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Ensemble work in theatre rehearsals : dynamics that shape group cohesion

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**ENSEMBLE WORK IN THEATRE REHEARSALS:
DYNAMICS THAT SHAPE GROUP COHESION**

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Television, Radio, Film, and Theatre

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Erin Shaughnessy Kelly

May 2005

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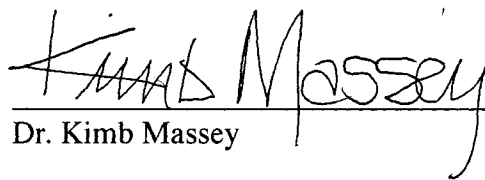
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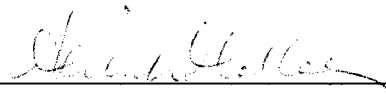
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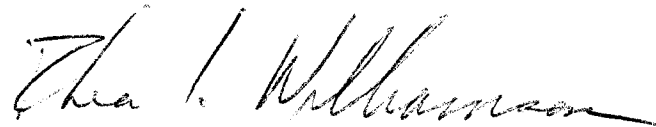


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ABSTRACT

ENSEMBLE WORK IN THEATRE REHEARSALS: DYNAMICS THAT SHAPE GROUP COHESION

By Erin Shaughnessy Kelly

This thesis examines group dynamics within theatre rehearsals. First, it defines rehearsals, and then examines their significance regarding ensemble work and performance preparation. Subsequently, it examines conceptual definitions of group cohesion, and draws from research in artistic settings to create a definition and indicators of group cohesion in a theatre rehearsal setting specifically. The definition and indicators are then applied to the cast of The Laramie Project at San José State University. Cast members' journals, post-production survey responses, and the researcher's participant observations supplied data for examination of group cohesion.

Participants' journals revealed nine themes, seven of which were duplicated in their survey responses. Five of these themes aligned explicitly and three correlated partially with cohesion indicators. The parallelism between the themes and the cohesion indicators demonstrates the positive correlation between the rehearsals and cohesion among cast members.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Groups are a familiar feature in many societal settings such as theatre, sport, therapy, religious and educational settings, and volunteer organizations. Recognition of the prevalence of groups leads many social scientists (e.g., Davis, Mills, Shaw, Steiner, Zander) to recognize the importance of studying groups (qtd. in Carron, Widmeyer, and Brawley 124-125).

One situation where group work is a fundamental component is in theatre settings. Lorenz Kjerbuhl-Petersen asserts that acting is primarily an ensemble art (240) where individuals must learn to work as a team. This collaboration originates in theatre rehearsals (i.e., sessions where members train and practice, often before performing for an audience). Rehearsals are one starting point for artistic creations and performances. They are the scene where artists ranging from directors, to actors, to stage crew, assemble to create designs for presentation. Rehearsals in theatre settings rely on individuals to communicate, gain knowledge, and create through interactions (Newton 39; Strasberg 66). They require patience and cooperation as individuals collectively explore as a group (Franklin 265). Because these actions are important to accomplishments in the theatre, it is relevant and valuable to explore group work in rehearsals further.

While there is a dearth of past research on rehearsal processes (Baker-White 12; McAuley 75), there is literature affirming their importance. Robert Baker White writes:

I want to suggest that in rehearsal lies the theatre's greatest chance to inhabit the space of polysemous potential that much theory prizes, and that

this potential has always been the theatre's special richness, and that this is a great irony, because rehearsal is the unseen, hidden core of the art. (14)

Miriam Franklin states that rehearsals are important to the artistic process because they provide tools with which a player can learn to express ideas and feelings. Rehearsal exercises test concentration, imagination, and emotional expression (4). They are useful to study because constructive training has far-reaching effects. Rehearsals comprehensively affect actors individually; actors' interactions with fellow performers, and production quality. They facilitate and encourage members to explore new territory and share creations with others (Weiner 43), both of which positively influence the final conception and performance.

When rehearsals involve a group of actors, individuals must be able to apply and relate the tools they learn to work with the company. Peter Hall claims, "Creative work in a theatre has always been done by a company" (37). He further asserts that a company with constructive rehearsals "does the best work" and "a potent theatre company asks actors to grow together, learn others' habits and accept that they are dependent on everyone else" (37). When rehearsals call for interpersonal dependence and cooperative group work, the dynamics among group members become critical elements of the rehearsals. Thus, an understanding of group characteristics and interpersonal dynamics within groups in general helps to clarify and provide analysis of important elements of collective work in rehearsals.

Researchers such as Albert Carron, Neil Widmeyer, and Lawrence Brawley assert that group study, or as it is often classified, group-dynamics, represent two processes.

These are *cohesion*, or the preservation of a group, and *locomotion*, the activity by which the group seeks to accomplish its objectives. They suggest that cohesiveness is “a dynamic process which is reflected in the tendency for a group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of its goals and objectives” (124). This is important considering that working in a group can be a demanding assignment. Members must interact, organize, listen, trust, and depend on others to work for the good of the group. These requirements can fuel stress because they remove the control individuals have when they work alone. However, united goals and cooperative work between members who commit to the group can also relieve group member anxiety and augment the experience and the outcome of the work. These are important qualities when group work, such as theatre rehearsals, demands focus and attention from members to work together.

Research on cohesion (i.e., the condition of working or joining together to form a united whole) is significant because it constructively affects individual accomplishments, the dynamics among people, and the productivity and capability of a group. Members of cohesive groups show higher self-esteem, more respect toward others, and greater interpersonal trust (James, and Freed 28). Cohesive groups promote creativity, communication, and cooperation (Festinger, Schachter, and Back 46; Moore 90), which help maintain attendance and create a social support system (Carron, Widmeyer, and Brawley 95; Carless, and De Paola 72). Considering how important the above functions are to the productive functioning of a group, some scientists believe cohesiveness to be the most important group variable, regardless of the nature of the specific group (Golembiewski 8).

The above initial research shows numerous overlapping principles between cohesion and theatre rehearsals. Theatre researchers also give much attention to the principles of cohesiveness as they emphasize the need for a relationship between participants (Brestoff 83), continued attendance (Spolin 361), actors who communicate (Stanislavsky, *An Actor* 185) and who work collectively (Strasberg 66). This shows the relevance of the topic in the theatre rehearsal setting.

While there is a wealth of research addressing cohesion in various settings, such as therapy (Cassity), sport (Carron), and work (Carless, and De Paola), researchers in neither the arts nor the social sciences have extensively addressed it in a theatre rehearsal setting specifically. This absence provides a need for the further research that this thesis will conduct because cohesion research is situation specific. Aiken remarked on the importance of sensitivity to circumstances when measuring group cohesion and noted that principles are not necessarily relevant across disciplines (64). In addition, studies by Carron and Brawley showed that the connection between group resistance to disruption and group cohesion differed according to the type of group sampled (103). Thus, group cohesion may present itself in different ways and have different correlates depending on the type of group considered. Components of cohesion are not necessarily appropriate across genres. For example, posture may be an important component of a military group, yet insignificant in a therapy group.

Given this sensitivity, it is important to discuss the specific situation this thesis will investigate. Starting with an assessment of the literature on theatre rehearsals and clarification of cohesion in that setting, research with an actual theatre rehearsal group

will be conducted. Specifically, artists involved in the rehearsal process of The Laramie Project at San José State University will provide qualitative data that will be investigated. Using this specific play as a vehicle for research, this thesis questions: what is the impact of the rehearsal process on group cohesion among participants and what are the possible implications of cohesion on theatre performance?

The most logical way to approach this research is through the following chapter divisions. The second chapter will provide a review of the literature. It will focus first on theatre examinations to provide a review of previous research and establish relevance of further research. It will then focus on cohesion literature, review research on the definitions and measurements of cohesion, and afterward establish the connection between theatre and cohesion. Subsequently, methodology for the study will be discussed in Chapter Three, followed by the results of the data in Chapter Four. Finally, Chapter Five will draw conclusions from the data and suggest ideas for further research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Theatre Rehearsals

Rehearsals are a familiar element of artistic exploration in ranging settings such as theatre, dance, and opera. Within the theatre setting alone, practitioners describe rehearsals in a variety of ways. Susan Cole discovers metaphors like “dance of creation” (216), “continual collaborative creation” (72), and “mountain-climbing expedition” (227) to describe rehearsals. Robert Baker-White calls them a controlled form of chaos, or a “discontinuous and disjointed directed task” (23), while Robert Newton describes them as a “transformation of a written script into continuous stage action, culminating in actual performance devised to provide an audience with an experience of theatre” (70). Regardless of the specific word choice, the fundamental concepts are consistent. Rehearsals are sessions where individuals can train, explore, practice, and create and make discoveries, often before performing before the public.

Susan Cole investigated theatre preparations by visiting the rehearsals of ten contemporary directors who were working on a variety of theatrical projects, and chronicled the rehearsal experiences. Instead of universal trends or a unified vision, her research gave an enlightening view of rehearsals’ multifaceted nature. Without universal instructions, or exercises that are appropriate for all situations, leaders and participants must be sensitive to new situations and circumstances. “The language of rehearsal is like life itself; it uses words, but also silences, stimuli, parody, laughter, unhappiness, despair, frankness and concealment, activity and slowness, clarity and chaos” (Brook 77).

Eleanor Lyon states that rehearsals must have a balance between detailed preparation and adaptability. She claims they “revolve around a continuum of flexibility and control” (78). Theatre experimentation “is a way of playing around with reality; a means of examining behavior by reordering, exaggerating, fragmenting, recombining, and adumbrating it” (Schechner, Performance 103-104). As such, involved members must be flexible enough to explore, and allow for changing structure, instructions and dynamics. “Rehearsal does not grant truth as something to be captured. Rehearsal grants truth as an activity to be engaged in, as a voyage or journey. Rehearsals move, and their value lies in motion” (Baker-White 24).

As rehearsals continually modify and grow, directors or leaders must also adjust with the journey. Cole observes this phenomenon as she researches various directors and documents their reactions to planning and directing rehearsals. They remark on the necessity of actually working with actual participants and the inadequacy of pre-made plans in the absence of actors. Directors need to explore ideas in rehearsals based on the space and the particulars of a cast (86).

Cole notes director Maria Irene Fornes’ experience of not knowing how an actor should move until she actually sees the actor do it. She attributes this to the fact that composition involves energies that happen between shapes and people (47). Artists cannot compose entirely on paper or in the mind. Similarly, Elizabeth LeCompte affirms the value of working with people. Discussing her rehearsal plans she says, “I can’t make it *not* work in my head. I have to come here [The Performance Garage] and *see* it not work in rehearsal” (qtd. in Cole 122). This shows how the multifaceted nature of

rehearsals requires physical experimentation and begs for continued research.

The above directors not only speak to the advantage of hands-on work in theatre creation, but they also show that each rehearsal experience is unique. For example, exercises or directions that are productive in one theatrical rehearsal will not necessarily be so in another rehearsal. This is useful to consider as directors and participants repeatedly engage in different rehearsal settings. It also suggests the value of continual research because each rehearsal experience is unique, and each, regardless of the focus (theatre, dance, opera,) can teach participants and researchers more about the artistic process.

Despite their prevalence and versatility, rehearsals have not been extensively researched. This dearth may be due in part to what Baker-White calls an atmosphere of privacy that accompanies rehearsals. He states, “In the theatre, actors and directors often like to work in a private environment”(12). Cole notes George Bernard Shaw’s strict policy that “no strangers should be present at rehearsal...Rehearsals are sacredly confidential” (2). Professor Gay McAuley from the Center for Performance Studies, Sydney, concurs that, traditionally, rehearsals have been a private process (75). In theatre studies, researchers often focus on the performance and do not allow time for reflection, analysis, or extended studies. They concentrate on a product in which the rehearsals are only a means to an end (McAuley 77; Sawyer 11).

While some theatre theorists disapprove of research on rehearsals, others do not share a reticence to study them. Lee Strasberg describes a “surprise at how little is known of our actual training and rehearsal procedures in The Group Theatre” (87).

Limited knowledge of rehearsals restricts the amount of previous documentation, but it also calls for investigators to do further research. There are considerable reasons to specifically study theatre rehearsals, because group rehearsals do more than prepare a performance. Rehearsals exist in a variety of settings from theatre to therapy and can greatly affect performers, directors, designers, and observers (Wiener 43). Although there is no final fact or statement to be told or extracted from the account of any rehearsal, there is a profound appreciation of the complexity of the process involved. “What is needed is movement between the rehearsal and the attempt to write it down, film it and talk about it” (McAuley 84).

Addressing groups, Nomi Paynton, a psychotherapist specializing in group analysis, states that group dynamics in the rehearsal process merit further exploration because rehearsals call for thorough interactions between people. She says that individuals often experience high levels of stress and tension during a rehearsal process because of the introduction of new people, feelings of vulnerability, and the amalgamation of individuals’ outside dilemmas (132). Additional investigation of participants’ perception of rehearsals and their effects on the performance may increase understanding of how to make interpersonal exchanges within rehearsals more productive for performance and a positive and stress-free experience during the rehearsal process (141).

Jim Hiley also notes the relevance of group dynamic research in rehearsals:

Criticism sometimes suggests that dramatic production is a linear affair like painting - that a concept is born in an individual’s mind and then

executed under that individual's control. But theatre is social, and vulnerable to environment, timing, personal relationships, fashion and economics. The painter relies on paint, brushes and canvas. In theatre, individuals and groups of people rely intimately and heavily on each other, even though they may not know each other very well. (230-231)

Theatre rehearsals are useful to study because they have value for both intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships generally and also for the performance preparation. First, they have the capacity to shape individual exploration. Rehearsals generate playful, nonjudgmental atmospheres that create a freer, more imaginative mode of self-awareness and exploratory behavior (Spolin 6-7; Wiener 43-44), and allow members to work through the intimidation of change (Frank 62). Baker-White notes that participants can abandon actions, decisions, and experiments in one rehearsal and start fresh the next. They allow actors to "display a normally hidden part of [themselves]" (Schechner, *Performance* 300). This freedom encourages participants to experiment and risk encounters with unfamiliar or untried territory. Such experimentation is necessary to develop artistic creations (54).

Rehearsals prompt participants to utilize their senses more persistently and entirely. Viola Spolin comments that individuals must have direct tactile and visual contact with their surroundings in order to be ready to participate in rehearsal activities (6). This allows participants to use their awareness to absorb their surroundings, adjust to changes, and facilitate communication:

All types of communication, with an imaginary, present or absent object,

require adjustments peculiar to each. We use all of our five senses and all the elements of our inner and outer make-up to communicate. We send out rays and receive them, we use our eyes, facial expression, voice and intonation, hands, fingers, our whole bodies and in every case, we make whatever corresponding adjustments are necessary. (Stanislavsky, *An Actor* 213)

Due to less inhibited self-exploration, rehearsals can subsequently affect the actors' interpersonal interactions, which may in turn the color participants' perception of performance. Rehearsals are not only a place for individuals to express their creativity and share inspirations, but also a place to receive emotional support, release anxieties (Paynton 132), and establish relationships, and stimulate different areas of the body (Wiener 44; Sawyer 12). These relationships allow participants to communicate more directly with others to create a group relationship. Groups of individuals who act, agree, and share together, create strength and release knowledge greater than could any single member (Spolin 38).

Creative exploration promotes an environment of mutual trust and collectivity among members (Baker-White 11). Rehearsals stimulate different areas of the body, help to establish relationships (Wiener 44; Sawyer 12), and allow participants to explore different personalities and reactions to others. This shift from usual social positions promotes cooperation and sharing control, and therefore make rehearsals a useful place to explore group dynamics (Wiener 44).

Group dynamics are a crucial aspect of theatre rehearsals that involve improvisation games. This is important to observe since improvisation is a tool that supplies artistic stimulation and innovation in rehearsals. Improvisational theatre activities require an artistic group relation that involves the talents and energy of many people. Further, improvisational theatre requires close group interactions (Spolin 10). It calls for active listening where players encourage each other to be open to offers and receptive to others' ideas. When people share their ideas, they take a risk, so the group dynamic requires trust that there will be supportive receptiveness (Diamond, and Lefkoff 23-24).

Rehearsals that enhance exploratory behavior, cooperation, and interpersonal exchanges among actors also prepare actors to perform. Baker-White comments, "playwrights from Shakespeare to the present have been acutely aware of how personality and interpersonal relations can affect the growth of a given production" (26-27). Rehearsals with interpersonal relationships teach actors to communicate, which helps them express themselves on stage (Strasberg 83). Rehearsals that train actors to relax and express themselves clearly teach them to maintain concentration during performances. Strasberg declares that a performer's focus helps the audience's concentration (51).

The training and interpersonal support that occur in rehearsals are important because transitioning into performance is not necessarily simple or straightforward. As a performance looms, long rehearsals require the actors' courage and patience to withstand strain and anxiety. They must learn to accept criticism gratefully and gracefully, and

cultivate cooperation as new technical crew and theatre employees arrive.

Eileen Blumenthal studies Joseph Chaikin's the 'Open Theatre', which addresses the blending of private rehearsals with public display and breaking down the conventional barriers between them. Blumenthal quotes, "Performing is sharing... It is giving birth, and the pain and trauma of birth is part of the move from private to public" (58). A strongly connected group helps create a smoother transition. Peter Hall claims that successful rehearsals build a creative company, and that this inspired company is necessary to produce a good performance (38). Thus, rehearsals have the potential to enhance not only the performers' experiences, but also the experience of audience members.

Schechner remarks in his book Between Theatre and Anthropology, that the relationship between performers and spectators is a collaboration. Directing The Performance Group, he addresses the important role audiences occupy. Theatre requires:

an environmental theatre wherein performers are aware of the audience, where space is shared and brought to life by the interaction between performers and spectators - the show itself would lack living yeast and fail to rise. No theatre performance functions detached from its audience. (10)

Schechner claims that spectators are very conscious of when a performance "takes off" (Between Theatre 10). When the performers have touched or stirred the audience, then "some kind of collaboration, collective special theatrical life is born" (Between Theatre 11). This ability to collaborate with the audience must first occur as the performers train and rehearse together. Rehearsals that establish an environment with collaboration create

a foundation of collectivity that the actors can convey in the performance. As a result, collaborative work in rehearsals will enhance the performance experience for both performers and spectators. This knowledge presents significant reason to study the group dynamics of collaborative work in theatre rehearsals.

Cohesion

Researchers have studied the effects of cohesion since the end of the 1800's (Steiner 45). Despite this extended research, and agreement about its importance, there is no clear universally accepted definition, or measurement of the word (Zaccaro, and Lowe 553). Leon Festinger defined cohesiveness of a group "as the resultant of all the forces acting on the members to remain in the group" (274). Andrew Szilagy and Marc Wallace deemed it the common attitudes, behavior, performance and closeness in a group (11). Jerome Frank described it as a member's sense of belongingness to a group or how attractive a group is to its members (63). However, mutual liking between members is not necessary to form a cohesive group (Veeraraghavan, et al. 3). Individuals may have a strong sense of belonging to a group even when there is significant mutual antagonism (Frank 66).

Donelson Forsyth referred to cohesion as the "glue" that bonds members to the group. He noted that cohesive groups share certain characteristics such as member satisfaction, a cooperative and a friendly environment, acknowledgement for accomplishments, higher self-esteem and lower member dropout (31).

Since there are many opinions, settings for applications, and studies, it seems necessary not to limit the definition of cohesion to one single factor, but to adapt a more

multi-dimensional, setting specific definition. Limiting to one factor ignores the possibility of multiple reasons for members' attractions to a group (Escovar, and Sim). One such multi-dimensional definition is Venkatesh Veeraraghavan, Thomas Treadwell, Nicole Lavertue, and V. K. Kumar's assessment of a cohesive group as one that retains its members, interacts and communicates, shows vulnerability, and is consistent with regard to group and individual goals (4).

Researchers also have noted some effects of group cohesion. On one side, Irving Janis discusses how groups that become overly cohesive cut themselves off from others, disregard others' thoughts, and take part in "groupthink" (17). Thus, they can become a problem to managers who want to keep control, or outsiders who want to be included.

There are also many noted positive effects of group cohesion. It improves communication between members (Festinger, Schachter, and Back 46), helps maintain attendance (Carron, Widmeyer, and Brawley 95), and provides a social support system (Carless, and De Paola 72). Frank asserts that group cohesion in therapy groups is significant because it allows members to work through the intimidation of change (62). Secord and Backman further observe that members of cohesive groups communally contribute and accept each others' ideas, and are less likely to be affected negatively by the power and status makeup within the group (126).

Just as there are many definitions of cohesion, there are also many opinions about the best or most accurate way to measure group cohesion. With no precise definition, researchers have developed different ways to measure this elusive dynamic, using items such as type of group or setting to help guide their assessment of cohesion. Items such as

observations and self-report questionnaires have previously calculated cohesion (Festinger, Schachter, and Back 10). Some researchers believe that, similar to the need to define cohesion on multiple levels, so too is it necessary to measure cohesion with a multi-dimensional approach (Gross, and Martin 548). Stephen Zaccaro and Charles Lowe suggest that a multi-dimensional method is helpful so as not to obscure and combine important differences in separate types of cohesion (549). Leon Festinger, Stanley Schachter and Kurt Back study both the interpersonal - the degree to which of positive interpersonal relations in a group, and the task-based – the degree individuals provide for personal attainment of a goal (22).

Carron, Widmeyer, and Brawley developed a multifaceted survey called the “Group Environment Questionnaire” (GEQ). This measured cohesion in sport groups based on an individual’s perception of task involvement, social interactions, a common goal and bonding within the team (248). Their research prompted Sally Carless and Caroline De Paola to conduct further examinations and develop a three-factor model that could be useful in various settings. These factors are (a) members’ commitment to a task, (b) social interactions among group members, and (c) the extent to which individuals see the group as an attractive social group (80).

Working with cohesion in a classroom setting, I will once again note Veeraraghavan et al.’s research, this time measuring cohesion. They created (and revised) the “Group Cohesion Scale,” testing cohesion in a classroom setting (4). With some concepts similar to those of Carless and De Paola, Veeraraghavan et al. assessed items such as group communication, including how freely members share personal

information, and how receptive members are to feedback or criticism; the feelings of unity and closeness between members; agreement or consistency about group and personal goals; and member continuation (4).

Ranging definitions and measurements of cohesion, as well as numerous genres of groups to study, reveal why it is crucial to consider what specific type of group researchers are studying. Lewis Aiken remarked that standardized questionnaires are not necessarily relevant across disciplines (64). Since there is an absence of research on cohesion in theatre rehearsals specifically, an investigation of related art literature provided information for further research. Examining group dynamics of related artistic settings revealed the relevance of studying group work in art settings and allowed for the application of the discoveries to the cast of The Laramie Project.

One constituent of cohesion that plays an important role in artistic groups is collaboration (the act of working together with one or more people in order to achieve a goal). Vera John-Steiner claims that in artistic settings, solo practices are often insufficient to meet the demands and challenges set upon the artists (4). A creative person often faces loneliness, poverty, and continual doubts about his or her abilities (74). John-Steiner further believes that the importance of cooperative work in film, theatre, musical performance, and even painting and poetry is obvious to the casual observer, and that this cooperative network is necessary to a final outcome (4). Collaboration thrives on diverse perspectives and dialogues between people. It succeeds when people with different views give and listen and negotiate while they create a shared vision or outcome. As a result, these collaborations between artists have the potential to help

“form a union” (96) and deepen each others’ contributions by challenging and sharing risks.

With similar opinions to those of John-Steiner, researchers James Bergin; Susan Williams, Alice Tamura, and David Rosen; and Mickie Rosen and Eva Mayro designed artistic projects to test their effects on the group cohesion. Bergin created activities for elementary students and studied the bond (or cohesion) among students. Activities required students to work together, converse, collaborate, and listen to each other. He found that these activities led to a more “cohesive” group (90). Williams, Tamura, and Rosen as well as Rosen and Mayro, claim that the use of structured art tasks directly increase the cohesive nature of a group. The shared artistic experience promotes support, cooperation, and eventually the secure atmosphere necessary to partake in self-disclosure (Williams, Tamura, and Rosen 201; Rosen, and Mayro 144).

Karina Golden researched group cohesion in the artistic setting of poetry therapy by testing whether or not collaborative writing affected cohesion among participants. The results of this experiment were consistent with previous research on poetry therapy and cohesion, which asserted that cohesion increases more in experimental groups than in control groups (133). In other words, group cohesion increased the most when members collaborated on a shared creative project.

Music therapy is another area of creative work in which cohesion plays a role. Mark James and Brenda Freed defined cohesion as group devotion, interpersonal trust, and mutual understanding (28). Working with this definition, they looked at ways group improvisations, group compositions, and creative performances increase cohesion within

a group (30). This is important to note because artists employ such experiences in other areas like theatre rehearsals.

Creative activities like group compositions and improvisations require members to work as a united team (James, and Freed 31). Such a team is more accepting of its members and facilitates greater peer acceptance (Cassity 67). As members collaborate, they have the potential to create an encouraging environment that can then lead to trust among individuals. A group that is trustworthy, supportive and attentive to others allows members to take risks and venture self-disclosures (James, and Freed 31). They risk social rejection when venturing to make creative suggestions. When a group is at the comfort level where members are willing to take risks, it becomes more united (James, and Freed 28; Stockton, and Hulse 189).

Researchers such as Michael Cassity and Robert Moore have studied the relationship between creativity and group cohesion in further capacities. Cassity claims that, when compared to traditional therapy group work, ancillary therapies (such as music and movement therapy) encourage interactions and communications that are more successful within the group (66). They create a more effective, unified group that is more accepting of its own members and of others in general (67). In this way, creativity impacts group dynamics and interpersonal relationships not only in a controlled setting, but also outside the therapy session.

Robert Moore studied ingenuity from another angle by examining the effects of group cohesion on artistic creativity. Akin to previous studies, Moore noted a strong relationship between artistic faculty and cohesion and observed that creativity was a

result of a social process and group interactions (90). The results showed that the group previously established as highly cohesive produced more inventive responses to questions than the less cohesive group (91). Thus, the above experiments show how artistic projects can enhance cohesiveness, and how cohesiveness can boost creativity. While this does not prove causality, it shows the intertwined relationship between artistic faculty and cohesion.

One example of a cohesive group that John-Steiner documents is The Group Theatre. Established in New York in the 1930's, The Group Theatre strove to create and sustain an encouraging and collective troupe even after a play closed (88). Their rehearsals included improvisations that required the actors to listen, support, and attend to each other as they revealed genuine emotions. This sharing stimulated a sense of companionship and unity among the members (89). Rehearsals increased camaraderie and drew actors emotionally closer (Wiener 43). Thus, they are a potential tool to increase the bond or cohesion of the rehearsal group.

Thus far, this chapter has provided a review of the multiple definitions and ways of measuring the elusive concept of group cohesion. It has also discussed several research studies of cohesiveness and examples of groups deemed cohesive. These analyses and examples have focused on group dynamics within creative settings. These focused studies can now be used as resources from which to create a definition of cohesion in an artistic rehearsal setting.

One common thread running through artistic group work that facilitates cohesion is the ability to collaborate effectively (Forsyth 31; Golden 125; John-Steiner 88).

Whether it is in poetry, music, ancillary therapies, or theatre rehearsals, it is important for the group to cooperate and work constructively toward a common goal. This is not important solely for creating a final product, but also for facilitating several more key cohesion-building essentials.

Another critical aspect of cohesion in rehearsals that sets the stage for several more variables is a group that creates a secure environment (Rosen, and Mayro 144; Wiener 43; Williams, Tamura, and Rosen 201). Such a condition allows members to trust one another (James and Freed 28; John-Steiner 127; Wiener 43). With an established trust, members are more likely and willing to remain in the group, communicate thoughts, listen to each other, and give feedback. Further, trust allows individuals to take risks and disclose personal information (James, and Freed 28; John-Steiner 79; Stockton, and Hulse 191; Veeraraghavan et al. 4). These elements all contribute to creating a bond within the rehearsal ensemble.

Therefore, extensive study of cohesion in artistic settings allows the definition of a cohesive group in a rehearsal setting as: a group that has continued attendance, works toward a common goal, is able to create a secure environment that encourages communication – both giving and receiving counsel and allows for interpersonal trust that enables members to take risks and reveal personal observations.

This definition takes into account earlier research on cohesion from the 1950's to the present day. It draws from analyses of group dynamics in a variety of situations, including the narrowed field of artistic genres, to finally pinpoint the specific area of theatre rehearsals. Because the specific lack of research on the rehearsal process required

information to be drawn from related fields to create a definition, I acknowledge the subjectivity involved in this chapter. I could not consider every genre of art, or every example within the areas I did cover. What I did do to limit subjectivity was follow the example of other researchers and make use of several relevant and applicable earlier studies. I obtained information from a selection that is related to my topic yet varied enough to gain a variety of perspectives and reduce one-sidedness. This helps reduce slanted or skewed results and creates a more objective research.

Drawing from the literature on theatre and cohesion, it is now possible to investigate them as they relate to each other. Therefore, the following chapter will note accounts of authorities in theatre research in order to examine the relevance of cohesive elements in theatre specifically.

Cohesion Related to Rehearsals

Characteristics of cohesion are important in theatre rehearsals specifically for numerous reasons. While discussions of theatre practices and concepts do not necessarily use the word cohesion, theatre researchers give a great deal attention to elements related to the above concepts. Referring to Garth Fagan Dance, Fagan says, “My dance company is a family. We’re not related by blood, but we might as well be. It’s a place where there are no holds barred, but underneath criticism, there’s support” (qtd. in Mattingly 44). Harold Clurman discusses the importance of a connection among rehearsal participants, especially when a group has diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, and preconceptions. He says this connection comes when everyone can meet at an established future goal or vision (Brestoff 83). Viola Spolin uses rehearsal games to

facilitate a bond among actors. This bond creates a unified environment where participants want to continue to work and feel like they belong in the group (361). Such are promising fundamentals of cohesion in theatre rehearsals.

In his work with The American Laboratory Theatre, Lee Strasberg notes an emphasis on the ensemble and the significance of collective work among actors (66). Jerzy Grotowski maintains that the ideal goal of work with actors is a “total acceptance of one human being by another” (25). Accordingly, actors must also be utterly willing to open themselves up to another person (25). This reception and openness toward fellow participants highlights the potential for interpersonal interactions in rehearsals. It also suggests the importance of participants’ willingness to recognize and acknowledge the needs of the group and the relevance of examining the group’s cohesiveness.

Miriam Franklin claims that acting is a group enterprise among actors, directors, crew, and audience (4), and that good teamwork helps every play (133). The individuals make up an ensemble that coordinates words and actions to contribute to the rhythm as a whole (265). Richard Schechner maintains that the rehearsal process is designed to coalesce separate elements of actor, writer, designer, and so on into a single united whole. The only place where participants can practice unity is in rehearsals (Between Theatre 250). Grotowski comments that members of the project, “Art as Vehicle,” achieved seamless unity in movement through four years of rehearsals (Repohl 20). The rehearsals were the key to creating that single united poem.

Franklin further says that two important components of rehearsals are loyalty and cooperation. Loyalty is necessary when adversity challenges the success or completion

of the rehearsal, and cooperation ensures that participants work for the good of the play (14). Members show loyalty through continued attendance and participation with other members as they work toward a common goal. Since cohesive groups share the above elements, cohesion is a relevant topic when studying rehearsal groups.

According to Constantine Stanislavsky, rehearsals require a collective effort, with mutual responsibility among members (Building 258). As actors rehearse and go into production together, they must help and depend on each other. Participants must experiment, experience, trust each other, and trust in their discoveries (Hall 50; Stanislavsky, Building 258). Such a feeling of trust is a component not only of rehearsals, but also of a cohesive group. This trust is the foundation for a safe environment of creative exploration.

The quality of trust that a cohesive group creates is practical in Lee Strasberg's work. Strasberg says that there is a therapeutic value in art – especially in the acting profession. This value exists in the actor's ability to share experiences and emotions that are otherwise censored and concealed (140). Rehearsals should be a place where artists are free to reveal personal creativity and ideas (Paynton 132).

Eleanor Lyon asserts that theatre preparation involves “people who are initially strangers in a situation with considerable personal involvement and risk” (75). It requires spontaneity, intimacy, and venturesome exploration (Cole 3). Since this can be an intimidating experience, Strasberg states that actors rehearsing need to feel comfortable and free enough with others to act “silly” (qtd. in Brestoff 115). He encourages an actor to go outside his or her everyday behaviors and “permit a fullness and vividness of

expression which he or she rarely indulges in except in what I call the private moment” (Strasberg 143). Asking an actor to share a “private moment,” or personal discovery, with others risks embarrassment and requires an environment with interpersonal trust among group members.

Quintero also discusses a connection between actors and rehearsal dynamics.

Addressing rehearsals, he says:

This most frightening and miraculous process can only happen within a group where mutual dependency and loyalty to a common goal create a feeling of solidarity against the pressure of outside forces. Most crucial, director and actors have to work together over and over again until they find that they have developed a private language, a connection unmarred by fears...(23)

Without actually using the word “cohesion,” this statement underscores the importance of several elements of a cohesive group. The loyalty, dependency, and abandonment of fears Quintero discusses are elements that help create a cohesive group in any setting. Because he addresses them in rehearsals specifically, he shows the relevance of examining the two subjects in tandem.

Stanislavsky emphasizes the importance of communication among actors (An Actor 185). While his observations focus on communication among characters acting on stage, the ability to perform this communication originates before the performance. In order for actors to effectively converse on stage, they need to learn to communicate off stage in rehearsals. The interchange can develop through discussion or an exchange of

thoughts and feelings. Actors must listen to other actors and thus learn from what others verbalize. Actors must learn to absorb the words and thoughts of their partners, first off stage, and then apply the principles on stage (An Actor 189-190). Because cohesion calls for individuals to both give and receive in conversation, it is an applicable concept in rehearsals.

Participants need the communication and support to feel comfortable enough to disclose their insights. Jerzy Grotowski says individuals must have the courage to be themselves and not to hide. His objective is to break down social roles so that the actors and spectators alike can reach a true self-realization. Thus, the purpose of rehearsals is to encourage actors to explore themselves creatively (Grotowski 21). This can be a terrifying task and requires dedication from participants. A cohesive environment is one that realizes commitment and willingness to risk.

The communicative ability of a rehearsal group is also critical to performance. Robert Newton asserts that there is an important connection among creativity, interpersonal interactions, and performance quality. He claims that relationships among members in rehearsals play a vital role in creation (39). The art of acting is first a collective art. “Thus, not only must an individual adapt and transform to forms contrary to his or her own person, but also all fellow actors must hand in hand appear all together as a single poem, in which part is joined to part, member to member” (Kjerbuhl-Petersen 240). When members join in a single purpose, the performance can develop and evolve.

Stanislavsky claims that everyone is a co-creator of the play, and thus important to the performance. If the staff is unfriendly and actors are uninvolved, then it hurts the

joint effort of everyone. “It spoils the performance and the theatre loses its artistic and educational significance... The joint effort begins in rehearsals and continues through performances. A bad rehearsal does harm, which prevents actors from conveying the thoughts and messages of the playwright” (Building 259). When actors cannot successfully express the concepts of the playwright, then they fall short of the purpose of performing the play.

In An Actor Prepares, Stanislavsky teaches the relevance of human interchanges. He asserts that if actors refuse to become acquainted, or exchange thoughts and feelings, then there would be no reason for a spectator to come to the theatre at all. The spectators would not get what they came for – which is to sense emotions and discover others’ thoughts about the play. On the other hand, Stanislavsky says that when the audience witnesses emotional and intellectual exchanges of feelings, they get excited. Spectators can understand and indirectly participate when the intercourse continues among actors (185). Actors can only provide such exchanges if they can communicate both on stage and off stage in rehearsals. They learn to do this in a trusting and supportive environment. Therefore, the afore mentioned research provides a connection among cohesive elements, theatre rehearsals, and subsequent performances. These connections show the relevance and significance of evaluating cohesive qualities and theatre rehearsals, and validate it as a topic of further research. Given this established connection, the next phase of this thesis explains how this further research was conducted.

Chapter Three: Methodology

To study the effects of rehearsal exercises on group cohesion in a rehearsal group, initial research of theatre theorists and group cohesion was performed and to gain a clear understanding of available literature. The meanings and consequences of rehearsals were discussed to illustrate why they are valuable to research. Then reported observations, experimentations, and assertion of acknowledged theatre theorists were presented to better understand previously recognized information. This allowed for an understanding of the topic and provided guide for an extension of former research.

Subsequently, the position of cohesion in theatre rehearsals specifically was investigated. While the absence of cohesion research in theatre established a need for more exploration, it also required an examination of related artistic fields to learn details and arguments. As a starting point, the basic and nearly universal definition of “group cohesiveness” as a “bond” between group members was assigned. While this definition is incomplete, it is relevant across disciplines and serves as a temporary base from which to look at other research.

Starting with this general definition, research addressing relationships among members of different groups such as music therapy, poetry therapy, and theatre groups, and acknowledged artist collaborations involving creative partnerships was prepared. In order to look at cohesion from varied approaches, a partnership or group that remained together ten years or more was defined as cohesive. This allowed the group components to be considered those that create or enhance cohesion. This documentation of

overlapping group principles that affected the relationships and dynamics within the various artistic groups created a situation-specific definition of cohesion in theatre rehearsal groups. This situation-specific definition of a cohesive group in a rehearsal setting is a group that has continued attendance, works toward a common goal, is able to create a secure environment that encourages communication – both giving and receiving counsel and allows for interpersonal trust that enables members to take risks and reveal personal observations.

After this definition of cohesion in a rehearsal setting was established, work with an actual rehearsal group, including observations and participation in exercises was performed to gain first hand information and experience of rehearsals. This research included a collaboration with the director, Gwen Templeton, and actors rehearsing for the play The Laramie Project at San José State University. Susan Cole notes that, “observing rehearsals is a delicate undertaking; it can be perceived as an intrusion. But it [observation] is necessary to document collaborative creation of rehearsal” (3). Working with an actual rehearsal group helped to establish the information from the rehearsal group as genuine and less manipulated.

While this research could apply to any theatre rehearsal group, this particular group was chosen for several reasons. First, San José State University did indeed perform the play The Laramie Project, which provided a subject. Second, while the university setting limited the age range of this rehearsal group, the culturally mixed makeup of the locale offered the possibility for an ethnically diverse group of actors to study. In addition, Ms. Templeton, as well as the faculty at San Jose State University,

gave permission to work with the group and provided support and consultation. The timeline for research was established, reasonable, and feasible.

Actors involved in The Laramie Project were a fundamental element in the research. The director informed the actors that they were invited to become involved in thesis research if they wished to participate. They were told that, if they chose to participate, journals they would keep throughout the rehearsal process as a requirement of the play would be used as data for research. They knew that their identity would be protected and would not appear anywhere in the research, so participants could write without inhibitions. No one was coerced or pressured to participate and only those who desired to be involved and signed permission forms stating their consent were included in this project.

Ethnographic observational research was conducted, and I played a role as a participant-observer. Ethnography is a methodology researchers use to describe peoples' patterns of communication and interactions in particular social contexts (Frey, et al. 315). The most common goal of ethnographic observers is to describe how people conduct themselves in particular settings – in this case, a rehearsal setting. Rather than try to generate universal theories of human behavior, ethnographic research provides an understanding of a specific event or occurrence (Gehart-Brooks, and Lyle 60). It focuses on the lived experience of participants who provide information through verbal descriptions and journals (de Laine 151; Moustakas 39).

This study utilized qualitative methodology and a narrative format in order to provide a rich description and detailed analysis of participants' experiences. This format

is preferred when exploring such complex experiences like human interactions (Gehart-Brooks, and Lyle 60). It also generates research results that are expressed in a common language that other researchers can universally understand.

As a participant-observer, I functioned as both a participant and an observer with the members of the rehearsal process (Frey, et al. 255). This allowed me to be as completely involved as possible in a social situation in which people knew they were being studied. Participation provides first-hand knowledge of the situation (Frey, et al. 268), which I supplemented with observations and data from journals and surveys provided by the participants. Such physical participation is a significant ethnographic research tool. Yvonne Daniel comments on the significance of this participant-observer approach in her own work. In order to learn about Cuban dance and Cuban culture, she took part in Cuban dances as a participant-observer. She asserts that it is by dancing that one can fully understand dance. She then supplements this experience with questionnaires and interviews with the dancers to accumulate a basic understanding of the dance (Daniel 21). Similarly, I more thoroughly understood the rehearsal process by personally experiencing it. While this method must recognize an element of restricted objectivity, it also allows for a study with more comprehensive research opportunities.

Robert Desjarlais claims that research which privileges “the linguistic, the discursive, and the cognized over the visceral and the tacit” (29) is to blame for researchers overlooking bodily experience in fieldwork. “Experiencing participation” (Ots 134) is a necessary move beyond observing living bodies and allows for a more “informed and humanly sensitive understanding of other visual, musical, poetic, and

choreographic systems” (Feld 22). Therefore, through participation in the rehearsals, I experienced the group dynamics on a deeper level and was better able to analyze and communicate the results of the research, even when it differed from my own experience.

It is important to acknowledge the possible limitations of participant research as well. Favret-Saada questions the meaning of a researcher’s experience in a field (190). Sabina Magliocco writes that on one hand, it is risky to assume that one’s own experience is the same as that of others. On the other hand, Magliocco claims that “assuming that cultural experiences create such vast gulfs between human beings that any mutual understanding is elusive at best creates a situation that erases shared aspects of humanity between subject and object” (17), which ultimately confines research endeavors. Ultimately, Magliocco asserts that such participant-observation allows the researcher to relate experiences more coherently to other readers (17).

Third-party data was gathered for this thesis from several sources. One source was video-recordings of various stages of The Laramie Project rehearsal process, such as “ensemble building” exercises, blocking, and show run-throughs. Notes taken on these as well as on real-time observation of rehearsals provided further data. After the show’s completion, participants’ journal accounts of rehearsals were collected. (See Appendix A for the journal assignment as per the course syllabus.) Finally, participants completed a brief exit survey after the show’s completion. This survey, which included open-ended questions, was distributed after participants turned in their journals. (See Appendix B for attached survey.)

To analyze the data, the situation-specific definition of group cohesion previously established was employed to create indicators for group cohesion in rehearsals, and evaluate third party data observation. Because the definition of cohesion in a rehearsal setting largely concerns interpersonal communication, related communication research was employed to create and assess indicators.

Components of interpersonal communication include space, gesture, intimacy, self-disclosure, and feedback (Klinger-Vartabedian 69). Duran claims that proficient communication requires the ability to perceive socio-interpersonal relationships and articulate ideas and feelings coherently (256). It also calls for capable listening skills and the ability to express empathy toward others. Examples of ways to demonstrate empathy are to give attention to the speaker, keep eye contact, and acknowledge that speaker's words by head nods (254). Individuals also communicate when they share personal observations. Lawrence Hosman and Charles Tardy observe that there is a positive correlation between self-disclosure and unity among communicators (20). While this can augment conversation, revealing personal information also increases one's vulnerability, and thus requires a trusting relationship and situation (28).

Drawing from this research, this thesis assigns indicators of cohesiveness to the presence or absence of continued attendance, participation in group discussions, disclosing individual reactions (Veeraraghavan et al. 4), verbal responses to others thoughts, confirmative noises (um humm, etc.), eye contact with other participants, physically leaning into the group, head nods, and smooth interchanges (Duran 254).

Tentative indicators in journal entries and surveys are the mentioning or lack of mentioning a trusting and safe environment, satisfaction collaborating with others (Forsyth 31), feeling free enough to explore new activities and disclose personal reactions to them (Secord and Backman 126), others' verbal responses to the exercise or to the discussion (Duran 254), and feelings of group satisfaction (Forsyth 31).

Using the above indicators, the level of cohesion the participants in The Laramie Project reached during the rehearsal process was evaluated by noting reoccurring themes in the journals and surveys and determining whether they aligned with the cohesion indicators. Further, the evaluation considered possible implications of cohesion (or lack thereof) for individuals, group work, and subsequent performance preparation.

Chapter Four: Exercises and Results

The rehearsals for The Laramie Project included a variety of exercises in which the actors participated. As actors kept journal accounts of their rehearsal experiences, they wrote about their reactions to these exercises. Therefore, descriptions of each of the exercises and abbreviations for the titles are provided below to clarify later results.

Exercise Descriptions

Dancing in the Dark (Dance/Dark)

This exercise was an hour-long movement exploration. With the lights dim and a mixture of different types of music, the director instructed the cast to start dancing as they would “at home alone in your bedroom.” Participants had the freedom to move in any way, but they were required to keep moving. The director then gave instructions to focus movements from specific areas of the body such as the “solar plexus, the fingers, the head, and the pelvis.” The next portion of the exercise asked participants to find a partner and dance with him or her while connecting first through the hands, and then other body parts such as knees, head, and back. Following this, pairs partnered with other duos to make groups of four, and explored movement while staying connected to the other bodies through different body parts. This continued with groups becoming clusters of eight and finally an assembly of the entire cast. With the entire cast in physical contact, the director gave further movement instructions, led the group in visualizations, and finally separated the group at the conclusion.

One Beat

Standing in a circle facing inward, one person created a movement and a sound that lasted for a moment, or a beat. After the person completed his or her movement and vocalization, the rest of the participants in the circle repeated them together in unison. This pattern continued around the circle until everyone had a turn to create his or her own one beat sound movement.

Metamorphosis

Metamorphosis placed all participants standing in a circle facing in toward each other. It started when one volunteer entered the circle and improvised moves and vocal sounds at the same time (this improvisation could include any movement and sound exploration). This person stayed in the center and explored movement and sound until he or she discovered one repeatable gesture and one repeatable sound – a “one beat sound movement.” When the person found this, he or she moved to a person standing along the perimeter of the circle and shared the gesture and sound with the person. This new person slowly mirrored the center person until they synchronized their movements and sounds. Then, the two slowly changed positions and the new person entered the circle. This new person continued the previous person’s gestures and vocals for a moment, and subsequently allowed them to transform until he or she created her own one beat sound movement. This process continued with each person until the final person had a turn in the center. This last person explored gestures and sound like every other member of the

group, but instead of presenting his or her work with another person, she sat down after he or she designed a personal one beat sound movement.

Tao Breath

The Tao breath started every rehearsal. It required the cast to stand in a circle facing in toward the center. Silently, participants made eye contact with each member of the circle to “check in with them and see how they are doing.” Then, as a unit, everyone took in a deep breath, raised their arms above their heads, and let the breath out as their arms came down. This repeated three times.

Blind

Leading the blind started with cast members randomly paring off into groups of two. One person became the first leader and the other the first follower. The exercise required the follower of the pair to close his or her eyes and follow the commands of the leader. Leaders gave verbal directions to their partners to move around the space of the room. Leaders had to keep their partners safe as they instructed their partners to move in a variety of ways. For example, they asked their blind partners to sit in chairs, move chairs, climb up and down stairs, pass through doorways, and run up and down a hallway. The exercise continued for five minutes, at which time the leader/follower roles switched.

Circle Lean

This exercise placed the cast in a tight circle facing inward, with one person in the center. With closed eyes, the center person slowly leaned back into the outstretched arms

of the participants. Slowly, the center person pivoted his or her feet as the cast rotated the person around the circle. After a full rotation, the cast stepped outward so the center person was at a steeper angle under the support of the circle's hands. This continued one final time with the cast even further outward as they passed the center person into the hands of each supporting member of the circled cast.

Abdomen

The abdomen exercise partnered people into groups of two. One person lay on his or her back on the floor and the other sat beside to him or her. The seated person placed his or her hand on the abdomen of the prone partner. The two held eye contact for three continuous minutes, and then reversed roles.

Fallback

Fallback required the cast to stand in two lines facing each other on the ground perpendicular to the base of the stage. The cast bent their arms at the elbow so their forearms were parallel with the floor, and placed them next to the arms of a person in front of them. Then one person stepped on stage with his or her back to the group, called "Are you ready for me?", waited for the cast to respond affirmatively, and then fell backward into the outstretched arms of the cast.

Superman

The Superman exercise asked the cast to stand side by side in a line with their arms bent at the elbow and forearms parallel with the ground. When it was an individual's turn, he or she moved a distance away from the group, ran full speed toward the group and jumped into the air and into the cast's arms.

Results: Journals and Surveys

Two data sets that were analyzed for this thesis. The first included the journals participants wrote throughout the rehearsal process. The second data set contained the responses to the brief exit survey, which participants completed after they submitted their journals and the show concluded. At the top of the survey, participants recorded how many of the total number of rehearsals they attended. This revealed an average attendance of 98.8%. Below the attendance record, the survey listed all of the rehearsal exercises and asked a series of questions regarding the activities. The survey included open-ended questions about the rehearsal process. Interestingly, the same themes emerged in the two data sets; therefore the results are organized by emergent themes rather than by data type.

Nine main themes emerged from the participants' journals, and seven of these were further evidenced in the brief exit surveys. These themes include mention of following: trust, support, safety, cooperation with group work, freedom to participate, communication (giving and receiving), emotional reactions, bonding with others (feelings of family), and possible impact of rehearsals on an audience. (Safety and emotional

responses only appeared in journals). These themes are presented below in hierarchical order according to the frequency of responses. Once the themes were established, they were applied to the previously established cohesion indicators to determine the presence or absence of cohesion within The Laramie Project cast. To protect their privacy, all participants were randomly numbered and will henceforth be referred to by number. For example, Participant 1 will be labeled P 1. Throughout the results, I did not include my own journals as data, so I am not a “P” in the below records.

Trust

Trust was one of the most recurring themes and appeared often in journals. Several elements surrounded the concept of trust as the journal descriptions demonstrated. For example, several participants commented on the effect Circle Lean had on their trust in the group. P 1 noted that she liked giving her trust to the group as they supported her weight. P 2 said the exercise helped everyone to depend on each other. He continued, “I really liked this exercise because it got us all to trust everyone else in the group. I honestly feel like I can trust this group.” P 5 commented that he felt apprehension before his turn in the circle. Once in the circle, however, he felt “at ease” as he believed everyone would physically support him. P 12 also discussed a transformation from fear to confidence, saying, “as I was tossed around, I decided to let go of my fears and kept saying to myself, ‘TRUST THEM!’ It was then when the circle got bigger that I decided to open up, let go, and let the trust happen.” Finally, P 15 understood that this exercise required trust in the cast and said, “I had no problem letting

go. It was a strange sensation, but honestly I could feel the love from everyone in the cast and I knew that they would not let me fall.”

The Blind exercise also tapped into participants’ levels of trust with each other. P 2 worked through fear during this exercise. He stated, “the exercise was really scary at the beginning, but fun at the end. This was because my partner had walked me up and down steps safely and I then felt like I could trust him.” P 5 commented that this exercise was “tough for what little you have to do. The connection I had to have with my partner – if I do this with a different partner every day, the trust and comfort zone would definitely increase.” P 10 worked through initial apprehension to discover, “after a short time, and I probably owe much of this to my partner, I became very dependent on him and confident in him. I stopped instantly at his command and wouldn’t move until he said to. So I did wind up trusting him and actually enjoying not having to be responsible for maneuvering myself.” P 11 stated, “this exercise definitely made me feel that I can trust my cast. I know they wouldn’t want me to fall.” Acting first as a follower and then a leader, P 15 understood the commitment level the follower required. He reacted to the trust his partner put in him as he directed her to run blindly down the hall.

Partners also noted reactions to trust that affected later exercises and rehearsals. P 3 stated, “I’m beginning to realize how important it is to trust one’s fellow actors on stage. If your scene partner does his job (and you know that they will), you’ll be in harmony with them.” After Blind, P 12 asserted, “knowing [his partner] supported me and held my arm when I was about to fall, I felt that I could trust her guidance from that point on.” He later noted his fear anticipating the Superman exercise and how he worked

through the fear. “I thought about what we did the other day with the Fallback exercise – of how I put my trust with them, and how right now, I shouldn’t have a problem. How I should stop thinking and just DO. So, I just...did it. I flew.”

P 13 noted the significance of the group exercises saying, “I totally loved the Blind walk and the circle supporting [Circle Lean] exercises, and think they both helped everyone in the group to trust one another, which will prove to be essential as we continue to work this show as an ensemble.” Realizing the difficult task of trusting a group, P 14 recognized her lack of commitment to “really give all of myself” in the exercises. She later made more of a conscious effort to involve herself because, “these hard workers that surround me deserve for me to give them my trust and for me to accept theirs.” In a later Metamorphosis exercise, she described “wishing them to give into their feelings, to drop their guard, to trust.”

The theme of trust also appeared in participants’ exit surveys. For example, P 2 and P 10 revealed that the rehearsal exercises helped the cast trust each other. P 8 was able to participate in exercises because “I just really trusted that no one would make fun of me.” However, participants clarified that there was a difference between trusting others and trusting oneself. P 5 described, “for some exercises, like Superman, Fallback and Circle Lean, it wasn’t about trusting others, but about trusting myself.” P 14 said, “my desire to run away from the Fallback exercise came from a personal lack of trust. I know the group would catch me, but I was holding onto internal issues. Still, I got up there and I let go. It was worth it.” She later said that the rehearsals helped her “learn that I could trust myself and those around me.”

Support

A second theme that emerged from the data was the feeling of support.

Participants' journals demonstrated supportive feelings in terms of giving encouragement, assistance or comfort to somebody. Participants acknowledged the support of the group in their descriptions of the cast. P 1 noted, "when we played Metamorphosis today, as a whole family we rocked!" P 9 and 11 also referred to the cast as their "family," and P 12 further said that "this is a family that shares a common passion." P15 described a "love" he felt from everyone in the cast and members as "healers" taking care of him.

Participants noted elements of support in rehearsals in several other ways. P 1, P 5, P 10, and P 11 witnessed individuals' efforts and noted those who made great improvements in rehearsals. When he was not feeling well in rehearsal, P 2 noted, "the cast all gave me encouragement and told me not to worry because they were behind me." During the Circle Lean, P 3 noticed "when we all supported one person, the noise of quick shuffling did not help my confidence when I was in the middle. I then tried to be as quiet as possible when supporting others." During the Abdomen exercise, P 5 recalled "I was so trying to tell my partner, 'It's okay, you're doing good' without breaking the stare."

Several participants commented specifically about Metamorphosis. P 7 claimed. "I felt like I really got to know [cast members] through the Metamorphosis exercise and there's a flow and an understanding that makes me feel warm and welcome into this new company." P 9 declared, "we all need to stay connected and stay with one another in

journeys through the Metamorphosis exercise and the play. We all need to take and support our journey together!” P 10 had two distinct reactions to Metamorphosis. The first involved negative observations of cast members failing to support others as they watched the center person with disapproving looks. This reaction changed dramatically as she noticed the progress everyone made by the following day. She said, “I really enjoyed Metamorphosis tonight and everyone was so much cooler about it. The commitment level was right on and everyone was so respectful of each other.”

After responding to her first experience with Metamorphosis with reactions like, “why are they doing that,” and “I am not going to do that,” P 14 realized how judgmental and unhelpful her thoughts were. Conscious of this, during the second Metamorphosis endeavor, she changed her mind-set and “willed them to know it was safe to explore and I was so proud of all of them.” When she was recovering after journeying in the center and sharing her one beat sound movement with another cast member, she tried to “pull myself back together as fast as I could because I wanted to watch [the new center participant]. I wanted to support her and give her my positive energy and thank her. At the end of the night, I hugged her because I had to thank her.”

P 12 remarked on the verbal support he received and offered to others. When he was the leader during Blind, he “felt good supporting [his partner] saying ‘You’re doing great’ or ‘Awesome!’ for she did the same to me.” During the Abdomen exercise he recalled, “for some odd reason I didn’t feel self-conscious of how I was staring at [his partner] or how I looked. I felt accepted. It was as if we were communicating through our eyes – everything’s fine and you’re a cool person.” Later, during the Fallback

exercise, P 12 noted the “amazing feeling of being supported by everyone” when everyone clapped and told him “good job.” He said, “it made it so visible how we love and support each other.” Finally, this participant noted support in later scene work when he felt pressured by the director’s continual corrections. However, he commented, “when the cast verbally cheered me on to fulfill what I was expected to do, that brought a load off of my back, that I should just relax. It is so supportive, I love it!” P 14 concurred with this sentiment saying, “it was so good to see everyone clapping and cheering each other on, especially through the tough times. I hope the cast members who were singled out really feel how supported by the entire cast they are!” Drawing from these experiences, P 12 declared, “never have I experienced and seen a group of people so committed to their craft, and the feelings of acceptance, support and belonging.”

The theme of support also appeared in participants’ exit surveys. For example, P 2 supported cast members by acknowledging their accomplishments. He declared, “I learned that I admired others who went all out [in the exercises].” P 3 observed, “kindness and respect during the entire process greatly improved the atmosphere,” while P 7 discovered, “I learned that the only way to work is with people who do not talk badly about others and who do nothing but give support.” Exercises that he found challenging “went very well because everyone was so comforting.”

Safety

A third reoccurring theme in the data was safety. Journal entries documented safety in rehearsals in terms of experiencing protection from physical and mental harm. They also noted a situation as dependable, steady and responsible. Recording reactions

to the first day of rehearsal exercises, P 1 declared satisfaction in “keeping others safe and bump free.” P 9 claimed, “the balance of the cast created a tight connection with a high level of security.” P 11 noted the way the cast connected as a unit during the Circle Lean, Fallback, and Superman to keep the “center person safe.” He continued, “it is good to feel safe because it allows you to open up.” During Abdomen, P 12 revealed, “I often feel uncomfortable when someone is looking at me for a long time. But, in my partner, staring at her, I felt a sense of comfort.” After Metamorphosis, P 12 expressed a desire to participate again because, “I know I could have been more expressive, knowing it’s a safe environment to explore.” P 14 discussed how the “positive and safe environment” of rehearsals helped her to feel confident enough to try things and explore emotions she could not picture herself doing and expressing outside the rehearsal environment.

Cooperation

Cooperation with group work was a fourth recurring theme throughout journal entries. Journal descriptions demonstrated several elements surrounding the concept of cooperation. Examples of such elements were the act of working with others, sharing responsibilities and achieving a common aim. P 4 commented, “I’m noticing that the tone of this group is very cooperative and not arrogant. There is sincere effort here.” Even though she “felt a generation gap” between cast members, she also noted, “I feel that people are getting along nicely and working in a collaborative way.” P 5 observed that rehearsals required the focus of the entire group, and that “any break in focus loses momentum.” He also discussed the necessity of working as a “molded group” and the joy of watching the “constant improvements going on with the cast.”

Connecting rehearsals to performing, P 7 conveyed a fear that his movements took focus away from others. He declared a need to continue to rehearse to learn how to “steal as little focus from others as possible” while on stage. P 8 noticed during rehearsals how “everyone is trying their hardest to make a good show, and when they don’t follow directions it is frustrating for everyone else.” P 9 noted, “because we are all on stage together at all times, it makes the Metamorphosis game that much more important. We all need to seek one another’s eye contact to insure connections and stay with one another.” P 10 agreed stating, “ I like that everyone is on stage. It makes me feel stronger.” She recollected an experience with Metamorphosis, and stated, “I really appreciated everyone’s focus and concentration.” P 10 also recalled the challenges of working with a group. “I guess a big part of being an actor is dealing with a ton of different people and maturity levels all of the time, some are great and some are challenging.”

P 13 promptly recognized the significance of cooperative group work. He stated, “I felt that today’s rehearsal was quite productive. Determining as a group what message we want the audience to take with them was a great foundation to establish everyone on the same page.” He also noticed:

The group warm – ups that we do in a circle are always a great way to gain focus and get going. It feels like the closer we get to opening, the more focus and energy everyone’s bringing to the table, igniting and encouraging such emotions from pretty much everyone at different times.

P 14 recognized herself giving out “negative energy as a defense mechanism.” She quickly altered her attitude, saying her fellow cast members deserved her commitment. She later recalled a positive experience with Dance/Dark where she allowed herself to explore and experience the energy of the group dancing together.

Cooperative teamwork also appeared in participants’ exit surveys, though in different ways. While P 2 noted, “the Superman and Fallback exercises helped us know that we are all on the same team,” P 1 observed that other exercises displayed a lack of solidarity. “The Tao Breath was extremely important for the cast to drop into the mood needed for the show. I was disappointed when certain cast members would not take this seriously. They didn’t quite understand how important the ensemble was.”

Some participants used rehearsals as a learning experience. P 5 expressed, “I learned how to work for the group, not as an individual. Everyone takes responsibility for any weaknesses in the show. I also learned to play off of other actors and found inspiration in others.” Similarly, P 14 described, “I learned how good it feels to be a part of a team that shares a common goal. I also learned how to grow as an actor and as a person from pushing myself and from the support of the people in the cast.”

Freedom to Participate

A fifth theme that emerged from the data was actors expressing a freedom to explore and participate in activities. Participants’ journals demonstrated feelings of freedom to explore in terms of being able to act, speak, and physically move without undue restriction or fear. P 1 exhibited this quality as she participated in Metamorphosis. She stated, “I was so nervous at first, but as the game progressed, I found myself really

wanting to give 100% effort. Being scared of what people think or their judgments – that’s not helping my growth or performance. Today I received a gesture from [another participant], and I really went with it and it felt great!” P 2 also discussed Metamorphosis, writing, “it’s scary and exciting to see some people go through [their turn in the center], because you just feel absolutely compelled to go in and not to worry because everything will be all right.”

After his exposure to Metamorphosis, P 3 noted a range of reactions. “It showed me that I still have a terrible, agonizing time letting my ego and my self-image gets in the way of taking risks in acting. I guess I still have a long way to go in ridding myself of those inhibitions.” Realizing his limitations and goals, he continued, “I greatly look forward to trying it again.” P 5 and 6 disclosed feelings of fear regarding Metamorphosis and being vulnerable and open in the center. While P 6 said she forced herself to stay in the center, she also said, “I felt really good afterwards, like I was on a sugar high.” P 7 recalled receiving another person’s gesture in the circle and how it affected him. “ When, and I think this is very important, I let myself freely explore the emotion, I became that emotion and I truly felt it deep down inside me. Then I took it and let it push me into wherever I was to be taken. It worked and I experienced a whole range of amazingly intense emotions.”

P 10 reacted positively to the prospect of Metamorphosis until she saw looks on cast members’ faces that she read as judgmental. The second round of the game, however, produced a different reaction. She noted dedication from the cast, which helped her “push through more of a variety in all aspects of sounds and movements, and it was

fun!” Discussing rehearsals in general, P 10 said, “I am impressed with the risks that the actors are beginning to take. It encourages me to stretch. To grow. To Play. Play is the best because letting go, surrendering to instinct and impulse is a high.”

Metamorphosis made P 12 learn about his own tendencies. During the exercise he noticed, “I was performing, rather than expressing. I was being safe, doing emotions and facial expressions that I’m used to doing. I let that keep me from trying new things. As an actor, it made me realize I should explore other feelings and emotions, rather than being intimidated.”

P 13 discussed the rehearsal exercises as a whole and said, “I find myself already more comfortable in this group because of them. Viewing everyone take turns in the middle of the cast circle makes me feel more comfortable and confident for the next time we play.” While P 14 remembered, “not giving all of her self” in early rehearsals, she later was able to release more and declared, “when I let my mind and reactions go, I learn something about myself.” P 10 also said of her emotions, “letting go on Thursday in front of this cast and not having any regrets about doing so, made me really feel comfortable with these wonderful actors. It is a very liberating feeling.”

The theme of freedom to explore also appeared in participants’ exit surveys. Participants noted feelings of free expression to explore in several ways. After Metamorphosis, P 3 acknowledged, “I learned I had much to learn about letting go of my ego.” P 5 said, “I learned to reveal myself and trust others.” Noting the rehearsal exercises overall, P 8 shared, “they helped me be less inhibited. I felt lucky that everyone else shared their emotions.” P 11 discovered new places to explore in her own body. “In

Dance/Dark I released myself to do any kind of movement. I've never banged my head and spun around like a ballerina like that before. Also, Metamorphosis allowed me to make sounds and movements I've never done before. I did this even though it was hard opening up and letting my body and voice do the work." P 12 commented on the exercises as a whole. He declared, "the exercises made us feel comfortable with each other as a cast, and to open up and explore our abilities as actors, and what we are capable of doing."

Communication

Incidents of communication was a sixth continuing theme throughout journal entries. Journal entries documented communication in rehearsals in terms of experiencing exchanges of information between or among individuals, for example, through speech and body language. In addition, communication includes actions such as giving attention, listening and acknowledging others' actions and words, disclosing one's own reactions to others and eye contact. For example, P 4 observed the different experience levels of the cast members and reactions to the serious subject matter of the play. Because of these elements, she stated, "I would love to have more of a debriefing – an emotional one. We could discuss 'How do you feel?' for example. I'm sure other people are feeling the same way."

Responding to Metamorphosis, P 8 became aware of the significance of paying attention to others. After struggling to explore the exercise himself, he observed, "when I really felt something was when I watched other people that really committed to the exercise." P 10 noted a group discussion and said, "I'm excited over the discussion we

had about tolerance. It was great to hear all the different views of the cast.” She later noted the attention of cast members when she delivered her lines in rehearsal. “During the [Character] speech, I really felt like people were listening to me. They were actually making eye contact with me.”

P 11 learned by observing others. She claimed, “I get so much more as I watch others giving their emotions. I start to get goose bumps when it touches me. I get really excited when I see emotions come out.” When it was her turn in the center of *Metamorphosis*, she took what she learned through observations and, “let my body and sound take over.”

Knowing that rehearsals would involve group exercises, P 12 said,

I walked into rehearsals immediately ready to do facial communications with my partner. As always, I was nervous, for I’ve never done anything like this before. Staring into my partner’s eyes, and making myself familiar with her facial features, it made me first feel uncomfortable to think what my partner was thinking of me. As we continued doing the exercise and while I stared into her eyes, I couldn’t help but say to myself over and over again, ‘Don’t think. Just keep looking at her eyes. Communicate.’ Although communication wasn’t through words, the feeling of comfort in her eyes that ‘it’s okay’ expressed a lot.

After this and subsequent exercises, P 12 stated, “I was able to open up and let go. In the end, I saw friends and people who I can open up to, for they share the same passion I do. I’ve never felt that way before, not even with my friends.” After an exercise of

Dance/Dark, P 12 was “amazed at how different I am when I’m dancing like that. I’ve never done or expressed that before when I’m with my other friends.” He noted “how much I opened up to them, and how we share a common passion – how we are a family.” P 12 gained confidence to participate in exercises like Fallback and Dance/Dark.

P 13 responded to communication after Metamorphosis. “The post-exercise discussion definitely helped me figure out exactly what it was all about. It wasn’t until this discussion that I understood exactly in what ways the exercise was more than just movement and sound. Hearing everyone talking about how this was really a venue to explore acting ‘tools’ made me feel more comfortable and confident for the next activity.” In a subsequent Metamorphosis experience, P 13 said, “A key point for me was using how other people spent their time in the middle. I was able to use what I’d seen others use as an advantage in more effectively experiencing emotions.” P 13 communicated with his partner during the Abdomen exercise by giving his partner his complete attention. “This exercise was all about focus, as each of us said afterward, that we forgot about the rest of the room and focused on being engaged and focused on your partner.”

Following a round of Metamorphosis, P 15 recalled:

Someone described feeling drunk during the exercise, and I would have to agree. I felt out-of-body and unsure about all of what I had just explored. The exercise was very powerful because you share something so pure with [cast members]. You let people see your soul. At least that is what I think

happens during the exercise. You share your naked soul if you are staying in the moment and maintaining honesty.

This statement displays the commitment to communication, both giving and receiving, that participants experienced during the exercise.

Communication was also apparent in survey responses. This communication included participants sharing their feelings and reactions to others, and listening to others' input. After disclosing his reactions to an exercise, P 3 wrote, "I noticed that many others in the cast shared my same feelings." Others commented specifically about Metamorphosis. P 5 shared, "I would be very willing to talk about Metamorphosis because it was the most revealing and the most vivid experience I have had. It challenged me to reveal myself." Similarly, P 8 said, "Metamorphosis was great because I got to hear what people were feeling and how I might do the exercise better." P 10 found she wanted to communicate more when she felt uneasy during rehearsals. "Metamorphosis was so uncomfortable that I really wanted to know what everyone else felt and thought." She also reacted to Dance/Dark saying, "Dance/Dark was so bonding that I HAD to talk about it."

A couple cast members also wrote about their fear or anxiety about communicating with others. P 7 wrote about not wanting to have to "admit" that he was scared during Fallback. P 12 felt reactions to Metamorphosis that he only wanted to write in his journal. "I didn't feel so willing to express my reaction for Metamorphosis because I had very personal feelings that I didn't want to share." However, he later

recorded, “I was very willing to listen and respond to peoples’ responses to Dance/Dark because we bonded well enough to listen and respond to the rest of the cast members.”

P 14 used the rehearsal exercises to learn about herself by observing others. She shared, “I thought Dance/Dark was a fabulous way to study people. I wanted to share my reactions. It fascinated me to see how it showed a person’s commitment and work ethic.” She later discussed more specifically why she felt willing to communicate her reactions to the group. “I wanted others in the cast to feel safe and secure and I believed listening and responding to them was a good way to do that.”

Emotional Responses

A seventh theme that emerged from the data was cast members expressing emotional reactions to rehearsal exercises. Several elements surrounded the concept of trust that emerged from the journal descriptions. For example, participants noted strong feelings, sensations or reactions about somebody or something. Participants recorded emotions ranging in intensity, from constructive and optimistic responses to negative and distraught reactions. Several cast members shared reactions of pride in the group. P 1 and P 14 disclosed that they were proud of the cast, while P 10 shared, “I’m so proud to be a part of this show. And I’m so proud of how far we have all come. I just hope that everyone else is proud also.”

P 2 experienced a range of emotions after one day of Metamorphosis. He expressed that the exercise “is now synonymous with terror, apprehension, sorrow, and weirdest of all, absolute mind blowing joy.” P 3 discussed the fear of trusting his partner during Blind. P 4 noted not a single exercise, but the weight of rehearsals overall. She

disclosed feeling overwhelmed from the sadness of the play and wondered if others shared her reaction. P 6 discovered “why I laugh and giggle so often. I laugh to cover discomfort – feelings of social awkwardness.” Responding to Metamorphosis, she stated, “it freaks me out, but I felt really good afterward.”

When P 7 entered into the center of the circle during Metamorphosis, he shared, “I started to feel an inner rage, but instead of exploring it, I jumped to another emotion which was unnatural but comfortable.” After he shared his one beat sound movement with another person and exited the circle, he experienced “a sigh of relief to have gotten out without having to explore my emotion. Next time I don’t want to do that. Next time I need to go in calm and not think about what might happen.”

As P 10 participated in rehearsal exercises, she found them to be “pretty nerve racking.” As she involved herself, however, she learned more about herself. “I used to not care what other people thought about me, but I think I’ve become more vulnerable somehow. My emotions are way more accessible – they sit just below the surface. I want a t-shirt that says ‘It’s okay to cry... I’m an actor!’ So I need to find a balance there.” This concept aligned with many cast members’ reactions to the exercises.

Participating in Dance/Dark and Metamorphosis, P 11 noted feeling “really nervous.” She observed that the exercises evoked “not just one emotion. There were so many of them floating through my head.” After Metamorphosis, she recalled, “I gave out so much emotion of anger and torment. I felt sorry for who I gave it to because I was going crazy. Even after we exchanged emotion, I could still feel the intensity. As I sat

down, my body was hot, I was shaking and it took a few moments for my body to go back to normal.”

P 7 said, “Metamorphosis helped me to find borders on emotion.” P 12 expressed a range of emotions throughout the rehearsal process. He described feeling nervous and uncomfortable undertaking rehearsal exercises that he had never done before. He feared “looking stupid” when he was in the center of a circle or the spotlight of everyone’s attention. When the director was working with actors on their monologues, P 12 said, “I felt so uncomfortable being the one who took the longest time to be corrected.” After describing his reactions, P 12 added, “I CAN take these corrections. I know that this will only make me better. Also, it really helped when the others cheered me on. It really made me feel so much more relaxed.” Rehearsals were a learning process for P 14, which she explained made her emotions “break out in jagged, confusing fragments. I want to hide, but I will break through.” Commenting on exploration in the rehearsal exercises, she described, “It feels a little scary... okay... A LOT scary... but so fun and so worth it!”

Cast members also experienced sensations of frustration with rehearsals. Responding to the survey, P 1 confided, “I was disappointed when certain cast members would not take exercises seriously.” P 10 felt hindered by a scene partner who did not know his lines and spoke too softly for her to hear. P 11 was disappointed when fellow actors broke out of character when they forgot their lines, and felt it was an unnecessary collapse in concentration. She reveals, “I have so much emotion built up in this show, I get so irritated when people don’t practice and employ director notes.” P 15 was

resentful when people were talking backstage during a run-through. He found it distracting and disrespectful to fellow actors.

Bonding

An eighth theme that emerged from the data was a bond among cast members. Participants' journals declared a bond among participants in terms of a link that binds people together in a relationship. It is a connection among group members' involvement with each other, especially with regard to how they communicate, behave and feel toward each other. For example, P 2 appreciated the cast's sensitivity when members immediately noticed he was not feeling confident about his role in the show. "I didn't realize before that moment just how much we had gelled until they noticed that quickly that something was wrong with me." P 7 declared, "every time we do building exercises, I get to grow closer to someone and I feel like if we grow like we are, we'll be a great company. I feel like the cast is definitely really strong."

After rehearsals moved into the theatre, P 10 recalled one night when the cast held a rehearsal back in the original rehearsal space (as opposed to the stage of the theatre). She observed, "in a way it was nice to revisit the Hal Todd [rehearsal room] as that's where we started out. That's where we did Dance/Dark and Metamorphosis, and I think it reminded us of our connection as a cast." P 11 determined that exercises such as the Circle Lean allowed the cast to "connect as a unit." She later noted energy in the group contact portion of Dance/Dark and revealed, "I definitely feel the connection within the circle."

After a rehearsal with Fallback and Dance/Dark, P 12 shared, “I find it amazing how we [the cast] share the passion of the same thing and we have bonded so well.” He later expressed gratitude at being part of “an amazing, committed, unified, I-got-your-back you-got-mine, bonded, and talented cast.” P 15 commented that the rehearsal exercises “strengthen not only ourselves, but ourselves as a cast. I felt very connected even at an early stage of rehearsals.”

The theme of bonding also appeared in survey responses. For example, P 5 felt the benefits of the group bond so clearly that he wished for further exercises during performances.

Without exercises like Metamorphosis and Dance/Dark, the cast would not have melded at all. It would have been hard to build off actors I didn’t think were giving 100%. The exercises helped immensely. I think if Metamorphosis and Dance/Dark were done some time in the middle of the show, we could have held consistent group togetherness, because as a group, we should keep it together.

P 7 concurred that the exercises “brought the cast together” and P 8 said they made him “feel closer to everyone in the cast.” P 12 learned that everyone is “capable of making mistakes, and it made us bond as a cast.” P 13 shared that the exercises “made me feel closer in general to the rest of the cast, and showed me how devoted everyone would be.” Finally, P 11 noted feelings of family throughout the cast. “Every exercise formed the cast as a tribe. The entire cast connected so well, I felt like we were family. I was

comfortable around everyone and didn't care what I did. All the boys were my brothers and the girls my sisters.”

Rehearsal Relevance

A final theme that emerged from journal entries was the relevance of rehearsals. Several participants referred to the significance of the rehearsals beyond the confines of performance preparation. They commented that rehearsals prepared them to understand the characters and the story of the play, which would subsequently leave an impression on viewers. P 10 used rehearsals to make her acting as “honest” as possible. She described, “When we are cohesive as a group, we are going to smash this thing! I hope the audience will feel it in their guts and their hearts. I want to hit them with this play so hard they forget to breath.”

Considering performances, P 11 believed that actors on stage giving their complete focus to fellow actors “will keep the audience glued into the production. The audience will do nothing but look at who's speaking, and I pray that they will get the message coming out of this.” P 15 considered himself “entrusted” with his roles, and noted that he would need to be calm even in the “jumpy energy” of actors and audience members during performances. He later drew from the audience to manage his struggles. “It has been difficult for me to calm myself between scenes, but I think that I was able to ride the audience” during performances.

In their survey responses, participants also referenced the relevance of the exercises to performance and the audience. P 3 noted that the exercises were a good preparation for a performance because “each exercise built trust and I felt more confident

after each one.” After the run of rehearsals, P 11 wrote, “I learned what it takes to become a successful cast. In the end, the show you perform will be successful. The connection among one another was phenomenal and I think the audience could see that on stage.” P 14 commented about the particular nature of this specific show as a group performance and how that affected her attitude. “Since the show needed a strong foundation of an ensemble cast, I think that the exercises were a great way to get that. They made me more committed to my work because it became more about the group rather than just myself. I never wanted to let the group down.”

Finally, in their exit surveys, participants commented on the rehearsal process and its effects on the group that did not fit into a specific theme. For example, P 1 noted how the exercises made her feel exposed. She described, “the Abdomen exercise forced actors to relate for a long period of time - longer than what they feel comfortable with. It forced me to be what I didn’t what to be - vulnerable.” P 14 shared a similar observation:

In Metamorphosis, one is so vulnerable, so out of their comfort zone that they have to talk and share how it was. Most people have never done this and are shocked by their own reactions. Many have never felt so stripped of their ‘masks.’ This helps strip away all the crap people use to cover up their true selves.

Five of the nine themes that emerged in the data sets aligned explicitly with cohesion indicators. The themes of trust and safety align with the indicator “mention of a trusting and safe environment.” The theme cooperation corresponds with the indicator of a “satisfaction collaborating with others.” The freedom to participate theme links with

the indicator “feeling free enough to explore,” while the theme of communication encompasses indicators “participation in group discussions, disclosing individual reactions and verbal responses to others’ thoughts.”

Several themes from journal entries and surveys emerged independent of or moderately related to of cohesion indicators. For example, rehearsal relevance was a unique theme that is detached from the cohesion indicators. While the remaining themes address positions similar to the indicators, they are also distinct. For example, the theme emotional reactions both parallels and deviates from the indicator “group satisfaction.” Journal accounts of “pride within the group” correspond with group satisfaction, but descriptions of fear and awkwardness are independent of the indicator. Similarly, while the theme group bonding relates to a “satisfaction among group members,” it is also a distinct category. The bond that participants discussed in their writing showed a high investment, concern and involvement in the group. Finally, the theme of support relates to the cohesion indicator, “noting and responding to others’ insights.” While participants displayed support with behaviors independent from this indicator of cohesion, such as through physical contact, they also aligned with the indicator as they listened and acknowledged each others’ reactions.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

As artists such as dancers, musicians, and actors train for their respective disciplines, they employ numerous techniques to prepare their minds and bodies. While some of these activities, such as an actor practicing diction, seem logical and directly related to the discipline, other techniques are less obvious in their purpose. They function to develop performances indirectly. For example, Salsa dancers learn percussion instruments to better understand the rhythm their footwork should possess and musicians work on lung capacity to increase breath control. In a similar way, actors participate in rehearsal exercises to prepare for performances. Rehearsal exercises include a variety of procedures and focus on different elements of performance preparation, from voice and diction, to interpersonal relationships and trust. While the activities do not always seem relevant or practical, they are valuable elements of the creative process.

As San Jose State University prepared for a production of The Laramie Project, the director employed several exercises into which the cast immersed itself. Exercises such as, Dance/Dark, Metamorphosis, One Beat, Tao, Blind, Circle Lean, Abdomen, Fallback, and Superman encouraged actors to investigate physical movement. Participants explored their own physicality as well as others' movement discoveries. While these activities did not help the actors learn their lines or blocking on stage, they functioned to prepare participants to communicate and relate to each other: the basis of cohesion. Through journal accounts and survey responses, participants articulated reactions to rehearsal exercises. Nine themes that emerged from the data included trust,

support, safety, cooperation with group work, freedom to participate, communication (giving and receiving), emotional reactions, bonding with others (feelings of family), and possible impact of rehearsals on an audience.

Analysis of the journal and survey themes, as well as my own observations as a participant-observer, visibly illustrated that the rehearsal exercises affected the group cohesion of The Laramie Project cast. Considering the previously established definition of cohesion in a rehearsal setting, the data reported components of group work that correlated specifically with indicators of group cohesion. This congruence between the data and the previously established indicators for cohesiveness demonstrates the correlation between the effect of the show's rehearsals on the cast and cohesion among group members.

One noteworthy indicator of cohesion is group member attendance (Carron, Widmeyer, and Brawley 95; Carless, and De Paola 72). Participants of The Laramie Project acknowledged the importance of attendance by the number of rehearsals they attended. Recording the number of rehearsals they came to, surveys showed that the average attendance rate for the entire cast was 98.8%. Participants further displayed their commitment to attendance as they declared their displeasure about missing a rehearsal. P 4 returned to rehearsals (after missing two) from a vacation and voiced, "I just wanted to get back and act, and get caught up with what I missed." Similarly, P 12 stated, "I don't want to miss a single day because this is such a learning experience."

Another important element of a cohesive group is a trusting safe environment (James, and Freed 28). The journal entries and survey responses as well as personal

observations chronicled participants' reflections on trust and safety. The data documented participants' reactions to how the rehearsal exercises not only required them to trust, but also helped them learn to trust the group. Exercises such as Blind, Circle Lean, Fallback, and Superman required trust because they could only progress if participants believed their fellow actors would keep them protected. Participants worked through visible displays of fear such as body shakes and pensive facial expressions and allowed their belief in the rest of the group to overcome their trepidation. Thus, with each subsequent successful activity, participants' level of trust increased, and allowed individuals to become more involved in later explorations.

Participants also displayed their trust in the group as they ventured to work outside the security of familiarity. Exploring unique exercises such as Abdomen, Metamorphosis, and Dance/Dark were unique experiences for most group members, and required them to step beyond the lines of their everyday behavior. In order to do this, participants had to investigate outside their comfort zone and risk embarrassment as they exposed their emotions to the group. For example, during Metamorphosis, when one participant squawked like an angry primate, he risked others laughing at him. However, when the other participants watched with support and assurance, they displayed the trust and commitment of the group. P 14 said, "as I watched others, I saw how they fully accepted this weird game and it made me want to explore more and give more too." Thus, Metamorphosis exposed the trust and respect among members that Forsyth calls for in a cohesive group (31).

Related to trust, participants also expressed opinions about how safe the environment felt. This safety within the group, especially in the face of intimidation and change, marks an element of cohesion (Frank 62). Before the rehearsal exercises began, the director explained to the cast that the environment was a secure environment in which to explore. Words alone, however, proved insufficient to establish this as true. P 10 shared her reactions after a second exposure to *Metamorphosis*. She explained in the post-exercise discussion, “You [the director] said our rehearsals were a safe place, but they aren’t safe until they show me that they are safe. Tonight definitely showed me this is a safe place.”

Participants successfully created this trusting and safe environment as they encouraged their fellow actors. For example, they helped to create the cohesive element of interpersonal trust (James, and Freed 28) during *Fallback*. Before each person’s turn to fall into the cast’s arms, everyone voiced a strong and assuring, “We’re ready for you.” P 12 noted in his journal the positive affect this had on his confidence level.

When the cast attempted *Superman*, before a participant ran and leaped into the wall of actors, the entire cast cheered and encouraged the person to feel secure. After a turn, the cast then congratulated the person for his or her bravery. This example, along with the journal and survey accounts of feelings of “family,” “love,” and “care,” show the safe environment that is necessary of a cohesive group and present in this rehearsal group.

Another important element of a cohesive group that appeared in rehearsal accounts is cooperative group work. Even when activities required individual

exploration, at some point, they also all required the cast to work together. Cast members noted in journals and surveys, as well as during group discussions, fear, excitement, and advice about working as a group. For example, when one person was afraid that he would be too heavy for the cast to catch in Superman, another alleviated his fear by explaining, “this is not about weight. This is about physics. Instead of one person catching you, your weight will distribute across five or six of us holding you together.” These words describe the way the cast worked together to keep each other safe, which allowed cast members to work through fear and therefore, participate more thoroughly in rehearsals.

During the partnering section of Dance/Dark, individuals cooperated with the director’s instructions and with their partners. They observed instructions and kept in physical contact with their partners in such unusual ways as through heads, elbows, hips, and feet. Despite the out of the ordinary and unfamiliar instructions, cast members complied with instructions, which contributed to the exercise, and thus their fellow actors experiences. As we began the exercise one night, I observed and sensed how ready everyone was to dance as soon as the music began. Then when we moved as a united group, and kept in contact through our hands, backs and buttocks, we moved individually while complementing each other. No one was left out or uninvolved. When we ran in and out of the circle holding hands, it felt so alive, fluid, exciting, invigorating and like everyone was working on the same page. Then, in the last moments of the exercise, when we “waved like kelp” in a tightly packed clump, I could clearly picture what I felt. We were individual unique entities all joined by a common motion. This common

motion was achievable thanks to the readiness of the group to cooperate and work as a band. As Forsyth affirms, researchers observe teamwork and cooperation as trademarks of a cohesive group (31), and cast members' participation in this exercise displayed both the presence and the benefit of this cohesiveness.

An additional element of The Laramie Project rehearsals that aligns with an indicator of group cohesion is the capacity to participate freely in exercises (Secord, and Backman 126). Participants exhibited an initial apprehension and a subsequent abandonment of self-consciousness during One Beat. When the rehearsal process began, participants' gestures and sounds were reserved and cautious. They disclosed in post-exercise discussions that they planned their movements, and noted tendencies to do movements that did not venture beyond their comfort zones. However, as rehearsals progressed, so to did individuals' explorations. Participants experimented with movements foreign to their bodies, and everyone else showed their lack of inhibition by also committing to the gesture. The above openness exhibits the freedom to experiment that helps produce a cohesive group. Since performance preparation requires venturous journeying (Cole 3), the freedom to explore that this cast exhibited allowed for more rewarding and worthwhile rehearsals.

Metamorphosis provided a further example of the cast's willingness to participate, and therefore its cohesion. First, Metamorphosis asked participants to move and behave in extraordinary ways that were atypical of average manners. For example, when in the center of the circle, individuals ran, crawled, punched fists, swung legs, circled their heads, jumped in the air, swept the floor with pelvises, and wrote letters in the air with

noses. They also experimented with sounds as they growled, snorted, gasped, yelled, groaned, and even spouted gibberish.

In addition, participants also moved beyond stereotypical gender constraints. Women showed aggressive, ungraceful, grounded qualities such as flat-footed stomps, upper cut punches, and quick darts across the circle. Men showed vulnerable, elegant, light behaviors such as traveling on relevè, crying, and leaping with full leg extensions. As long as a person was willing to experiment, he or she could carry out any action he or she felt inspired to perform.

Finally, *Metamorphosis* not only asked participants to improvise movements and sounds, but also required actors to use their improvisations to explore emotions. They had to put aside self-consciousness, tap into their feelings and acknowledge them in an atypical and distinctive manner. For example, participants displayed joy by skipping, frustration by grunting and wringing their hands, despair by wailing and heaving, relief by jumping and singing, and fear by rocking on the floor in a tucked position.

The above space investigation, emotional journeys, and movement discoveries in *Metamorphosis* exhibited the willing and uninhibited spirit of the cast. Cast members demonstrated their freedom to participate through their personal discoveries in the center of the circle. They readily stepped out from traditional and universally accepted behavior to embrace the exercise and the rest of the group. This freedom to explore displays a cohesive quality among the group (Secord, and Backman 126). It also provides examples about how this cohesive element furthered the artistic process. It permitted cast members to, as Strasberg promoted, explore with full and brilliant expression (143).

When group members communicated with each other in exercises, they further displayed trust and the presence of cohesion (James, and Freed 28). After individuals created a personal one beat sound movement in One Beat and Metamorphosis, they also had to be able and willing to convey the actions to other people. Since the one beat sound movement expressed that person's state of mind and emotions at that moment, it not only asked him or her to reveal vulnerability, but also to share personal sensations with another person. The communication was possible because the group displayed trust. This cohesive quality allowed individuals to share experiences without the fear of another person judging or disregarding his or her personal experiences. Expressing her reactions, P 14 said, "I considered it an honor when you came to me with your sound and gesture. I felt so privileged that you trusted me to share such an emotional experience."

The movements, gestures, and contact individuals exchanged during exercises were only one component of the group's commitment to communication. After their conclusions, rehearsal exercises prompted further exchanges because everyone wanted to share their reactions to the activities. Such communication among group members further displayed a cohesive quality (Festinger, Schachter, and Back 46; Moore 90). For example, when the director asked if anyone would like to reveal their thoughts, most members of the cast raised their hands. One person expressed his complete confusion and nervousness about the exercise. Another revealed that she felt sort of drunk and out of control, while a third said it was nice to explore moves and sounds that he never would have attempted otherwise. These revelations continued into members' journals as they continued to share reactions of frustration, confusion, thrill, release and excitement to the

activities. This communication augmented the rehearsal process because it allowed ideas and expressions to flow. As Grotowski wrote, when participants are able to share their insights, they can show their true personality, and more completely contribute to the artistic creation (21).

Participants also communicated and displayed cohesiveness as they listened and acknowledged others' observations (Forsyth 31). In response to the statement about feeling out of control, one person said, "I know just what you mean, I had the same feeling." In his journal, P 15 wrote that he shared the same reactions to exercises as another individual. Members also showed their attention with eye contact, head nods, and confirmative noises such as "uh huh," "ah" and "um humm." Through these actions, participants displayed cohesiveness in their willingness and ability to both give and receive ideas. As they listened and acknowledged others, they created a constructive rehearsal environment that was conducive to imaginative investigation and discovery.

As cast members of The Laramie Project plunged into the emotional and stimulating rehearsal exercises, they delved into not only personal exploration, but also the dynamics of the entire ensemble. Noting the definition and indicators of cohesion in a rehearsal setting that this research established previously, the data presents evidence that the rehearsals helped to facilitate group cohesion among the cast. The data, including participants' journals, surveys and this researcher's own observations as a participant-observer, produced numerous correlations between rehearsal accounts and indicators of cohesion.

Rehearsals challenged participants to risk embarrassment as they revealed personal emotions. Participants were capable of the challenge because of the safe and secure environment that surrounded rehearsals. This environment also became trustworthy as participants expressed a belief and dependability within the cast. Rehearsals facilitated communication among participants that required a give and take relationship. Post-activity discussions, as well as words and body language within exercises, exhibited cast members sharing personal reactions and not only listening but also personalizing others ideas by relating them to their own experiences. As they agreed and disagreed with head nods, body language, and facial expressions, participants facilitated communication within the group.

Rehearsal exercises required cooperation, which created an environment that was steady and collaborative. Cast members learned that working as a team made rehearsals more constructive and allowed everyone to “be on the same page” (P 13) and become “focused and strong” (P 10). In the words of P 10 after an exercise of Metamorphosis:

I felt like with a connection like we had tonight, we were so strong. If we were five people joined and connected like this [cast] on one side of a fence, and there were five hundred people on the other side, and we both pushed – our united five would hold their ground and no one could push us down.

The implications of a cohesive relationship among theatre cast members have relevance and value well beyond the singular play The Laramie Project. The value engages individual growth, cast development, and performance quality. Theatre scholars

such as Franklin, Stanislavsky, Schechner, Strasberg, and Clurman all speak to the value of a connection or collaboration between people involved in the theatre. The value of a cohesive group begins, however, with an individual actor. When an actor works with a group that possesses the trustworthy, supportive and communicative characteristics of a cohesive group, the actor works in an environment conducive to self-discovery. For example, P 12 gained the courage to persevere through confusion and frustration about his character because of the cast's encouragement. Their support gave him the energy and the inclination to carry on and continue to learn about acting. This supports Paynton's assertion that rehearsals should be a place where actors are able to explore and reveal personal creativity (132).

Individual actors involved in this cohesive environment were also able to access private emotions (that they could then use on stage), and let them erupt out of their bodies. Strasberg writes about the importance of the capacity to share emotions that individuals normally conceal (140). P 7 noted an evolution in his reactions to rehearsals. Initial exercises made him feel uncomfortable participating and relief when his turn was over. During an activity later in the rehearsal process, however, he wrote, "I let myself freely explore emotions that I truly felt deep down inside me. I let these push me and experience a whole new range of emotions." He experienced what Strasberg encouraged as "indulging in a private moment" (143). He used these emotions to develop and "relate to my characters" with greater dimension. This aligns with Tortsov's teachings about using personal sensations and experiences to infuse an art (Stanislavsky, *An Actor* 200).

The cohesive environment of the rehearsals supported a freedom to explore and helped this actor to tap into his emotions and connect to his character

The effects that the cohesive environment had on individuals subsequently affected the cast as a whole by creating a cooperative company environment. For instance, the cohesiveness of the group allowed P 5 to understand what it means to work as a team, not just as an individual. This is important because, as Franklin asserts, good teamwork helps every play (133). His experience taught him how to find motivation and inspiration from other actors. This realization is important because it provides continual resources in group members.

A cohesive environment allows participants to open themselves up to another person (Grotowski 25), and thus allows for the exchange of ideas and knowledge. In his journal, P 15 discussed, “I was inspired by [a participant] tonight because of how he performed on stage even when he was not talking.” This journal entry displayed how the actor was open to learn by observing fellow actors. P 14 discovered the satisfaction of “working toward a common goal,” and how to grow as a performer because of the support of fellow cast members. Clurman agrees with the relevance of a united goal as he writes that people of all backgrounds can learn to connect with each other when they have a united future goal (Brestoff 83). The open and receptive qualities of a cohesive group ignited the positive effects of the group work in the rehearsal.

Communication among cast members also displayed the group’s cohesion and had an important effect on the members’ work as a company. In his survey, P 12 shared that his willingness to convey his thoughts to others increased because of the “bond”

among cast members. Further, P 14 wrote in her journal that she displayed her support of the rest of the cast by listening and responding to others. A cohesive group encourages actors to feel comfortable enough to share their insights and reactions, which allows them to reach a richer self-assurance (Grotowski 21). This promotes both speaker and listeners to reach for further self-awareness and poise, which enhances rehearsal contributions.

The above effects of group cohesion on a rehearsal group are not only significant to note for rehearsals alone, but also for performance. While research shows that cohesion among group members is beneficial in many different genres, the advantage of cohesion to performance shows why it is pertinent to study in theatre rehearsals specifically.

Elements, such as teamwork striving toward a common goal, security, trust, and communication, which comprise a cohesive group, affect performance as they establish a group relationship in the performance preparation of rehearsals. For example, when the cohesive rehearsal environment helps individuals overcome self-consciousness and fear of embarrassment, it also prepares the person for performance. The person becomes prepared to act and behave in new manners, and thus embraces a greater variety of characters and character qualities.

When the group dynamics create an environment conducive to unhindered discovery, an actor works through frustration and obstacles that hinder performance. Tapping into “personal creativity” (Paynton 132) promotes a more thorough investigation of a play that benefits the performance. Similarly, the emotional commitment that P 7 found during rehearsals later affected his performance. The cohesive elements of support

and freedom to explore allowed the actor to commit to his emotional journey. Cohesively, the rehearsal group showed support and intimacy (Cole 3), which led the actor to risk embarrassment and investigate new sensations (Lyon 75). This exploration created the connection he found to his characters, which produced a persona with additional individualism and personality. Dimensional stage characters, such as these, also add depth and quality to the performance.

The cooperation that comes from a cohesive rehearsal group is another factor that affects the performance quality. In her journal, P 4 addressed the connection between cooperative group work and performance condition. "I think the humanity of the play comes out more each time we work together." P 5 wrote, "as a cast we need to mold together or the play will suffer." These statements address the concept that the cast's goal is not limited to performing the lines, but included bringing to life the story and lives of the characters. The cohesiveness allowed the group to collaborate to create a play with genuine compassion.

In addition, cooperation is important because theatre performances often bring with them an audience of outside forces (Quintero 23). These may serve to enhance or detract from the play, but in any case, actors must be prepared for outside influences. One way to continue under these pressures is to look to fellow actors for reinforcement. A cohesive group supplies the support, trustworthiness and unity a cast needs to survive external influences (Quintero 23).

The communicative ability of a cohesive group is another influence on the quality of a performance. Newton claims that communication advances the creativeness of a

play. He says that interpersonal interactions promote energy and intensity within the performance (39). P 13 disclosed that rehearsal discussions helped him understand the purpose of rehearsal exercises. He used discussions to learn how to participate more effectively in rehearsals, which enhanced his preparation for performances. P 10 benefited from hearing the cast's views about the play's subject matter. She gained awareness for cast members' opinions, which enhanced her understanding about the individuals with whom she shared the stage.

Stanislavsky notes that communication in rehearsals is key because it facilitates exchanges on stage (An Actor 189). These interchanges are significant because they embrace the audience and help them to participate and experience the play more thoroughly (An Actor 185). Thus, when actors rehearse in a cohesive environment that promotes interpersonal communication, they are better equipped to continue the interactions during performances. This subsequently augments the performance quality of the play, and shows the significance of cast members working in a cohesive group environment.

For the purpose of this thesis, research focused on the rehearsal process of the cast preparing for The Laramie Project. The play's cast provided data in the form of journal entries, surveys, and observations regarding the group dynamics of the cast. Specific investigation concentrated on the effect of rehearsals on the presence of cohesion among group members. Because the concepts of cohesion are wide-ranging and dependent on the subject matter, research about artistic settings was gathered in order to determine a definition of cohesion specific to theatre rehearsals. The definition produced indicators

of cohesion that were then applied to The Laramie Project data. This application displayed the presence of cohesion within the rehearsal group. It also presented possible benefits of the cohesion to individual cast members, the group as a whole, and the performance quality of the play. The cohesive environment allowed the ensemble to collaborate and create a supportive, trusting, communicative environment that was conducive to artistic exploration.

While the play The Laramie Project served as a vehicle for this research, future research should not be limited to this specific play. Paynton claims that research on group dynamics of the rehearsal process warrants further exploration (141), and this thesis is one example of research on the cohesiveness of theatre rehearsal groups. Additional research on rehearsal dynamics and the application of cohesion to casts is relevant in different plays and rehearsal groups. Further, this thesis does not claim that the specific rehearsal exercises were the exclusive explanation for, but instead, one source of the noted group cohesion.

Thus, further research would serve to supplement data, and further elucidate the cause and effect of group dynamics in theatre rehearsals. This study found indicators of cohesion, emotional responses and relevance to the audience, that previous literature did not discuss, so further research could expand on this discovery and uncover further information. Future research could combine qualitative and quantitative research to provide an analysis of macro level trends. Since cohesion between rehearsal group members proved to beneficially affect individual development, interpersonal relations

and performance quality, this topic is constructive and has possible implications well beyond the confines of this singular study.

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Appendix A

Journal Assignment

The course syllabus allocated with the production of *The Laramie Project* defined the journal assignment as follows:

“Actors are required to keep an Observation Journal during this rehearsal process. This journal will become a crucial tool in your development as an actor and in the creation of you character. The journal should include two one-page written descriptions of a personal discovery from rehearsal per week. The one-page description of your personal discovery should address your experiences as an actor through the rehearsal process, address you personal experience in acting exercises or while working on assignments.”

Appendix B

Laramie Post Production Survey

Gender: _____ How many of the 29 rehearsals did you attend? _____

Please answer the following questions regarding the rehearsals and rehearsal exercises.
Please note abbreviations used to represent the various ensemble exercises.

DANCE/DARK	=	Dancing in the Dark
METAMORPH	=	Metamorphosis
ONE BEAT	=	One beat sound movement
TAO	=	Tao breath
BLIND	=	Leading a 'blind' partner
CIRCLE LEAN	=	Lean into the arms of circled cast members
ABDOMEN	=	Hand on partner's abdomen with eye contact
FALL BACK	=	Fall backwards from stage into cast's arms
SUPERMAN	=	Outside "Superman" jump in to cast's arms

1. Please choose one exercise and discuss what prompted your level of willingness to participate.

2. Please choose one exercise and discuss what prompted your level of willingness to share your reactions.

3. Please choose one exercise and discuss what prompted your level of willingness to listen and respond.

4. Discuss how the ensemble building exercises affected (if at all) your preparation for the show.

5. What did you learn (if anything) about yourself through the ensemble building exercises?

What did you learn (if anything) about other participants through the ensemble building exercises?

6. Describe any other significant issues you feel were not asked in this questionnaire.

Please place survey in the envelope in The Laramie Project box in the main office

Thank you for your participation!