

THE USE OF DRAMA TO HELP CHILDREN BUILD CONFIDENCE AND SELF IMAGE

THOMAS F. FREEMAN HONORS COLLEGE

SENIOR THESIS

BY

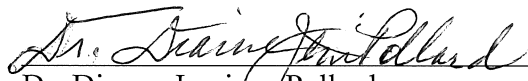
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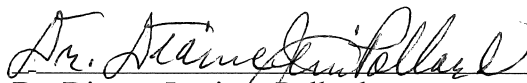
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ABSTRACT

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By

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Texas Southern University, 2021

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The art of Theatre has been practiced for hundreds of years. It is an art form that merely imitates life. The actor is challenged mentally, physically, and emotionally in order to live truthfully under the imaginary circumstances given by the creator of the show/production that they are participating in. This requires one to flex a set of creative muscles that must be developed through constant training within the craft. Although excellent formal training would equip any Actor with the appropriate tools to excel within a performance, those tools don't just apply to the stage. The tools given to one who trains in the Theatre are the same tools that can be used in every other facet of one's life outside of the Theatre. Theatre teaches discipline, dedication, cooperation, and builds confidence. In the early stages of Theatre, participation was exclusive to only men who were of age. Thankfully, as Theatre evolved over time, women were allowed to perform as well. In this thesis I will be talking about the impact and benefits of Theatre in regards to children. Considering all of the concepts Theatre teaches, children are most impressionable in regards to learning things because children are more emotionally malleable in comparison to adults. In this paper, I will be talking about the benefits of theatre and performing in regards to children and their development. Research shows that Theatre can be helpful in regards to enriching the social and emotional development of youth. According to the National Arts Council, "Students who have arts-rich experiences in school do better across the board

academically, and they also become more active and engaged citizens , voting, volunteering, and generally participating at higher rates than their peers.” Artistic engagement has cognitive benefits within kids. The concept of role playing helps children develop positive cognitive characteristics, specifically a strong sense of confidence. Ensemble group performances creates a sense of community amongst the children and teaches them to cooperatively work with others. Theatre improvisation games help kid's with developing critical thinking skills considering the level of creativity and imagination they require. Within this paper, I will dive more into how Theatre boosts kids confidence, teaches children the importance of teamwork, and how It also helps kids with developing critical thinking.

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VITA

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DEDICATION

I want to firstly dedicate this paper to God, because he has truly given me the strength to finish my collegiate career. I also want to dedicate this paper to my Parents, my Grandparents, my Church family, my friends, and last but not least, Mr. Thomas F Freeman.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to acknowledge Dr. Dianne Jemison Pollard as well as the theatre department faculty for the wealth of knowledge they equipped me with, I want to acknowledge all of my classmates who have helped me through these years, and lastly I want to thank and acknowledge the Thomas F Freeman Honors College for welcoming me with open arms.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The art of Theatre has been practiced for hundreds of years. In order to express the legitimate impact of Theatre, we must first define Theatre as well as start from the beginning of the arts' lineage. Theatre is a tool whereby people define and understand their world or escape from unpleasant realities. The earliest evidence of Theatrical activity were found in African paintings that dated all the way back to between 3500-3000 B.C . Hieroglyphics, decorations, and artifacts were also pieces of evidence of theatrical activity during the earliest times. There are about 50 artifacts as evidence that are dated between 2800 and 2400 B.C. The classic people of these time periods first expressed their theatrical creativity through rituals, which were performed in order to pray to their deities for shelter, food, water, rain, sunshine. African customs and rituals were the basis of modern theatre today. Rituals were a narrative form of dance and song that served the purpose of worship or animal imitation. Early African theatre consisted of literary elements such as repetition, rhythm, imagery, riddles, and similes. African theatre was driven solely by voice, anything was rarely written or recorded. Storytelling is a skill that is transferable and beneficial across all ages including children. Women storytellers often told animal stories dealing with their thoughts as well as the thoughts of animals and their weaknesses. Men storytellers narrated tales dealing with heroic characters, Gods, and Spirits. The storytellers or "Griots" were originally the counselors of kings. They preserved the constitution of the king by memory alone. Each noble family had an appointed Griot. Griottes referred to Female storytellers and Griots referred to Male. They were prominent in many African societies. Their roles included historians, genealogists, musicians, and advisors to mobility. The art of theatre

and storytelling continued to evolve as time progressed. In 450 B.C, the Golden Age of theatre was established by the Greeks. The Greek tragedy is defined as an imitation of a serious action of great magnitude that is complete within itself. A Greek philosopher by the name of Plato believed that theatre served the purpose of teaching. An Athenian named Thespis was the first actor. Esculus, Sophoclese, and Euripides were the main prominent playwrights during the Greek period of Theatre. This was when a tangible structure of literary works started to be established. Contrary to early African theatre, actual scripts started to be written. Athenian tragedies have six elements that were developed by a Greek philosopher named Aristotle. Those six elements were plot, character, dialogue, music, spectacle, and theme. The main components of a Greek tragedy is the point of attack, exposition, inciting incident, and the major dramatic question. As time went on, another theatrical genre was derived from the Greek Athenian tragedy. This genre was the Roman comedy. Plautus and Terence were the prominent Roman Comedy playwrights. The main differences between the Greek tragedy and roman comedy are the 5 elements of comedy. These elements are wisecracks, surprise, repetition, exaggeration, and incongruity. Wisecracks refers to comedy that is targeted towards someone in a derogatory manner. Surprise refers to a humorous surprise or things that unexpectedly happen that are funny. Repetition refers to when funny catch phrases are repeated or when something is done over and over repeatedly. Exaggeration refers to a heightened over dramatic dramatization of any activity. Incongruity refers to the low probability of a specific thing happening. Another difference between Greek tragedies and roman comedies was the presence of a Greek chorus. In Roman comedies, the actors who have more dialogue take the place of a Greek chorus rise of the medieval times, better known as the middle ages. Another genre that was born during this time was the Liturgical drama. These were considered dramatic pieces that had religious undertones. These Liturgical

dramas would specifically happen during the pagan holiday of Easter in order to shed light on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Morality plays, mystery plays, and miracle plays were other genres that were created during these times. Feudalism fueled the creation of these certain genres of dramatic pieces. Feudalism was an economic system during medieval times. The peasants were controlled by the king and the church. One of the most important factors of the medieval period is the fact that learning became more important than the lords. Healthcare was dominated by myth, folklore and superstition. Music and art was dominated by the church during this medieval period. The superstition and folklore pushed the narrative that citizens were physically ill because they were sinners. During this time was also the rise of Humanism. The core of the Renaissance was the study of the classical text; this was a break from medieval philosophy. Politics in everyday life as well as medicine were dominated by the Roman Catholic church. One of the principles of Humanism is the ideology of reason. Empiricism is another concept that was derived from the medieval period. Empiricism is the concept of knowledge being gathered through scientific study of something that can be visibly seen. Around 1610 and 1629, Farces became popular. This was a comedy based theatrical genre. A farce is any comic dramatic work using buffoonery and horse play; typically including crude characterization and impossible situations. The concept of the Farce was influenced by the art of Commedia dell'Arte which was improvised comedy in Italian Theatre in the sixteenth and eighteenth century based on stock characters. The popularity of Commedia Dell'arte gave light to the establishment of the neoclassical era. The neoclassical ideal was any piece of art or architecture from the 18th century and onwards. French Comedies soon became prominent. A French dramatist by the name of Racine became the most popular at that time. The plight of French comedies were to expose the nature of middle class characters who were driven by sex and money. Moliere was also another

famous French dramatist. Around 1592 the literary genius of William Shakespeare began to blossom. By this time three parts of his masterpiece *Henry VI* had been performed.

Shakespeare's work is the foundation of all classical theatrical training considering how brilliant his many works are. Theatre has been the foundation of the entertainment pop culture thrives upon. It has been a mirror of the social dynamics of humanity because it does imitate life.

Theatre can teach us about ourselves and others. Learning is a privilege that should be given to all. Learning through theatre gives a different yet relatable perspective.

CHAPTER II: IMPACT OF THEATRICAL ENSEMBLE WORK

The level of interaction that role playing and play presents in general is the many social benefits for children. “One of the critical benefits of a child’s play has long been thought to be its contribution to the child’s thinkability. Children have been shown to acquire knowledge most easily through play across a variety of contexts” (Barnett 138). Playing impacts children by challenging their critical thinking skills. The information referenced above also harps on the concept of children learning important life lessons from certain performances considering that the context is educational. A common motif in regards to the behavior of children is that oftentimes their toxic behavior is perpetuated by a lack of positive outlets. “The research in this paper focuses on the following ‘matching’ of adolescent needs and creative outlets by examining whether the fluctuating self-esteem, the need for peers, and the drive for taking risks felt by many adolescents may be positively addressed by a challenging experience in a Shakespearean theatre production ” (Kander 2009). Allowing youth to have the full theatre experience positively challenges them. The challenge and the validation of a successful performance gives children a secure sense of confidence and boosts their self esteem. There are nuances within the mechanics of theatre that helps to develop certain social skills.

Theatre offers a positive outlet for children and youth because the themes of certain scripts are timeless and harp on modern social events that the youth may deal with. This example is apparent with Shakespeare's timeless writing. “Shakespeare's timeless themes and human characters offer relevance for today's youth: The rebellious and passionate teens of Romeo and Juliet, the bemused and confused lovers of *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, or the self-questioning Hamlet himself ” (Kander 2009). Theatre presents modern situations and allows youth to learn how to navigate social themes in a positive productive way. There’s an importance of youth and

children working within an ensemble. “It is perhaps more appropriate to speak of peer groups, as there are several groups of crowds with which an adolescent may identify. The familiar cliques and groups of this age group become a factor in the adolescent’s identity information” (Kander 2009). Peer bonding and peer to peer interaction is an integral part of adolescent development including a development of self-esteem, because a peer group can be a powerful influence on adolescents.

Theatre exposes children to the concept of positive risk taking which also helps build creativity and confidence. “Risk taking is called a creative ability: creative abilities (expression, risk taking, and imagination) are improved through arts involvement. The research of Brice Heath and others offers support for the argument that ‘the arts permit the making of mistakes as part of the creative process and cultivates responsible and productive management of risk by young people” (Kander 2009). The ability to properly manage risk that is perpetuated by possible failure builds a level of self-confidence and self-esteem. A rudimentary part of creativity is the ability to fail. Failure forces creativity to thrive. The practice of theatre by nature demands creativity and risk taking. “Risk taking can also be considered in terms of its dramatic structure and aesthetic properties: It is imaginative, inventive, uncertain, and goes beyond the ordinary and predictable in ways that can titillate, excite, and very often frighten, it has an emotional current” (Kander 2009). For example, Shakespearean theatre provides a challenge that requires taking risks and creativity. Shakespeare's work has been known as a benchmark for many actors because it’s heightened language and nuances challenge actors. “In particular, the Shakespearean theatre production experience may provide a challenge that offers the thrill of risk-taking. Shakespeare’s work is acknowledged as some of the greatest in the English language and in the Western theater. The performing of his plays provides a worthwhile challenge. Acting in a

Shakespearean play has for generations been a benchmark for professional actors”(Kander 2009). It takes a highly skilled performer to prestinly execute Shakespeare, therefore the skill requirement causes the kids to develop a level of speech proficiency. The theatre experience gives kids the opportunity to test their limits and expand creatively.

Theatre and performance mainly affect the psyche and emotional development of anyone who is exposed to the art. Emotions are a key component of what makes up the concept of Character. Character is defined as “the aggregate of features and traits that form the individual nature of some person or thing.” Character development is involved with the emotional development, social development, as well as the development of self-esteem. According to ‘Kids Matter,’ and educational government funded family website promoted in Australia, social development involves learning values, knowledge and skills that enable children to relate to others effectively and to contribute in positive ways to family, school and community. Within an ensemble, every member must be on one accord. Artistic synchronicity is definitely paramount. Theatre builds communities and allows people, in this case children, to relate to each other. Our perception and the reference point through which we view the world is dictated by our experiences. Our experiences are colloquial. This concept is mentioned by author Sanjay Kumar in an article called *Theatre for Children in India: An Instrument of Social Change*. “Kumar overviews how ‘how avante garde’ theatre groups have sprung up across India, and that children are learning about the world around them through theatrical opportunities. The social diversity we are exposed to is correlated to our ability to navigate within different social dynamics amongst people from different social and cultural backgrounds. Ultimately, theatre and theatre activities allow children growing up in difficult environments to learn about their society. “Theatre exercises takes place in a large cultural context and partakes society’s biases, where

power and discourse are located with the upper class, upper caste and upper sex. It is society marked by unbridgible and incomprehensible differences between the rich and poor, urban and rural” (Kumar 31). Since the children are being exposed to the diversity and the different social caste systems among their peers, they are learning to find common ground and relate to each other socially despite differences. They are becoming educated about each other's differences and the conditional prejudices that are being pressed socially by society. This immersion within theatre is causing their social and self-awareness to grow exponentially. Georgia Wilson, an elementary school teacher, wanted to teach her studies about the importance of group social interactions through actively performing “Tableaus”. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary a Tableau is “a depiction of a scene usually presented on a stage by silent and motionless costumed participants.” Wilson took excerpts from various children’s books and immersed her children within creating stage tableaux. Within her studies she realized the importance of group creation and group creativity among people, specifically children. Wilson states, “In the space of performance, the text, the self, the group, and the socio-cultural environment coverage; they intersect” (Wilson 1999). Ensemble work, like creating tableaux, allows children to unify and cooperate with each other on a social and artistic level, giving children the ability to navigate different social interactions that involve teamwork. “Therefore, theatre (in the form of tableau) has a justifiable place in the social development of children and allows them a chance at understanding not only characters they read about or learn about in school, but availability for them to become the characters and began to think on a deeper level. A child at play in their own backyard with a few friends may be able to play creatively, but lacks the structure and guidance by the teacher, and the full classroom environment experience. Therefore the child would not be promoted to think on a deeper level on their own, and again this

points to the need for theatre arts to be present in the child's life for a better chance at development socially" (Jimenez 2017). This ensemble work teaches kids to be socially malleable and adaptive when they are introduced or exposed to peers who are socially different. Children may be predisposed to having a narrow perspective of social norms until their perspectives are broadened. Activities within theatre can allow children's limited perspective of certain societal norms to be broadened. Working in an ensemble promotes collaborative learning, which definitely is positive in different facets of life. The theatre is a creative space in which to facilitate positive youth development.

David Beare and George Bellivue (2007) created a developmental model of collaborative play creating that highlights the importance of artistic group development and interaction. Their theatrical framework was also keyed towards self-social development within youth. Their method was performative and inclusive. The framework consisted of social principles as well as self-development themes and key themes. The first three themes dealt with the social mechanics and levels within a group setting. The first three themes are inclusion, control and intimacy. "In the inclusion phase, students are grappling with feeling part of the group or outside of the group, and tend to reveal less of themselves as they 'test the waters' to see if sharing is safe and experiment with 'blending in with the group'. To move to the next stage, students must develop 'a feeling of belonging to, and identification with the group' (Berkowitz 2010). Immersing youth within an artistic group setting allows kids to develop social adaptability amongst diversity. The second theme and developmental stage is the control stage, which is geared towards exploring the "boundaries and limitations of acceptable behaviors" in regards to behaving within artistic groups. Intimacy is the third theme within the performative framework, and it harps more on the importance of bonding between ensemble members, which is the main focus of this chapter.

“The third developmental stage, intimacy involves bonding between group members, and self-disclosure is increasingly important. Students take more risks interpersonally as well as in their acting. The authors identify lack of skills to handle interpersonal conflicts as a factor in holding students in this phase”(Beare and Belliveau, 2007). Bonding between peers within an artistic setting encourages a social freedom that is best facilitated within theatre. Performance is a theatrical theme that Beare and Belliveau also explore. “Beare and Belliveau’s (2007) first two theatrical themes, writing and rehearsing, are of less interest to the present study; the third theme of performing calls attention to the effect of an audience ‘filled with family, friends, and staff members’ whose positive response to the performance increases self-confidence and community ties for the students. Often students feel deeply validated by the act of performing, partly because of the praise from their friends and family, and partly because they were able to express themselves in a meaningful way” (Beare and Belliveau 2007). Theatre challenges the certain artistic abilities of children. When the youth are exposed to improvements within an artistic setting they become more socially confident in their abilities. An exponential progression of skill is often brought out in theatrical group settings because oftentimes the atmosphere is conducive to support and non-judgement.

Morrow, Bauer, and Herrington (2009) described the value of artistic collaboration in an article in the John Hopkins Press newspaper. “They concluded that collaborative play creation ‘can be one of the most satisfying of theatrical experiences’, and that outcomes for students include ‘becoming energized and enfranchised’, with ‘a deepened sense of cooperation with and respect for their collaborators’” (Berkowitz 2010). This ability to create connections and respectively collaborate with others is a representation of social awareness within youth. Acceptance is an important theme within theatrical group environments because it promotes and

encourages a freedom of social expression. Joan Schirle (2005) expressed the social impact of collaboration by highlighting the mechanics of youth collaborating on creating and writing plays. “In particular, writing the play together themselves gives young people a chance to be heard for themselves, independent of the messages of consumerism that surround them- ‘devising is a way to be heard,’ for minority groups including teenagers. Schirle points out that ours is a ‘nonliterary time’ and collaborative play creation does not require a student to have a particular skill set or type of intelligence; instead, all intelligences and contributions are welcomed.” A creative environment such as a theatrical one is primed for social acceptance which instills a sense of social confidence within the youth.

Theatrical ensemble work highlights the main importance of unity. In Craig Kosnik’s dissertation (2014) “The Adolescent’s Voice: How Theatre Participation Impacts High Schoolers and College Students”, he gives a very complete definition of an Ensemble. “An ensemble is a group of individuals, using their individual strengths and working together cooperatively and responsibly for the betterment of the group, when the group becomes just as important as the individual. Our ensemble’s goal is to respect one another and use our strengths to create the best theatrical work we can make” (Kosnik 2014). Most ensembles thrive because of the sense of familial unity. From a more subjective emotional perspective of the impact of ensemble work, theatrical ensembles provide youth with something that they may not have in their personal lives which is a sense of family and unity. “Many of the reasons that the idea of family\ensemble is important are similar to the themes of fun and friendship –, it makes them want to continue to participate, gives them a place to belong, and makes them happy” (Kosnik 2014). Ensemble work offers youth support and love in regards to performance in theater. This theatrical may supplement the lack of unity, support, and love that the youth may not be getting at home. This

drives home the concept that immersing youth within the act of performing an ensemble heightens their ability to cooperate and work well with their peers and others.

A theatrical community\ensemble enables leadership. "One important way in which the community or ensemble nature of the program manifest is that social aspects are interwoven in the work. The mix of work and social aspects might be expected from teens in any setting, but in this community, it is expected and managed as part of the work process. Most of the students work at a steady pace, and don't break between tasks when in heavy production work. Mixing and managing social aspects means that the work can become rewarding-students have fun doing the tasks, not just in between"(Seidel 1996). Most theatrical programs are structured in a way that students learn together and from each other. Theatrical ensembles in regards to the active production of shows requires a sense of familiarity and community within the students. The sense of family and community presses the importance of expectation, reliability, and obligation in regards to the group. Everyone is expected to give their all in order to ensure that the performance manifests excellently. Being tasked with community work and the requirements that come with that can often times mold a leader. "Leaders tend to emerge from the social group work, either voluntarily or by virtue of demonstrating an ability. Ms. Joyce refers to this as trial by fire leadership and prefers it to appointing students to take on leadership roles" (Seidel 1996). When students take on a role or any sort of authoritative position within the theater they must accept ownership and responsibility. If they feel that they aren't ready, then filling the specific role or position that they are cast for will be there "trial run" so to speak. Their capabilities will shine through in their abilities as well as their reliability will be tested. This shines light on the device of auditioning within the theater. In reality, a job interview is just like the theatrical audition. Let me explain. Within theatrical addition a casting director usually

requires a resume. This resume consists of an actor's theatrical body of work as well as their educational history. This proves their qualification and their capabilities in regards to being cast for a role. This is a direct correlation parallel to the workforce. Most if not all employers require a resume in which your work history is shown. This resume depicts your capabilities and quality of work based off of your past experiences. This resume is also considered and compared with other prospects\candidates for also possibly auditioning and or applying for your position or role. Thus, you don't just receive your desired goal or job position. You must be chosen and picked. Although there are very close similarities between the workplace and the theatrical space there is one slight difference. Within the theatrical audition you must show your capabilities actively upfront. From that point the casting director as well as other authoritative figures who dictate the cashless will decide if you qualify for the role that you audition for. An actor being cast is dictated by their ability to perform. This emphasizes the mechanics of emergent leadership. "This philosophy of how one finds leaders opens the leadership process up to anyone with the interest and determination to do the job. It is important that the students understand that making a decision, even a minor one, means taking responsibility, ownership, and being a leader. The expectation of responsibility from all in the group is a necessary trust, and also makes each one of the group a leader in some small way. The nature of the work makes it difficult for the participants to worry about the details of whether or not other work is being done. Each worker must concentrate on his or her own work"(Seidel 1996). The theatrical process of production with regards to a show being produced involves separate microcosms within one body of work. Leadership can be maintained even within the theatrical ensemble group setting. Leadership within an ensemble is one's ability to focus on individual work in order to ensure the betterments of the ensemble as a unit. This is because each individual is important to the entire body of the

theatrical production so one person's lack of effort can affect an entire show. "The empowerment of the individual results, in turn, in the expectation of effort within the group. Working for the group is expected whether student is in a lead role or a support role. The trust that others will do their work is modeled by the teacher and carried on through the ranks. Allowing individuals to focus more carefully on their own efforts. The ensemble environment of mutual support and responsibility is so ingrained that field notes show that students hold a general expectation of help from whoever is around. Often a question request would be stated allowed for the general group to answer or volunteer to assist. The entire process encourages and expects creativity and leadership from everyone involved – the smallest required students to expect leadership responsibilities and to try to improve their part so that the groups production will benefit" (Seidel 153). Overall theater thrusts you into a social environment. That immersion is a trial for students in order for them to get better. You could say at that moment it's like "sink or swim" in regards to their social development. This immersion forces students in a way to become more comfortable socially. One student from the course study explained, "I think I'm more outgoing because of theater, it sort of bought me out of my shell. You have to work closely with students, strangers when they come to shows, and when they come for tickets, or ushering being on stage – anything. You just have to be real open with people... Theory help me with that" (Seidel 1996). Theatre socially impacts students. Theatre, with it's collaborative mechanics, provides scenarios that help kids applicable skills. "If the building blocks of skills important to effective leadership are seen in the theater program and at the systems in which the theater participants operate are like those found in leadership studies, and the possibility that students can learn leadership and related communication skills from theater exists"(Seidel 1996).

CHAPTER III: THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE HELPS YOUTH DEVELOP EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE.

An integral concept of theater is the ability to harness and express emotions. An actor must understand their emotions in order to truly express how they are feeling on stage. Theater requires one to be emotionally developed and aware. This requirement would be beneficial to children considering that youth are the most emotionally malleable and impressionable. "Research shows that adolescents experience wide fluctuations in their daily emotional states (Larson and Richards, 1994), and learning to manage these emotions is vital to their eventual effectiveness and well-being in adult work, parenting, and other roles (Salovey and Sluyter, 1997; Larson and Brown, 2007). Theater often imitates life so it would be considered a reflective art. "Numerous scholars have argued that emotional development needs to be understood in relation to the real-life cultural contexts in which young people experience emotions" (Larson and Brown, 2007). Theater allows children and youth to navigate their emotions in regards to hypothetical yet relatable real-world situations. Youth are able to work through their developmental emotions in a forgiving non-consequential environment. Let's dive deeper into the emotional impact the theater can have on youth. Theater challenges and requires use to experience an array of emotions. McLaughlin (2000) found that teens in high quality youth programs engage in an "arc of work" that culminates in a final product or event that is subject to evaluation. Such instrumental activities can be expected to elicit emotions associated with the attainment and nonattainment of long-term goals and thus provide youth with opportunities to learn about the causes and outcomes of these types of emotional episodes" (Larson & Brown 2007). The pursuit of getting to an end goal will demand that the youth learn

to manage their emotions. Another impactful feature within theater is the collaborative work that it entails. Working collaboratively toward a goal as another level of demand for emotional knowledge and skills, again with pertinence to preparation for adult employment. "Research shows that many adults lack adequate skills for managing emotions in work groups at their jobs, and that dysfunctional emotional dynamics occur frequently, with negative effects on work satisfaction productivity" (Glisson & James 2002). The information above also implies the emotional development and awareness taught in theater can be translated to other facets of life including the workforce. Theater ensemble groups provide a context in which youth can learn about managing the dynamics of emotions at the different levels including self and group work. It should be noted that the expressive nature of drama may provide youth added opportunities for perspective taking and emotional development. Youth being exposed to different perspectives can also have an impact on their emotional intelligence and development. In the article "emotional development in adolescence: what can be learned from a high school theater program?" Qualitative data was collected over the course of a high school theater production. The participants were between the ages of 14 and 17. The qualitative data collected was to harbor the experiences in the theatrical setting that demonstrated their capacity to actively retain emotional knowledge and to develop strategies for managing emotions. The youth who are using this case study expressed the three main emotional experiences that they had during the course of the show. They gained abstract emotional knowledge, learned to manage negative emotions, and learned to manage positive emotion. "At a basic level, they (students) reported discovering that individuals vary greatly in their experience and expression of emotions" (Larson and Brown 2007). The youth became cognizant of varying experiences, perspectives, and emotions of their peers. Thus, learning how to cooperatively work with a group of emotionally diverse people.

“Drew (student) learned that there were some youth who are volatile and more emotional than others. He also described coming to recognize the differences in emotionality may be authentic or a matter of display. This knowledge included increased awareness of their own emotional patterns” (Larson and Brown 2007). For some of the youth, being exposed to their peers' emotional development made them more self aware of their own. "Furthermore, youth reported gaining knowledge of the underlying dispositions that can account for these differences" (Larson & Brown 2007). Not only were the youth learning that people's emotional patterns differed but, they were also learning why they differed. Multiple students also expressed similar sentiments of character development being a part of their emotional development process. "Shawn described gaining knowledge about emotional personality through exploring his character who was ‘essentially a thief and a liar and robber but also has deep down a heart to care for people’” (Larson and Brown, 2007). Theater allows you to step into someone else's shoes, inhabiting someone else's emotions. In turn this gives you a different perspective of your own emotions in comparison to the character that you are inhabiting. The youth learned how impressionable and influential emotions can be. "Other youth reported learning that stress, criticism, doing well, and the emotions and their characters influenced their own and others' emotions” (Larson & Brown, 2007). Age aside, as people it's important that we learn about the effects of emotions on ourselves and others.

Self-awareness falls under the confines of emotional intelligence. "Additionally, Hughes and Wilson claimed ‘young people report that taking part in youth theater develops their sense of self identity’ and the ‘whole activity of youth theater is focused on providing young people with the skills and resources to develop their initiatives, confidence, ability to express themselves and take risks’”(Kosnik 2014). The realization of identity is fundamental to all

humans in regards to emotional awareness and emotional intelligence. Intrapersonal intelligence is integral to human development as well as social development. Self-exploration is the catalyst for self-awareness, and a theatrical atmosphere is an atmosphere that is prime for self-exploration. Formation of identity of one's emotional development. Character work in theater allows you to develop a better understanding of yourself, who you want to be, even who you don't want to be. "This understanding of self and shaping of identity occurred in multiple ways: portraying characters on stage and noting how those characters were similar to and/or different from themselves; the ability to take chances and risks; and meeting different kinds of people with varying viewpoints" (Kosnik 2014). This allows one to have to develop a more in depth and clear perception of themselves and considering that they are exploring different characters from different perspectives. "By participating in the Music and Theatre Workshop, Nelly applied her energies to developing a new role in the group, which demonstrated her competence and resourcefulness, in spite of her vulnerabilities" (Orjasaeter et al. 2017). While dealing with mental health issues, a patient may only have a negative perception of themselves because only their weaknesses are apparent. Harnessing creativity in an environment that is devoid of judgment helps to unlock positive characteristics that are strengths rather than weaknesses.

The previous paragraph harps on the positive benefits of role playing from the aspect of someone who creates and crafts a character based off of imaginary circumstances. The other use of roleplaying operates within a group setting and focuses on the patients playing characters based off of real people in their lives. This is considered Psychodrama. "The essence is that protagonists, as the clients are known, act out problems using the roles they have in real life and explore ways of moving towards the roles that they would like to have" (Darrington 2). Within the field of psychodrama "surplus reality" is a term that describes the use of role playing in

which other clients may assume the roles of real people in the target client's life. This allows them to confront conflicts and work through trauma, without the consequences of actually having to face their past or the present.

Identity comprises the totality of what makes us who we are; finding identity requires self-exploration, which means that youth should have the privilege of exploring themselves in a judgment free zone. Theater offers this judgment free zone.

I feel that drama is an impactful educational device. Emotional functioning and development are central characteristics and components of educational drama. "Peter Slade (1954) writes that drama is the ideal activity for educating the emotions in schools. Way (1967) describes emotion and its management as a fundamental aspect of educational drama. By "channeling...emotional...energy" he writes, "children are provided with a constructive opportunity for mastering emotion instead of gradually and insidiously becoming mastered by it". Educational drama is a vehicle for the healthy release of emotions. Educational drama is the vehicle through which the student learns to channel and control his or hers emotions. Warren (1995) encourage teachers to respond to challenging emotional behavior from a more proactive, rather than judgmental stance through educational drama. Courtney asserts that drama can achieve behavioral change by transforming 'emotional responses into those relatively adapted to the situation... Then drama and theater provide an adequate education of the emotions.'" (Chasen 2003). Educational drama actively engages emotional functioning in order to facilitate cognitive development within youth. An illustration of the impact of educational drama is within the framework of cycle trauma therapy. "The technique of 'objects, dolls and puppets', in which the individual projects his or her own emotional feelings onto the dramatized experience of the object that he or she creates, facilitates a more 'abstract and distanced' emotional experience"

(Chasen 2003). Role-playing and projection are integral parts of theatrical mechanics that allow youth to properly harness and facilitate their emotions in a healthy way in which they can see the impact of their emotions from a different perspective. "Masks are 'inherently less distancing', as the object representing the emotion becomes a clear and more personal extension of the individual's body and experience. Storytelling helps individuals release emotion and recognize certain aspects of life that are like those of the character in the stories that they create." (Chasen 2003). Dramatizations of specific emotions allows youth to understand the impact of their emotions without having to experience the consequences of emotions that they project. Theater offers the youth an atmosphere that allows them to express real emotions in a real-life yet hypothetical non-consequential matter. "The projective techniques of drama therapy help individuals to understand and manage emotional experience contributors to the field of educational drama note the connection between emotional functioning and learning. "According to Slade, when children gain emotional and physical control through drama, they achieve the best frame of mind for learning. Wayne notes the activation of drama facilitates a balanced use of the physical emotional and intellectual self. In Bolton's theory, objective, scientific concepts become bonded to personal emotional meaning when drama is used for educational and curricular purposes "(Chasen 2003). Trauma requires a harnessing of three different concepts such as emotional awareness, physical awareness, heightened and confident sense of self. There are certain theatrical techniques and exercises that fully immersed youth within the exploration of their emotional boundaries, their ability to express their emotions, and their sense of self. A concept that I want to express more deeply is the impact that educational drama has on literacy. Educational drama has implicit impact on the development of balanced literacy. "Both provide opportunity to project and express personal subjective experience through shared, symbolic,

objective forms to construct new meaning and understanding” (Chasen 2003). A children's artistic experience will dictate their artistic perspective of the information that they're being shown or subjected to. For example, scholars believe that youth acting out a children's book of their reading is just as beneficial as in reading it without him acting it out. “Wagoner writes how Heathcote compares drama to reading in that both establish a need for information and relate personal experience to that of other people. According to Wagner's interpretation of Heathcote's work, ‘readers give life to texts; in this sense, reading is akin to role-playing in a drama, allowing the reader's own subjective world to come into play.’”(Chasen 2003). Allowing the reader to give life to the text exposes the reader to a more lively perspective of the material that they're trying to absorb. Of course, scholars also emphasize and make a connection in regards to the correlation between youth learning speech and reading. "The New Zealand Ministry of education notes that when learning to read, ‘play, talk and make-believe are interwoven. Stories narrated or invented by the child are a kind of play with language, separate from speech, and an essential link between learning to talk and learning to read’”(Chasen 2003). Playwriting or any device within theater is considered another dimension of communication for children. The mechanics of musicals for example depict the severity for theater to be a heightened sense of communication based out of need and desperation. For example, in a musical a character has an objective. They have something that they want. Their emotions are part of an obstacle that may be in the way of getting what they want. They may feel a certain way, and they may not know how to express themselves. Words may not be enough. At that point the only channel of expression for them that will accurately allow them to express the richness of their emotions is song. That is what theater offers to children a channel of communication and expression that doesn't limit them to just words. Even within writing, a theatrical perspective as another layer of communication for

children there is a distinct relationship between drama and writing that impacts children. “Sheila Robbie explores the relationship between drama and writing and states, “at the heart of dramatic meaning – making is, in effect, a search for script for new thinking and learning’ (Warren,1995). The concept of interpretation is what adds another communicative element to writing that promotes the action of exploration artistically within children. Most dramatic writing conveys meaning instantaneously. The foundation of communication, oral language, is a basic component of educational drama. Theater encapsulates requirements for reading, writing and speaking which exercises a child’s ability to do all those things. The course the common saying goes practice makes perfect.

CHAPTER IV: THEATRE HELPS KIDS WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIFE SKILLS

In the dissertation "Former students' perceptions of how theater impacted life skills and psychological needs", Tia Shaffer Cowart deep dives into the impact that theater had on her self development and life skills from the perspective of her being a former theater student. "From a very young age it was evident that I had a great deal of academic and artistic potential. In both church and school, I was a singer, orator and writer. However, it was not until enrolling in the theater program in high school that I truly began to evolve" (Shaffer, 2016). The ultimate goal of this study was to investigate how theater impacted life skills and psychological needs in participants who are teens and as adults. The author of this dissertation concentrated on life skills that would be considered soft skills in the corporate workforce. In the workforce when employers are looking for employees, they often ask what soft skills and hard skills the employees possess. Hard skills are in reference to tangible abilities such as the ability to weld, work well with spreadsheets, operate machinery. Soft skills refer to more social intangible abilities. For the purpose of this study, life skills are generally defined as the ability to cope with the challenges and stresses of life (dictionary.com, n,d), for example: (a) work ethic; (B) etiquette; (C) listening skills; (D) creativity; (E) cooperation; (F) communication; (G) problem solving; and (H) time management. Researchers say that life skills are needed to help students become productive members of society. Theater programs often include activities that challenge the development of the life skills listed previously. "According to Ruppert (2006), previous studies suggested that theater education impacted student self-esteem, overall academic performance and motivation"(Shaffer, 29). The abilities to properly express and interpret thoughts are skills that are paramount in life. "The DICE consortium (2010) found that theater

education impacts competence of ‘communication in the mother tongue’ which they defined in this way: ‘communication in the mother tongue is the ability to express and interpret thoughts, feelings and facts in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and to interact linguistically in inappropriate way in the full range of societal and cultural contexts – education and training, work, home, leisure, according to their specific needs and circumstances”(Shaffer, 2016). The notion of "communication in the mother tongue" is essentially a major skill that will allow students to thrive in a diverse set of contexts. Another imperative life skill that theater helps with is the ability to learn. "One participant recalled that whenever students ask questions the teacher would simply repeat the question back. This forced the student to think independently and to come to their own conclusions" (DICE consortium 2010). Learning to learn pertains to gaining processes, knowledge and skills. There is even a relationship between theater and the development of literacy skills. "Theater can aid students in understanding stories, comprehending what they read and in writing on various topics. For example, reading teachers can read stories to students in a dramatic fashion. A recent study found that allowing pre-kindergartners to act out their favorite stories help them to find greater meaning in the stories and motivated them to learn”(Arts Education Partnership, 2012a). The information cited above harps on the importance of comprehension, not just literacy. A study by Sherry DuPont stated that children involved in acting out what they read had a better understanding of the literature. There is more substantial research that supports the claim that theater impacts cognition and life skills. Theater pedagogy techniques positively impact motivation, students attention span\focus, creativity and cuts back on psychological stress" (Shaffer, 2016). Another important skill that allows students to survive their everyday lives is the skill of cognition. Lehman (2008), an arts education advocate, asserted that learning artistic

modes of problem solving evokes expressive, analytical, creative, and developmental tools humans need to deal with real-life situations. He also argued that arts education sharpens the mind so that youth can make decisions where there is no definite right or wrong answer. Shaffer states how Educators are now starting to take note of how valuable of a teaching tool theatre is in regards to preparing their students for the real world.

In Craig Kosnik's dissertation he interviews students with regards to how theatre translated into their everyday lives across 4 concepts; Organizational, social, self, and artistic. Three students that he interviewed common out ensemble work helped with their time management skills. "Helen briefly commented: 'I think because of crazy rehearsal and stuff it helped me balance my time'" (Kosnik 2014). Working on a show with the theatrical ensemble requires one to be punctual, disciplined, and organized. When you join ensemble the focus no longer is on you your importance diminishes in a way. You are now considered a part of the unit. This means that the obligation to do your very best, to work your very hardest, and to even be to rehearsal on time, is no longer an obligation to just yourself but it's also an obligation to your fellow ensemble members. This notion requires a sense of responsibility, reliability, and discipline. Theater is a combination of different skills. When you or children are immersed within a craft that exercises different skills, they realize their strengths and weaknesses. These realizations mold the vision of what they would possibly want to do as a career in the future. "Rose (student) mentioned how theater has helped her in pursuing a career in animation: I remember, in my beginning animation classes, they were like, we recommend you go into acting classes, and I was like "what?!" I thought I just left that? I thought that I had to give that up what?" And so, it was really great, when there were like, you are actually the characters, so you're not just drawing, or just not making things move on a piece of paper. You're giving that

thing life. You're making it a part of you, so you got to make it relatable, and you have to give emotion, and you need to make it think. So acting, theater in general, I think it really helps" (Kosnik 2014). It didn't matter if the students in this case study entered a theater related career or not, there theater experience alone could help make them more successful in any career path they chose. Overall theater multiple students and youth so that they are ready for the real world. to get outside of the comfort zone and to become more outgoing. "Mclauchlan found that drama class promotes personal growth and enhances general life skills and students who self-identified as shy claimed that drama helped them become more outgoing"(Kosnik 2014) .Being outgoing and knowing how to navigate social dynamics is an integral part of being in the workforce.

Theater is an implicit unknowing pedagogy class with regards to teaching youth about leadership and how to lead. I want to go into this concept with more depth. Theater teaches youth collaborative leadership and communication skills which in turn allows the youth to develop skills with which they can excel in three areas. Firstly, theater teaches students to work with a diverse group of peers on tasks that may be complex such as a show or a musical. Secondly, students learn to assess themselves and others in order to draw from these observations so that they can improve their own mistakes. Lastly, student learns the important of having a plan in a vision in regards to guiding a group of ensemble members or, in the hypothetical case of the workforce, workers. Theater is an excellent metaphor for leadership. In order to properly and accurately as well as conveniently facilitate the different aspects and roles of the theater, one must have the characteristics of a leader. "Being a leader today involves one in a drama whose outcomes are largely unknown. Leaders have to improvise unavailable plots and scripts and in many cases rewrite the script as the drama unfolds" (Starratt 1993). The theatrical space leadership means being a playwright, a lead actor, stage director, dramaturgy, and a director all

in one. Theater is a theatrical way to explore the human interactions, characteristics, and the mechanics of insoluble work that are of primary concern to a leader. "The concept is not unlike that of having football players study ballet to enhance their agility, or using paintings to teach students concepts of geometric proportion" (Seidel 1991). We use the arts to explore and develop our skills in understanding in ways that are applicable in all areas of life. The dramaturgical lens through which theater allows us to see things may simply be a realistic and accurate perspective on how we should look at social life. So this poses the question, is theater metaphor for life or direct parallel. Seidel lists the concepts and characteristics of dramaturgical life that are apparent within life itself. "Social life itself is dramatic; artists take this dramatic material and shape it by means of a stage performance to bring out and underlying meaning from the dramatic material; subsequently, scholarly analysis of such theatrical performances provide terminology such as plot, scene etc., by which such performances may be examined and evaluated; subsequently social scientists happen upon such terminology and using to examine and evaluate everyday life as reflecting dramatic or theatrical qualities" (Seidel 1991). These are clear theatrical illustrations that highlight the connection between theater and leadership. A majority of theatrical scholars harp on the concept that theater is a reflection of social life. Leaders have a natural tendency to explore the human condition. This allows them to have an upper hand in properly navigating social life within a leadership context. The only way a leader can navigate social life is to learn skills that allow him\her to navigate social dynamics and project competence and confidence. "Within the artistic work of theater, students are able to explore the basic skills of communicating with others such as use of voice, body, and choice of behaviors, combined with a structured exploration of human interactions. The artistic explorations mix with a series of real-life and real-time interactions within a group, in which students must learn to participate

effectively in order to produce theater art. The development of the social skills and leadership skills tend to be will facilitated within the theatrical group atmosphere considering that ensemble work mirrors that of the workplace environment in which these skills would be applicable. I am a product of receiving the theatrical education. My personal experiences dictate my perspective of community within the theater and how it equipped me with skills that I could take was in the workforce. One important concept was the fact that within school the theatrical program that I was enrolled in required freshman and sophomore theater students to take classes in different aspects of theater, whether they were "good at them" or not. Also I was exposed to a diverse set of peers. This meant that I was learning how to navigate learning new skills as well as learning how to navigate interacting with new people which prompted my persistence and social development. "The theater teachers noted in interviews that theater is open to everyone that there are so many different types of work to be done that every student with an interest can 'find a niche,' as one theatre teacher put it. Parents and students both claim that working in theater has expanded the students circles of friends, and that they have a greater number and variety of friends. Some students felt it probable that they would socialize only within a certain circle if not for exposure to many others in theater. Parents express the belief that this work translates to the students being more at ease conducting themselves for the first time with people that they don't know"(Siedel 1991). Immersing children within a group setting emphasizes the importance of networking within the workforce. "Theater relies on its connections with both the school and community at large in order to survive and prosper" (Siedel 1991). This is definitely similar to how it is in the workforce considering that the arising of opportunities based off of building connections and networking. The immersion of youth within the theatrical ensemble is so beneficial because it highlights a highly valuable ability. "The same time, perhaps the most

powerful aspect underlying the effectiveness of the program is the close knit community which it has developed. Nearly learning to create a community in order to facilitate work is, according to leadership scholars, a highly valuable skill”(Seidel 1991). Here at Texas Southern University (the school where I currently reside; where I'm also writing this thesis to graduate from) I have the honor and privilege of being cast as a stage manager for one of the theatrical productions. I was tasked with a set of responsibilities that allowed me to develop my leadership skills. Add to create a sense of community within my actors, delegate things that needed to be done in regards to the show, uphold proper communication between the director and all of the other cast members a part of the show, all while maintaining authority despite the fact that I was stage managing my peers.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

In conclusion, theater imitates life. It is an artistic reflection of human nature from all facets of life whether that be socially physically or emotionally. To embody another life, to create a character requires one to dive into introspection, and this skill and privilege will allow children to develop social awareness. To witness other people's emotional development causes us to take a look at our own; allowing children to witness emotional development of their peers will give them emotional intelligence and emotional awareness in regards to their peers and themselves. It causes us to take a step outside of ourselves in order to explore the different perspectives and interpretations that are brought along by the diverse emotions that we are exposed to within the theatrical atmosphere. Lastly theater is truly a playground for human study and development. This is something that every youth and child should have the honor and privilege to experience. This paper has brought me joy to write because it has allowed me to deeply analyze the different concepts that remind me why I love theater so much. I've been acting since I was in the third grade and ever since then I've learned techniques and concepts that have shaped me into the person that I am today. I have gained the social confidence that has allowed me to be valuable in any social dynamic or situation. Working on shows has taught me persistence and determination that has been transferable for me within my transitions into the workforce. Analyzing the literary works of legendary playwrights such as William Shakespeare, Tennessee Williams, and August Wilson has sharpened my cognitive abilities in order to excel on a collegiate level. Because I learned a lot of these concepts as a youth when I was the most emotionally

malleable and impressionable, they will stick with me. Every child should have the opportunity to be equipped with these tools that will last a lifetime.

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