environment will not grow wallflowers.

A comparison of chapter 4 results to select learning theories.

There are a multitude of learning theories to be found in the field of education. Eleven have been listed and discussed in Chapter 2 as possibly being of interest concerning the theatrical

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learning environment. Post-observationally, this researcher has narrowed this selection down to

five that bear merit for comparative purposes here in Chapter 5. This researcher makes no claim

that the theories selected are superior to other theories not included, just that they seem to have

some relevancy to the observational data.

The theories, or at least parts of those theories, seem to mesh at least in part with the

observed phenomena recorded in the Results section of this dissertation. The learning theories to

be discussed here, out of the 11 previously listed in Chapter 2 are: 1. constructivism; 2.

community learning; 3. social learning theory (Bandura); 4. communities of practice (Lave and

Wenger); and 5. collaborative learning.

1. Constructivism.

Constructivism is concerned in part with conditionalized knowledge (Duffy & Jonassen,

1992). In part this means knowledge gained through a specific environmental experience,

possibly in concert with knowledge gained via a semiotic process (such as reading), but not

through semiotics alone and in lieu of the additional phenomena of that specific environmental

learning experience. Additionally, constructivism is concerned with the necessity to construct

person-centered messages to accomplish one's goal of learning or performing a task. Zull (2002)

defines a person-centered message as a "tailor-made message for a specific individual and

context" (p. 12). Constructivism thus addresses a part of the theatrical learning environment

experience, in that 'tailor-made messages' (interpretations of script, blocking, delivery, etc.) are

constructed individually by the various interpretations of actors of their specific roles, and both

the learning of and the delivery of those interpreted messages takes place in specific, or a series

of specific, environmental experiences (knowledge gained in a conditionalized manner).

Constructivism does not, however, fully address the necessity of cooperative interpretation of

information (group input, learning, interpretation, and eventual dissemination of information), or the necessity of going beyond the isolation of arriving at a 'tailor-made message for a specific individual' to a set of tailor-made messages interactively composing a whole message that is greater than the sum of its parts.

The performance of a play or musical is the delivery of conditionalized knowledge, in that it is simultaneously an individually and severally performed interactive set of person-centered (interpreted) messages conveyed by actors to an audience that receives it in a similarly conditionalized fashion (some audience information-receivers may be previously familiar with the play, some may not, some may be interpreting it differently due to the current presentation format, some may not understand it at all or substantially misinterpret the information presented, some may find fault with the play's message and/or delivery and express that displeasure via criticism, some may be bored with it or otherwise elect to not pay attention to the information being communicated, etc.). More succinctly put, the presentation of a play is an exercise in information transfer wherein all parties engaged in the process, message deliverers and message receivers alike, are at least once removed through interpretive and conditionalized effects from the original message of the playwright.

By conditionalized, it is further meant that the delivery and receipt of knowledge during the performance of a play is a phenomenologically unique event, to some degree separate from and different from the semiotic content and context of the play as it exists on the written page and also somewhat unlike any past or future effort at similar information transfer. The old saw for this is that one never experiences nor performs the same play twice. Repetition implies some degree of alteration, especially in a live performance. Even a digitally recorded and projected movie presented twice in the same theatre on the same day will have the environmental diversity

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of a differently conditionalized audience experiencing a panoply of different ambient audience-generated sounds, sights, smells and potential interruptions of concentration, a different presentational time, and – if the same individual sees it twice – a slightly different cognitive history and mental concentration level of that particular individual.

But the main premise of the term 'conditionalized' is that knowledge acquired is information paired with an experiential event, environment, activity, or all three (Duffy & Jonassen, 1992). It is a dynamic, rather than a passive, learning event. In this context the term conditionalized is in concert with the long-established Montessori method. Kolb (1984, p. 2) states "Montessori's beliefs are consistent with the Constructivists in that she advocates a learning process which allows a student to experience an environment first-hand, thereby giving the student reliable, trustworthy conditionalized knowledge."

David Kolb and Roger Fry (1971) had previously formulated the Kolb & Fry Model, also known as ELM, or the Experiential Learning Model, which featured four elements: concrete experience, observation and reflection, the formation of abstract concepts, and testing in new situations. They concluded that these four elements of learning resulted in four basic types of learners: the converger learner, who implemented active experimentation and abstract conceptualization; the accommodator learner, who implemented active experimentation and concrete experience; the assimilator learner, who implemented reflective observation and abstract conceptualization; and the diverger learner, who implemented reflective observation and concrete experience. This led to the development in 1971 of the Learning Style Inventory (LSI, sometimes known as KLSI), which is a measurement product still in use today as Kolb LSI Version 4 (Kolb, A., 2013). The LSI/KLSI is designed to determine an individual's learning

preference. Whatever the preference, the learning model and the measurement technique is based on conditonalized learning.

It is this researcher's opinion that experiencing a live presentation of a play is tantamount to experiencing a conditionalized learning environment first-hand, and developing a presentation of a play to its fruition is also a conditionalized learning experience. It is also this researcher's opinion that the actors' behaviors observed and recorded in the observations of the two plays could be described, at least in part, as behaviors consistent with converger learners, accommodator learners, assimilator learners, and diverger learners. Certainly, convergence of ideas and actions, accommodation of others' ideas and interpretations, assimilation of group performance and goal orientation, and, sometimes, divergence in the form of reflective observation influencing and perhaps redirecting concrete experience were all observed at one time or another during the production and performance processes of the two plays. That is not to say that the observer could identify singular learning personality preferences among the various actors, which is what the LSI/KLSI purportedly determines. It is merely stated that those learning behaviors were observed generally.

Perhaps an additional term is needed in conjunction with 'conditionalized' to fully express the scope of the idea of conditionalized knowledge as it applies to a theatrical learning environment. That term would be 'entertwined'. Conditionalized knowledge is knowledge that is on occasion entertwined with other things besides the simple attainment of, or delivery of, that knowledge. Several actors interviewed in this dissertation's two sets of observations expressed the idea that delivering a particular line or singing a particular song coincided with adopting a specific stance or facial expression or body motion(s), or series of some or all of these additional phenomena. The semiotic symbol-chain of the line or stanza became entertwined with physical

expression or physical movement or a particular environmental condition. The actors indicated that if the symbol-chain and the body reactions thus paired were not entertwined due to miscue or mistake in delivery or timing, the experience "felt wrong", sometimes in a visceral sense.

This entertwining of symbol-chains and bodily reactions is a learned event. It is not usually present or felt at the beginning processes of memorizing the symbol-chain and repetitiously experimenting with various ways of transmitting that symbol-chain to an audience. Similarly, presenting a symbol-chain that has been, through numerous rehearsals, entertwined with a particular learned set of environmental phenomena seems to 'feel wrong' if an 'incorrect' stage environment presents itself via mistakes in scenery placement or incorrect blocking positions.

This physical stage presence described above, in which an actor either feels in place or out of place when delivering lines, needs some further explanation. The symbol-chains delivered in a particular environmental situation amount to delivering information within a contextualized setting, a contextualized environment. The information imparted and the environment within which that information is imparted become a cohesive unit.

Without deviating too far from a general discussion of conditionalized knowledge as it applies to Constructivism, it is necessary at this point to add in one other set of descriptors in order to make this statement clear: the concepts of contextualized versus decontextualized language and learning. David Newman, an Australian speech-language pathologist, speaking of how a child learns in a particular contextualized environment versus the decontextualized classroom environment, states:

Initially a child learns language skills in a familiar place, doing well known activities. An example would be a young child helping mum do the dishes. The child learns about

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plates, cups, saucers and other kitchen items by being immersed in and talking with his/her parent about their environment. The child uses the context of the kitchen to more freely commit any new words - about kitchen items - to memory. In the school classroom, language is far more decontextualized. School children often have to learn new concepts in the absence of contextual supports. For example, students may have to learn the names of capital cities around the world. They may, at times, be expected to do this difficult task without the aid of maps of foreign countries, pictures of the cities, or any other media. The students have to rely totally on the verbal or written information presented by the class teacher. (Newman, 2011, p. 3).

In other words, it is often more difficult to acquire knowledge if that knowledge is not conditionalized and/or contextualized. How do these tenets of Constructivism apply to the study at hand? In the two sets of observations of *The Wiz* and *The Adding Machine*, it is obvious that the learning environments are inclusive of both conditionalized and contextualized elements. Knowledge gained by the actors through study of the playbook is entertwined with physical expression and physical movement. The play may be about anything and be situated anywhere, or situated in a set of anywheres, but the literal physical milieu in which the plays or musicals are presented are familiar experiential events (plays and musicals are common) conducted in conditionalized environments (theatres with varying but nevertheless fairly standardized stage environments), and in a fairly predictable fashion, i.e. in the general format of beginning, middle, apparent end, highpoint, or unveiling, and denouement. This combining of textual, physical, and environmental learning is, collectively, experiential learning. The transmission of textual material - the written play - by the actors through physical and environmental modes to an audience of learners is also conditionalized learning taking place via an experiential process. It

is therefore correct to say that certain elements of the observed learning processes that took place in *The Wiz* and *The Adding Machine* fall within the definitions of the learning theory of Constructivism.

2. Community learning.

It can be properly said, in the case of observing *The Wiz*, that this production which took place in a community theater, overseen by an unpaid volunteer director, and populated by actors from a variety of nearby localities, actors with highly diverse educational backgrounds, previous acting/singing/dancing experience and expertise, qualifies as a community learning experience.

Brookfield (1983), in his book *Adult Learners, Adult Education and the Community*, considers community learning to be learning that generally takes place outside of conventional educational frameworks. He lists six features to support this hypothesis:

1. It (community learning) is deliberate and purposeful in that the adults concerned are seeking to acquire knowledge and skills.

2. Such purpose and intention may not, however, always be marked by closely specified goals. Learning may be apparently haphazard and therefore unsuccessful at times. A tenants group faced with a massive increase in rents may spend much time engaged in unprofitable and inappropriate enquiries as they are initially unable to specify the terminal skills and knowledge they require to achieve their broad objective.

3. It occurs outside of classrooms and designated educational institutions and does not follow the strict timetable of the academic year.

4. It receives no institutional accreditation or validation.

5.   It is voluntary, self-motivated and self-generating. Adults choose to engage in this learning, although the circumstances occasioning that choice may be external to the learner's control (as in the example in point 2).

6.   Acknowledging that the word 'learning' is a gerund – a word which can stand as a noun or verb – it is used (here) in its active sense. Thus, learning refers to the process of acquiring skills and knowledge, rather than an integral change of consciousness. (Brookfield 1983, p. 15)

Addressing the features sequentially as they might apply or not apply to the production of *The Wiz*, #1 in the list above is an applicable match, #2 is not. Any theatrical production has, of necessity, closely specified goals. Learning is not haphazard, and goals are nearly always achieved. Features #3 and #4 are an applicable match for The Wiz (in the case of *The Adding Machine,* they wouldn't be). Feature #5 is certainly a match, as is feature #6.

So most, but not all of the six features identified by Brookfield tend to identify a theatrical learning environment as Community Learning. The problem is that the list of features does not go far enough to accurately describe all facets of a theatrical learning environment. There is no mention of testing or other evaluative processes. There is no mention of presentation of learned material to parties not previously involved in the learning process, with the intent of communicating that learned material in an effective manner. There is no mention of an individual and collective effort to achieve a 'personal best' in the acquisition of knowledge, nor is there a sense that 'community learning' and 'collective effort' are interchangeable identifiers. A theatrical learning environment implies a 'collective effort' that involves learning material and developing skills in tandem efforts described elsewhere as the 'currentness of competency,' implying that such efforts are closely coordinated and mutually (interactively) helpful.

3. Social learning theory.

The Social Learning Theory of Albert Bandura (1977) is concerned with the importance of an individual who is in a learning situation becoming engaged in observing and modeling the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. Although the theory addresses symbolic coding (semiotics), it is chiefly concerned with real-world, real-time human interaction. People learn from one another via observation, imitation, and modeling. People learn through observing others' behavior, including attitudes, opinions, beliefs, and the outcomes of those behaviors. According to Bandura: "Most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action". (Bandura, 1977, p. 81) Social learning theory explains human behavior in terms of continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences. Necessary conditions for effective modeling are attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation.

Attention, in Bandura's model, is dependent upon complexity of observed phenomena, accuracy of sensory capacities, past associations with phenomena, prevalence of observed phenomena, and 'arousal level', possibly meaning focus of attention. Retention merely refers to how effectively the individual paid attention to phenomena, although it is tied to symbolic coding, cognitive organization, motor rehearsal (physical memory of observed phenomena), and how skilled or 'gifted' the individual is at the mental recording process. Reproduction deals with reproducing the image or symbolic description of the phenomena. And motivation includes having a valid reason to reproduce descriptions of phenomena, incentives to do so, and other forms of reinforcement that influence task fulfillment.

The observed results of learning that takes place in a theatrical learning environment can be broadly described as 'behavior' by this learning theory, although this researcher has trouble

buying into Bandura's premise that 'most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling'. If that were true, symbol-systems would take on a great burden of literalism in order to make learning (arguably a behavior) possible. It is likely that Bandura is more concerned with learned social behavior than learned behavior in general, and while the physical actions and delivery of words by actors on a stage fit within the concept of 'social behavior', the conceptual content delivered by those physical actions and words are often far too complex or far too illusory to be considered mere 'modeling'.

Despite the reservations this researcher has expressed above, the observed and recorded behavior witnessed in the two plays studied meets several criteria of Social Learning Theory. Real-world and real-time human interaction is key to the theatrical learning process, as is observation and imitation of behavior that leads to modeling of certain behavioral processes and patterns, such as dancing, blocking, and interactive positioning of actors. And yet many if not most of these initial imitations of behavior undergo the process of adaptation over time and replication (practice), which is not a process that Bandura seems to address. Clearly, the actors initially came up with many interpretive behavioral actions and processes that were unique to each individual's interpretation of the play and their respective part(s) in the play's unfolding development. However, complete interpretive independence of actors will lead to chaos, not cohesion in the final stages of the theatrical production process.

Cooperative and coordinated behavioral interpretation (cohesiveness) is a necessary end result of the initial theatrical interpretive process. In other words, Bandura's 'social behavior' requires the additional components of compromise and cooperation in order to attain a high level of functionality. Some behavioral end-results were due to an acquiescence on the part of the particular actor to outside influences (other actors and/or the director) that modified that actor's

original intentional interpretation of behavior appropriate for and apropos to that actor's assigned part or role in the play. In that sense the actor was not imitating external observed behavior (modeling), he or she was modifying already existing internalized concepts of appropriate behavior (adapting).

Bandura's (1977) emphasis on symbolic coding, cognitive organization, and motor rehearsal are also consistent with the learning process that takes place within the theatrical learning environment. But Bandura's three-component interaction process that he considers to be core to an individual's personality falls short, in this researcher's opinion, of explaining an actor's frequent necessity to adopt a different 'stage personality' in order to be effective as a disseminator of information. This is referred to as being 'in character", and can be qualitatively different from mere emulation or modeling.

Certain schools of acting, such as Constantin Stanislavski's method acting (*An Actor Prepares*, 1936), strive to have the actor 'be' the character, adopting the character's internal motivations for his or her actions, beliefs, reactions, and self-evaluation. It is not uncommon for actors employing such techniques to state that they have to 'come out' of the other personality after a stage performance in order to return to their own perceived sense of self. Thus the theatrical learning process can involve the creation of a secondary personality used chiefly for purposes of enhancing communication to individuals outside of the original social learning activity.

To sum up, Bandura's Social Learning Theory is insufficient to explain the totality of the theatrical learning environment.

4. Communities of practice (Lave & Wenger).

The learning theory of Communities of Practice (Lave, J. & Wenger, E, 1998) falls within the scope of social learning, and yet there are distinct differences. Lave & Wenger summarize the concept of Communities of Practice (CoP) as an identifiable group or groups of people who jointly share a concern or a belief in a common pursuit, cause, or goal. They interact collaboratively either intermittently or regularly for purposes of learning more about the pursuit, cause or goal, and may or may not also engage in activities as a group in advancing those interests.

Three components are required in order to qualify as a CoP: the domain, the community, and the practice (Wenger, 2006).

A domain is a shared identity, and may be a vocation or a shared interest, a cultural or religious identity, or some combination thereof. A shared identity may be very limited or fairly broad, and may be comprised of members who are otherwise dissimilar (Wenger, 2006).

A community is a group that coalesces an otherwise possibly non-associated set of domain groups or singleton members of domain groups. A community will generally engage in shared activities, help each other, and share information with each other, although not necessarily all at the same time or consistently. A community tends to build relationships that enable its members to learn from each other. Merely sharing the same vocation or job location (for instance workers in an office building) or residential locality (for instance residents in an apartment complex) does not mandate a community in terms of a CoP (Wenger, 2006).

Practice means that the domain members are active practitioners, interacting over time and in an ongoing basis to develop or explore shared interests. As Wenger states: "A conversation with a random stranger who happens to be an expert on a subject matter that interests you does not in itself make a CoP. Communities develop their practice through a

variety of methods, including: problem solving, requests for information, seeking the experiences of others, reusing assets, coordination and synergy, discussing developments, visiting other members, mapping knowledge and identifying gaps" (Lave & Wenger, 1998, p. 82).

Some of the above sounds very much like what was observed in the development and subsequent stage presentation of the two plays studied. What Lave & Wenger's theory does not specify, though, is the group mandate of successful attainment of a set of group goals (or getting as close to successful attainment as is practicable) within a set time frame that defines an endpoint, such as in the development and production of a play. This refers to the deadline time set for 'going live' with the result of the group's efforts on a stage before a live audience. Additionally, beyond the endpoint of this mandated community cohesiveness complete disbandment can and often does take place. The actors go their separate ways, still having the commonalities of domain (actors) and shared interest (participating in plays), but no longer members of an identifiable active community (actors participating in *The Wiz* or *The Adding Machine*).

In theory at least, all three elements of Lave & Wenger's Communities of Practice also exist in a large lecture hall learning environment, or they can. Ostensibly everyone in the class is in attendance there because they have a shared identity (domain): they are all students and are all enrolled in the same class. They are also identifiable as a community in Lave & Wenger's definition of the term because they engage in certain shared activities (listening to lecture material, reading the same text, taking tests, etc). And to a greater or lesser degree the students engage in the practices mentioned by Lave & Wenger of problem solving, mapping knowledge, and possibly requesting information.

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The three comparisons fall short, however, in degree of intensity and clarity of purpose. Firstly, the fact that the domain consists of all students in no way implies that they share a commonality of individually perceived levels of success or interest in the subject material presented in the class. Secondly, the students may all attend the same college and the same classroom, but that does not necessarily imply that they are definable as a community in either case. There is no guarantee that they share activities, help each other, or share information with each other. And thirdly, there is no guarantee that any particular individual class member will choose to engage in the behaviors Lave & Wenger define as 'community practice' to any significant degree (any one or a number of the students may choose to exhibit behavior this researcher has termed the wallflower effect). There is, to put it simply, no mandate in the Communities of Practice learning model that says every individual must collaborate with the group.

5. *Collaborative learning.*

Students who actively participate in the learning process, as opposed to students who are just absorbing information through note-taking and non-reactive listening, experience the best results from that learning process, both quantitatively in testing, and qualitatively through responses to interview questions about satisfaction with that process (Srinivas, 2013). Students who work together collaboratively in small groups, even if the general population of the class they are attending is large and thus some information is communicated to them en masse, still tend to learn more of the total material presented and retain that knowledge longer than when the same amount of material content is delivered solely via mass instructional formats such as the large lecture hall method of information dissemination (Chin, 2013). Students who participated

in small collaborative groups also generally expressed more satisfaction with their classes when polled on the subject.

There are several models of teaching that all more or less fall within the general category of collaborative learning. A few would be team learning, study groups, learning communities, reciprocal learning, and peer teaching and learning. These collaborative learning formats tend to be formal groups, in that they are an integral part of the general teaching format (Chin, 2013). There can also be informal groups that are more or less spontaneous rather than formally included in the instructional format of the class. These may be voluntary groupings of students in a class who are collectively concerned with support, encouragement, and assistance, and assist each other in completing course requirements or are otherwise engaged in analyzing and interpreting lecture material and text material (Cohen, 1994).

In the simplest definition, collaborative learning occurs when groups of students endeavor to help each other in the learning process (Cooper & Boyd, 1994). In its most effective form, collaborative learning means all members of the group contribute to the group's efforts and goals, rather than having a few students do all the work while the others undeservedly share in the cumulative credit. This inequality of effort among participants is sometimes called 'social loafing' (Cohen, 1994, p. 12).

Performed in a sincere manner by all participants, collaborative learning encourages the development of higher-level reasoning skills that enable students to grasp the meaning of information and analyze, evaluate, synthesize, and apply that information effectively (Chinn, 2013).

A few benefits and positive aspects of collaborative learning have been discussed above. Srinivas (2013) lists 44 benefits of collaborative learning in all, which is much too long to reproduce in this chapter. This list can be found in Appendix D.

As noted above, collaborative learning involves groups of learners working together to solve a problem or problems, complete a task or series of tasks, or possibly to create a product. In the sense that a play is a 'product' this fits nicely with the observed behaviors in the two plays studied by the researcher. Collaborative learning is based on the idea that learning is a naturally social act in which the participants interact among themselves. It is through the interaction that learning occurs. In a collaborative learning setting the participants have the opportunity to converse and otherwise interact with peers, present and defend ideas, exchange diverse beliefs, question other conceptual frameworks, and be actively engaged.

Possibly the most important aspect of collaborative learning is that it creates an environment of positive interdependence. By positive interdependence, it is meant that students engaged in a collaborative learning endeavor need to believe that they are linked with each other in a way that ensures that they all succeed together. This does not mean that all participants have the same skill level or learning abilities. 'Succeeding together' does not mean identical outcomes, or even guaranteed maximal output of effort from individual participants. What it does mean is that learners with different learning skill sets and different backgrounds can nevertheless collaborate in joint tasks and discussions in order to arrive at a shared understanding, if not an exactly equal understanding, of the subject matter at hand. This is a marked differentiation from the more traditional 'competitive' approach to learning, wherein each individual is responsible for his or her own level of understanding and competency, and

measurement devices such as tests are designed to measure and record individual rather than group achievement.

Closest match of learning theories.

Collaborative learning tends to minimize or even nullify the wallflower effect, as well as establishing high levels of motivation, interactivity, and goal-sharing. If this researcher had to pick the closest match in learning theory from the ones discussed above (constructivism, community learning, social learning, communities of practice, and collaborative learning) to the observed behavior recorded in the two sets of theatrical learning environments, collaborative learning would be the closest match. However, there are two marked differences.   The activities described above concerning the merits of ordinary collaborative learning are intra-group, not inter-group. The use of the term 'shared understanding' does not imply that the collaborative group is sharing that understanding with individuals outside of the group environment. There is also no real group commitment in ordinary collaborative learning to maximize and then re-maximize the end effort (the live presentation of the play), and use that end effort or series of end efforts as a vehicle for transmission of the knowledge gained by the group to an external group (audience). These two differences, external transmission of information and maximization of end product, which occur as part and parcel of the theatrical learning environment, might conceivably be included occasionally in some efforts at collaborative learning, but they are not mandated by the collaborative learning process.

In other words, the differences can be summed up in this way: a collaborative effort at group learning that takes place in a traditional large lecture hall environment might have a 100% success rate as an idealized goal of the class, while simultaneously having individual mediocrity and/or failure built right into the grading mechanism as measurable possibilities for individual

learners within the class. Additionally, there is usually no endpoint attempt at transmitting the

material learned to an outside group in the form of a presentational learning process as opposed

to an exercise in measurement of retention of information (regular test or final exam). In a

theatrical learning environment, a 100% success rate is more likely a mandated goal, not an

idealized one, with very little tolerance for individual mediocrity and likely no tolerance at all for

individual failure. And transmission of the material learned to an outside group via another

learning environment (the stage) is part and parcel of the standard operation.

Learning and Measurement

How, then, do you measure the success of the learning process in a theatrical learning

environment? How is success determined in a play if grades are not given?

A better question might be: How is success *defined*? Is "success" all or part of the

following?

A. A determination of *personal best*, measured against past performances of the

individual (for example, a personal best track time for a runner). In the case of an actor, it would

be a determination of personal best as compared to past performances. The runner's time is a

hard-numbers determinant; the actor's determination is a juxtaposition of internal (self-criticism

or self-praise) or external (audience, peer, critic, etc.) praise or criticism, or a combination of

both.

Either form of praise/criticism (hard numbers or opinion) is recordable and publishable.

An argument can be made that the vast majority of education-based measurement is hard-

numbers measurement, assuming that letter grades are convertible to hard number equivalents,

and therefore a hard-numbers measurement determination of "success" is the educational system

norm.

But that is not always so. There are no physicians, for example, that are recorded somewhere on a transcript as obtaining a medical license as a B- or C+ physician. At some point in the measurement process associated with becoming a medical doctor, the success or failure of the process becomes disassociated with a strict hard-numbers measurement.

B. <u>A measurement via external judgment of data retained and/or skills acquired, strictly for an *individual* as determined by the instructor or facilitator</u>. This would be testing or assessment of an individual without comparison to test scores or assessments of other individuals, determined solely by the instructor/facilitator. An example of this would be in the form of a mentor to an apprentice. In the case of an actor, it would be determined by the director. This latter might not seem common, but it is. Many professional stage directors and movie directors determine future interactions with actors (landing a part in a new production) based on personal assessment of past individual performances of those actors.

C. <u>A measurement of individual performance in *comparison* with a class performance on a local (individual class members) level</u>. This amounts to what an individual's ranking is within the limited population of the class itself. This is easily done in either case, best to worst student in a particular class and best to worst actor in a particular play. How you equate such a ranking to "success" is another matter, and again depends on what you think "success" is.

D. <u>A measurement of individual performance in comparison with an *aggregate* of class performances</u> (state or national level testing).

This implies that a scholastic ranking system can be unconditionally generalized. It also implies that determining that ranking (through standardized questions) is the best method of determination. It should *not* imply, but often does anyway, that financial rewards or other considerations will be given for the maximization of performance measurements in such a

system. Here be dragons.

A measurement of individual student actor performance on the state or national level is done through state and national competitions such as the American College Theater Festival (ACTF). It amounts to relating opinions to awards.

Measurements of individual *professional* theatrical performance in comparison with an aggregate of performances on a national level in theatre are called the Oscars and the Tonys. They are systems almost as rife with flaws as the national scholastic measurement system mentioned above.

Back to the original question: How is success determined in a play if grades are not given?

"Success" in the form of grades given in an *academic environment* is an arbitrary *endpoint* measurement of the percentage of data retained or skills acquired, or a combination of both. It is a predetermined measurement point on a timeline in a particular exploration of a particular segment of a curriculum. The goal is to regurgitate information and/or to demonstrate skills to a party or parties who are already thoroughly familiar with that information, for purposes of grading the amount of information retained and the degree of skills acquired. In a play, the arbitrary endpoint measurement process for simple assessment of data retained or skills acquired is the endpoint presentation of the play itself, with a significantly higher set of endpoint goals. The 'data retained' must be very, very close to 100%. And this 'data retained' must involve a deep understanding of the play, not just memorization. The 'skills acquired' must be demonstrably functional in transmitting that data. The goal is to successfully convey that information through skills acquired to a party or parties who may be thoroughly unfamiliar with that information

Conclusions

In a strict interpretation of the philosophy of Phenomenology, it is not possible to conclude *anything*. An observer can only strive to conduct observations in a bracketed manner and then describe the phenomena observed as accurately as possible. It is possible to state opinions about the observed phenomena at that point, but it is really not possible to make conclusions (make a final evaluation) about observed phenomena given that the phenomena observed might well change in future observations. Certainly with regard to observation of a phenomenon as complex and dynamic as an interactive theatrical learning environment, there is no ironclad guarantee that what is observed constitutes a 'commonality' or 'usualness' of phenomena. On the contrary, a common belief in theatrical circles is that no two performances of a play are exactly alike, and no two audiences will interpret and/or react to the presentation in exactly the same way.

Offering up conclusions, then, would be an arbitrary and biased act on the part of the researcher. It is possible, however, to offer up opinions. Therefore, in lieu of conclusions, a list of the observer's opinions appears below:

Contiguous and continual compentency.

Striving for contiguous and continual competency of students at all stages of learning in a classroom situation should help to improve the learning performance of those students. This is in stark contrast to the common state of affairs wherein students in an 'ordinary' learning environment have the option to limit concentration of learning effort to short windows of intense activity ('cramming for a test') instead of being continuously current on information presented and continuously competent in the assimilation and retention of that information.

Constructive feedback.

Positive and constructive feedback, on an ongoing basis, should be part and parcel of the complete event window of the learning experience. This feedback should not be limited to teacher-student interactivity, but should be broadened to include interactivity of the entire student population of the classroom environment collectively, and on a regular basis.

Investment.

Establishing a feeling of 'investment' in the subject matter, the classroom learning process, and the content delivery mechanism of a learning experience should help to enhance the learning performance and retention of content material. Investment in this sense of the word means to 'establish a proactive attitude and corresponding work ethic' for the knowledge to be gained.

Owning the course material.

Establishing the work ethic mentioned above should coincide with the necessity to convince students to believe in 'owning' the course material, meaning retaining the information gained for future use. This should be as important a goal as the initial acquisition of that knowledge and information. This concept is perhaps best contrasted with the concept of 'renting' learned course material, or in other words striving to retain it just long enough to regurgitate it onto the pages of a final exam, with no sense of practical use for the information beyond that point.

Collaborative effort.

A large lecture hall learning environment is not typically an environment conducive to collaborative effort, to the extent that the term 'collaborative effort' has been described previously in this chapter and elsewhere in this dissertation. Students entering into a large

lecture hall learning environment are not likely to see it, due to past experience with similar environments, as a collaborative environment. Nevertheless, reasonable efforts by a teacher or facilitator to incorporate collaborative learning, to whatever extent possible, into such a restrictive physical environment should help to improve the learning process taking place there. A collaborative effort, even if minimal, should be preferable to a room full of individual learners who are uninfluenced by the outcomes of other class members. Some of the less-motivated individual learners may, in a collaborative environment, choose to improve upon their initial intent of pre-selecting an individual goal of mediocrity as an acceptable level of involvement, or effort, that they intend to devote to the learning process.

Portability of the theatrical learning environment.

The observed advantages of the theatrical learning environment do not constitute a 'cure-all' for the inadequacies of the large lecture hall learning environment, and for various reasons they may not be portable to all examples of that environment. There are environmental differences and attitudinal differences that may not be adjustable in all variants of a traditional large lecture hall learning environment. For example, it is safe to say that generally every participant in a theatrical learning environment initially wants to be there in the first place. The potential learning experience is not viewed beforehand as a requirement or mandated course, or a waste of time, or irrelevant to the intellectual needs of the participant. It is not viewed initially as a negative experience, even if it later on turns out to be.

There are exceptions to this, of course, as was observed in the dropout rate of participants in *The Wiz*. Those dropouts may have initially viewed participation in *The Wiz* as the lesser of two evils, in the sense of getting out of some other planned activity by the government sponsored

training program that was viewed as less desirable or more potential work. If so, they may not have had the same initial drive to want to participate in the theatrical experience.

Additionally, it may not be physically or financially possible to divide the class size of a large lecture hall population into smaller groups on a regular or even on an occasional basis, thus making collaborative efforts at learning unfeasible if not unworkable. Ostensibly, this is what large lecture hall 'labs' are for, but this researcher has attended such 'labs' in the past, and found them to be A) still large classes of 30 or more; B) run by a teaching assistant, not the principal teacher or facilitator; C) essentially an *additional* class, not a collaboration effort of the lecture hall environment, and D) individual grading not co-dependent on the assigned lab partner.

Time constraints.

Time constraints are not radically adjustable in a traditional lecture hall learning environment. There is no real possibility of the instructor in a traditional large lecture hall learning environment making a decision to require the students therein to attend a significant amount of extra hours of in-class coursework and practice (possibly 50% more than the original amount of allotted coursework time), or additional days of study and practice near the end of the course including weekends, which may end up being many consecutive days of extra study before a 'final exam', in order to achieve a high degree of group competency.

Not all subject matter to be learned in classroom environments is compatible with the format of the theatrical learning environment. There are many subjects which must be approached in traditional ways. On the other hand, some aspects of the theatrical learning environment already exist within the formats of learning particular subject matter. For instance, certain subject matter such as mathematics requires a continual currentness of individual competency in order to proceed in class without getting hopelessly lost. Certain subject matters

such as ballroom dancing require a high degree of student interactivity. Certain classes devoted to skills attainment such as debate require a high degree of personal investment in the subject matter in order to demonstrate competency in competitions. In other words, the theatrical learning environment does not lay claim to exclusive ownership of these learning practices. It is, rather, the combination of these practices and the mandated nature of their use that sets the theatrical learning environment apart.

Juxtaposition of the opinions listed above with final quotes from Wesch.

This researcher does not mean to imply that a theatrical learning environment, as defined in this dissertation, is usable or desirable in whole or in part in all classroom learning situations across the board. Applications, if any, would be up to the individual teacher, coordinator, facilitator – whatever name applies to the person or persons running the particular educational show. But it is of importance to point out here one last time what situations *do exist* currently in at least some formal academic learning environments, and especially in large lecture hall learning environments. Quotes from Wesch below do this admirably, and hopefully justify the last-minute inclusion of new material here in Chapter 5 to help clarify the need for procedural changes, or at least the need for considering procedural changes in certain learning environments.

On the purpose of the large lecture hall environment room:

The room is nothing less than a state of the art information dump, a physical manifestation of the all too pervasive yet narrow and naïve assumption that to learn is simply to acquire information, built for teachers to effectively carry out the relatively simple task of conveying information. Its sheer size, layout, and technology are

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testaments to the efficiency and expediency with which we can now provide students with their required credit hours. (Wesch, 2009, p. 1)

On being physically present in the room as a learner:

I marvel at what a remarkable achievement it is to bring hundreds of otherwise expressive, exuberant, and often rebellious youths into a single room and have them sit quietly in straight rows while they listen to the authority with the microphone. Such an achievement could not be won by an eager teacher armed with technology alone. It has taken years of acclimatizing our youth to stale artificial environments, piles of propaganda convincing them that what goes on inside these environments is of immense importance, and a steady hand of discipline should they ever start to question it. Alfred North Whitehead called it 'soul murder'… (Wesch, 2012)

On students playing the educational game:

My teaching assistants consoled me by noting that students have learned that they can "get by" without paying attention in their classes. Perhaps feeling a bit encouraged by my look of incredulity, my TA's continued with a long list of other activities students have learned that they can "get by" without doing. Studying, taking notes, reading the textbook, and coming to class topped the list. It wasn't the list that impressed me. It was the unquestioned assumption that "getting by" is the name of the game. Our students are so alienated by education that they are trying to sneak right past it. (Wesch, 2012)

On the educational game playing the students:

If you think this little game is unfair to those students who have been duped into playing, consider those who have somehow managed to maintain their inherent desire to learn. One of the most thoughtful and engaged students I have ever met recently confronted a

professor about the nuances of some questions on a multiple choice exam. The professor politely explained to the student that he was "overthinking" the questions. What kind of environment is this in which "overthinking" is a problem? Apparently he would have been better off just playing along with the "getting by" game. (Wesch, 2012).

On the attitude toward learning:

Last spring I asked my students how many of them did not like school. Over half of them rose (sic) their hands. When I asked how many of them did not like learning, no hands were raised. I have tried this with faculty and get similar results. Last year's U.S. Professor of the Year, Chris Sorensen, began his acceptance speech by announcing, "I hate school." The crowd, made up largely of other outstanding faculty, overwhelmingly agreed. And yet he went on to speak with passionate conviction about his love of learning and the desire to spread that love. And there's the rub. We love learning. We hate school. What's worse is that many of us hate school *because* we love learning. (Wesch, 2009, p. 4).

On the possibilities of change:

When students are engaged in projects that are meaningful and important to them, and that make them feel meaningful and important, they will enthusiastically turn off their cellphones and laptops to grapple with the most difficult texts and take on the most rigorous tasks' (Wesch, 2012).

Summary of major observations from the research compared with Wesch's traditional classroom descriptions and observations of student behavior.

Essentially what Wesch has described and videotaped, concerning the status of his modern-day large lecture hall learning environment, amounts to a modified phenomenological

portrait of pre-accepted structure. This pre-accepted structure comes in the form of acceptance

of the physical learning environment, acceptance of certain outmoded communicative tools (such

as the blackboard and chalk method of information transfer), unchallenged acceptance of top-

down teaching methods, and quantitative measurements of 'success' in learning (proof of

information transfer) via testing methods that are convenient and efficient for the

teacher/facilitator and the record-keeping processes of the academic institution. The students

accept this structure, the teacher/facilitator accepts it, and the academic institution accepts and

promotes it as legitimate and functional teaching methodology.

Associated with this acceptance are covert procedural agreements developed over many

years of academic pursuit. The students, teacher/facilitator, and academic institution are all in

agreement in advance, without discussion, that the students and teacher/facilitator will meet for

the new class at specified times in a specific room or lecture hall, wherein the students are

expected to act in a restrained, passive manner (sit down, face forward, generally be quiet and

physically inactive, don't bother other people, pay attention, take notes, and *absorb information*),

and the teacher/facilitator will be expected to *dispense information*.

In other words, the learning environment format of this brand-new class isn't a situation

that either the student or the teacher/facilitator is entering into for the first time, regardless of the

newness of the information to be dispensed. The students, with variances in class size, have

entered into this general educational environment format possibly a hundred times or more in

their academic lifetimes.

Within this familiar environment the individual student, possibly surrounded by a sea of

other students, is generally unaffected by the success or failure (or influence) of those other

students. The student is free to choose anonymity and non-involvement (the wallflower effect),

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free to accept mediocrity as a goal (a 'C' grade is okay), free to forsake a genuine quest for knowledge and replace it with attempts at 'gaming' the academic system (how little time can I spend studying; how many points is this worth; what exactly do I need to know for the test?).

Contrast the very familiar learning environment described above with a learning environment wherein even the partial failure of the learning process is not an option (the production of the play), and additionally the failure of any individual participant (student) in the learning process is *also* not an option. Collaboration with others through more or less constant interactivity is normal. Keeping pace throughout the learning process with the academic progress of the rest of the class members is normal. All students being 'invested' in the learning process, in that they are committed to it and are actively seeking knowledge and improving skills rather than trying to game the academic system, is normal. Constructive individual and collective feedback is more or less constant and is normal. Mastery of text material is accompanied by interactive discussion and interpretation of that material, determining meaning of that material through research outside of the boundaries of the text provided, challenging and re-interpreting the meaning of that material in response to new discoveries, developing the means and skills necessary for imparting the meaning of that material to others, and ultimately actively transmitting the material to others through a multi-faceted communicative process.

Recommendations for Further Research

This researcher would recommend controlled experiments (quantitative experiments, as opposed to qualitative) to 'test the waters' of some or all of the opinions mentioned above in this chapter. Anything that can be proven to improve the status quo of the general large lecture hall learning environment should be a welcome change in the educational community. Having said that, the researcher chooses to make some last comments about the status quo.

Some words about the current state of affairs in education.

Versions of Michael Wesch's iconic descriptions of a large lecture hall learning environment exist currently, to some degree, on practically every sizeable college campus in the United States. Legions of students in that type of learning environment probably exhibit variations of the same sort of disengagement and disinterest as he describes in observing his own classes. Top-down modeling of information transfer is still alive and well, after all these years. It's efficient, from the educational institution's point of view. But efficient at what? Efficient at herding students through an educational processing plant, at promoting standardized measurements as a way of judging and recording educational merit, at delivering a maximum amount of data content at the expense of a deep understanding of that content? Perhaps a large lecture hall learning environment, a "traditional learning" environment as it has been referred to elsewhere in this dissertation, is efficient at all of those goals, if 'goals' is the right descriptor. But this is not the only form of learning environment extant in those institutions of learning.

Versions of the theatrical learning environment exist in parallel with the lecture hall learning environment within practically the same number of learning institutions, and have coexisted for practically the same amount of historical time. Side by side. The theatrical learning environments described in this dissertation are commonplace. And yet the two learning environments that so commonly coexist within the same learning institutions do not seem to influence each other all that much. Should they?

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This dissertation is not concerned with making a grand statement about the portability of the theatrical learning environment to all other learning environments. Sheer numbers of students, time constraints, fixed academic protocols, subject matter, financial considerations, and other considerations may all hinder or prohibit changes in established academic routine.

Furthermore, it's not realistically possible to get all students everywhere to buy into the educational process at the extremely demanding level of a theatrical learning environment, or to willingly choose to be participative in such an environment (or any learning environment, for that matter). But at some point it's necessary to ask: what's actually going on here?

What's the real goal?

"The will of man is by his reason swayed."

A Midsummer Night's Dream Act 2 Scene 2 Lysander

Proudfoot et al, eds., 2005, p. 371

Ostensibly, increasing test scores in educational environments is a national goal. It is seen as a greater good for the country. It has been coupled with financial incentives and promotional incentives for those who can make it happen. What could possibly go wrong?

At the time of this dissertation's publication, 35 or more Atlanta public school educators may possibly be on their way to prison for manipulating standardized test scores. It seems that they were more interested in recording good test scores than they were in the actual *learning* that took place in their learning environments. To quote an online newspaper article: "They were fixating on testing, as opposed to being fixated on teaching and learning. …It seems they focused *unrelentingly* on test scores, and had organized 'cheating parties' where many teachers would allegedly gather in rooms during testing weeks to erase incorrect answers and replace them with correct ones."

And it's not just Atlanta. A former El Paso superintendent of schools was recently sent to prison for encouraging low performing students to drop out of the school system. To drop out. In other words, the educational system was being manipulated to encourage certain students to embrace failure. Ohio, at this publication date, is also currently investigating whether some schools intentionally encouraged some students to drop out so that their test scores would not negatively affect the school system's overall test scores. There are, sadly, many more examples.

So what's the real goal? Is the goal to fix the learning environment, as the "will of man" so loftily first envisioned? Or has the goal become "by reason swayed" to *put the fix* on measured results in order to attain the reward of profit, promotion, prestige, or all three?

Is it even possible to get things like volunteerism, interactivity, high level of commitment, high level of accomplishment, and pride of accomplishment incorporated into these obviously goal-distorted learning environments? Yes. Look at the theatrical learning environments that currently co-exist alongside them. They're already there.

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Appendix A - Sample Copy of Document Distributed by the Researcher to Actors and Director of The Wiz for Their Signatures:

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

Observation and videorecording of participants during the rehearsals

of THE WIZ, a play produced and

performed at The Columbian Theater, 2011

Participant's Permission Release Statement

Some of the rehearsals of THE WIZ will be observed and recorded by Raymond L. Freeby as part of a dissertation requirement in the Department of Education at Kansas State University.

 I understand this project is research, and that my participation is completely voluntary. I also understand that if I participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or negative judgment by others.

In signing this form, I agree to participate in at least one short (estimated at 10 minutes) question and answer discussion of theatrical processes as they concern my participation in a theatrical event. I further agree to audiovisual documentation of casting events, rehearsal events, and other production events for research purposes only. I give permission to Raymond L. Freeby and Dr. Jeffrey Zacharakis of the Kansas State University Department of Education to retain a copy of this confidentiality statement for research documentation purposes only. I understand that Raymond L. Freeby and Dr. Jeffrey Zacharakis will keep my identity as disclosed on this document strictly confidential and anonymous.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I will receive a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

Name (Please Print):_____

Signature:_____

Date:_____

Appendix B - A Sample Copy of Document Distributed by the Researcher to Actors and Director of *The Adding Machine* for Their Signatures:

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

<u>Observation and videorecording of participants during the rehearsals</u>

<u>of THE ADDING MACHINE, a play produced and</u>

<u>performed at Kansas State University, 2011</u>

Participant's Permission Release Statement

Some of the rehearsals of THE ADDING MACHINE will be observed and recorded by Raymond L. Freeby as part of a dissertation requirement in the Department of Education at Kansas State University.

I understand this project is research, and that my participation is completely voluntary. I also understand that if I participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

In signing this form, I agree to participate in at least one short (estimated at 10 minutes) question and answer discussion of theatrical processes as they concern my participation in a theatrical event. I further agree to audiovisual documentation of casting events, rehearsal events, and other production events for research purposes only. I give permission to Raymond L. Freeby and Dr. Jeffrey Zacharakis of the Kansas State University Department of Education to retain a copy of this confidentiality statement for research documentation purposes only. I understand that Raymond L. Freeby and Dr. Jeffrey Zacharakis will keep my identity as disclosed on this document strictly confidential and anonymous.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I will receive a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

Name (Please Print):_____

Signature:_____

Date:_____

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Appendix C - Standard interview question presented to actors.

"How does the theatrical learning experience you underwent in the production of (either *The Wiz* or *The Adding Machine*) and the theatrical learning environment you were immersed in differ from your learning experiences in other 'ordinary' or conventional classroom environments? You may define 'ordinary' or substitute some other descriptor if you wish, in order to make definite comparative points. Feel free to discuss similarities as well. Feel free to discuss any other points you consider to be important or informative about your interactions with the director and the other actors, and whether or not the same sort of interactions take place in an 'ordinary' learning environment."

Appendix D - 44 Benefits of Collaborative Learning

44 Benefits of Collaborative Learning

Retrieved from the Global Development Research Center

(http://www.gdrc.org/kmgmt/c-learn/44.html)

1. Develops higher level thinking skills

2. Promotes student-faculty interaction and familiarity

3. Increases student retention

4. Builds self-esteem in students

5. Enhances student satisfaction with the learning experience

6. Promotes a positive attitude toward the subject matter

7. Develops oral communication skills

8. Develops social interaction skills

9. Promotes positive race relations

10. Creates an environment of active, involved, exploratory learning

11. Uses a team approach to problem solving while maintaining individual accountability

12. Encourages diversity understanding

13. Encourages student responsibility for learning

14. Involves students in developing curriculum and class procedures

15. Students explore alternate problem solutions in a safe environment

16. Stimulates critical thinking and helps students clarify ideas through discussion and debate

17. Enhances self-management skills

18. Fits in well with the constructivist approach

19. Establishes an atmosphere of cooperation and helping schoolwide

20. Students develop responsibility for each other

21. Builds more positive heterogeneous relationships

22. Encourages alternate student assessment techniques

23. Fosters and develops interpersonal relationships

24. Modeling problem solving techniques by students' peers

25. Students are taught how to criticize ideas, not people

26. Sets high expectations for students and teachers

27. Promotes higher achievement and class attendance

28. Students stay on task more and are less disruptive

29. Greater ability of students to view situations from others' perspectives (development of empathy)

30. Creates a stronger social support system

31. Creates a more positive attitude toward teachers, principals and other school personnel by students and creates a more positive attitude by teachers toward their students

32. Addresses learning style differences among students

33. Promotes innovation in teaching and classroom techniques

34. Classroom anxiety is significantly reduced

35. Test anxiety is significantly reduced

36. Classroom resembles real life social and employment situations

37. Students practice modeling societal and work related roles

38. CL is synergistic with writing across the curriculum

39. CL activities can be used to personalize large lecture classes

40. Skill building and practice can be enhanced and made less tedious through CL activities in and out of class.

41. CL activities promote social and academic relationships well beyond the classroom and individual course

42. CL processes create environments where students can practice building leadership skills.

43. CL increases leadership skills of female students

44. In colleges where students commute to school and do not remain on campus to participate in campus life activities, CL creates a community environment within the classroom.

Appendix E - Signed Copy of IRB Proposal Number 5936

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY | University Research Compliance Office
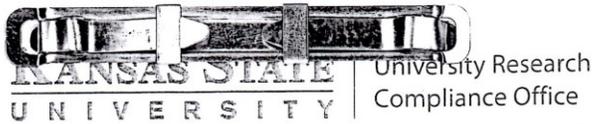
TO: Jeffrey Zacharakis   Proposal Number: 5936
        Educational Leadership
        BH 326

FROM: Rick Scheidt, Chair
        Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: July 28, 2011

RE: Proposal Entitled, "Phenomenological Observation of Information Transfer in a Theatrical Environment"

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects / Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Kansas State University has reviewed the proposal identified above and has determined that it is EXEMPT from further IRB review. This exemption applies only to the proposal - as written – and currently on file with the IRB. Any change potentially affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation and may disqualify the proposal from exemption.

Based upon information provided to the IRB, this activity is exempt under the criteria set forth in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, **45 CFR §46.101, paragraph b, category: 2, subsection: ii.**

Certain research is exempt from the requirements of HHS/OHRP regulations. A determination that research is exempt does not imply that investigators have no ethical responsibilities to subjects in such research; it means only that the regulatory requirements related to IRB review, informed consent, and assurance of compliance do not apply to the research.

Any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, the University Research Compliance Office, and if the subjects are KSU students, to the Director of the Student Health Center.