

THE THEATRE LOBBY EXPERIENCE: THE AUDIENCE'S PERSPECTIVE

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by

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Professor Ruth Brent Tofle

.....for my wife, Barbara and my daughter, Abigail

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# THE THEATRE LOBBY EXPERIENCE: THE AUDIENCE'S PERSPECTIVE

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## ABSTRACT

Theatre designers and historians, cultural historians, and performance theorists have suggested that a theatre lobby may have a significant impact on the theatre-going experience. Despite the theories and assumptions regarding how theatre lobbies may or ought to function, no systematic investigation addressed the question from the audience's perspective until now. What meaning does the audience give to the lobby?

Using the qualitative methodology grounded theory, analysis of directed interviews were collected for this study, and the following theory emerged: An audience member with enough time, space, and awareness encounters a person, an activity or some material goods that seizes his or her attention, resulting in a connection with the static, the public, the private or the performance. Consequently, the audience member experiences an individualized and memorable event experience. Three conditions are required for "attention:" space, time and something or someone compelling to the individual audience member. Under the right conditions, an audience member gives attention to the building, its contents, people, or activities inside. The attention leads to an interaction with some of these various elements, which leads to a memorable lobby experience.

For this study, the lobby was delimited by space and by duration. Space was physical buildings including all interior audience social areas, from the outside entrance of the theatre building to the auditorium, as well as restrooms, the box office, concession stands, and any adjoining rooms. Duration was any time spent in the audience social areas, including prior to the performance, intermission, and after-show activities. From this study, four categories of lobby experiences emerged: a private experience, a public experience, experiencing the static, and performance preparation.

In addition to the resulting theory, this study revealed that the background and training of each respondent affected his or her understanding of the lobby experience.

*Theatre-insiders* are individuals who have knowledge of the production process.

*Theatre-supporters* are those individuals who attend performances but have no significant background or training in theatre. Both types of audience members are important to theatre.

A lobby experience is just one part of a fluid theatre-going experience, which may begin long before the curtain rises. Perhaps it starts when they walk in the front door and encounter the lobby, where they might find services for basic audience functions, purchase tickets, store outer garments, answer nature's call, or imbibe in a drink. The lobby, as the entrance to the building, can be rich in history or decoration, setting a tone for the evening. The lobby can be the start of a significant performance, providing an introduction to what is to be found in the inner sanctum. The lobby may also be the social center of the theatre-going experience, where audience members can visit with old friends or make new ones. The theatre lobby provides humans the opportunity to connect



with others, the past, the present and even the potential. It is possible that any of these connections will lead to a significant and memorable theatre-going experience.

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## CHAPTER 1 – THE PROPOSAL

*The theatrical event viewed as a cultural happening blends the creative process with the experience of that process. The focus of interest becomes the cultural and social contexts that generate the event, intervene in it, tamper with it, and may even ultimately suppress it, transform it or allow the event to survive in time.*  
Vicki Ann Cremona, *Theatrical Events: Borders, Dynamics, Frames*

### Introduction

In this era of mediatized and virtual entertainment, attending a live theatre performance can be a significant event. For some, the theatre-going experience starts with a decision to go to a play and ends when the memory of the event fades. Architect Bonita Roche suggests the theatre-going experience is the performance, which “begins from its first advertisement and continues well past the time the audience has physically left the theater.”<sup>1</sup> For others, the theatre-going experience is what happens on that particular evening, from the arrival at the theatre building to the departure.

In 1958, the French Centre of the International Theatre Institute surveyed well-known, international theatre designers, architects, professors, producers, and theatre managers to explore theatre facades, entrances, and auditoriums. One of the results of this survey was a succinct definition of the purpose of attending live theatre: “It was almost unanimously agreed that the theatre constitutes or ought to constitute an

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<sup>1</sup> Bonita Roche, “Contemporary Theatrical Space: Lobby Design.” (M.Arch. Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1979), 4.

exceptional moment in daily life which tends to take man out of the ordinary run of things and carry him off into a world of make-believe.”<sup>2</sup>

No matter the duration of the theatrical event, many seem to agree that it is a meaningful experience. What may add to the “exceptional moment in [a] daily life,” is a number of supplemental activities linked to the outing. Activities may include dinner or going with a group. Performance theorist Richard Schechner considers the theatre-going experience an assemblage of ritual that includes the arrival at and departure from the theatre:

In all cultures, people “go to” the theatre: they make special times and places for it; and there are special observances, practices, rituals that lead into the performance and away from it. Not only getting to the theatre, but entering the exact precinct where the show is to be performed involves ceremony: ticket-taking, passing through gates, entering in controllable groups, finding a place from which to watch. Ending the show and going away also involves ceremony: applause or some ratification of the conclusion of the formal performance, a wiping away of the reality of the show and a re-establishment of the reality of everyday life.<sup>3</sup>

Even the physical act of going to the theatre requires an effort in terms of travel, parking, and other logistics. The theatre-going experience is a momentous event marked by formal procedures and ceremony, with different rules, dress codes, activities, and meanings for individual audience members. Regardless of the process, however, the results are the same - it is an event.

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<sup>2</sup> Raymond Cogniat, “The Theatre Facade Entrances and Auditorium,” *World Theatre* 7, no. 2 (1958): 91.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Schechner, *Essays on Performance Theory, 1970-1976* (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1977), 122.

Director, playwright, and political activist John McGrath, in *A Good Night Out: Popular Theatre: Audience, Class, and Form*, suggests that the theatre event is not about the private individual, but rather a social group as a whole:

Theatre is the place where the life of a society is shown in public to that society, where that society's assumptions are exhibited and tested, its values are scrutinized, its myths are validated, and its traumas become emblems of reality. It is a public event, and it is about matters of public concern.<sup>4</sup>

In an event in which participants share space and experiences, a 'community' may develop: "It's one of the few places left in America where 500 people can laugh or cry or sigh or breathe – together, side by side, in an acknowledgement of our humanity."<sup>5</sup>

Shared space can lead to shared experiences.

Theatre architect and consultant Martin Bloom suggests the theatre-going experience is about human interaction within a specialized structure:

As an emblem of the culture which spawns it, a theatre is fundamentally a facility for human interaction in which the material of life can be transformed into art. As such, it plays a pivotal role in giving significant shape to experience and should function with the highest possible degree of efficiency. It should allow an audience to observe and react, and it should permit a rehearsed event to take place without distortion. In order for a theatre to fulfill this obligation, it must be capable of bringing spectators and performers together in an intricate interrelationship that can unleash forces that neither side could achieve alone.<sup>6</sup>

Bloom recommends a physical space (theatre building) for human interaction to take place. This space is important, as theatre is about a small group interacting with a large group. Bloom is not the only one to suggest that a theatre building "plays a pivotal role."

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<sup>4</sup> John McGrath, *A Good Night Out: Popular Theatre: Audience, Class, and Form* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1981), 83.

<sup>5</sup> Laura Shamas, "Frontlines: Watching the House," *American Theatre* 7, no. 6 (1990): 4.

<sup>6</sup> Martin Bloom, *Accommodating the Lively Arts: An Architect's View*, 1st ed. (Lynne, NH: SK/Smith and Kraus, 1997), 102.

Henri Schoenmakers also recognizes the need for a public place: “An essential aspect of the theatrical event is the gathering of live human beings, theatre-makers, and audiences, in more or less the same time and space.”<sup>7</sup>

The precise nature of this significant space where theatre occurs varies. In many instances, theatre happens in a structure dedicated to performance events. In a conventional theatre building, it is common to find separate areas for the performers and for the audience, until these two groups meet for the performance.

For clarity in this study, I will use ‘auditorium’ to mean the room in which the performance takes place, particularly the audience’s space from which the performers are observed. The auditorium can include seats or not, depending on the theatre. The auditorium also includes the stage on which the actors perform. The stage does not necessarily have to be raised, or hidden behind a curtain, or have any other conventional lines of demarcation, but rather is the area where the performers act. The ‘backstage’ will be those areas that are not normally exposed to the audience during the course of the performance, including dressing rooms, wings, fly space and orchestra pit.

The area outside of the auditorium and separate from the backstage I label as ‘the lobby,’<sup>8</sup> an area that includes “all the other social areas in the theatre building, notably the stairways and corridors leading from the outside world into the auditorium, the cloakrooms, bars, and restaurants, and the box office.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Henri Schoenmakers, “The Spectator in the Leading Role,” in *New Directions in Theatre Research*, ed. Willmar Sauter (presented at the Proceedings of the XIth FIRT/IFTR Congress, Munksgaard: Institutionen för teater och filmvetenskap, 1990), 15.

<sup>8</sup> I recognize that from an architectural standpoint, I am appropriating a specific term to describe a rather broad and inclusive space. However, a single term will facilitate the reading of this study.

<sup>9</sup> Gay McAuley, *Space in Performance: Making Meaning in the Theatre* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 60.



Theatre designers and historians, cultural historians, and performance theorists have suggested that a theatre lobby may have a significant impact on the theatre-going experience. The lobby has to serve multiple functions: affecting social connections; generating revenue; displaying educational and marketing materials; and most importantly, transitioning the audience from the outside into the world of the play. Chapter Three will explore some of the theories regarding the lobby functions in detail, including architectural theorist Martin Bloom's suggestion that the lobby is the place to prepare the audience for a special occasion; Richard Schechner's proposal that the gathering and dispersing of the audience is as important as the performance to the theatre-going experience; and Marvin Carlson's comparison of the audience's activities in the theatre lobby to the actor's preparation backstage.

### **Justification of the Study**

Regardless of the quantity of material available on how theatre lobbies ought to function or the assumptions about its significance, very little systematic investigation has actually addressed what occurs in the theatre lobby. More specifically, there has been no detailed study of the audience's experience of the theatre lobby. The lobby, a part of the audience's social space, may be integral to the totality of the theatre-going experience. Yet, no one has asked the audience their views on what happens in the lobby. Therefore, I propose to use a qualitative method, grounded theory, to develop an emergent theory about the lobby as seen from the perspective of the audience. My specific exploration focuses on the research question: "What meaning does the audience give to the lobby experience?" The answers to this question I hope will assist theatre-managers and

theatre-makers in learning more about their audiences, and possibly increase their attendance.

Although my research has not uncovered any significant studies exploring the theatre audience in relation to the theatre lobby, scholars have been calling for this kind of inquiry for decades. In her thesis “Contemporary Theatrical Space: Lobby Design,” Architect Bonita Roche calls for research about audiences outside of the auditorium: “This span in time and space must be looked at directly and given a physical form in the correct position if the performance is to be expressed in its total significance.”<sup>10</sup> In 1993, noted theatre architect Ian Mackintosh criticized a lack of research about audience practices, particularly the use of audience space, suggesting an empirical approach to investigation:

How little time is spent in trying to analyze what actually happens when theatrical congress takes place, what has happened when the actor can say, genuinely, to a member of the audience “you were a wonderful audience to play to!” There are many secondary factors – day of the week, price of the ticket, whether the audience dined before, the presence of coach parties, etc. But the primary factor is “place” and if the phenomenon is to be satisfactorily explained, an empirical approach is likely to serve better than theorizing.<sup>11</sup>

McAuley shares Mackintosh’s view that it is important to understand the social aspects of being at the theatre:

Scholarly emphasis on play, production, and performance has tended to downplay the importance of the social experience occurring in the audience space. Spectators go to the theatre to see a performance, but also to participate in a performance of their own.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Roche, “Contemporary Theatrical Space,” 4.

<sup>11</sup> Iain Mackintosh, *Architecture, Actor and Audience* (London: Routledge, 1993), 126.

<sup>12</sup> McAuley, 267.

It is of some consequence that scholars in two separate disciplines, theatre studies and architectural studies, call for research about the audience.

In the late 20th century, a desire to understand the audience increased for some scholars. Borrowing heavily from cinema and television studies, Susan Bennett, Herbert Blau and others<sup>13</sup> developed reception theories to explore the theatre audience's response, focusing on the performance and the impact of the performance on the audience.

However, this research is confined to what happens within the auditorium. Reception theorists have not explored other audience social areas.

Performance theorist Marvin Carlson suggests a study of audience pre-show expectations to understand better the effect of the performance on the audience:

The comparatively small amount of reception research carried out in the theatre today has been developed almost entirely through interviews and questionnaires seeking to establish what an audience thought or felt about a performance after its completion. Almost no organized work has been done on the other end of this process - what an audience brings to the theatre in the way of expectations, assumptions, and strategies.<sup>14</sup>

In 1994, theatre scholar Stacy Wolf conducted an ethnographic study of theatre audiences for her dissertation "Theatre as Social Practice." Asserting that "the audience may be the most frequently invoked yet least understood element of a performance event,"<sup>15</sup> Wolf compared the producer's expectations as revealed by location,

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<sup>13</sup> See Susan Bennett, *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1997); Herbert Blau, *The Audience* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990); and Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>14</sup> Marvin A. Carlson, "Theatre Audiences and the Reading of Performance," in *Interpreting the Theatrical Past: Essays in the Historiography of Performance*, ed. Thomas Postlewait and Bruce A. McConachie, 1st ed. (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1989), 97.

<sup>15</sup> Stacy Ellen Wolf, "Theatre as Social Practice: Local Ethnographies of Audience Reception" (Ph.D. Diss., University of Wisconsin - Madison, 1994), 3.

architecture, and other published materials to the audience's response as revealed by discussions, observations and eavesdropping. Wolf theorized that the theatre-going experience is about context:

The ways in which audiences use theatre are often much more about context than about the performance text, and much more about social practices than about aesthetic or artistic ones. Why people go to certain theatres, whom they go with, what happens before and after and other seemingly social concerns are fundamental aspects of theatre.<sup>16</sup>

Although Wolf's research focused on the audience's reception compared to producer's expectations, her interest in the audience and theory about context gave me a starting point for this study. Like Wolf, I want to understand the audience from the audience's perspective. I also accept her premise that theatre is more than the performance.

However, I choose to focus on the relationship of the audience to the theatre-going experience by undertaking an exploration of the theatre audience outside of the auditorium but within the theatre building space. No one has explored – except in theory - how the audience prepares for the theatrical event or transitions from the outside into the world of the play prior to the performance. Therefore, I intend to engage in such a study, and at the same time, I hope to provide a partial answer to Carlson's quest:

A clearer understanding of how spectators today and at other historical periods have learned and applied the rules of the game they play with the performance event in the theatre will provide us with a far richer and more interesting picture of that complex event.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>17</sup> Carlson, "Interpreting the Theatrical Past," 97.

## Methodology

What meaning does the audience give to the lobby experience? To understand the audience's perspective it is necessary to use a methodology that is ideally suited for exploring individual experiences. Qualitative Research is an umbrella term to classify a number of methodologies that rely on information gathered through ethnography, in-depth interviewing, focus groups, and observational research. Of all of the qualitative methodologies, grounded theory seems particularly appropriate for this investigation. As Barney Glaser, sociologist and one of the originators of grounded theory suggests: "Grounded Theory allows the relevant social organization and socialpsychological organization of the people studied to be discovered, to emerge - in their perspective!"<sup>18</sup> Grounded theory began in the mid 1960's and has become one of the most popular methods of qualitative research. It is used in any number of disciplines, including nursing, psychology, social work, and education.

Grounded theory methodology is suggested for any of the following reasons:

- ✓ Relatively little is known about the topic area
- ✓ There are no 'grand' theories to explain adequately the specific psychological constructs or behaviors under investigation
- ✓ Researchers wish to challenge existing theories
- ✓ Researchers are interested in eliciting participants' understandings, perceptions, and experiences of the world
- ✓ The research aims to develop new theories<sup>19</sup>

For this particular study, because there is relatively little known about the topic area, there are no grand theories. The theories proposed by scholars have not been tested

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<sup>18</sup> Barney G. Glaser, *Emergence Vs Forcing: Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis* (Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press, 1992), 5.

<sup>19</sup> Shelia Payne, "Grounded Theory," in *Analysing Qualitative Data in Psychology*, ed. Evanthia Lyons and Adrian Coyle (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2007), 70.

empirically, and theorists do not always agree. More importantly, as I seek to understand individual perceptions, grounded theory's rigorous approach to analyzing subject experiences seems ideal.

My desire to understand the perspective of the audience and to discover a theory with potential practical applications for the future coincides with John Creswell's succinct outline of grounded theory goals:

The intent of a grounded theory study is to move beyond description and to generate or discover a theory, an abstract analytical scheme of a process or action or interaction. Participants in the study would all have experienced the process and the development of the theory might help explain practice or provide a framework for further research. A key idea is that this theory-development does not come 'off the shelf' but rather is generated or 'grounded' in data from participants who have experienced the process.<sup>20</sup>

Grounded theory scholar Kathy Charmaz advises that to be appropriate, a grounded theory study must be credible, original, have resonance, and be useful.<sup>21</sup> "Credibility" is dependent upon "the researcher's own familiarity with the research topic and setting, sufficient data for claims that are made in the research, and systematic analysis development between categories and observations."<sup>22</sup> As revealed in Chapter Two, my commitment to the audience has long been a part of my professional and academic career, and I followed grounded theory's best practices in collecting and analyzing data. "Originality," as related to the categories developed in analysis, is dependent upon meeting the following criteria: "are [the categories] new, do they have

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<sup>20</sup> John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007), 63.

<sup>21</sup> Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis* (London: SAGE, 2006), 528.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

significance, do they challenge, refine and change the current ideas and concepts?”<sup>23</sup>

Chapter Three provides an overview of the “current ideas and concepts” surrounding the theatre lobby as espoused by scholars and theorists from architectural studies, cultural studies, and performance and theatre studies. Chapter Six includes a discussion of the relationship between those ideas and concepts and the responses collected from participants in this study. To meet the expectations of “Resonance,” defined by Charmaz as “the researcher’s ability to draw novel meanings and analytic interpretations,” I reveal in Chapter Five the results of this study in terms of meanings, codes and interpretations developed throughout this project. Finally, in an effort to provide usefulness, in Chapter Six I make some suggestions for possible practical applications of the developed theory about the theatre lobby experience.

A more detailed and thorough explanation of grounded theory methodology including a definition, detailed procedures and methods for validating this study, is provided in Chapter Two.

### **Scope of the Study**

For the purposes of this study, I define the lobby experience as a measure of space and of duration. Space, for the presentation of theatre, ranges widely in size and shape. Performances can be outdoors, on the street corner, in a warehouse, or in a building built for the specific purpose of presenting theatre. For this study, the theatre-going experience is limited to physical buildings, as it is within a building that a lobby may exist. It is through the lobby that the audience moves from the outside into the auditorium. Although there are theatres in which the outside is connected directly to the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

auditorium, these physical arrangements are not common, and in these instances, there is no lobby in which to have a lobby experience. The managers of the theatre, to meet some of the service functions usually provided by a lobby, have either to take space from the auditorium or annex some outside area near the building. Either solution is beyond the scope of this study.

The lobby experience space includes all interior audience social areas from the outside entrance of the theatre building to the auditorium.<sup>24</sup> The lobby area also includes restrooms, the box office, concession stands, and any adjoining rooms. If the backstage areas are traversed to enter the auditorium, then they are considered lobby space as well.<sup>25</sup>

In terms of duration, the lobby experience is any time spent in the audience social areas, including prior to the performance, intermission, and after-show activities. The duration is from the moment the participant arrives at the theatre prior to the performance until the participant leaves the building. If an individual arrives an hour before curtain, activities post arrival are within the scope of the study. If an activity took place earlier in the day (i.e. tour of facility, contact with the box office, etc.) and the participant left the building for a significant measurement of time (dinner, shopping, sightseeing, etc), then that activity was not included in this study.

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<sup>24</sup> The auditorium is the area in which the audience experiences the play and connects with the performers. If the performance takes place in the lobby, then the lobby is functioning as an ‘auditorium,’ not as a lobby.

<sup>25</sup> For example, while attending a production of *Marat/Sade*, I had to enter through the stage door and onto the stage for my seat. The performance stage was built over the orchestra pit permitting theatre-in-the-round in a proscenium theatre.



## Review of Literature

In preparation for this study, I explored texts, theories, and methodologies from several disciplines. I conducted additional research as required to appreciate fully what the data was revealing.

My exploration began with an obvious choice: handbooks and guides for constructing theatres. *Large Multi-Purpose Halls for the Performing Arts: Issues and Concepts to Consider Before Design*,<sup>26</sup> a brochure that highlights an architect firm's experience as builders of multi-purpose halls, served as an entry point into theatre architecture. *Buildings for the Performing Arts: A Design and Development Guide* provides a guide to typical lobby functions.<sup>27</sup> Architect and author Ian Appleton addresses the special occasion of the theatre-going experience and how the lobby can affect the event. Architect Hugh Hardy links anticipation of an experience to building decoration and adequate space in *Building Type Basics for Performing Arts Facilities*.<sup>28</sup> Architect and theatre designer Roderick Ham, in *Theatre Planning*, compares the theatre to the opera, presenting a historical perspective on the audience space as a location for display and social interaction.<sup>29</sup>

With a general understanding of the theatre building, I took the next step: examining the theatre-going experience in relation to the building. Martin Bloom in

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<sup>26</sup> Kevin A. Kelly and James B. Gatton, *Large Multi-Purpose Halls for the Performing Arts: Issues and Concepts to Consider Before Design* (Houston, TX: CRS Sistine, 1985).

<sup>27</sup> Ian Appleton, *Buildings for the Performing Arts: A Design and Development Guide* (Boston: Butterworth Architecture, 1996).

<sup>28</sup> Hugh Hardy, *Building Type Basics for Performing Arts Facilities* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley, 2006), 2.

<sup>29</sup> Roderick Ham, ed., *Theatre Planning* (London: Architectural Press [for] the Association of British Theatre Technicians, 1972), 213.

*Accommodating the Lively Arts: An Architect's View*, suggests that “the theatre is a place where people can congregate to experience life in a form more focused, comprehensible, and heightened than in day-to-day existence.”<sup>30</sup> In *Actor and Architect*, Hugh Hunt offers advice on what a theatre should contain to “make theatre-going an exciting and civilized event.”<sup>31</sup> Historian Michael Hays suggests the theatre building is fundamental to the theatre-going experience from an historical perspective with his look at audiences and theatres in *The Public and Performance: Essays in the History of French and German Theater, 1871-1900*.<sup>32</sup> Noted reception theorist Peter Eversmann, in “The Experience of the Theatrical Event,” suggests the theatre-going experience is a matter of place and is “reflected in the language we use; we are *going* to the theatre, we ask for the best *spot* in the house, we buy a *seat* and we watch the performance that *takes place*.”<sup>33</sup>

My attempt to identify the ideal building led to three texts written for theatre practitioners. Performance theorist Richard Schechner, in *Performance Theory*, asks for “A tightly boundaried, closed individual building with access from the street strictly controlled.”<sup>34</sup> In *Theatrical Space: A Guide for Directors and Designers*, theatre scholar William Condee argues that the audience, as a part of their theatre-going experience, will

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<sup>30</sup> Bloom, *Accommodating the Lively Arts*, 6.

<sup>31</sup> Hugh Hunt, “Theatre and Youth,” in *Actor and Architect*, ed. Stephen Joseph (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), 72.

<sup>32</sup> Michael Hays, *The Public and Performance: Essays in the History of French and German Theater, 1871-1900* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1981), 3.

<sup>33</sup> Peter Eversmann, “The Experience of the Theatrical Event,” in *Theatrical Events: Borders, Dynamics, Frames*, ed. Vicki Ann Cremona (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), 93.

<sup>34</sup> Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory*, Rev. and expanded ed. (New York: Routledge, 1988), 161.

include every contact with the building.<sup>35</sup> Hannelore Schubert in *The Modern Theater; Architecture, Stage Design, Lighting* suggests that contact between audience members facilitates contact with the performer.<sup>36</sup>

Having gained a basic understanding of the purpose of a theatre building, including theatre lobbies, from a theoretical perspective, I expanded my research to include architects' perspectives on the lobby. Several architecture scholars provided insights. Donald Deal, in his Master of Architecture thesis developed the term "Transitional Preparatory Space."<sup>37</sup> The focus of his thesis was the function of foyers for churches; however, his ideas seemed to be applicable to theatre lobbies. Caroline Stacy Labiner suggested that too much space segregates an audience in her thesis, "The Segue from City to Stage: Facades, Marquees, Entries, Lobbies in New York Theater."<sup>38</sup> Bonita Roche in "Contemporary Theatrical Space: Lobby Design" placed the transitional function of the lobby into a historical perspective.<sup>39</sup> David Cherry, in "Environment and Theatre: An Architectural Study," argued that too much stimulation in the lobby can have a negative impact on the performance.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> William Faricy Condee, *Theatrical Space: A Guide for Directors and Designers* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1995).

<sup>36</sup> Hannelore Schubert, *The Modern Theater; Architecture, Stage Design, Lighting*, trans. J. C. Palmes (New York: Praeger, 1971), 84.

<sup>37</sup> Donald Allen Deal, "Transitional Preparatory Spaces" (M.Arch. Thesis, Clemson University, 1974), 1.

<sup>38</sup> Caroline Stacy Labiner, "The Segue from City to Stage: Facades, Marquees, Entries, Lobbies in New York Theater" (M.Arch Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1984), 21.

<sup>39</sup> Roche, "Contemporary Theatrical Space," 2.

<sup>40</sup> David William Cherry, "Environment and Theatre: An Architectural Study" (M.Arch. Thesis, Georgia Institute of Technology, 1981), 63.

The search for architectural theories from the perspective of practicing architects directed me to Montse Borrás, who presented a working definition of a general lobby in *Lobby Design*: “The lobby is an architectural and spatial concept ... giving access connecting the exterior with the interior of a building.”<sup>41</sup> Architect Michael Mell in *Building Better Theaters* offers opinions on the lobby’s relationship to the total theatre-going experience.<sup>42</sup> These two texts represent some of my discoveries of what architects have to say about theatre building functions.

A number of works from various disciplines treated the theatre lobby as a social center. Performance Studies scholar Gay McAuley’s *Space in Performance: Making Meaning in the Theatre* explores the social aspects of the theatre-going experience, even suggesting that the social may be more important than the performance.<sup>43</sup> McGrath compares theatre to cinema in *A Good Night Out*, proposing that 1) theatre is a social event and 2) all of the pre-show activities have a relationship to what is happening on the stage.<sup>44</sup> Reception theorist Susan Bennett connects the social functions of the lobby with the economic functions in the seminal text, *Theatre Audiences*.<sup>45</sup>

Several texts that explored how theatre lobbies function as transitional spaces include: A summary of the *World Theatre* survey, “The Theatre Facade Entrances and

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<sup>41</sup> Montse Borrás, *Lobby Design*, trans. Heather Bagott (Köln: Daab, 2006), 4.

<sup>42</sup> Michael Mell, *Building Better Theaters*, 1st ed. (Cambridge, UK: Entertainment Technology Press, 2008), 125.

<sup>43</sup> Gay McAuley, *Space in Performance: Making Meaning in the Theatre* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 248.

<sup>44</sup> McGrath, *A Good Night Out*, 24.

<sup>45</sup> Bennett, *Theatre Audiences*, 131.

Auditorium,”<sup>46</sup> Julian Hilton’s *Performance*,<sup>47</sup> and *Places of Performance: The Semiotics of Theatre Architecture*<sup>48</sup> by Marvin Carlson. Richard Schechner, in *Theatres, Spaces, Environments: Eighteen Projects*, outlines how and why his audiences prepare for a performance.<sup>49</sup>

Several scholars from separate disciplines examine the importance of intermission to the theatre-going experience, including architecture scholar Christos Athanasopoulos’s *Contemporary Theater: Evolution and Design*,<sup>50</sup> *The Ideal Theater: Eight Concepts. An Exhibition of Designs and Models Resulting from the Ford Foundation Program for Theater Design*,<sup>51</sup> and *The Development of the Playhouse; a Survey of Theatre Architecture from the Renaissance to the Present*.<sup>52</sup>

This review identifies a representative sampling of the theatre, architecture, and performance texts that I evaluated to prepare for this study. The authors are architects, architectural scholars, cultural theorists and performance studies scholars, and practicing theatre-makers. Although there is great diversity in the specifics, each discipline suggests that the theatre audience, theatre-going experience and theatre space are linked together

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<sup>46</sup> Cogniat, “The Theatre Facade Entrances and Auditorium.”

<sup>47</sup> Julian Hilton, *Performance* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1987), 133.

<sup>48</sup> Marvin Carlson, *Places of Performance: The Semiotics of Theatre Architecture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 132-4.

<sup>49</sup> Brooks McNamara, Jerry Rojo, and Richard Schechner, *Theatres, Spaces, Environments: Eighteen Projects* (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1975), 112.

<sup>50</sup> Chrēstos Geōrgiou Athanasopoulos, *Contemporary Theater: Evolution and Design* (New York: Wiley, 1983).

<sup>51</sup> *The Ideal Theater: Eight Concepts. An Exhibition of Designs and Models Resulting from the Ford Foundation Program for Theater Design* (New York: American Federation of Arts, 1962).

<sup>52</sup> Donald C. Mullin, *The Development of the Playhouse; a Survey of Theatre Architecture from the Renaissance to the Present* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1970), 163.

and that these linkages are worthy of recognition. The goal of this study is to understand the lobby experience from the perspective of the audience. The relationship between published scholarship reviewed and audiences' responses will be explored in a later chapter.

## **Conclusion**

It has been suggested that the theatre lobby is an element of the theatre-going experience that includes social interaction and performance preparation. Despite the theories and assumptions regarding how theatre lobbies may or ought to function, no systematic investigation has addressed the question from the audience's perspective. Generally, audiences must pass through the lobby on their way to the performance space. The primary services required by the audience are contained within the lobby. Social activities among the audience take place in the lobby. With all of this activity, what does the audience think or feel about the theatre lobby? How does the lobby affect their theatre-going experience? What meaning does the audience give to the theatre-going experience? The purpose of this study is to address these questions through a grounded theory analysis of interviews from the audience - those who should know best.

## **Organization of the study**

This study contains six chapters. This first chapter outlines the research project, providing justification and scope of the study and a review of relevant literature.

Chapter Two explores grounded theory as a methodology. The chapter contains a brief overview of the historical development of grounded theory, a definition of dimensional analysis, and detailed procedures followed for this study. As per grounded theory practice, I also include a report on researcher bias.

Chapter Three provides an overview of theories about the theatre lobby as presented by scholars, theorists, and practitioners of theatre.

Chapter Four summarizes the content of the respondents' interviews. Specific stories collected during interviews provide a broad view of lobby experiences as expressed by the experts – the audience.

Chapter Five presents the results of my analysis. This chapter includes definitions developed over the course of analysis, as well as categories and their dimensions. The final section of Chapter Five offers an in-depth explanation of my emergent theory about the theatre lobby experience.

Chapter Six provides an exploration of the study's significance and implications, including a discussion of the relationship between scholars' theories (current ideas and concepts) and the audience's perspectives. Chapter Six also includes possible applications of the emergent theory with suggestions for theatre managers and theatre-makers on ways to expand the lobby experience. Finally, Chapter Six identifies the limitations of this study and suggestions for further research.

The Appendices include a copy of IRB application, IRB approval and a sample consent form.

## CHAPTER 2 - THE METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

What meaning does the audience give to the theatre lobby space? To understand the audience's perspective it is necessary to use a methodology appropriate for exploring individual experiences. The methodology I have chosen, one of the more popular approaches to qualitative research, is grounded theory. This chapter provides a brief history of grounded theory, a definition of the methodology, an explanation of its procedures for data collection and analysis, and suggestions for validation of this study.

### History

The development of grounded theory evolved from the merging of two methodologies: American pragmatism and Chicago sociology. American pragmatism, with proponents such as John Dewey, George H. Mead, and Charles Pierce places an emphasis on action and problematic solution. American pragmatism's goals are problem solving. The tradition of Chicago sociology, started at the University of Chicago, is field observations and intensive interviews. These two approaches united when Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss wrote *Awareness of Dying*.<sup>53</sup> In addition to the text, these two theorists realized they might have developed some tools useful to others. Again

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<sup>53</sup> Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *Awareness of Dying* (Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co, 1965).



working together, they produced grounded theory's seminal text *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*.<sup>54</sup>

Over time, a rift developed between Glaser and Strauss that has led to much confusion about grounded theory as a methodology. Both Strauss and Glaser published their own supplemental texts in an effort to explain the “real” grounded theory research methodology.<sup>55</sup> Neither text has cleared up the confusion entirely:

There are two versions of grounded theory: Straussian, which has a focus on fragmentation of data through a three-stage coding process; and Glaserian, which is closer to field-based or hermeneutic qualitative research with a lesser emphasis on coding.<sup>56</sup>

Each approach has its followers and detractors. Ian Dey, a significant critic of the great divide, identifies the various offshoots:

There is no such thing as ‘grounded theory’ if we mean by that a single, unified methodology, tightly defined and clearly specified. Instead, we have different interpretations of ground theory, the early version or the late, and the versions according to Glaser or Strauss, or Strauss and Corbin, among others (e.g. Charmaz, Kools et al).<sup>57</sup>

Regardless of which specific grounded theory subset a project may follow, there are some practices common to all methodologies identified as grounded theory: “Constant

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<sup>54</sup> Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co, 1967).

<sup>55</sup> See Juliet M. Corbin and Anselm L. Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2008) and Barney G Glaser, *Emergence Vs Forcing: Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis* (Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press, 1992) as two more recent examples.

<sup>56</sup> Carol Grbich, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Introduction* (London: SAGE Publications, 2007), 70.

<sup>57</sup> Barney G. Glaser, *Theoretical Sensitivity: Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory* (Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press, 1978); Anselm L. Strauss and Juliet M. Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1990); Kathy Charmaz, “Discovering’ Chronic Illness: Using Grounded Theory,” *Social Science & Medicine* 30, no. 11 (1990): 1161-1173; Susan Kools et al., “Dimensional Analysis: Broadening the Conception of Grounded Theory,” *Qualitative Health Research* 6, no. 3 (1996): 312-30; Ian Dey, “Grounded Theory,” in *Qualitative Research Practice*, ed. Clive Seale et al. (London: SAGE, 2004), 80.

comparative method of analysis, the use of concepts and their development, theoretical sampling, and saturation.”<sup>58</sup>

Unfortunately, the great divide is not the only thing that confounds those who choose to use grounded theory as a methodology. In addition to having to select one set of procedures as outlined by a specific grounded theorist, confusion remains in the title “Grounded Theory”: “For some grounded theory is both a methodology and a set of procedures.”<sup>59</sup> For others, it is one or the other. Strauss, in a follow-up text, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, denies grounded theory is a methodology:

The methodological thrust of the grounded theory approach to qualitative data is toward the development of theory, without any particular commitment to specific kinds of data, lines of research, or theoretical interests. So, it is not really a specific method or technique. Rather it is a style of doing qualitative analysis that includes a number of distinct features, such as theoretical sampling, and certain methodological guidelines, such as making of constant comparisons and the use of a coding paradigm, to ensure conceptual development and density.<sup>60</sup>

In contrast, Glaser identifies grounded theory as a methodology: “The grounded theory approach is a general methodology of analysis linked with data collection that uses a systematically applied set of methods to generate an inductive theory about a substantive area.”<sup>61</sup>

This conflict continues to have an impact on projects even today. The result of this confusion is that the number of options can overwhelm a beginning researcher.

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<sup>58</sup> Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research* (2008), 303.

<sup>59</sup> Päivi Eriksson and Anne Kovalainen, *Qualitative Methods in Business Research* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2008), 154.

<sup>60</sup> Anselm L. Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 5.

<sup>61</sup> Glaser, *Emergence Vs Forcing*, 16.

Since the great divide, several scholars of note have developed grounded theory for the next generation. The six most prominent have been collected in the text *Developing Grounded Theory: The Second Generation*. This text is an excellent guide to the many different procedures and types of outcomes available to a grounded theory study.

In spite of all of the differences between scholars, both old and new, there is at least some common ground. They all agree that in a grounded theory study, a theory must come from within the data:

A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed and provisionally verified through a systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory, and then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge.<sup>62</sup>

This approach differs from the more traditional research project in which a theory is stated and then a test is developed to determine the validity of the theory. It is not the purpose of grounded theory to develop the theory and then test the theory as these are two separate processes. Grounded theory explores the topic, without a test, to discover a theory that appears to respond to all of the data collected. The resulting theory is open for testing as a project in the future.

### **Why Grounded Theory?**

Grounded theory is an appropriate methodology for exploring personal experiences and under-researched topics, such as the topic of this dissertation. At the present, research has not discovered much information on the impact of the theatre lobby. As explained in the next chapter, there are expressions of expectations, but no one has

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<sup>62</sup> Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research (1990)*, 23.

conducted any serious tests of the theories. In addition, the bulk of the theories about the lobby come from architectural studies. No one within the discipline of theatre has seriously explored the audience's response to the lobby.

Carol Grbich suggests grounded theory, if these three conditions are present:

when there is little or no prior knowledge of an area; when the microcosm of interaction in particular settings is to be observed and all related aspects need to be explored; and where there is a need for new theoretical explanations built on previous knowledge to explain changes in the field.<sup>63</sup>

In particular, to understand how individuals relate to a space, Grbich adds that grounded theory is “best suited for those [investigations] relating to interaction between persons or among individuals and specific environments,”<sup>64</sup> or “for small scale environments and micro activity where little previous research has occurred.”<sup>65</sup> Grbich's description of a situation in which grounded theory can provide a useful approach suggests that grounded theory method would be appropriate for a study of the theatre lobby experience.

To understand an individual's perspective about an activity, Juliet Corbin, identifying grounded theory as a qualitative methodology indicates qualitative research may be a good approach:

There are many reasons for choosing to do qualitative research, but perhaps the most important is the desire to step beyond the known and enter into the world of participants, to see the world from their perspective and in doing so make discoveries that will contribute to the development of empirical knowledge.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Grbich, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, 70.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>66</sup> Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research (2008)*, 16.

This study of the lobby experience focused on audience members, collecting stories about their personal experiences in the lobby. The audience members are participants in the lobby and the theatre. From their gathered thoughts, feelings and suggestions, I created an emergent theory about the lobby experience.

One of the concerns about using grounded theory methodology is the apparent lack of generalization. This study is a deep scrutiny of a subject with the development of a theory grounded in the data. This study is not a quantitative research project that relies on statistical justification. A grounded theory study can increase knowledge, even with limited sources of data:

Generalization is not the purpose of qualitative research. The idea behind qualitative research is to gain understanding about some phenomenon, and a researcher can learn a lot about a phenomenon from the study of one factory or organization.<sup>67</sup>

Grounded theory does not require large numbers, or representations of populations, typical to a quantitative study. Rather, grounded theory is concerned with participants who have experience with the subject under study: “Sites and sources are selected flexibly for their theoretical relevance in generating comparisons and extending or refining ideas, rather than for their representational value in allowing generalizations to particular populations.”<sup>68</sup> As explored later in this chapter, saturation and theoretical sampling are the foci of a grounded theory research project that leads to understanding that may be transferable to future projects.

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 319.

<sup>68</sup> Dey, “Grounded Theory,” 80.

## Dimensional Analysis

Dimensional analysis is one of the methods for examining data used by grounded theorists. Dimensional analysis, as introduced by Leonard Schatzman, is an attempt to provide duplicatable methods for data analysis. Prior to Schatzman's writings, grounded theory passed from mentor to student, one individual at a time. This inefficient training method added to the divergence of definitions and practices found in grounded theory projects.

Schatzman's stated goal for dimensional analysis is that "the analyst seeks only to identify experiences that answer the methodological question (and perspective): What "all" is involved here?"<sup>69</sup> Schatzman suggests that grounded theory lost the focus of the original practices, as many do not understand the foundations of grounded theory. For Schatzman, an understanding of the phenomenon under study is the purpose of dimensional analysis:

An explanation, after all, tells a story about the relations among things or people and events. To tell a complex story, one must designate objects and events, state or imply some of their dimensions and properties - that is, their attributes - to provide some context for these, indicate a condition or two for whatever action or interaction is selected to be central to the story, and to point to, or imply, one or more consequences.<sup>70</sup>

The goal of dimensional analysis is to tell a story rather than wallow in convoluted and conflicting procedures. For Schatzman, the richer and more detailed the story, the greater the potential for understanding.

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<sup>69</sup> Leonard Schatzman, "Dimensional Analysis: Notes on an Alternative Approach to the Grounding of Theory in Qualitative Research," in *Social Organization and Social Process: Essays in Honor of Anselm Strauss*, ed. David R. Maines (New York: A. de Gruyter, 1991), 310.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 308.

The quest of dimensional analysis is to fill in the ‘coding paradigm.’ Juliet

Corbin defines the paradigm:

1. There are conditions. These allow a conceptual way of grouping answers to the questions about why, where, how, and what happens.
2. There are inter/actions and emotions. These are the responses made by individuals or groups to situations, problems, happenings, and events.
3. There are consequences. These are the outcomes of inter/actions or emotional responses to events. What happened as a result of those responses?<sup>71</sup>

Researchers using dimensional analysis procedures of exploring and analyzing the data strive to fill in the three categories listed above. Barbara Bowers, in reframing the questions, provides an alternative procedural guide:

1. The researcher defines the core category and other related categories.
2. The researcher identifies the strategies used by subjects to carry out the phenomenon being studied, that is, how the actors orient their action in relation to the object.
3. What are the consequences of this core category and strategy of action?
4. What are the conditions for this strategy of action in this core category?<sup>72</sup>

For Bowers, ‘consequences’ are the primary concern: “Consequences are different for different groups, so the researcher must always be clear and specific for who the consequences are operating.”<sup>73</sup> In this study, it was not feasible to consider all of the

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<sup>71</sup> Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research* (2008), 89.

<sup>72</sup> Barbara Bowers, “Grounded Theory,” in *Paths to Knowledge: Innovative Research Methods for Nursing*, ed. Barbara Sarter (New York: National League for Nursing, 1988), 50.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

audiences who use the lobby.<sup>74</sup> Rather, the participants in this study reflect the generic user of the lobby.<sup>75</sup>

It should not appear that Schatzman takes grounded theory into an inappropriate and personal direction. Rather, the analytical processes codified in dimensional analysis are based on Strauss's original work, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*. Strauss's coding paradigm is "Conditions, interaction among the actors, strategies, and tactics."<sup>76</sup> He further dictates, "Without the inclusion of the paradigm items, coding is not coding."<sup>77</sup> In addition to returning to the foundations of grounded theory, as defined by dimensional analysts, Schatzman's coding paradigm is expanded to include 'what are the consequences and for whom?'

The coding paradigm is a guide to analysis and development of an emergent theory. The coding paradigm examines the phenomenon under study, its causal conditions in context, intervening conditions, actions and interactions of the participants involved, and the consequences of those actions.<sup>78</sup> As outlined in detail in Chapter Two the procedures used by this study address all of these issues. Although grounded theory may employ a number of processes and tools to interpret data, dimensional analysis is the specific method I followed.

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<sup>74</sup> Chapter Six identifies the targets and limitations of this study.

<sup>75</sup> Chapter Five explores the potential consequences of the lobby experience applied to the audience members who comprised this study.

<sup>76</sup> Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, 27.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>78</sup> Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*, 67.



## The Researcher

The audience's experience in the theatre lobby is an understudied subject within theatre scholarship. I started this project believing there was much to be learned about the lobby both as a physical space and as part of the theatre-going experience for the audience.

Before outlining specific procedures for this study, it is a grounded theory practice to define the role of the researcher. Corbin identifies the researcher as the go-between the participants and readers interested in the topic: "Researchers are translators of other persons' words and actions."<sup>79</sup> As the researcher for this project, I designed the study, interviewed the subjects, and analyzed the data.

One of the reasons I chose this study is because I am interested in the audience, which comes from my work as a theatre producer. I am driven to generate more audience and to make the present audience more committed. I understand that theatre is about both the performance and the audience, but at this particular moment, I choose to focus on the audience. My goal, with this study, was to acquire some tools for future studies about the audience. I want to know what appeals to the audience. Why can some plays be huge hits in one theatre and a failure in another? Why is it that some theatres can generate an audience only with musicals, whereas a different company only succeeds with farces? What does going to the theatre mean to our audience? I could have designed a quantitative study and generated statistical explanations of actions, but I wanted something else. I am interested in theatre stories, particularly from the audience.

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<sup>79</sup> Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research* (2008), 49.

To find answers to some of my questions and to explore the audience's viewpoint, I sought an appropriate methodology: "Committed qualitative researchers lean toward qualitative work because they are drawn to the fluid, evolving, and dynamic nature of this approach in contrast to the more rigid and structured format of quantitative methods."<sup>80</sup> Corbin created a checklist of qualitative researchers, and I believe that I model many of the following traits:

- ✓ A humanistic bent
- ✓ Curiosity
- ✓ Creativity and imagination
- ✓ A sense of logic
- ✓ The ability to recognize diversity as well as regularity
- ✓ A willingness to take risks
- ✓ The ability to live with ambiguity
- ✓ The ability to work through problems in the field
- ✓ An acceptance of the self as a research instrument
- ✓ Trust in the self and the ability to see value in the word that is produced<sup>81</sup>

Keeping with full disclosure, originally I did not accept grounded theory as the methodology for this study. I began with a desire to measure space and count contents. Fortunately, after consulting with my committee, and clarifying what I hoped to discover, I embraced grounded theory.

Although I will explore many methods for validating a grounded theory study later in this chapter, researchers' personal bias is high on the list of concerns. Both Corbin and Charmaz declare that the researcher must be self-aware enough to account for personal biases.<sup>82</sup> It is important to recognize that with qualitative studies the researcher

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 303.

may be directly involved with respondents, and therefore it is important to build in safeguards to protect the study from a researcher's prejudices. For grounded theory, one of the safeguards is to report on personal assumptions prior to the study.

A second procedure is to include personal memos during analysis. By comparing these personal documents, the hope is to reduce the negative impact of a researcher's personal bias. It is not possible to eliminate bias nor is it expected. One of the tenets of qualitative research is that a researcher's background will be a factor throughout the study. However, it is important to be aware of the issue of bias. By identifying the issue in advance, the researcher is aware of the potential of shaping analysis to match his or her own prejudices, rather than letting the data generate a theory. Found in Appendix 1 are my initial assumptions regarding this study.

To enhance my credibility, the following highlights my personal processes: as the researcher, I relied on respondents who had experiences in the theatre lobby. I sought their perspective, while working to distance my own. I shared some of my stories with respondents in an effort to build relationships and facilitate the interviews. I tried to avoid putting any pressure on the respondent and accepted the response, 'I had no experience that I can think of.' I relied on the respondents' information about experiences in the past, rather than studying an ongoing event. Rather than rely on an automatic or undeveloped response, I wanted to collect respondents' memories and reflections that had become more long-term memories. Admittedly, I have had several lobby experiences, which provides a context for understanding the respondent without having to have been there myself. Knowing in advance some of the pitfalls of this type of study, I relied on memos and records of assumptions, as well as challenging myself to

focus on the data and what it revealed. These efforts were my attempt to lay the foundation for valid grounded theory analysis.

### **Using Computer Software**

I used computer analysis software as a data management tool for this study. After researching several options (ATLAS.ti, QSR NVivo, HyperRESEARCH, and MAXqda),<sup>83</sup> I selected ATLAS.ti based on price, availability, support and reviews found online. During a trial period, ATLAS.ti proved to be a valuable asset for this project.

Computer programs do not analyze for the researcher; rather, the software is one of several tools: “Not only are computer programs helpful for organizing, storing, and shuffling data and memos, they play an important role in evaluation.”<sup>84</sup> According to Corbin and Strauss, the value of analytical software programs is that “they contribute to creativity in the sense that the researcher is able to try out different axial views of data, looking at relationships first ‘this way’ and then ‘that way’ without having to spend a lot of time retrieving and organizing data.”<sup>85</sup> The software can collect all memos, thoughts, comments, codes, and choices expressed by the analyst and can help with the search of the data. For this particular project, the software was valuable in helping to identify trends, find quotes, and create patterns. I found it so useful that in addition to my interview data, ATLAS.ti assisted with my extensive collection of supporting literature and documentation.

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<sup>83</sup> Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*, 174. This text provided an outstanding guide for evaluating qualitative analysis software.

<sup>84</sup> Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research (2008)*, 310.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 315.

## Pilot Study

Prior to exploring what meaning the audience gives to the theatre lobby, I engaged in a pilot study of the theatre lobby as a physical space. I used a case study design, where several methods of collecting and analyzing data are combined.<sup>86</sup> The case study design is an empirical inquiry that:

1. investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context,
2. when the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly evident;
3. and for which multiple sources of evidence are used.<sup>87</sup>

Following a model developed by Michael Quinn Patton,<sup>88</sup> I collected as much information as I could about the theatre lobby. My pilot study included site visits to four theatres, a collection of audience and theatre staff interviews, and a compilation of observation reports. Following Yin's guideline that case studies "inherently deal with a wide variety of evidence,"<sup>89</sup> I relied on several data collection methods: interviews, observations, participant-observations, and surveys.

I explored four theatres, as each represented distinct organizational structures, based on expectations about the audience, as well as pragmatic concerns of time, distance, willingness, and availability to participate, etc. The four theatres were

- (1) The Court Theatre in Chicago, Illinois, a regional, professional theatre
- (2) The Macklanburg Playhouse, in Columbia, Missouri, an educational theatre
- (3) Lander's Theatre, in Springfield, Missouri, a community theatre
- (4) The Fox Theatre, in St. Louis, Missouri, a commercial touring house

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<sup>86</sup> Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1984), 23.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation Methods* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1980), 304.

<sup>89</sup> Yin, *Case Study Research*, 91.

I visited each site for a minimum of two performances and several hours of measurement and observations. I was able to explore each site in both occupied and unoccupied states. I attended each theatre as a 'member of the audience' for a visit. The second visit was to stay in the lobby during the performance and conduct interviews.

One method of data collection was the interview. The subjects for this pilot study were users of the lobby, i.e. audience members, house managers, security personnel, and concessionaires, those individuals who had the most involvement with the theatre lobby. My intention was to connect with audience members either during my participation as an audience member or during the observation phase of the data collection. I approached individuals in the lobby who had just left the concession stand, as I recognized that they were individuals who were using some of the available lobby services. The focus of my study was on those who were experiencing the lobby. I was looking for insight into how the lobby is used.

To facilitate a dialogue and to reduce time lost with note taking, I used a voice recorder for all interviews. Following Yin's recommendations about interview data collection, I asked broad general questions about the lobby experience:

Most commonly, case study interviews are of an open-ended nature, in which an investigator can ask key respondents for the facts of a matter as well as for the respondents' opinions about events. In some situations, the investigator may even ask the respondent to propose his or her own insights into certain occurrences and may use such propositions as the basis for further inquiry.<sup>90</sup>

This approach is similar to grounded theory's initial steps as the researcher assumes the respondent is the expert and lets the respondent guide the conversation.

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 83.

The interview for each audience member began with “tell me about your experience tonight.” My initial goal was to discover if the lobby was an element of an individual’s theatre-going experience, in particular, the instance in which I conducted the interview. As time permitted, the remainder of the interview was the gathering of details. I was seeking an understanding of the audience member’s involvement with the lobby, and therefore I asked questions specific to the respondent. At the conclusion of my interviews, I asked each individual if they had an experience in a theatre lobby, not confined to the present event or theatre. This allowed opportunities for the participant to reveal meaningful experiences without limitation.

My goal was to collect audience interviews as expansively as possible, seeking individuals whom I perceived to be from age 18-60+. In an effort to broaden my pool of respondents, I made a point of selecting by type of grouping, i.e. male and female, two or more females, two or more males, parent-child groupings, etc.

A second data collection method for my pilot study was observation. The first observation of the space was the examination of the unoccupied theatre lobby. I explored the shape of the theatre lobby, signage, patterns, movement indicators, furnishings, etc., any static visual elements. I took a number of photos and videotaped movement patterns of the empty space, where permissible. I examined how the architectural and design elements assisted the audience in transitioning into the world of the play.

The second observation of the space was as a participant-observer. According to Yin, “Participant-observation is a special mode of observation in which the investigator is not merely a passive observer.”<sup>91</sup> According to Bowers, the ideal researcher “should be

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 86.

able to maintain one foot in the world of the subjects and one foot outside that world, viewing actions from the perspective of the subjects while standing back and asking questions about what the subjects take for granted.”<sup>92</sup> As a participant, I experienced the production from the ordering of tickets, through the search for parking, to the entering of the space and participating in normal lobby functions. I used the participant-observer method as an opportunity to be part of the activities and experience the lobby first-hand.

The third observation of the space was during occupancy of the theatre lobby around a performance. I was no longer a participant, rather just an observer. This second visitation of the occupied space, separate from the participant-observation phase allowed me to compare two personal experiences. I observed how users physically engaged with the space and with each other within the space. Through observation, I focused on the physical activities in the lobby.

In my pilot study, I was more personally involved in the lobby experience. I was a participant using the services and partaking of the theatre-going experience. I relied on a randomness of subjects to collect interviews, which was marginally successful. The bulk of my data was on my own personal information and perspective.

Because of this preliminary study, I developed a clearer picture of what I was seeking – the participant’s perspective on the lobby experience. At the same time, I developed my interview skills. My original interviews also provided some information applicable to this study, furnishing me a starting point for understanding what meaning the audience gives to the lobby space.

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<sup>92</sup> Bowers, “Paths to Knowledge,” 43.



## Grounded Theory Procedures

One of the salient features of grounded theory methodology is that although conventional research practices are used such as literature reviews, hypothesis generation, data collection, and analysis, these activities occur simultaneously rather than as a linear sequence of distinct stages. Bowers succinctly describes research for a grounded theory study:

The ongoing process of data analysis guides the development of the interview questions and sample selection. As data are collected and analyzed the interview questions, research questions, and hypotheses change. This in turn leads to changes in data collected and subjects sampled.<sup>93</sup>

The research process evolves over the entire course of data collection. Juliet Corbin reiterates the parallelism of grounded theory:

Research is a continuous process of data collection, followed by analysis and memo writing, leading to questions that lead to more data collection, and so on. In this approach, the original question(s) is modified over and over again in light of what is being discovered during the analysis. This entire data collection and analysis process will go on until I am satisfied that I have acquired sufficient data to describe each category/item fully in terms of its properties and dimensions, and until I have accounted for variation (conceptual saturation), and most of all until I can put together a coherent explanatory story.<sup>94</sup>

Therefore, outlining a specific and detailed research plan prior to actually collecting data and beginning analysis was counter to the grounded theory methodology. Until discovery began, it was not possible to know where the research would lead.

With that in mind, I followed common general practices for a grounded theory study. I modeled the data collection methods for this project after Strauss's guide to

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>94</sup> Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research* (2008), 197.

grounded theory. In *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, Strauss summarized the research process as “Thinking, going to the field, observing, interviewing, note taking, analyzing.”<sup>95</sup> He recommended eight distinctions to valid theory generation.<sup>96</sup> First, create generative questions, “essential to making distinctions and comparisons; thinking about possible hypotheses, concepts and their relationships; sampling, and the like.”<sup>97</sup> Second, with the first interview, coding starts immediately which should lead to concepts and linked ideas: “The coding is [the] beginning to yield conceptually dense theory which will of course become much more dense as additional linkages are suggested and formulated.”<sup>98</sup> Next, theory must be discovered and then verified by being “checked out during the succeeding phases of inquiry, with new data and new coding.”<sup>99</sup> As coding is verified, it must be connected to real world data and the central issue under study. With the evolution of the coding, the fifth distinction is integration, the mapping of dimensions, distinctions, categories, and linkages to identify those that are most important. The quest is to find the core category that leads to a theory. The sixth is the use of theoretical memos to keep track of ideas and concepts. These memos should be

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<sup>95</sup> Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, 17.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-19.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 17. This is one of the more contentious areas of grounded theory. Glaser, in *Basics of Grounded Theory*, condemns Strauss for this step, as grounded theory is not supposed to be based on thinking in advance, rather letting the data reveal what it can. This discussion is highlighted in *Grounding Grounded Theory*, in which several tenets are identified, and the author chooses not to settle on either side of the argument, rather to recognize that there is merit in both tactics. One of my assumptions as a researcher is that it is important to acknowledge one’s own assumptions. When thinking about the research project, coming up with questions and potential hypotheses is a natural activity. In identifying assumptions, the researcher develops strategies to overcome the self- biases. For me, Strauss’s first step seemed an appropriate beginning.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

examined and sorted throughout the process as the theory emerges and new concepts are integrated.

The seventh step is to summarize the research into a triad of analytical operations “data collection, coding, [and] memoing.”<sup>100</sup> Data collection leads quickly to coding, and equally quickly to memoing. Coding or memoing guides the search for new data or additional coding or memoing, or inspecting and coding already gathered data. Finally, the eighth step is to begin writing, and it may be necessary to return to the data. The entire process is a non-linear flow chart. Consider the image of a double helix of movement, up and down, forwards, and backwards as appropriate. The purpose of this process is in an effort to have a theory grounded in the data.

### **Data Collection**

What is happening in the theatre lobby? The event is highly individualized - no two users of the lobby will have the same experience. Realistically, not everyone who encounters the lobby will be able to describe his or her experience using the same vocabulary or give the same meanings to the words they use. Regardless of these differences, every individual who experiences the lobby is the same - each is an expert on his or her unique experience. For this study, I sought firsthand experiences from those who have actively utilized the lobby. I wanted their experiences as the basis for my theory.

Although grounded theory involves a tight interconnectedness between data collection and data analysis, in that both take place at the same time, for organizational purposes I will separate my data collection and data analysis procedures. Following the

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

outline established by Creswell in *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*,<sup>101</sup> my data collection includes procedures for choosing respondents, an explanation of theoretical sampling and the interview format and setting.

The primary data collection method for this study was directed interviews. According to Sheila Payne, interviews are suitable for collecting data as “they build upon everyday experience of conversations and generally people are pleased to have the opportunity to talk with an attentive person in a face-to-face situation.”<sup>102</sup> Interviews are also popular “because they tend to generate a higher response rate than other methods and there is likely to be less missing data than in questionnaires.”<sup>103</sup>

I collected experiential data from direct sources. That is, I directed respondents to explain their personal experiences and meanings, by following interview guidelines as outlined by Barbara Bowers:

When using the formal interview, the grounded theory researcher generally begins the research process with a fairly general research question.... The researcher next invites the research subjects to explain or describe the object. It is crucial for the researcher not to provide the subjects with a definition.... Early interview questions are also constructed in a way that gives subjects permission to define the object in the way they perceive it.<sup>104</sup>

For a grounded theorist, a basic tenet of the directed interview is the concept that the respondent is the expert:

The conventional status afforded to interview data, for example when using grounded theory analysis, is that responses are construed as evidence of what people think and feel and how they understand their

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<sup>101</sup> Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*, 120-1.

<sup>102</sup> Payne, “Grounded Theory,” 72.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Bowers, “Paths to Knowledge,” 46.

world. These insights are assumed to have stability over time and are inferred as being characteristic of that individual. Grounded theorists feel able to draw conclusions about the state of mind of individuals on the basis of their talk.<sup>105</sup>

My interest is the audience's perspective. Therefore, for this particular study, the experts were the members of the audience.

The process used in a grounded theory study to choose respondents is 'selective sampling' and 'theoretical sampling.' Selective sampling is "guided by the initial purpose of the study, as well as by constraints such as time, subject availability and researcher interest."<sup>106</sup> For this study, I began with respondents who are identified as "convenience samples."<sup>107</sup> These were individuals who I determined had had a significant experience in the theatre lobby and were able to articulate that experience. My exploration began with three interviews. The first interview subject was a theatre graduate student with extensive theatre-going experience. The next two subjects were an older couple with a developed interest in theatre, but no experience with the production process.

As analysis began, following grounded theory principals, I used "theoretical sampling," that is sampling "directed by the evolving theory"<sup>108</sup> to guide the selection of my additional respondents. For clarification, theoretical sampling is the process in which a researcher identifies respondents within the context of emerging theory, rather than selecting respondents based upon a pre-ordained theory or quest for scientific

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<sup>105</sup> Payne, "Grounded Theory," 75.

<sup>106</sup> Bowers, "Paths to Knowledge," 54.

<sup>107</sup> Carl F. Auerbach, *Qualitative Data: An Introduction to Coding and Analysis* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 96.

<sup>108</sup> Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, 21.

randomness: “Identifying and sampling subjects whose accounts will provide comparisons along selected dimensions.”<sup>109</sup>

As my study evolved, I selected respondents to provide further information to fill in the gaps in the emerging theory. I continued with interviews until no new information was forthcoming, or “theoretical saturation,” in which samples are collected “until you are simply confirming the theory already developed, rather than modifying or elaborating it.”<sup>110</sup>

When I began my study, I assumed that frequency of attendance would be the divisor between respondents and integral to the lobby experience theory. However, I soon learned that attendance was not the distinction, but rather how much the individual knew about the production process. I will explore the concept of theatre-insider and theatre-supporter in Chapter Four.

For this study, I conducted 27 formal interviews, classifying 15 respondents as theatre-insiders and 12 respondents as theatre-supporters. Of the 27 participants, 12 were interviewed during the pilot study. These interviews were rich enough in detail and insight to provide appropriate material for this current study.

When conducting an interview the challenge was to select a format conducive to generating information from the respondent. Finding a suitable setting, time, and format depended on the needs of the respondent and my personal resources. The other issue to address was whether to use a tape recorder, video recorder or rely on manual note taking as each method had potential positive and negative impact on the interview process.

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<sup>109</sup> Bowers, “Paths to Knowledge,” 49.

<sup>110</sup> Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, 102.

To assist in easing the respondents concerns, I suggested sites and times convenient for the individual. Meetings were held in semi-private locations in public venues that provided comfort and safety for everyone. Some situations were more public than I would have wanted in terms of outside noise and potential distractions, but they were convenient for the participant. On the average, I spent 45 minutes with a respondent, although not all of that time was exclusive to the lobby experience. There were some discussions about other aspects of theatre that may be foundations for future studies. I chose to use a tape recorder to collect the entire interview with the hope this would provide greater accuracy. I took notes to help create follow-up questions and identify other directions during the interview.

During the interview, a researcher must be aware of two concerns. The first is the primary exploration, which for this study is “what has happened in the lobby for this audience member.” The details and variety of perspectives collected during the interview have provided some wonderful context for the lobby experience theory. The second concern is to develop trustworthiness in the interview content, which leads to greater validation of the study. This issue was addressed by letting the respondent speak his or her words, rather than have the researcher try to coerce words, even unconsciously. Admittedly, a directed interview does require the interviewer to ask pointed questions, particularly as my theory evolved and I needed specific answers to specific questions. Nevertheless, it was my goal to let the respondent talk about his/her experience.

My interviews began with “can you tell me about a significant experience you have had in a theatre lobby, either prior to a performance, during intermission or post-show?” My follow-up question was “What did this experience mean to you?” I was

seeking an understanding of the audience member's involvement with the lobby.

Subsequent questions were specific to the respondent and arose from the respondent's own words. In one particular instance, nothing significant came to mind for the respondent, so I asked directed questions in an effort to evoke a useful response.

## **Data Analysis**

Inherent in the grounded theory process is that data analysis begins with the first interview and continues throughout the research up to and often including the write-up of the project. According to Straussian scholar Juliet Corbin:

Analysis is a process of generating, developing, and verifying concepts - a process that builds over time and with the acquisition of data. One derives concepts from the first pieces of data. These same concepts are compared for similarities and differences against the next set of data - either expanding concepts by adding new properties and dimensions, or, if there are new ideas in the data, adding new concepts to the list of concepts. Or, there is still a third option of revising previous concepts if after looking at the new data it appears that another term would be more suitable. It is important to keep in mind that if a researcher knew all the relevant variables and relationships in data ahead of time, there would be no need to do a qualitative study.<sup>111</sup>

Analysis is the evaluation and re-evaluation of the data, collecting new data as required, and striving to find a theory within the data. The goal is to determine what is 'grounded' within the data as it relates to the central focus of the project.

Analysis begins with the first interview. Payne suggests that the "transformation of spoken language into written text should be regarded as the first stage in the interpretative process."<sup>112</sup> As interviews were transcribed questions about the data and

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<sup>111</sup> Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research* (2008), 57.

<sup>112</sup> Payne, "Grounded Theory," 77.



opinions were already forming. As a novice grounded theorist, early analysis was often misleading, and I stumbled down more than one unproductive alley.

Data analysis is a multifaceted phase that involves a number of concurrent operations. Several scholars present procedural suggestions on how to analyze data. This again is one of the challenges of the multiple interpretations of grounded theory. Strauss, the first formal grounded theory scholar, summarizes the process of data analysis:

Grounded theory is a detailed grounding by systematically and intensively analyzing data, often sentence by sentence, phrase by phrase of the field note, interview, or other document; by constant comparison, data are extensively collected and coded, thus producing a well-constructed theory. The focus of analysis is not merely on collecting or ordering a mass of data, but on organizing many ideas that have emerged from analysis of the data.<sup>113</sup>

Creswell's *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design* provided the most appropriate outline of analytical procedures for this study:

1. Create and organize files for data
2. Read through text, make margin notes, form initial codes
3. Describe open coding categories
4. Select one open coding category for central phenomenon in process
5. Engage in axial coding - causal condition, context, intervening conditions, strategies, consequences
6. Engage in selective coding and interrelate the categories to develop "story" or propositions
7. Develop a conditional matrix
8. Present a visual model or theory
9. Present propositions<sup>114</sup>

I followed the process outlined above. I began with the transcription, making notes as I progressed. I engaged in a coding, analyzed the codes, created a matrix, and provided a

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<sup>113</sup> Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, 22-3.

<sup>114</sup> Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*, 156-7

theory. The results of these activities are presented in subsequent chapters. The details of my procedures comprise the remainder of this chapter.

### *Coding*

The first analytical step was the creation of the interview transcript, which is also my connection with the data. While transcribing, I made notes about thoughts, concerns, areas of exploration, comparisons to known theorists, and anything else I did not want to forget. With the transcription completed, coding began.

Coding is a close examination of the information, “naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorizes, summarizes, and accounts for each piece of data.”<sup>115</sup> I examined the first three interviews word by word, providing a code for each word. I then went back and divided the interviews into phrase-by-phrase, line-by-line, and finally event-by-event. By coding each time, I was able to generate a long list of concepts and ideas that provided a starting point for continued analysis. Each code was supposed to provide insight and explanation about a word/phrase/line/event: Coding is the first step to determining concepts within the data.

To demonstrate the coding, process, I begin with the initial transcript that is Adam’s opening remarks describing a lobby experience:

The first one would be when I saw *Assassins* at Studio 54 in New York City, the recent revival. And they had set up placards in the lobby, brief biographies of the presidential assassins so that the audience had a context for the show. It included pictures of the real people so that you could compare them with what you saw on stage.<sup>116</sup>

Next step is to divide the sentences into words and start coding:

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<sup>115</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 43.

<sup>116</sup> Adam, interview by author, tape recording, Columbia, MO, February 14, 2006.

<b>Text</b>	<b>Codes</b>
The first one	Identifier, importance, beginning,
would be when	Time, condition
I	Actor, Personalization
saw	Visual, Verb, Action
Assassins	Identifier, Play, Event
at Studio 54	Location, Theatre,
in New York City,	Location, City, Center of Theatre, City,
the recent	Identifier, Sequence, time
revival.	Identifier, Sequence, event, performance
And they	Others, theatre management, creators, house staff
had set up	Activity, action, creation, established, delineated, defined
Placards	Content, Communication, Marketing, Management Tool
in the lobby,	Location, context theatre building,
brief	Time, quantity, limitation
biographies	History, reference, content
of the presidential	Limitation, type, political, identifier
assassins	Character, play, actor
so that the [Audience]	Participant, focus, primary consumer

I examined the text word-by-word, entitling each phrase with a major dimension and subsequent sub-dimensions. Each sub-dimension brought a tighter focus to the question of “what may be happening within the theatre lobby?”

Returning to the text once more, using longer phrases, codes assigned to this paragraph included “Exp-Performance,” which means this story was an example of something in the lobby relating to the performance. “Impact-Performance” code

identified this activity as an example of something in the lobby that might have an impact on the performance. “Performance-Prep” indicated that this was an example of something helping the audience member get ready for the performance.

Re-coding the above paragraph a third time, using ATLAS.ti, created the following image:

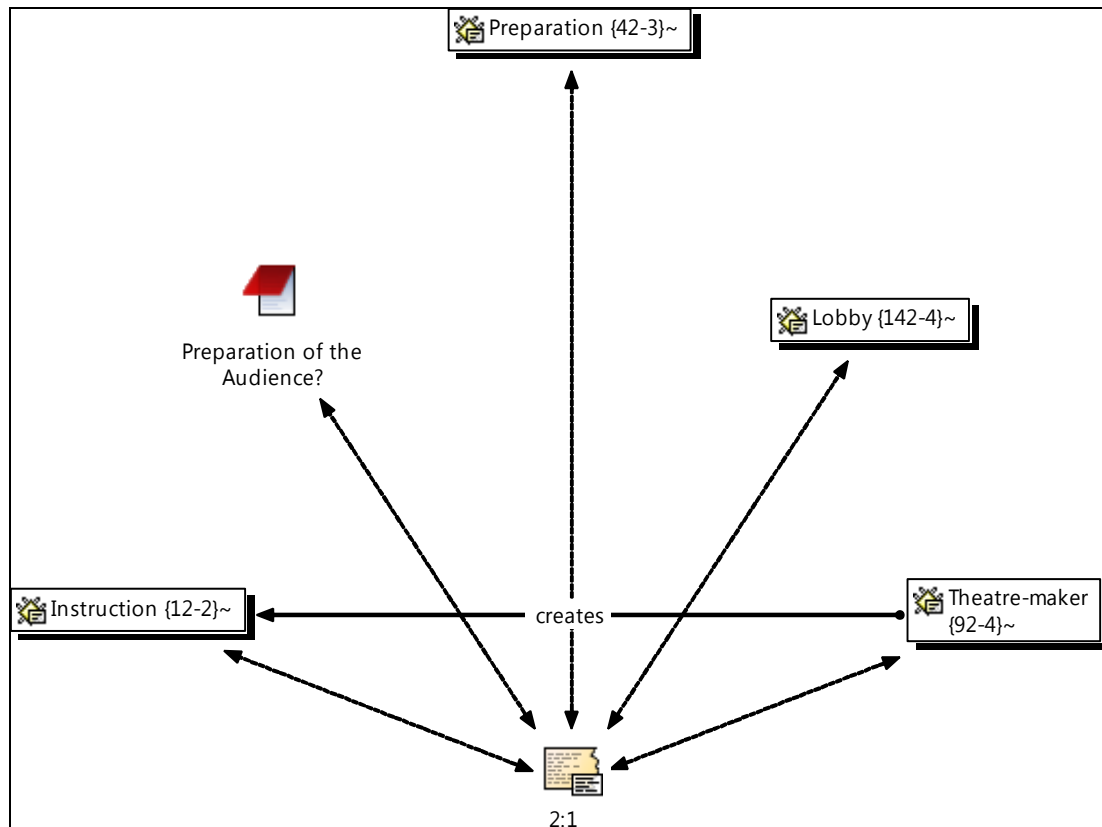


Figure 1: ATLAS.TI Coding Network View

According to this picture, Adam’s story involved preparation in the lobby. The information Adam discussed was put there by a theatre-maker who created the instruction, and this story generated the following sample memo:

The original concept is instruction, but to what end?

Is it to prepare for the performance? Is there something about this performance that requires preparation? Style of acting, production values, theatre company?

Is it to prepare for the story? Script? Subject matter?

Of course, these issues address the intentions of the theatre-makers.

The primary question is what is the effect on the audience? How do they receive the material?

Do they notice?

Do they act?

Does it "prepare" them?

What happens if they are not prepared? Can someone tell if the audience is not prepared? How can the audience know the difference of being prepared?

Each of these reviews of the transcript is a different phase in the coding process. The purpose of coding is to break apart the data and put it together in new and enlightened ways, or to take the data down to the smallest level, and with the interpretive codes seek to develop concepts and ideas that bring structure to the smaller bytes of information.

There are three types of coding: open, axial and selective.

### ***Open Coding***

Coding begins with "open coding," which "refers to the preliminary process of breaking down, examining, and comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data."<sup>117</sup>

The purpose of open coding is to develop initial concepts found within the data. The quest is to identify what is found within the text, not to force data to fit concepts. Glaser demands that the researcher start with nothing: "Open coding is the initial step of theoretical analysis that pertains to the initial discovery of categories and their properties. The mandate of open coding is the analyst starts with conceptual nothing - no

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<sup>117</sup> Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research* (1990), 61.

concepts.”<sup>118</sup> Strauss provides a set of steps to conduct coding, which include asking questions of the data, analyzing the data minutely and frequently stopping to write memos.<sup>119</sup>

Open coding is an extremely close examination of the data and continues until such time as a core category surfaces.<sup>120</sup> The “core category” is a concept extensively discussed by some or all of the participants, or is a particular concept that appears to be central to the experience under study.<sup>121</sup> The core category becomes the center point of the theory and is related to all other categories. With the core category determined, once again, a re-reading of the data examines the appropriateness of the core category to the data. Does it fit?

### ***Constant Comparison***

Comparing the core category to the data is an example of “constant comparison,” one of the universal tenets of grounded theory. Constant comparison is a means of insuring the analysis of the data is grounded within, as well as providing guidance for, what might be missing from the data. Eriksson’s definition of constant comparison is the quest to find what might be the same and what might be different between two data:

Empirical indicators from the data, such as events or actions or activities that have been observed and written into documents or transcribed

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<sup>118</sup> Glaser, *Emergence Vs Forcing*, 39. It must not be forgotten that there is still a research question to explore, and as coding begins, the research question must be present. I will confess that my initial coding began with nothing in the forefront and I spent a lot of time down paths not related to lobby experiences. I took “nothing” much too literally.

<sup>119</sup> Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, 28-32.

<sup>120</sup> Glaser, *Emergence Vs Forcing*, 39.

<sup>121</sup> Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*, 161.

interviews are compared with each other in the analysis process, with the aim of searching for similarities and differences between them.<sup>122</sup>

This comparison takes place among categories within a single document and/or between two documents, and/or outside of the data collected, all in an effort to guide the search for more data. “What if this happens?” is a question constantly asked while reviewing the data. Juliet Corbin explains the purpose of constant comparison:

As the researcher moves along with analysis, each incident in the data is compared with other incidents for similarities and differences. Incidents found to be conceptually similar are grouped together under a higher-level descriptive concept such as “flight.” This type of comparison is essential to all analysis because it allows the researcher to differentiate one category/term from another and to identify properties and dimensions specific to that category/term.<sup>123</sup>

If an answer is not found within the data, then additional data must be collected. This is why data collection and analysis happen simultaneously.

### ***Axial Coding***

For some grounded theorists, “Axial coding involves a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories.”<sup>124</sup> This procedure relies more on the analysis of the codes rather than analysis of the data. Charmaz explains the process of axial coding as breaking down codes into dimensions and then putting the dimensions together in new codes: “Axial coding relates categories to subcategories, specifies the properties and dimensions of a category and reassembles the data fractured during initial coding to give coherence to the

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<sup>122</sup> Eriksson and Kovalainen, *Qualitative Methods in Business Research*, 159.

<sup>123</sup> Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research (2008)*, 73.

<sup>124</sup> Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research (1990)*, 96.

emerging analysis.”<sup>125</sup> The procedure for axial coding is similar to open coding: “look for answers to questions such as why or how come, where, when, how and with what results, and in so doing, you are necessarily uncovering relationships among categories by conceptualizing the phenomenon.”<sup>126</sup>

Not all theorists practice axial coding, which is another indication of the disparities among grounded theorists. However, all grounded theorists do strive for the same goal, a richer understanding of the codes and a quest for a core (or central) category. By comparing codes, combining where possible, developing categories, and sub-categories, the process can lead to a core category.

### ***Dimensions***

Dimensions are interchangeable with categories and subcategories. Grbich, in referencing Schatzman, identifies the purpose of dimensional analysis: “Dimensional analysis has replaced coding in order to bring the researcher’s focus back from linear procedures to the data themselves through the use of an explanatory matrix.”<sup>127</sup> For Barbara Bowers, “Discovering and describing the characteristics (dimensions) of the objects (categories) and identifying the salient objects (core categories) in the object world are the first steps in grounded theory analysis.”<sup>128</sup> Dimensional analysis strives to bring a greater focus on coding, “to illumine the properties within its domain as

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<sup>125</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 60.

<sup>126</sup> Eriksson and Kovalainen, *Qualitative Methods in Business Research*, 165.

<sup>127</sup> Grbich, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, 82.

<sup>128</sup> Bowers, “Paths to Knowledge,” 47.



context.”<sup>129</sup> It is through dimensions that a researcher can find more depth to the codes and a richer understanding of the activity under study.

### ***Core Category***

The quest for a central or core category is a second tenet of grounded theory. Codes/Categories “are analytic - not mere labels but conceptualizations of key aspects of the data.”<sup>130</sup> The core category is that around which all of the data revolves. As explored above codes/categories provide insight and direction within the data. Corbin’s criteria for a core category include abstraction, frequency, consistency, and depth:

1. It must be abstract; that is all other major categories can be related to it and placed under it.
2. It must appear frequently in the data. This means that within all, or almost all, cases there are indicators pointing to that concept.
3. It must be logical and consistent with the data. There should be no forcing of data.
4. It should be sufficiently abstract so that it can be used to do research in other substantive areas, leading to the development of a more general theory.
5. It should grow in depth and explanatory power as each of the other categories is related to it through statements of relationship.<sup>131</sup>

The core category for this study will be explored in Chapter Five.

### ***Selective Coding***

With the core category or categories identified, selective coding is the next step in the emergence of a theory: “the process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that

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<sup>129</sup> Schatzman, “Social Organization and Social Process,” 310.

<sup>130</sup> Dey, “Grounded Theory,” 80.

<sup>131</sup> Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research (2008)*, 105.

need further refinement and development.”<sup>132</sup> Selective coding is the process by which events/actions are coded using the terms and concepts identified in early analysis.

Selective coding applies to data collected after open coding is mostly complete and a core category has been determined. As new data arrives, it may not be necessary to do a word-by-word or line-by-line analysis. Rather, selective coding analysis is the search for examples of the core category and its assorted sub-categories and dimensions. Should something be revealed that does not fit within the established core category then it is necessary to return to open coding and to re-evaluate the central code. This is another example of constant comparison. With new data, the emerging theory has to adjust.

### ***Memos***

According to Barbara Bowers, memos serve several functions.<sup>133</sup> Memos are integral to the grounded theory process as they provide an ongoing record of the development of a theory. A memo can include important decisions about selective and theoretical sampling, shifts in the focus of interview questions and tentative hypotheses. Initial memos focus on identifying the dimensions of several categories. Subsequent memos compare relationships among categories, or explore how the relationships varied under different conditions. Over the course of a project, memos evolve to become progressively more abstract and integrated.

Memos served as the foundation for the write-up of this study. Throughout the analytical process, I generated memos that identified paths to follow, definitions of terms, definitions of codes, and general thoughts about something within the data. Memos were personal expressions not to be shared until they have been filtered and processed into a

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<sup>132</sup> Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research (1990)*, 116.

<sup>133</sup> Bowers, “Paths to Knowledge,” 54.

formal paper. Memos were also the means of reminding me about ‘stuff,’ particularly useful when combined with analytical software: “The researcher doesn’t have to guess at what he or she was thinking or wrote in memos months ago. These can be pulled out of the data bank in moments, making the analysis more consistent and the findings more reliable.”<sup>134</sup> When dealing with a large amount of data, particularly data that was constantly being re-examined, it was hard to retain all of the information without some written support.

### ***Matrix***

A useful tool for analysis is the creation of a diagram, a “visual device which also furthers cumulative integration along the full course of the research.”<sup>135</sup> This visual display “aims to link categories with categories to form a substantive theory of action.”<sup>136</sup> Also known as matrixes, diagrams, charts, tables, and other visual tools can help identify connections and patterns not readily apparent in the written text:

Conceptual frameworks are best done graphically, rather than in text. Having to get the entire framework on a single page obliges you to specify the bins that hold the discrete phenomena, to map likely relationships, to divide the variables that are conceptually or functionally distinct and to work with all of the information at once.<sup>137</sup>

Strauss provides a guide for incorporating matrixes into the analysis. First, matrixes should provide a clearer picture of where the research project began and how it has evolved. Second, matrixes must give directions for future exploration. Third, a matrix

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<sup>134</sup> Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research* (2008), 315.

<sup>135</sup> Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, 22.

<sup>136</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 61.

<sup>137</sup> Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994), 22.

should not be a single diagram, but rather a succession of diagrams, each incorporating the preceding one.<sup>138</sup>

For this study, as coding progressed, the matrix became a useful tool to identify linkages unnoticed in writing. They also served to point out when my theory was headed down a weak analytical path. Matrixes were extremely helpful when working with my advisor by providing a simple display of complex ideas.

### ***Sampling***

As analysis progressed, I identified codes revealing theory and dimensions. The next tenet of grounded theory is to collect data using theoretical sampling, which “means seeking and collecting pertinent data to elaborate and refine categories in your emerging theory.”<sup>139</sup> As a theory emerges, the researcher realizes that there are holes in the data as dimensions are incomplete or thinly defined or there are no examples of certain activities or a lack of substantial support for some codes. Any of these situations requires additional data.

Charmaz explains the purpose of theoretical sampling:

To obtain data to help you explicate your categories. When your categories are full, they reflect qualities of your respondents’ experiences and provide a useful analytical handle for understanding them. In short, theoretical sampling pertains only to conceptual and theoretical development; it is not about representing a population or increasing the statistical generalizability of your results.<sup>140</sup>

Theoretical sampling is the search for data that corresponds to the evolving theory. The functions of theoretical sampling include:

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<sup>138</sup> Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, 184.

<sup>139</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 96.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

- ✓ To delineate the properties of a category
- ✓ To check hunches about categories
- ✓ To saturate properties of a category
- ✓ To distinguish between categories
- ✓ To clarify relationships between emerging categories
- ✓ To identify variation in the process.<sup>141</sup>

New data collected, based on the emerging theory, has one of two purposes. The first purpose is to enhance the theory, strengthening it with examples and details. The alternative purpose is to reveal weaknesses in the theory, requiring a review of the data comparing it to the new information resulting in the construction of a stronger theory. Either approach should lead to a successful grounded theory study.

### ***Saturation***

As a researcher conducts theoretical sampling, there comes a time when no new information is collected. The explanations and stories sound the same. This is saturation: “that point from which the researcher cannot discover new dimensions in the data being collected.”<sup>142</sup> Glaser warns the researcher that:

Saturation is not seeing the same pattern over and over again. It is the conceptualization of comparisons of these incidents which yield different properties of the pattern, until no new properties of the pattern emerge. This yields the conceptual density that when integrated into hypotheses make up the body of the generated grounded theory with theoretical completeness.<sup>143</sup>

Saturation is an important benchmark for grounded theory, as it is the point when coding and data collection can cease.<sup>144</sup> Saturation is when the researcher has rich codes, thick

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>142</sup> Bowers, “Paths to Knowledge,” 48.

<sup>143</sup> Barney G. Glaser, *The Grounded Theory Perspective: Conceptualization Contrasted with Description* (Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press, 2001), 191.

<sup>144</sup> Payne, “Grounded Theory,” 79.

with dimensions; a grounded matrix that provides insight into the emergent theory; and a core category rich in description and depth that has been tested against old and new data.

With saturation, the theory can be generated.

### **Developing Theory**

The final step of analysis is the collation of data, codes, diagrams, and memos into a comprehensive and unifying theory. For grounded theorists, like myself, who follow Strauss, the generation of theory centers on the core category. Corbin identifies theory as interpretive and “entails not only condensing raw data into concepts but also arranging the concepts into a logical, systematic explanatory scheme.”<sup>145</sup> According to Charmaz, interpretive theory aims to

1. Conceptualize the studied phenomenon to understand it in abstract terms.
2. Articulate theoretical claims pertaining to scope, depth, power, and relevance.
3. Acknowledge subjectivity in theorizing and hence the role of negotiation, dialogue, understanding.
4. Offer an imaginative interpretation.<sup>146</sup>

An interpretation of the data is a question of understanding relationships. This particular study is about connections: audience members connecting with space, with each other and with the performance. The conditions, strategies, and consequences have been assembled to generate a theory appropriate to the data collected.

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<sup>145</sup> Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research* (2008), 56.

<sup>146</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 127.

## The Write-Up

The write-up for a grounded theory study is a challenge in that it is hard to demonstrate the parallel operations in a linear format. Although there is advice on how to proceed with the report, there also appears to be considerable flexibility.

One example, suggested by Charmaz, is that the organization of the report should be by category:

Use your major categories for headings of sections. Grounded theory gives you a decided advantage when developing a completed report. Your categories ground readers in your topic and direct them through your analysis. They foreshadow the content and emphasize the logic of the piece.<sup>147</sup>

Although this process seems to make sense, it is too generalized. A second example by Shelia Payne provides a different organizational structure, but once again suggests nothing concrete:

In presenting a grounded theory, it is important to explain the process of analysis (as in any methodological account) and demonstrate how the core category and subcategories are derived from the data. The new theory is then presented with sufficient detail of the constituents of the core category to be understandable, together with the relationship of the core category to other categories.<sup>148</sup>

With such flexibility, I have chosen to follow an organizational structure that represents my grounded theory study and is found in Chapter Four. My report begins with definitions of terms developed throughout my analysis. Then I present my matrix, highlighting my core category, with conditions, tactics, and consequences. The final section of my write-up is my explanation of my theory, highlighting the dimensions of my categories.

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>148</sup> Payne, "Grounded Theory," 85.

## The Quest for Validity

One of the major complaints about qualitative methodologies in general and grounded theory in particular is the question of validation. Practitioners of grounded theory methodology are wholly aware of this issue and make a committed effort to demonstrate validation. One method grounded theory uses is the parallel operations in which data analysis and data collection happen at the same time, striving for relationships among concepts.<sup>149</sup> With relationships verified through out the study, there is no need to wait until the end of the study to create a quantitative research project to test the theory. It has passed one close examination already.

Corbin addresses the validity issue by admitting that even with the best of intentions a theory generated by a grounded theory study is only one interpretation. The participants' and researchers' experiences allow for many plausible interpretations of the data.<sup>150</sup> According to Glaser, validity is a question of fit, work, relevance, and modifiability:

If a grounded theory is carefully induced from the substantive area, its categories and their properties will fit the realities under study in the eyes of the subjects, practitioners and researchers in the area. If a grounded theory works, it will explain the major variations in behavior in the area with respect to the processing of the main concerns of the subjects. If it fits and works, the grounded theory has achieved relevance. The theory itself should not be written in stone or as a "pet," it should be readily modifiable when new data presents variations in emergent properties and categories. The theory is neither verified nor thrown out; it is modified to accommodate by integration the new concepts.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds., *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998), 161.

<sup>150</sup> Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research* (2008), 302.

<sup>151</sup> Glaser, *Emergence Vs Forcing*, 15.



One of the pitfalls of qualitative studies is that categories are highly subjective and open to interpretation. Charmaz suggests there are other pitfalls that can affect the validity of a study:

- ✓ Premature closure of analytic categories
- ✓ Trite or redundant categories
- ✓ Over-reliance on overt statements for elaborating and checking categories
- ✓ Unfocused or unspecified categories<sup>152</sup>

It is the responsibility of the researcher and an adjudicating body to determine if a study fails any of these tests.

To aid in determining the appropriateness of a grounded theory study, Charmaz presents a succinct list - credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness:

1. Credibility consists of several aspects: the researcher's own familiarity with the research topic and setting, sufficient data for claims that are made in the research, and systematic analysis development between categories and observations.
2. Originality refers to the categories developed in the analysis: are they new, do they have significance, do they challenge, refine and change the current ideas and concepts?
3. Resonance refers to the researcher's ability to draw novel meanings and analytic interpretations.
4. Finally, usefulness refers to the practical aspects of the usefulness of the research results.<sup>153</sup>

Following this explanation of the process of doing a grounded theory study, it is valuable to share some of the stories collected throughout this study, prior to reviewing the theory. The theory will not reveal the direct and personal experiences of individuals, which are as just as fascinating to me. Chapter Four highlights theatre lobby experiences as reported by a number of respondents who participated in this study.

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<sup>152</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 107.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 528.

## **CHAPTER 3 – THE THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE**

### **Introduction**

As noted in Chapter 1, one way to assess “originality” of the categories developed in grounded theory analysis is to examine the relationship between them and “current ideas and concepts.” Do the categories “challenge, refine and change” existing notions regarding the phenomenon? One goal of this study is to provide this assessment in its concluding chapter. In order to accomplish that goal, this chapter provides a summary of published theory on the phenomenon of the lobby in general and the theatre lobby in particular. For organizational purposes, I have sorted the information by discipline and in chronological order, when possible. Within the broad summary of this material, I have highlighted the writings of two individuals who have generated significant commentary about the theatre lobby and performance preparation, Richard Schechner and Martin Bloom.

### **Architectural Studies**

The term architectural studies describes the exploration and study of architecture and interior design. For purposes of this study, architectural studies includes material

from architecture students,<sup>154</sup> working architects, architectural scholars and other appropriate texts.

### **Students of Architecture**

The theory that the audience engages in some kind of transformation is not restricted to theatre scholars. Master of Architecture thesis “Transitional Preparatory Space” by Donald Deal offers insight into this significant function of the lobby. Deal’s objective is to provide some design guidance on the area that “occurs between spaces, primarily exterior and interior.”<sup>155</sup> He developed the term Transitional Preparatory Space (TPS) to describe this area. He considers the TPS important “because the design of it must be executed in such a way as to not only translate one physically, but also to prepare one for the function to which he is being directed.”<sup>156</sup> Although Deal’s text was published in 1974, I have not found any contemporary use of the phrase “Transitional Preparatory Space” or the acronym TPS.

A second issue Deal raises in his thesis is the challenge of measuring the TPS. Deal asserts that “[t]he TPS can only be sensed or felt. The quality of the TPS is evaluated through the senses, but its effect is upon the emotions[.]” This quality, Deal maintains, “Cannot be readily rationalized, measured or depicted.”<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Architectural studies may be a new field to some readers. For clarification, a Master of Architecture degree is a professional degree that is one method for becoming an architect. An architectural thesis is the culmination of a student’s research. Submission of the thesis represents the completion of the final requirement for the degree and may be presented as graphic representations, a written work, or physical forms.

<sup>155</sup> Deal, “Transitional Preparatory Spaces,” 1.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 2.

Architecture student Bonita Roche, in her Master of Architecture thesis, “Contemporary Theatrical Space: Lobby Design” implies that the transitional function of the theatre lobby is the consequence of theatre moving indoors: “a way of bringing one in from the real staging ground of the street to the illusionary realm of the theater became necessary.”<sup>158</sup>

David Cherry, in “Environment and Theatre: An Architectural Study,” claims the function of the lobby is to assist the audience to his or her place: “The lobby is also the organizing element for the audience members. There the audience member must discover the route to his/her respective place for the performance.”<sup>159</sup> It is unclear whether Cherry is referring to a literal application of place, meaning section, row, and seat, or an interpretative translation of place, meaning the audience’s place as an observer, participant, and respondent. If the latter, Cherry, like Roche, is acknowledging the importance of the audience transitioning into the auditorium and into the world of the play.

In the same thesis, Cherry expresses concern that if a lobby is not well designed and organized the audience may become frustrated, lost, or simply confused, which “may eventually hinder the patron’s ability to enjoy the performance.”<sup>160</sup> Cherry has the expectation that the theatre space can have an impact on the reception of the performance. His concerns are not limited to pre-show, but include intermission as well. Cherry fears that if the customer service in the lobby is not adequate, the audience may

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<sup>158</sup> Roche, “Contemporary Theatrical Space,” 2.

<sup>159</sup> Cherry, “Environment and Theatre,” 63.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

become sufficiently upset that their response interferes with their enjoyment of the performance.<sup>161</sup>

Carolyn Labiner, in “The Segue from City to Stage: Facades, Marquees, Entries, Lobbies in New York Theater,” an historical study of Broadway theatres, suggests that the transition function of the theatre lobby is required for the audience to prepare for experiences outside traditional comfort zones:

As theater became more removed from the world just outside the door and as we used it to extend our experiences beyond those of our immediate neighborhood, more attention to the transition between was required.<sup>162</sup>

Labiner applies her theatre-as-neighborhood metaphor to suggest an appropriate size for the lobby. If there is too much room, then the audience will not become a collective, but rather remain solitary individuals.<sup>163</sup> A secondary issued in regards to the design of the lobby is Labiner’s theory that audiences want to see each other: “The gathering places are enormous but unfocused. The intention seems to have been to provide platforms to view other patrons. This distances the members of the audience from one another and isolates them.”<sup>164</sup> Labiner believes that audiences want to see each other and good lobby design is necessary for this to happen.

### **Architects – Social Theory**

Cinema lobbies, like theatre lobbies, have to handle large crowds, sell concessions, and guide the audience to their seats in a timely fashion. Given these

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 97

<sup>162</sup> Labiner, “The Segue from City to Stage,” 3.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

similarities, I explored theories dealing with movie houses. As early as 1927, a published text considered the cinema lobby, with attention on transforming the crowd. Although others have suggested that theatre aims to transform individuals into a community, the author of *American Theatres of Today* stated that a well-designed lobby could transform a “pushing, complaining mob” into “a throng of joyous, contented people.”<sup>165</sup> According to Sexton, this goal would be achieved “[b]y giving such interest to the design that the minds of the people are kept off the fact that they are waiting. Their interest in the details of the design may even tend to enliven their desire to gain admittance to other parts of the house.”<sup>166</sup>

Hannelore Schubert also acknowledged the crowd in the lobby area in *The Modern Theater; Architecture, Stage Design, Lighting*. However, he focused on the relationship between space and connectivity among the audience. Too little space and individuals cannot move around; therefore, conversations will die. Too much space and people will not reach out to others, and conversation will never start. Schubert’s theory is that there must be contact within the audience to facilitate contact with the performers. “The foyer offers space for discussion, and a social meeting point,”<sup>167</sup> and the purpose of the social meeting point is to strengthen the contact between the audience and the performer in the auditorium.

Like Schubert, Roderick Ham in *Theatre Planning* focuses on social interactions in the lobby space. From an historical perspective, Ham suggests that social interaction

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<sup>165</sup> Randolph Williams Sexton, *American Theatres of Today* (New York: Architectural Book Publishing Co., inc, 1927), 18.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Schubert, *The Modern Theater; Architecture, Stage Design, Lighting*, 84.

means the audience performs for each other, even suggesting that the social performance might take precedence over the onstage performance.<sup>168</sup> Architect Ham believes that the building is integral to social interaction: “A visit to a place of entertainment emphasized the stratified structure of society. The building itself stressed the segregation of society into classes.”<sup>169</sup> Unfortunately, Ham notes that using the building as a social center could lead to a disconnection among patrons, which may be counter to the goal of using the lobby to bring the audience together.

In *Contemporary Theater: Evolution and Design*, architecture scholar Christos Athanopoulos suggests that good theatre design will take into consideration the needs of the audience in terms of convenience and comfort. The focus of his interest is opera, and he justifies his concerns based on the length of performances: “Because most operatic performances are lengthy, everything connected with the audience, the foyers, the seats - must be carefully designed for convenience and comfort.”<sup>170</sup> Once again, due to the length of the performance, intermissions provide an important opportunity for the audience to take a break. However, Athanopoulos believes intermission serves a second function. With the development of the subscription system, in which audiences share the same schedule, i.e. First Friday, or Second Matinee, audiences are often comprised of the same people, regardless of the production. It is Athanopoulos’ theory that this process has resulted in the theatre lobby being the “center for social intercourse.”<sup>171</sup> Therefore, he contends that the intermission is often more important than the performance.

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<sup>168</sup> Ham, *Theatre Planning*, 213.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Athanopoulos, *Contemporary Theater*, 234.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

In *Buildings for the Performing Arts: A Design and Development Guide*,

Architect Ian Appleton reiterates the idea that theatre is a special occasion, particularly in the realm of social intercourse. He purports that good lobby design can facilitate social interaction:

The foyer provides the means of access to all parts of the auditorium and should have facilities for the public to sit, talk, walk about and meet friends. These social aims can include also a legitimate level of self-display and formal promenading to a general awareness of those attending the performance.<sup>172</sup>

Appleton suggests that the need for social connections include an element of “being seen” and may be a concern to contemporary theatregoers.

### **Architects – The Lobby Experience**

Kevin A. Kelly and James B. Gatton, two architects at CRS Serrine, created a guidebook for governmental entities entitled *Large Multi-Purpose Halls for the Performing Arts: Issues and Concepts to Consider Before Design*. One of the key issues addressed was the total theatre-going experience, which included the approach to the building, the social interaction pre-show, the performance, intermission, and post-show reflection.<sup>173</sup> To provide for all of these needs, Kelly and Gatton suggest that the design of the lobby should be dramatic:

Consider the audience as participants in a festive event during the intermission. There is a feeling of excitement in being part of a group. Create open spaces for awareness of people’s movement during intermission. Feature elevators for more than the handicapped and older patrons, but for the dramatic view.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Appleton, *Buildings for the Performing Arts*, 162.

<sup>173</sup> Kelly and Gatton, *Large Multi-Purpose Halls for the Performing Arts*, 36.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.



Kelly and Gatton's concept of the total experience includes opportunities for the audience to craft their own performance, for each other.

For some architecture theorists, the feeling of anticipation is part of the theatre-going experience. Architect Hugh Hardy in *Building Type Basics for Performing Arts Facilities* suggests that the grandiose lobby can facilitate the sense of anticipation:

Arrival in the public spaces should intensify the sense of anticipation... Audiences come not only to see a performance but also to socialize, drink, snack, schmooze, and see who's who. Therefore, public spaces, both outside and inside, need to be generous.<sup>175</sup>

Hardy's call for enough space to accommodate the social functions of the theatre lobby reveals his interpretation of the theatre-going experience in which all audience areas are included: "The great fun of attending live performance is seeing other people in the audience. Staircases, level changes, overlooks, and transparent walls in public spaces all contribute to audience enjoyment by making people-watching possible."<sup>176</sup> Hardy suggests that audience social areas are integral to the totality of the theatre-going experience, which implies that the outside of the auditorium is as important as the inside.

Michael Mell in *Building Better Theaters*, shares Hardy's theory that the lobby is part of the theatre-going experience:

Aside from the practical services it provides, the lobby represents the first phase of the theater-going experience. It is the buffer between the real world and the magical world of the theater, and where you can meet friends and share the anticipation of the performance to come.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Hardy, *Building Type Basics for Performing Arts Facilities*, 2.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>177</sup> Mell, *Building Better Theaters*, 125.

Mell's definition of the theatre-going experience includes meeting friends and anticipating the performance, as well as the transition from the world outside into the world of the play.

### **Martin Bloom**

One architectural text, *Building Type Basics for Performing Arts Facilities*, is especially significant for this study because of its extensive focus on the theatre lobby. Author Martin Bloom identified one lobby function beyond basic audience services, i.e. concessions, bathrooms, ticketing, etc. For Bloom, the primary function of the lobby was to prepare the audience emotionally: "Having unburdened oneself of coats and parcels, one should be able to move freely into the highly structured environment which little by little will prepare one for the event to come."<sup>178</sup> This event is one of significance and occasion for all parties involved, according to Bloom, "for those who perform in it and for those who attend it, it always provides immediacy and, under the right circumstances, a sense of occasion."<sup>179</sup>

Time spent waiting should not be wasted, says Bloom; rather there should be something for the audience to do prior to the performance:

If there is time to wander there should be interesting things to contemplate - perhaps images of past events in this theatre, perhaps something of the history of the building itself or the cultural climate that brought it about. Elements that link the current production to some larger context will enhance the effectiveness of the impending event.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Bloom, *Accommodating the Lively Arts*, 15.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

Bloom contends that understanding the building or company's history will potentially add to the effect of the performance on the participant.

Bloom also appreciates the potential that the theatre lobby has to transform the audience from a collection of individuals into a theatre audience:

Aided by the ambience of the lobby, the individual members of the audience can be transformed into that most prized component of the theatrical event - an assembly of expectant, attentive, and responsive witnesses to what is about to transpire just beyond the doors to the auditorium.<sup>181</sup>

An issue of *World Theater* that focused on theatre architecture combines opinions of both theatre and architectural studies. In 1958, a survey of well-known international theatre designers, architects, professors, producers, and theatre managers undertaken for the *World Theatre* magazine explored the value of the theatre lobby. The primary focus of inquiry was the transition of the audience from the world outside into the world of the play, "Between the moment when one decides to go to the theatre and the moment when the curtain rises a series of psychological barriers are crossed, of a kind which helps to put the spectator as much as possible in the right frame of mind."<sup>182</sup> The presumption, at that time, was that good design could influence the users of the design. German Architect and designer Fritz Bornemann suggested that in addition to preparing for the performance, the transition should also facilitate social connections:

The sequence provided by the entrance halls, cloakrooms, staircases and lobbies leading toward the auditorium, and, inversely, from the auditorium to the foyers during the interval, should have a scheme of development which would help to establish first an atmosphere of concentration and an

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>182</sup> Rene Hainaux, "Editorial," *World Theatre* 7, no. 2 (1958): 83.

‘inner gravity’ and then the encouragement of conversation during the interval.<sup>183</sup>

Raymond Cogniat summarized the goal of the transition into the theatre, by passing through the theatre lobby, “One thing is certain that at that moment the spectator has nothing in common any more with the person he was when he arrived.”<sup>184</sup>

## Theatre Studies

Some architects and architectural scholars believe in the transformation function of the theatre lobby. They also accept the social function of the theatre lobby, particularly in that it can aid in an audience member’s transition. Like architectural scholars, theatre scholars have given some attention to the audience in research projects. In general, most of the studies were quantitative studies of the theatre audience’s response to a performance. Scholar Frances Jo Grossman-Ziegler, in her dissertation “Theatre/ Story/ Audience: The Audience in Contemporary Theatre” explored the audience’s reaction to non-linear, non-traditional plays using surveys. Grossman-Ziegler supports the theory that an audience is comprised of individuals, unified by the performance: “One enters theatre as an individual, but separate spectators are transformed into collective community - or the audience, when drama becomes theatre.”<sup>185</sup>

Historian Donald C. Mullin, in *The Development of the Playhouse; a Survey of Theatre Architecture from the Renaissance to the Present*, presents an historical review of theatres from the Greeks to late 1960’s. What was important to Mullin is the issue of

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<sup>183</sup> Cogniat, “The Theatre Facade Entrances and Auditorium,” 97.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 99

<sup>185</sup> Frances Jo Grossman-Ziegler, “Theatre/ Story/ Audience: The Audience in Contemporary Theatre” (Ph.D. Diss., Emory University, 1985), 2.

space, particularly during intermission: “It is a poverty-stricken modern arts center indeed which cannot boast of a graciously proportioned lobby in which most of the patrons can find room during intermissions.”<sup>186</sup> Presumably, Mullin was insuring the audience’s needs were being addressed at a time when large performing arts centers were being built in major cities, modeled after the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC. The change in theatre building design during this construction boom was in contrast to previous building design philosophies: “The new theatre centers are spacious and magnificent to a degree not dreamed of a generation ago.”<sup>187</sup>

In *A Good Night Out: Popular Theatre: Audience, Class, and Form*, author John McGrath attempts to describe a specific audience. Applying a Marxist lens, McGrath segregates English audiences into the elite, those who attend the national theatres and the West End, and the workers, those who are inclined towards events where they can enjoy a pint or two with their entertainment. McGrath’s theory is that theatre is about the social, “a very complex social event, with a long history and many elements, each element also having a long and independent history.”<sup>188</sup>

According to McGrath, theatre is a social event with a number of rituals that are part of the whole theatre-going experience. Furthermore, these rituals and other aspects of the experience have to be examined as well:

the nature of the audience, the nature, social, geographical and physical, of the venue, the price of tickets, the availability of tickets, the nature and placing of the pre-publicity, where the nearest pub is, and the relationships

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<sup>186</sup> Mullin, *The Development of the Playhouse*, 163.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> McGrath, *A Good Night Out*, 24

between all these considerations themselves and of each with what is happening on stage.<sup>189</sup>

McGrath's call for research into more than the performance is an attempt to expand theatre studies to include activities and materials outside of the auditorium.

Noted audience reception theorist Herbert Blau, in *The Audience*, agrees with the concept that theatre is a communal experience. However, he also notes that an audience is composed of individuals, each with his or her own reactions and private response to the performance. Blau's experience is that an audience is created by the performance rather than for the performance:

The audience ... is not so much a mere congregation of people as a body of thought and desire. It does not exist before the play but is initiated or precipitated by it; it is not an entity to begin with but a consciousness constructed. The audience is what happens when, performing the signs and passwords of a play, something postulates itself and unfolds in response.<sup>190</sup>

This theory suggests that the theatre lobby may not be part of the equation when transforming individuals into an audience. Blau does not address what other theorists have said about intermission being an opportunity for social connections.

*Theatre Audiences* by Susan Bennett is a significant text that played a part in bringing reception theory to the forefront. Although she focuses on the audience's response to the performance, Bennett acknowledges that the audience does not attend theatre in a vacuum. When interacting with the performance, the audience has a role to play. This role has two sides: one is social, being with others, and the other is private, having individual responses. According to Bennett, the audience starts playing these

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Blau, *The Audience*, 25.

roles before the curtain rises.<sup>191</sup> Therefore, the theatre lobby serves a social function: “The very existence of the foyer emphatically points to the social construction of theatre.”<sup>192</sup> Additionally, Bennett is one of the few scholars to address the lobby as a revenue generator:

Cloakrooms, restaurants, and bars are the most usual services, but increasingly stores or counters selling theatre-related goods have been incorporated. Clearly both mainstream institutions and smaller theatres welcome and need the extra money this can raise and, for the audience, it provides material evidence of their support and cultural taste.<sup>193</sup>

Bennett suggests that, in addition to the financial function, the foyer can also serve as a physical manifestation of the audience’s participation in the cultural community.

Performance theorist Marvin Carlson, in *Places of Performance: The Semiotics of Theatre Architecture*, explores the lobby as a transitional space, comparing the preparation of the audience to the preparation of the performers:

Actors get into costume and makeup and pursue whatever physical or psychological preparation they consider necessary ... The spectators make more modest but similar adjustments, checking their coats, chatting with others preparing to share the same event, reading programs, or in the great opera houses, strolling about the lavish public spaces, removing themselves, as all these activities encourage them to do, from their concerns outside the theatre, to focus upon their impending duties and pleasures as participants in the theatrical experience.<sup>194</sup>

According to Carlson, as participants in the theatrical experience, the audience needs to make passage into the auditorium, which is a transition; they are transformed from

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<sup>191</sup> Bennett, *Theatre Audiences*, 125.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>194</sup> Marvin A. Carlson, *Places of Performance: The Semiotics of Theatre Architecture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 132-4.

individuals with worldly concerns, into an audience with the performance the center of their attention.

To support Carlson's theory of transformation in *Theatre Semiotics: Signs of Life*, Carlson identifies one process that may transition the audience. Carlson suggests that the audience may prepare for the performance by reading materials placed in the lobby, in particular theatre reviews: "More detailed and more specific guidance is given when theatres display on their premises entire reviews or newspaper stories, to be read by prospective patrons, or even more significantly, by those actually attending the performance."<sup>195</sup> For Carlson, these reviews are more than just a newspaper article; they tell the audience what to expect, potentially affecting the response to the performance.

*Space in Performance: Making Meaning in the Theatre*, by performance studies scholar Gay McAuley, examines the relationship between theatre-maker and the audience, and the space where these two groups meet. One of the underlying themes of *Space in Performance* is that theatre is about the social connection. Like Blau, McAuley supports the concept that audiences are created by the performance, not before the performance:

Spectators go to the theatre as individuals, or more frequently as members of subgroups (couples, families, groups of friends, even teacher and students) and *through the process of responding* to the performance they become a collectivity, a group with a particular quality that can be perceived by the actors and differentiated from other similar groups.<sup>196</sup>

In contrast to Blau, McAuley believes that architecture can be part of the process of creating an audience. In addition, other aspects of going to the theatre can contribute to

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<sup>195</sup> Marvin A. Carlson, *Theatre Semiotics: Signs of Life* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 24.

<sup>196</sup> McAuley, *Space in Performance*, 250.



the audience's transition, such as "the socializing that may take place before the show and in the interval (in the auditorium itself or in the other social spaces in the theatre), the crush around the bar for drinks, the curtain call at the end of performance."<sup>197</sup> Audience social areas are important to McAuley's concept of the theatre-going experience in which the individual is both part of a group and separate from the group: "The experience of the individual spectator, while always personal, is also occurring at group and collective levels."<sup>198</sup>

In *The Shapes of Our Theatre*, scenic artist Jo Mielziner suggests that the lobby has many practical purposes. He even suggests that the lobby should be divided into two distinct rooms, one to meet the physical needs of the audience, and the second to be a "place where everyone can gather and prepare himself in anticipation of the drama."<sup>199</sup>

### **Richard Schechner**

Performance theorist and practitioner Richard Schechner has given significant attention to the functions of the theatre lobby. In the text *Performance Theory* Schechner argues that the audience attending the theatre is the same as the dramatic structure of a play; both involve "gathering, performing, and dispersing."<sup>200</sup> According to Schechner, the audience has agreed to witness the production and to ignore the non-performance related distractions. As part of the agreement, the theatre-makers will include

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>199</sup> Jo Mielziner, *The Shapes of Our Theatre*, ed. Ray C. Smith, 1st ed. (New York: C. N. Potter; distributed by Crown Publishers, 1970), 112.

<sup>200</sup> Schechner, *Performance Theory*, 169.

intermissions to give “the spectators a chance to see themselves.”<sup>201</sup> For Schechner, the social gathering is integral to the theatre-going experience.

Schechner is one of the few scholars to examine the intermission:

Dramas written for the proscenium usually include one or two intermissions because it’s necessary for patrons to see each other, evaluate the product they’ve purchased, drink, smoke and re-experience the thrill and surprise of the rising curtain.<sup>202</sup>

During intermission, according to Schechner, the audience gets to reconnect with each other and to review the performance before returning to their seats. The evaluation of the performance is part of the theatre-going experience and this evaluation begins almost immediately.

A second aspect of the intermission that Schechner discusses is the universality of food and drink:

All over the world, performances are accompanied by eating and drinking. In New Guinea, Australia, and Africa, feasting is at the very center of theater; in modern western theater, a show without something to eat or drink at intermission or just before or after the theater is unusual.<sup>203</sup>

Schechner implies that food and drink are more than just a revenue stream for the theatre; they are part of the ritual of theatre.

As a theatre-maker, Schechner incorporated intermission into his productions in an effort to control, by integration, the theatre-going experience. One example of this integration occurred during a production of *Mother Courage* with The Performance Group:

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 170.

A full meal was served during intermission - during this break in the narration the performance was carried on by other means, by mingling performers and audience, by encouraging spectators to use parts of the space otherwise and at other times reserved for the performers.<sup>204</sup>

Historically, as a working artist, Schechner attempted to put into practice his own theories about intermission and social gatherings.

A second function of the theatre lobby presented by Schechner was to assist in the preparation of the performance. With The Performance Group, while exploring environmental theatre, Schechner presented performances where the audience was expected to move around during the scene, shifting focus and changing perspective. To prepare the audience for this type of performance, Schechner would lead the audience through a maze:

Spectators entered the garage by a small door on Wooster Street, and found themselves on a steep flight of stairs leading to the second floor. On the second floor, spectators walked into a long rectangular black room, hung up their coats, and proceeded through the maze which led spectators to a trapdoor in the floor and down a winding staircase into Jerry's environment.<sup>205</sup>

This story of an audience transition is an example of physical movement used as performance preparation. The reason for this process, according to Schechner, was to “introduce the spectator to the nature of the performance.”<sup>206</sup>

## Theatre Practice

Several scholars have shared their theories on the purpose of the theatre lobby. Some scholar-artists, like Schechner, were able to put their theories into practice in some

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>205</sup> McNamara, Rojo, and Schechner, *Theatres, Spaces, Environments*, 112.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 102.

format. Jill Dolan discussed her desire to explore gender in performance in the *Kenyon Review*. For a production of *Etta Jenks*, director Dolan wanted to prepare her audience for the performance. Applying an interactive model, Dolan set up a number of pre-show games and activities in the lobby billed as “a ‘pornography do’s and don’t midway’ and a ‘museum of the gaze.’”<sup>207</sup> She included a dildo ring toss, mock reporters, posters, and handouts, all in an effort to get the audience ready for the performance. As Dolan reported, the response to the production was not as expected. Dolan shared that during post-show talkbacks audience members admitted to being confused by the cross-dressing, cross-gendered actors and characters. Because the production also included considerable non-traditional elements, without additional research, evaluating the effect of this particular lobby experience is not possible.

Julian Hilton in *Performance* suggests that the audience must transition in order to alter their consciousness: “The passage though this threshold we may call *tuning in*. I have frequently found that it takes about twenty minutes of stage time for this threshold to be crossed, and not until then am I fully tuned in to the signals being transmitted to me.”<sup>208</sup> Perhaps not every audience member needs a full 20 minutes to “tune in.” Nevertheless, according to Hilton some time must be allotted for a transition. If the physical building or the theatre lobby cannot fulfill this function, then it must occur during the performance.

William Condee writing to *theatre-makers* in *Theatrical Space: A Guide for Directors and Designers*, warns that the first encounter with the theatre space cannot be

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<sup>207</sup> Jill Dolan, “Gender, Sexuality and “my Life” in the (university) Theater,” *The Kenyon Review* XV, no. 2 (1993): 197.

<sup>208</sup> Hilton, *Performance*, 133.

repeated: “Experience the auditorium by entering the theatre as the audience does - through the front doors and lobby. In most cases, time and money do not allow alteration of these areas, but nonetheless be aware of the audience’s first impressions of the theatre building.”<sup>209</sup> Condee is suggesting that the first impression is a lasting one, and may have an impact on the reception of the performance.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have summarized the prevailing theories about theatre lobbies, from the perspectives of scholars and artist/scholars from architectural studies, theatre studies, cultural studies and performance studies. Although there is no specific unifying philosophy as to the function of the theatre lobby, there seems to be a consensus that the theatre lobby can have an impact on the audience’s response to the performance and their theatre-going experience. As explored, the lobby has the potential to fulfill many functions, including serving as a social center, to assist in generating revenue, to perform as a transitional passage and to aid in performance preparation.

The theories related to the transition function of the theatre lobby suggest two types of transitions. One is the transition from a collection of single individuals into a cohesive unit known as an audience. The second transition is to shift from the outside world into the world of the play. All of the theories explored in this chapter could fit in one of these categories. The theories listed in this chapter developed over time using a range of methodologies. Some of the theories were created from opinion, personal experiences, or other indirect evidence. Most did not involve the audience directly, except in studies about responses to the performance. If the audience was surveyed

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<sup>209</sup> Condee, *Theatrical Space*, 3.

before a performance or at intermission, the responses were turned into percent figures. No theorist focused exclusively on the lobby experience or conducted individual audience interviews. The next chapter will explore some of these topics, but from the perspective of the audience.

## CHAPTER 4 – THE AUDIENCE’S PERSPECTIVE

### Introduction

This research project is an examination of the theatre lobby experience from the viewpoint of the audience. As outlined in Chapter Two, data was collected through directed interviews and analyzed using grounded theory methodology. Before exploring the analysis and emergent theory, I want to present highlights of the personal reflections of some of the respondents. As these are individual comments, the participant can contradict what others have said, sometimes even contradicting him or herself. Collecting stories from individuals who are fully dimensional, with a range of perspectives and opinions, results in multiple viewpoints on the lobby experience. Consider this the data in a relatively raw form prior to coding and analysis.

Each interview began with a simple “tell me about a memorable experience you have had in a theatre lobby.” The rest of the interview was an exploration of the respondent’s memories and then an investigation into other lobby experiences revealed over the course of the interview. Each respondent led the conversation; although I had a few questions to turn to if the conversation waned. After the early interviews, I explored some topics in subsequent interviews as per grounded theory procedures. The categories

and dimensions were developing and I wanted to discover what others thought about certain topics.

## **Theatre-going Experiences**

For some audience members, a theatre-going experience is more than just seeing a show; it can include activities that happen before arrival at the theatre or after the performance. The theatre-going experience can also involve the emotional states of anticipation or disappointment. The diversity of responses to the theatre-going experience may indicate an individualized and private event for the participant.

Hardy, Mell, and Bloom, as summarized in Chapter Three, suggest that the theatre-going experience is about the anticipation. For Michelle,<sup>210</sup> the anticipation was reflected in her conversation with her daughter about the theatre:

We talked about what a wonderful day we were going to have out together as mother and daughter and I was talking about how beautiful the theatre is inside - she has never been here before until today. We talked about the architecture in the theatre and I couldn't wait for her to see it.<sup>211</sup>

Michelle's story is an example of the theatre-going experience starting well before show time.

When describing the exterior of a theatre complex, Adam suggests that the exterior decoration affected his theatre-going experience:

On the upper level there are the fountains outside the Lincoln Center. I'd say of all of [the theatres in New York City] that is probably the most picturesque of them. I think that it kind of sets the tone for the performance, the courtyard area itself, with the fountains and big glass wall. Because whenever I go to the Lincoln Center to see something, I

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<sup>210</sup>To protect the identity of the respondents in this study, all names have been changed.

<sup>211</sup> Michelle, interview by author, tape recording, St. Louis, MO, September 25, 2005.



always feel like I need to dress up a little more or it's a little fancier than going to see something down at the Shubert.<sup>212</sup>

In addition to enjoying the fountain, Adam's theatre-going experience may have begun as he was getting dressed, as he makes decisions about dress based on the theatre building he is going to visit. Later in his interview, Adam commented that the types of productions the Lincoln Center presented were a grade above some of the theatres in New York. Is this assessment because of the theatre company's production values or is it because of the theatre building? For some, an answer may not be possible as the theatre-going experience is about a whole and they may not be able to segregate aspects of their experience.

Tonya's theatre-going experience is reflected in the activities she engages in outside of the performance:

My favorite lobby ever, and this isn't a theatre, but it's where Cleveland Orchestra plays at Severance Hall. It's so beautiful and so wonderful, it's all marble. It's got like many floors and all these old fixtures and huge staircases and murals. And there is, when you step out to the place where one smokes, right outside has one of the most gorgeous views of the city... And that really being there in the theatre even more than being in the actual space where they perform, I looked forward to so much. David and I got to go last time downstairs and you'd go and get like cappuccino beforehand. It was such a life I wanted to be a part of it. And I think that had more to do with the lobby than it had to do with the theatre itself.<sup>213</sup>

Tonya's imagination helped to create a personalized theatre-going experience.

In exploring the theatre-going experience with Eric, the question came up about when the performance begins. Eric discussed dinner theatre in comparison to other forms of theatre. Dinner theatre audiences spend up to two hours prior to the performance

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<sup>212</sup> Adam, interview.

<sup>213</sup> Tonya, interview by author, tape recording, Columbia, MO, November 5, 2005.

experiencing the theatre. In most situations, the dinner takes place in the same room as the performance, so does the show start when the audience is first seated? Eric explained the difference for him:

You know, it kind of depends upon whether the performers are the servers. Because if the performers are the servers, then as far as I'm concerned the show's already started. If they're not performers and they're just servers, it's not a show yet.<sup>214</sup>

Pursuing this line of thought, I asked Eric to define 'show': "Any contact with any of the people who are going to appear on stage. 'Cause if someone is standing out in the lobby in costume, you betcha. That starts it. The show begins there." Eric develops a relationship with the servers, if they are also performers: "For me it's almost like reading a bio. 'So, where you from?' You know, and I'll visit with them. And for me, that's kind of almost an important part of it. If I can do that, I like that."<sup>215</sup>

In an attempt to bring greater clarity to the starting point of the show, I asked Eric, "So the show does not necessarily start with the script?" He replied, "It may be. Depends upon what they're doing. If I have any contact with any of the performers before the curtain actually rises."<sup>216</sup> There is always an exception. When asked: "What about if you don't know they are a contact? Such as they're working the box office and then they have to run back and change clothes and step on the stage later?" Eric responded, "Then yeah, that didn't really start it for me." This dialogue demonstrates the unique perspective each individual has on the theatre-going experience, even regarding as fundamental a question as when the show starts.

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<sup>214</sup> Eric, interview by author, tape recording, Columbia, MO, August 24, 2006.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

## **Lobby Experiences**

The theatre-going experience may include activities outside of the theatre building, including eating out, getting dressed, or traveling to the theatre. Drawing upon some of the theories outlined in Chapter Three, experiences in the theatre lobby could be divided into an experience with people or an experience with things.

## **Social Experience**

A number of theorists suggest that theatre is a social experience, defined as a social event in which crowds gather to share the experience. The social experience can be further divided into three activities: Being Seen/People-watching, meeting friends, or meeting strangers. The participants in this study shared a variety of stories about being social in the lobby.

### ***Being Seen/People Watching***

Adam is very concerned about his dress when going to a specific theatre. He admits he is personally uncomfortable which may influence his response to the performance: “When I’m in the city for long trips, and I haven’t brought nicer clothes, I always feel underdressed when I go to Lincoln Center.”<sup>217</sup> When asked why, Adam’s answer expresses his concern for others who are having a theatre-going experience: “Because I’m the first person to chastise someone for eating in the theatre or showing up in jeans and a hat. And I always feel like a bit of hypocrite [if I’m underdressed.]”<sup>218</sup>

Further exploration on this topic revealed Adam’s background as a theatre performer:

I always try to look a little nicer than everyday dress. Out of respect. I think for the performers, for again, it makes more of an experience

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<sup>217</sup> Adam, interview.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

dressing up to go to the theatre. And I like that respect when I'm onstage or when I'm directing something, so I think that I should show the same thing to other people.<sup>219</sup>

As Adam reports that he dresses up "out of respect ... for the performers," a logical deduction can be made that his choice of clothing is influenced by his concern for how others might react to his choices.

Carla shared her own perspective on dressing for the theatre. Unlike Adam, Carla expressed interest in what others were wearing rather than concern for her own dress:

In line, that's where you, that's where I really look at what everybody has on. That's where I check the clothing out to see. And I can honestly say it's been in the years, you know, when I went to the theatre when I was in college, high school and college, people dressed up, significantly. I mean that was a major event, even to go to college productions, people pretty much dressed nicely. And now you get a wide range of outfits. You get everything from the flashy real fancy things to people just showing up in jeans. It is kind of an interesting phenomenon, to reflect back on that issue. That going to the theatre used to be an event, and now it's just something people do.<sup>220</sup>

Carla did not reveal her own dress choices. Nor did she comment on whether she feels that she is on display or not. The issue, in this example, is that of watching others rather than having others watch you.

Diane also admits to being committed to watching others. When asked what she looked for in a lobby:

People of course. Sometimes, you know, also, sometimes, I notice the atmosphere as far as what the play is doing to the people. If they're really hustling and bustling, and you know I think that demonstrates kind of what the play is about. Are people in shock and awe, or are they not talking?<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Carla, interview by author, tape recording, Springfield, MO, March 27, 2006.

<sup>221</sup> Diane, interview by author, tape recording, Tucson, AZ, June 4, 2006.

Diane watches others and observes how they are experiencing the theatre.

These three stories by Adam, Carla, and Diane reveal aspects of the social experience that are part of the theatre-going experience. All three dealt with the concerns of strangers and the impact this has on their own experience. Although Adam, Carla, and Diane focused on people they did not know, the theatre-going experience could be about people we do know.

### *Meeting Friends*

While at the theatre, one significant social connection is between friends and family. For Yolanda a particularly memorable meeting took place in the lobby following the performance:

We had driven up to Northern Michigan to see our daughter in *Romeo and Juliet* and she wasn't expecting us until later - we were going to meet her after the show because you know it's a very long drive. We got there just after the show was starting. My son and husband dropped me off at the theatre, made sure I could get in. The theatre let me in, even gave me a free ticket. I got to see her as Juliet and I was waiting in the lobby knowing that she didn't know I was there. And all of a sudden I heard her, "Mom." You know crying and running toward me. I had talked to the woman who was the director of the show and she had mentioned to [my daughter] in the dressing room, "Your mom's here." "My mom's here" and there she came running out and everything. And it was really cool because she didn't know that I was there and so that was a wonderful lobby experience.<sup>222</sup>

This experience, both personal and memorable, involved Yolanda and someone she knew. Could this meeting have taken place at another location and have a similar impact? This meeting took place because both were present at the theatre, although for two different reasons, one to perform and one to observe.

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<sup>222</sup> Yolanda, interview by author, tape recording, Columbia, MO, November 8, 2005.

Carla's story is about being prepared for a social experience. When asked "Do you look for friends and do you succeed in seeing friends with regularity?" Carla replied: "Oh yeah. Having now lived here 20 years, we run into a lot of friends. We almost always do run into somebody we know once we're there."<sup>223</sup> For a number of seasons, Carla actually pre-empted the chance encounters by creating a social group: "Six of us got theatre tickets together so that we could attend all together. It's fairly common for us to do that. Now we've got a group of friends that like to go to the theatre, so we do group events to go to the theatre."<sup>224</sup> For Carla and at least five others, the opportunity to go to theatre – together – is highly attractive.

Michelle shares a need to communicate with others while at the theatre. Her experiences are tied to her childhood and to the cinema, nevertheless they reveal a desire to connect:

I just remember the long lines at the concession stand during intermission. Being a teenager, and trying to get to know people, you know, as a teenager. You know what I'm saying??? Boys and girls. It was a social experience as a younger person.<sup>225</sup>

Like Michelle, Zachary also appreciates the opportunity to connect with friends while at a show:

Well, we were there oh, 15-20 minutes ahead of time so we probably spent five minutes in the lobby seeing if there was anybody we knew. I don't think there was anybody we knew well enough to go up and visit with, so we went on in and found our seats. I'm always looking around the crowd to see if there's anybody I know. It so happened that there was a couple next to us and I knew the faces. [April] knew the woman, by name, so they started striking up a conversation and renewing old acquaintances.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Carla, interview.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Michelle, interview.

<sup>226</sup> Zachary, interview by author, tape recording, Columbia, MO, November 6, 2005.

Zachary's experience was within the auditorium rather than the lobby, which is outside the scope of this study. However, Zachary mentions he always likes to look around to see if he knows anybody, and he does this both in the lobby and in the auditorium. For this particular evening, he happened to bump into somebody inside the auditorium.

Waiting for friends or family is important; Brad takes advantage of the time to engage in other activities while in the lobby:

One of the theatre lobbies that I go to has local artwork with changing exhibits. I go through and look at the paintings and the art work that they have on exhibit. It is a good thing to do while I am waiting for everybody in the party to arrive. Or to come from the restrooms or whatever.<sup>227</sup>

When asked, "Do you see anything else, other than the artwork, or is the artwork the primary goal?" Brad reported, "Well let's just say something to spend time with."<sup>228</sup> The time spent interacting with the art takes place outside of the auditorium, so it is part of the lobby experience. However, it also has almost nothing to do with the performance, and yet is part of the theatre-going experience.

Unlike Zachary and Carla, who search for people they know, Eric met an acquaintance while at a performance in another state:

I was in a show in Denver; there is a girl that I used to do theatre with who was in the show. I didn't know she was in the show and as I was standing in line to go into the auditorium, I'm like, "Hey, so and so is in there! I've done theatre with her." I said this to the person I was with and the lady behind me said, "Yes! And I've seen her in shows with you in Missouri." It was her mother. She always traveled to Denver, to see all of her shows and I thought, I don't know, it is kind of an odd connection. And it was,

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<sup>227</sup> Brad, interview by author, tape recording, Springfield, MO, March 26, 2006.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

you know, I'd be less than truthful if I didn't say the recognition was nice.<sup>229</sup>

When asked: "Did you connect with the mother again at intermission?" Eric replied: "Yeah. At intermission we kind of caught back up and found out what, you know, caught back up with what was going on and afterwards I did go backstage and found my friend and visited with her a little bit."<sup>230</sup> Like some of the others, this is a chance meeting that evoked an emotional memory. Likewise, this experience is not dependent upon the production or anything a theatre-maker could control.

Zachary discovered that social connections go a long way to making a theatre-going experience. Zachary's experience was with a staff person at the theatre:

It was opening night of *Always Patsy Cline*. We had always wanted to see the show. So [my wife] called to see if there were any tickets available. "I'm sorry no tickets. Well, where are you folks from?" "Well, we're from Columbia, Missouri." "Oh by chance do you know a [Rhonda Greer]?" "Oh, yes, her mother babysat our son and [Rhonda] at the same time." Of course this was when they were 4, 5 and 6 year olds. "Yeah, we know [Rhonda]. Hadn't seen her for a long time." "Oh, you know [Rhonda]. She had just performed here in a play about 2 or 3 weeks before." It was kind of a woo-ooo type of thing. "Let's see if I can find any tickets." She had two tickets.<sup>231</sup>

These stories exhibit how social connections are associated with the theatre-going experience. Whether the social connection is random or planned, or whether it is with staff or fellow audience members, meeting people and sharing brief moments in time together make for memorable experiences.

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<sup>229</sup> Eric, interview.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Zachary, interview.



### *Meeting Strangers*

While ‘meeting friends’ is one kind of social connection, a second kind is the one that takes place between strangers. For example, there is one location within a theatre building where Carla is sociable, particularly with strangers: “Being a woman, you know you’re going to be standing in line. And yeah, that’s one of those places where you do socialize and you socialize with the people you know and you socialize with the people in line.”<sup>232</sup> The restroom line is a common experience for many who attend the theatre. Carla appears to take advantage of the time while waiting.

Brad is also a social individual and, although he is male, he too finds lines are an opportunity to socialize. When asked, “How a performance affects his experiences in the lobby during intermission,” Brad declared a desire to share, as it enhances his experience:

I want to share it with somebody. I mean there is the feeling that I would like to share with somebody and if I do, we’ll see somebody in the lobby or that I know and that we can connect on something, then that enhances the experience.<sup>233</sup>

However, this need for a connection is strong enough that Brad will “occasionally” share with strangers:

I really can’t say when that would occur. I mean it’s like you are standing in line together or something like that and the conversation just starts. Or one person says something and you can’t help but comment on what they said or something to that effect.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Carla, interview.

<sup>233</sup> Brad, interview.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

Brad is even known to start the conversation to see if any one will respond: “And on a few occasions, I feel like saying something, and I just kind of say it to the blue and see if anybody listens.”<sup>235</sup>

Restrooms are not the only location for connecting with people we may not know.

Adam shared a chance meeting while picking up tickets:

We got there, my mom and I, to pick up the tickets at the will-call window. I felt a hand on my shoulder and looked over and it was Elaine Stritch who was standing to the left of me and asked if this was the proper line for will-call and I said, ‘yes.’ I walked up to the ticket window and the guy mouthed to me, “do you know who that was?” And I said yeah. So that was kind of surreal to be standing in a lobby with her and of course this was right after her big splash, *Elaine Stritch at Liberty*.<sup>236</sup>

For Adam, this was a memorable experience, made even more special because he recognized Elaine Stritch in this context. Adam’s experience reveals that what the audience brings to the theatre in terms of background and training influences their theatre-going experience.

Adam is one respondent who is willing to go to the theatre by himself, although he admits that his experience is altered by the presence of others: “When I went to Lincoln center to see *The Light in the Piazza* by myself, I spent that time like reading the review in the lobby and I read the playbill. And I really took time to sit and look at the set before the show started.”<sup>237</sup>

Compare these activities to what Adam does when he attends a performance with friends or family:

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Yolanda, interview.

<sup>237</sup> Adam, interview.

I tend to talk before the show, maybe peruse the playbill, and I guess the way that I could differentiate it is when I go by myself I feel like it's more of a maybe a cultural experience or a personal aesthetic choice or an educational experience perhaps. Whereas when I'm with someone else, I think maybe I'm a little concerned if they're liking the show or, particularly my mom because our tastes don't always align.<sup>238</sup>

Even though Adam is willing to go alone, when the opportunity arises, he will connect with others:

Maybe because it was a hard ticket, but I saw lots of individual people in the audience. In fact, ones that had gotten rush tickets with me, you know that were scattered throughout the house, um. But when I saw that, and this happens sometimes too, I'm sitting in the rush line, waiting for tickets with a group of students from California, who had come to the city for the first time. So while we were waiting in line, we were playing cards and talking about what they had seen and their experience in the city. And they talked to me at intermission and after the show, so I guess that's something else that I neglected to mention, when I go by myself, um is always an opportunity to meet other people particularly if you do student rush, cause you have to stand in line for an hour or couple hours to get your ticket.<sup>239</sup>

There seems to be the potential for a social connection while at the theatre. Even attending alone, Adam reaches out to make connections with other individuals. Brad went so far as to say something "to the blue" and hoped for a reply. These two examples may indicate a desire for social connections.

Oscar compared the social aspect of going to the theatre to the social aspect of going to a sporting event. First, Oscar explained that it is not necessary to know anybody or to visit with any one individual. He enjoys the excitement of just being in proximity to others. When exploring the lobby at a sporting event, Oscar suggested the potential for surprise might be enhanced by the lobby:

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<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

I feel that crescendo-ing effect, personally. The emotion of the contest is enhanced by the lobby. The milieu of people around me who are also coming to share that same experience and the - the gathering of the - their sodas for the game and the buying programs so to see the names of the players, performers. Just the general buzz that you hear among a lot of people and if it's a very, very significant performance or really significant game, that's enhanced by even more people going to the same activities. That idea that something is about to happen.<sup>240</sup>

Once inside the auditorium, Oscar finds that theatre is much more of an individual experience when compared to sporting events:

With a sporting contest the audience, to a degree, is a participant in the whole thing. And sometimes in different productions at a theatre, the audience may be asked to participate in some way or another or they may choose a few people to be part of a particular act or something like that. But for the most part, the theatre crowd are purely spectators and they may react to something when it's finished, like a song that's well sung, they may, you know, applaud robustly. Whereas, the sporting crowd voices their opinion along the way, while play is occurring, with cheers or boos, and so the - the - there's more of a relationship with the - and I think sporting crowds, to a - to a limited extent, feel that they can influence the - the activities that are happening on the - on the court or the field by - by their activities.<sup>241</sup>

Oscar does not suggest a return to the circus atmosphere of pre-Victorian theatre audiences, but he does admit that he loves the energy of a sporting event and wishes some of the interactive participation by the audience could be found at a theatre.

These stories are some of the responses about social connections at the theatre. The joys of meeting friends and acquaintances are memorable and a basic component of attending the theatre for many. The desire to connect with others is strong enough that some will speak to strangers while waiting in line. For one individual, the experience of

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<sup>240</sup> Oscar, interview by author, tape recording, Springfield, MO, September 26, 2005.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

a performance is enhanced by being around others, even if no actual conversation takes place. Just knowing others are sharing the event is enough.

### **Experience with Materials**

The lobby experience includes exposure to permanent and semi-permanent displays, artifacts, architectural elements and other materials. These various items are gathered together under the term “static,” which I define as something that is a relatively permanent part of the performance environment

Although no major theorist mentioned the history of the theatre building or the theatre company that occupies the building, for several respondents, connecting with the history was significant to their theatre-going experience. Frank succinctly describes his response:

My favorite thing in the lobby is when the theatre’s history is in the lobby. And that’s the thing I think of as the most pleasant thing for me. That feeling of the provenance of the building and what’s happened there before. That resonates for the evening to me. And to the theatres that have, the really old theatres, sometimes it’s, you know, you’ve never seen a picture of that actor and things like that. That’s my favorite kind of pre-show, intermission lobby, that you feel all this history under the evening because of what’s in the lobby.<sup>242</sup>

Frank suggests that there are activities or materials within the lobby that might be considered part of a theatre-going experience even though these things are not directly linked to the performance.

In a similar vein, Carla reported that it is not the building, but rather performers who once worked at the theatre that capture her imagination and engage her in a theatre-going experience:

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<sup>242</sup> Frank, interview by author, tape recording, Amana, IA, September 28, 2009.

They put up photographs from past productions and it's fun to find Kathleen Turner, John Goodman, or Tess Harper. You know it's fun to find their pictures. And it is especially fun to look back because we have been to so many of those productions, and go "oh yeah, I remember this and I remember that."<sup>243</sup>

Connecting to the past evoked personal memories for some participants. In other instances, the past is not personalized, but still present in their theatre-going experience.

Tonya did not find the history of the theatre company inspiring, even though the theatre dedicated considerable space to its story:

I looked at the pictures on the walls and tried to figure out who the people were. [My husband] talked to me about [the founder] because I don't know anything about her. And then I saw there was a shrine room to her so we went in there. And we looked at all the various pictures of the actresses that had gone to Stephens back then, over the years.<sup>244</sup>

The connotations of "shrine" can imply either a positive or a negative response. As revealed later in the interview, Tonya did not respond positively to the room dedicated to the theatre's history:

There's something odd in an odd sort of way. The crappy stuff there too just hanging on the wall in a crappy sort of layout. It wasn't very polished or anything like that. But it was kind of cute at the same time and enchanting in a way. Actually, if I was an eighteen-year-old girl wanting to be an actress I'd think that was just the coolest thing. And it seems to work, I mean they certainly have a big audience base there.<sup>245</sup>

Tonya's response suggests the possibility of diverse reactions to materials in the lobby. This response may also indicate that Tonya is self-aware enough to know that she may not be the targeted demographic.

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<sup>243</sup> Carla, interview.

<sup>244</sup> Tonya, interview.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

Occasionally, the lobby may contain items not related to the performance or the theatre building that still resonate for the audience. In one theatre lobby, a number of old yearbooks were displayed and available for perusal prior to the performance. These books seemed to attract significant attention, even during intermission, although they had nothing to do with the theatre building, company, or performance. The yearbooks merely reflected the history of the host college.

Yolanda shares an experience in the lobby with materials, demonstrating how displays can influence an evening:

It was inviting really is one of the things I keep coming back to, because it was it was a bright lobby, there was a lot of interesting stuff, for lack of a better word. I mean we have these pictures, which are interesting but once you've seen them, you've seen them. There wasn't a lot of seating but there was some, if I remember correctly. Of course, there was a little gallery tribute room to the side, which was interesting, and I'm sure going back over looking and see different things. One thing that I loved, I absolutely loved was the triangular, whatever you call that triangular thing, they had. It wasn't just current photos going on but it was current, past, everything. And it had dance, it had everything on it. I thought that was, it was interesting because I could go and I could look and could see something that would be - if I go back again, it'll probably be something else new up there. And there was one of those incredible dance - I don't know if you saw the dance photo, the dancer was just like back and her legs - it's just this really cool thing.<sup>246</sup>

Both Yolanda and Tonya were describing the same theatre. These differing reactions serve as a reminder that it may not be possible to predict what an individual will respond to, nor whether the response will be positive or negative.

These examples of contact with static materials, such the documentation of the history of the theatre building or theatre company, suggest that the theatre-going experience includes more than the performance and performance-related elements.

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<sup>246</sup> Yolanda, interview.

For some theatregoers the theatre-going experience is not about the play but about the location. As someone who has seen the play before, and is quite familiar with the theatre building, Diane anticipates her theatre-going experience:

If it's something I've seen a lot of, and I know the play, like *The Nutcracker*, I've seen it so many times, and I love it, I love the music, but it's nothing I need to think hard about, because I've seen it so many times. So when I go, I'm more into the ambience of the theatre. You know, the lobby and what's going on in the lobby. The whole aura of going.<sup>247</sup>

Diane describes the experience as more than the performance – it is an event. In addition, Diane presented several other examples of the theatre building, particularly the decoration, affecting her experience, becoming, in a way, a part of the performance:

It adds to the whole going out, you know, a almost like, especially if you are going to see a play that is like *A Midsummer's Night Dream* or something that is a fairy tale, or a fantasy, or something that's romantic, or you know, it adds to the whole drama of it.<sup>248</sup>

In response to the question, “So the theatre itself is affecting your reception of the performance, on certain levels?” Diane replied, “The actual building, and the lobby, and the décor – yeah.” One particular area of interest for Diane is the bathrooms:

There are some places where the women's restrooms are really cool. They're very ornate, they're neat, you have to go in and you sit, as far as, this is coming from a women's perspective. You can sit, in the mirror, especially, once you know, we're going back to the *Nutcracker* they have these beautiful mirrors, you can sit, and you know dream about when you were a little girl, just look at your self in the mirror. It's kind of a surreal moment.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> Diane, interview.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.



Not everything included in the theatre-going experience is designed by theatre-makers or theatre-managers. As Diane's story reveals, an audience member's experience also includes memories or imagined activities.

## **Lobby Functions**

Research of published lobby theories reveals that in addition to serving as a social center there are three additional functions of the lobby: revenue generator, transitional passage, and performance preparation. What do the members of the audience who participated in this study say about these lobby functions?

### **Revenue Generator**

Theorists understand the value of the theatre lobby in terms of financial support of the theatre. How does this compare to what the audience reports? Many shared that purchasing items in the lobby is not central to their theatre-going experience. Yet when questioned closer, some participants admitted that buying merchandise and concessions was memorable in a few instances.

Nancy uses intermission to stop by the merchandise booths: "I came out and bought a souvenir lapel pin because I always get something from every show I've been to."<sup>250</sup> These souvenirs are part of her experience, collecting them with her programs for her memories book. Peter, as a memory aid, made a purchase, but it was connected to the performance – he bought a copy of the script. When asked why, he replied:

Well, I am a big fan of *Man of La Mancha*. I was sort of flipping through [the script] before. Just after watching the show and hearing my favorite lines and seeing these things, it's like I kind of just remember as walking by "Oh, they have this in the lobby for sale," and I thought you know

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<sup>250</sup> Nancy, interview by author, tape recording, St. Louis, MO, September 23, 2005.

“what the heck it’ll be nice to have.” Especially, I found myself sort of, whenever there’d be a particular line or particular moment, trying to remember it in my head. My urge is to sort of take out my little notepad and scribble it down. You know, the things that you don’t want to forget. It’s for my own personal enjoyment, I just love to be able to quote lines. And those sorts of things.<sup>251</sup>

Like Nancy, Peter purchased an item to enhance memories of the experience. However, these were the exceptions rather than the rule. In general, participants of this study did not make regular purchases at the merchandise booth.

Leon’s experience demonstrates that purchasing merchandise is not a habit. His willingness to make a purchase was tied directly to the production:

We noticed that, I guess at intermission, I don’t know whether it was the guild or who was involved but they were selling the souvenir roses and some different things. We had one request from the child that we brought to get a rose. I think that, I guess that’s the only thing that I really noticed is that and I don’t remember that being a typical experience of being able to buy souvenirs at the theatre.<sup>252</sup>

This was at a community theatre production of *Beauty and the Beast*, so it is quite possible that souvenirs are not always available. However, it is interesting to note that because of a request by a youth in his party, Leon noticed the souvenirs and made a purchase.

Carla’s use of the concession stands is not dependent upon the show, but rather upon a specific theatre: “The Vandivort Theatre does coffee and biscotti, and so I always plan on getting coffee and biscotti when we go to a production there.”<sup>253</sup> Carla clarified that she is not a drinker, nor does she like coffee, but something happens at the Vandivort

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<sup>251</sup> Peter, interview by author, tape recording, Chicago, IL, November 22, 2005.

<sup>252</sup> Leon, interview by author, tape recording, Springfield, MO, September 18, 2005.

<sup>253</sup> Carla, interview.

and she makes an effort to get there early enough to get coffee and biscotti. Likewise, at a different theatre, Carla purchases chocolate covered strawberries. While at a third theatre, Carla likes to purchase wine.<sup>254</sup> Carla has associated a specific food with a specific building while enjoying her theatre-going experience.

During the interview process, it became apparent there are some who understand theatre financial operations. For these individuals, concessions become an opportunity to support the theatre financially. For example, Eric shares his philosophy on concession stands:

If they have a concession stand, I'll generally go get something, because a lot of times, that's how they are making their money. 'Cause as we know, theatre is a business. I may not really want or need what I buy at the concession stand, but I'll still do it. But, the flip side of that is, if they don't have concessions, I'll think, 'Now, why in the world don't they have concessions?''<sup>255</sup>

Brad shares this same understanding, when he admits that he does not purchase items:

From the big shows, the big concerts, that are big money makers. I usually do not buy the promotions...if I'm at a concert in which the artists make their money by doing their shows and selling their disks themselves. Then, if I like the music, I will frequently buy a tape or CD or whatever, at the show."<sup>256</sup>

Brad's willingness to make a purchase, if he perceives that the money goes directly to the artist, exemplifies his support of arts and culture beyond ticket sales.

The cost of tickets is one more economic issue that is part of the theatre-going experience. This issue is mentioned in this study, as the box office is often part of the lobby. For Carla, the ticket price is related to the dress code:

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<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> Brad, interview.

Depending on the production and where it is, sometimes, I felt perhaps, I can be honest here, the cost of the ticket determines what I wear. That the more a theatre production costs, the dressier I dress, because, to me, that seems to be an important kind of thing. I was really shocked that when we went to the opera a few years ago. Opera is one of those things that I always thought people, when you see opera in the movies, think *Pretty Woman*, when you see opera in the movies, or when you read about opera in the books, everybody is always dressed for the Opera. I was shocked when I went to the opera and people were not.<sup>257</sup>

As already explored, Adam and Carla share a philosophy that ticket price is a guide to how an audience should dress.

One final aspect of a ‘revenue generator function’ in the theatre lobby that received minimal attention from this study’s participants was the marketing for future productions found in a lobby. No one focused on the non-show related materials. It is possible that these are not important to audience members, as demonstrated by Carla’s statement, “There’s usually advertisements for upcoming productions. And I will see those, I will look at those. Just to see if there is anything coming up that I might like to come to. And that is more of a cursory glance, of you know, I see it and go.”<sup>258</sup> Carla was the only respondent to mention these items directly, even when prodded. It is possible that posters for future productions may have some influence for the audience, but that is a future study.

As an example of the contradiction between audience members, Frank’s distaste for merchandise booths is strong enough to have a negative impact on his theatre-going experience:

What comes to mind is going into the theatre at *Wicked*. They’re selling things so hard when walking in the door that they put me off. I’m thinking

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<sup>257</sup> Carla, interview.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

of the negative side, and you know I can't blame them for doing it 'cause the kids are lined up to buy the stuff. But it's just so about the money you know when walk in the door. I feel like it's not lending to the experience.<sup>259</sup>

As Frank addressed his concerns, is it possible that others in the audience will feel the same way? Perhaps theatre-makers should consider how they approach merchandising as it may have consequences on the performance. On the other hand, if others are flocking to the offerings, then perhaps only a few are negatively affected and it becomes a matter of trying to balance financial needs with audience reactions.

The revenue generator function of the theatre lobby is important to some of the audience. A few want it for their memories; others consider it part of the ritual of attending theatre; while there are some who choose not to partake. Like many lobby experiences, audience members have individualized responses to the same setting.

### **Transitional Passageway**

One of the more significant functions, propounded by theorists, is the use of the lobby as a transitional passageway. To explore the audience's perspective, several were asked directly when the transition from the outside world into the world of the play took place. Brad commented that it depends on how the space is used:

In most cases, I would say it's when you go into the first door of the theatre. But, if it is too cramped then there is not a lot of experience until you walk into the theatre itself. But, I've been in some in which there is a corridor and that has its own unique experience. You know lighting, whatever it is, that begins to create that transition. Most of the theatres I have been in, I think the lobbies are fairly effective. But then, it probably goes to age and how it was built.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Frank, interview.

<sup>260</sup> Brad, interview.

Brad had attended a number of theatres, thus his comment is based on direct knowledge.

Frank's transition experience is from a historical perspective as he likens going to the theatre to being treated like royalty:

At the Lyceum, I've really enjoyed it. It's got two grand staircases on either side. When I'm talking to kids about going to the theatre, I'll talk about the fact that old theatres looked like palaces. That theatre was just for the nobility, and it was presented in the palace, and then they built palaces for the show. [Going to the theatre] is your one night when you go and felt like royalty. You went, you paid your money, you went to this beautiful building, and the show that night was just for you. If you didn't have a ticket, you didn't see the performance. Nobody else got to see it. The Lyceum with those two staircases, it has all those actors from a hundred years ago all up and down. I just really feel – I love that lobby.<sup>261</sup>

Rather than building up for the show, Diane prefers to spend time in the lobby calming down. This aids her transition into the world of the play:

Maybe you don't have time to get a coffee or anything. But, if the lobby was pleasant to the eye, it might kind of calm you down a little bit and then get you ready for the mind-set of what you are actually going to be watching. If the lobby is blahsville and you're frazzled and the people aren't doing their job of getting you shuffled into where you need to be, or it's like chaos, then you are going to go into the play with chaos in your mind, and it could take you a quarter of the play or so to get into the mindset of it. I don't think that's how I want it to be.<sup>262</sup>

Diane recognizes that time and space are needed for the transition. More importantly, her performance experience is connected directly to the lobby and theatre decoration:

If you are going to go downtown or whatever, to me [the lobby] definitely can change my attitude about the play and what I'm feeling. Sometimes, I've noticed that they don't have, they're not offering any type coffee or beverages or any thing like, or where people can just take a breath and pause for the moment. I enjoy the lobby and if it's welcoming or intimate, or just a place to just [sound effect breath] you know, it's all the better. Some of these places are just amazing. Some places are like cathedral churches, like Catholic churches, I just stand in awe and that adds to the

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<sup>261</sup> Frank, interview.

<sup>262</sup> Diane, interview.

drama of the play. I mean it puts you in a full other world sometimes. You're just like a little girl. And even if the play sucked, you are at a nice place, that's at least a point there. The play might have been bad, but the staircase and the light fixtures were awesome.<sup>263</sup>

The transition into the world of the play does not always demand a physical space or good interior design. Like Diane, Eric's time in the lobby enhances his response to the performance:

If there's something in the lobby for me to do that has, even if it doesn't have to be show-specific. It can just be something to get me kind of thinking along- the lines of musical theatre or drama or whatever it is. As soon as you enter the lobby. It really does. 'Cause that's when you start. You may notice decorations, along the theme of the show, CEC does that. They change the lobby, the decorations of the lobby for each and every show. [Steve Green] does that and does a great job. So that's when the whole experience starts, is when I step into the lobby.<sup>264</sup>

It does not take a lot of effort to create an influential lobby, as some things as simple as cast photos can have an impact. Eric uses the actors' pictures to get into a theatre mood:

I got to see the actors' faces and kind of knew who to look for, what to look forward to rather than go, "oh yeah, they were from Missouri," and that type of thing. For me it was a great way to kill some time and kind of get in the mood for musical theatre. They had pictures of all their actors; I think they just had the Equity actor's headshots up. It was kind of fun to look at those and later during the show go oh, yes I saw that picture. Boy, they look different than their head shot, good makeup job!<sup>265</sup>

Eric defines this particular experience as a "full lobby experience, it kept me engaged and got me kind of tuned in to what was going to happen – what to expect."<sup>266</sup> In one particular instance, Eric turned his waiting time with company pictures into a game:

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<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> Eric, interview.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

I remember a significant experience at the Boulder Dinner Theatre. They had pictures from all of their past productions up and for me it was just fun. And interesting to go through and because they didn't have the pictures labeled. For me it was a game - what show is this from? What scene is it? Who are the main characters - can I pick them out? I really enjoyed that. It was a game that I played with myself. There were some pictures I couldn't identify, you know. And for me it was kind like oh, man, it's gotta be, wait a minute, you know. Oh, wait, that's the sewer scene from *Guys and Dolls*. And I thoroughly enjoyed that just because it was just a little mental exercise.<sup>267</sup>

Eric's story is an example of a patron creating an experience for himself that had very little connection to the performance; however, because of his efforts and something in the lobby, Eric was able to craft a memorable theatrical experience.

Audience members do not work alone when transitioning from the outside world into the world of the play. Theatre-makers can be participants in the process as well. For example, the house manager at one theatre reported, "What we try to do is have the ushers and the house manager kind of dress like the show, just for fun."<sup>268</sup> In addition to the dressing up being fun for the ushers, dressing up is done in the 'spirit of customer service': "We try to think about the audience member and their experience."<sup>269</sup>

Unfortunately, not all theatre staff appreciate the impact they might have on an audiences' experience. Frank discusses his experiences with theatre staff in detail:

Sometimes there is a house person kind of making sure people head in the right direction depending if that's needed. Some people who just walk into people, you can go through another line over here and that's understandable especially if your people speak tersely because there's so much noise to be understood. But, some people can do it cordially and some people just have security guard mentality. Then this will be taking the ticket and that's getting more and more impersonal because they're

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<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Xaviera, interview by author, tape recording, Columbia, MO, November 5, 2005.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.



scanning the tickets. And, again, some people can manage to do that with a smile and that really - I appreciate that. The next person usually just tells you what direction to go in and I don't expect much of that person because they're just reading those tiny numbers and trying to keep the line moving and I think they'd have to really be nasty for me to feel like they're not just trying to do their job. Possibly, there's a next person who directs you more specifically and then there's someone who either points to your seat, which is getting more common, or walks you to your seat. I often will read my ticket numbers and tell them, as I'm handing them, to make it easier. They check them anyway, but they need to because people are wrong sometimes. But they can see easier, if they've heard it, I think. All those people affect how I sit down.<sup>270</sup>

Frank encounters five individuals as he transitions from the outside into his seat. Every contact has the potential to influence the response to the performance:

More important than almost anything to me is 'cause I'll forgive whatever the theatre has to survive with, it's the way you're treated by people you encounter. To the bar staff, you are spending \$125 a ticket and then to be treated like a herd of cattle, that's really offensive to me, really offensive. And there's more and more of that going on. There are lobby people who absolutely make you feel welcomed to the place - welcome to the home. And I think they are valuable; I think the attitude of the person seating you, the attitude of the person directing you make me feel welcome someplace as opposed to you're doing something wrong. It's tremendously affecting as far as how you sit down and start watching the play.<sup>271</sup>

Frank's story suggests that there are many opportunities to evoke a positive or negative response to the environment when moving from outside into the world of the play.

Zachary shared a story of a unique transition where the staff "rescued" the experience:

Starting off, we parked on the east side of the theatre which is kind of a back entrance and so we went in this door and it was kind of odd. It looked to me like some kind of lobby for the performers or the help or the backstage people. But, they were most gracious. One young man said, "Hey, just follow me," and he led us to theatre [from backstage]. [April]

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<sup>270</sup> Frank, interview [emphasis mine].

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

is not in the best of health, physically. She has had problems getting around so he led us to the doors into the lobby, and pointed out the ticket office. He was very very gracious.<sup>272</sup>

This spontaneous pre-show activity affected his theatre-going experience as Zachary often repeated, throughout his interview, “these people were so nice,”<sup>273</sup> and he summarized the whole event with “this was a positive experience.”<sup>274</sup> This story again highlights how theatre-makers may have little control over the house staff and yet suffer the consequences or benefit from outside influences on the performance.

In some theatres, the use of music in the lobby helps the transition into the world of the play. Frank commented, however, that annoying music is a hindrance: “If the lobby’s got it. Like department stores have now, constant music, it’s not welcoming.”<sup>275</sup>

Further exploration revealed a story about the use of music in the lobby:

It does set the tone of the play you walk into. I find it not always necessary but important. But if it’s wrong, it’s detractive. I remember *Legally Blond* had a number that kind of worked in the show, but they played it outside all day long, and it was cheesy, and it was meant to be cheesy, but it didn’t attract you to hear cheesy, and it felt like really simplistic music. It just made you think, is this going to be worth \$125 dollars?<sup>276</sup>

The respondents in this study are constantly reminding theatre-makers that everything is part of the experience. These interviews suggest that all aspects of the theatre-going experience, particularly the transition from outside into the world of the play deserve consideration.

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<sup>272</sup> Zachary, interview.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> Frank, interview.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

## Performance Preparation

For some theorists, the lobby serves as a transition from the outside into the world of the play. The transition may be defined as moving from individuals to a collective community, or it may be a mental or emotional shift leaving behind the concerns of the world and focusing on the issues for the characters. Theoretically, transition refers to some global transformation of the audience.

A subset of transition is the theory of performance preparation. Like a transition, performance preparation may move individuals into a cohesive unit of those who have shared the pre-show experience. For others, the performance preparation may involve the shifting of the audience's perspective via educational materials. For this study, the distinction between transition and performance preparation is the scale. Transition describes a global or generalized transformation. Performance preparation refers to activities and materials that are specific to a particular production.

For some respondents, preparing for the performance is as easy as reading the actors' bios:

I love reading all of the bios on the actors. Sometimes, with intermissions being so short these days, I don't have time to read them. If I went early, I would, you know, I'd love to sip on warm coffee, and walk around and look at the bios and pictures and art. That would be icing on the cake if I could do that every time.<sup>277</sup>

Leon tells of a story in which merely the number of cast photos helped him prepare for the show: "I noticed this time different than in the past were the cast

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<sup>277</sup> Diane, interview.

portraits. And I remarked at how large a cast that this particular production was.”<sup>278</sup>

When asked his reaction to the cast size, Leon shared:

I guess the only thing I thought of is how were they all going to get on stage, knowing the size of the stage of the little theatre. Not realizing the number of people that would be changing in and out. You know not everybody was necessarily on the stage all at the same time.<sup>279</sup>

Leon also shared that it was more than just the cast size: “The involvement that would, you know, the complexity. I guess the larger cast typically indicates that this is going to be a much more sophisticated production.”<sup>280</sup>

Audience preparation can require greater effort than posting of photos. Some theorists suggest the lobby must serve the performance and in that effort, there are two basic approaches. One is to present materials that the audience volunteers to peruse at their leisure. These would be static presentations requiring limited staff. For example, the touring production of *Miss Saigon* featured a part of a helicopter in the lobby.

According to one participant, “that was impressive.”<sup>281</sup>

Adam shared two experiences in regards to experiencing ‘the static’:

The first one would be when I saw *Assassins* at Studio 54 in New York City, the recent revival. And they had set up placards in the lobby, brief biographies of the presidential assassins so that the audience had a context for the show. It included pictures of the real people so that you could compare them with what you saw on stage. And I thought that was very interesting.<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> Leon, interview.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> Oscar, interview.

<sup>282</sup> Adam, interview.

This preparation was important to Adam's experience: "I always like it when there is some kind of supplementary material in the lobby to get you ready for the show or to provide a context for the production."<sup>283</sup> Even though Adam was familiar with the play, some of the information was new and it further affected his expectations:

I hadn't read or seen the show in quite a while actually, or listened to the cast recording. So I think number one, it reminded me of who these people were. I also think that it's helped me draw the line between fact and fiction and where John Wydman, the librettist, had taken some liberties, what he had invented.<sup>284</sup>

Adam added to his story by pointing out the similarities between the cast and the original characters: "It was interesting, it sounds kinds of trivial, but to see how closely the actors resemble the individuals. Like Michael Cerveris in his wig and mustache, and costume looked surprisingly like John Wilkes Booth."<sup>285</sup> Once again, this demonstrates the difficulty of predicting what will remain in the memories of the audience.

Adam shared one more example of a static display used as performance preparation:

When I went back to [my alma mater] this summer to see *Vincent*, which was a one-man show with my undergraduate professor [Mark Lowery]. One of the art students, who had worked on the show with him, set up placards about Van Gogh and his life. It was kind of a timeline or a chronology of his career. As I had only a passing familiarity with Van Gogh, this helped me to appreciate the show more, because I didn't really know much about him.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

Like Adam, Brad also wants to prepare for the experience: “I think being prepared for it and knowing what to expect, it makes a difference in how much you enjoy it.”<sup>287</sup> These accounts suggest that a theatre might benefit from a static display in the lobby.

Respondents mentioned one type of static display that might also serve as performance preparation. However, these displays are not crafted by the theatre-makers; rather they are written by outsiders – the review. In New York City, it is common to take the performance review, enlarge it, and put it on display. For one participant, this review serves as something to do while waiting, “it’s nice because it kind of gets me ready for the show.”<sup>288</sup> In contrast, a different participant works hard to avoid the reviews, even trying to avoid hearing others talk about the performance, until after he has seen it:

I don’t really like to read reviews before I go to the shows, because they give away too much. There are not many reviewers I respect that much. They’re not good at – they don’t lay the blame in the right place so often. And there’s so much kind of grandstanding among reviewers. They consider it more important than actually doing their job. Reviewing is a lot negative now and that’s not good.<sup>289</sup>

Comparing these two responses once more demonstrates conflicting opinions of the theatre audience.

A second approach to performance preparation is the interactive. This might be something in the lobby in which audience members make contact with performers or staff to ‘get ready’ for the show. One example, at the Court Theatre, was for *Endgame* where the theatre-makers set up a carnival:

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<sup>287</sup> Brad, interview.

<sup>288</sup> Adam, interview.

<sup>289</sup> Frank, interview.

We had sort of a carnival-like atmosphere set up in the lobby. As people walked in, there were circus props available in the lobby. There was a video of Fellini's *Clowns* playing on the monitor and there was some artwork of clowns and circuses and carnivals available in the lobby as well.<sup>290</sup>

The Court Theatre, an artistic home for JoAnne Akalaitis, works hard to create some kind of preparatory atmosphere in the lobby.

For some theatre-makers, the lobby is a valued part of the production. Frank told the story of a proposal to recreate an historical experience:

I used to work for Joe Layton and he was working on a play about the theatre district before it was cleaned up called *The Life*, which was about the prostitution and all that. And he came right to the threshold of the production going into the Minskoff, which is a new theatre. And they were going to turn the lobby into the streets of Hell's Kitchen and have people accosting people in the lobby and talking to many people.<sup>291</sup>

Unfortunately, due to the death of the author, this concept did not materialize, so its impact will never be known.

Studio Arena Theatre, in an effort to educate their audience, created an experience called "Preflections:"

The way it was organized, sometimes a staff member or sometimes a performer would come out and speak to audience members that had been collected in the lobby. They would talk about the current production, making a little presentation, taking audience questions. This went on for about 30-45 minutes prior to the show.<sup>292</sup>

The information contained within this presentation was usually show-specific including plot details and character history. Gina reported that as result of these experiences some audience members shared with her that they had become more attuned to the performance

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<sup>290</sup> William, interview by author, tape recording, Chicago, IL, October 22, 2005.

<sup>291</sup> Frank, interview.

<sup>292</sup> Gina, interview by author, tape recording, Grand Island, NY, January 21, 2010.

understanding subtler nuances of the story, and appreciated the more complex production practices.<sup>293</sup> Over time, the audience grew to expect these pre-show “classes” and looked forward to the next production.

Any one of these activities could help the audience prepare for the performance. Whether it was a static display or an interactive event, each example asked the audience to volunteer. In contrast, consider the next three experiences in which the audience was forced into “performance preparation.”

The first example was positively received by the respondent Mary at a performance of *The Death of Tintagiles*:

I was interested in how Maeterlink was being staged in contemporary stagings. What I remember most about this experience is actually getting from the lobby into the theatre. They didn't let us go in one by one. They kept us all, everybody who was in the audience that night [in the lobby]. I remember kind of standing and waiting, for them to let us in, and wondering why they wouldn't let us in. I'm sort of looking at my watch and tapping my foot and going “when are they going to let us in the theatre?” It was a fairly large lobby, but still I felt kind of crowded in because we were all standing there, kind of in line, waiting to get in – in a clump, waiting to get in. I was feeling mostly frustrated at that point. [This lasted] I think, probably 10-15 minutes. I think I was standing for quite a while before they finally...And it wasn't the main door either that they were opening. They were opening like a door into a side corridor, and then when they finally opened the door, we had to walk in sort of single file and the hallway was very dark. It was hard to see. I can't remember now if they had somebody with a flashlight, or if they had somebody leading us. But what I remember was, it was very dark and we were almost having to kind of feel our way through this passage way to get into the theatre, and then we'd come around some kind of partition, and we get up into the theatre and there were sort of bleacher seats set up in the middle section of the theatre. There was some light, but it was fairly dark in there. And as we were coming in getting our places, it occurred to me, wait a minute, this is Maeterlink, the play we were seeing was *The Death of Tintagiles*, not *The Blind*. They are doing this on purpose, this is part of this experience is how we get into the theatre, because Maeterlink had a very famous play called *The Blind*, and it's

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<sup>293</sup> Ibid.



about death coming to people who are blind. And it is very Maeterlinkian to be lead sort of almost blind into the theatre. And so it was like, the show was starting before the show started, so then, once we were all seated, it wasn't very long before the show started, and the lights go out, and I remember someone giggling behind me. But, the giggling stopped almost immediately. We were in this very spooky Maeterlink prologue.<sup>294</sup>

The story is told in detail to display the clarity of memory, indicating how much of an impact this experience had on the participant. More importantly, the story reveals how much thought an audience member will put into the lobby experience that is directly connected to the events on the stage.

At the Court Theatre, the audience was forced into a potentially embarrassing situation, creating some tension for both the staff and the audience:

During the *Romance Cycle*, we carpeted the whole house in white. It was one big white carpet from the back of the building across the stage through the seats on the aisles up into the lobby here. Part of the process was people weren't allowed to set foot on the carpet with their street shoes. They either had to bring their own slippers or if they didn't they had to take off their shoes. So we built all these little shoe cubbyholes along the window here and as soon as they walked in we had a greeter ask them to take off their shoes and put them on the cubbyholes along the walls here. And that was again another surprise and people sometimes weren't prepared for that and resisted, complaining to me sometimes. That was quite a memorable experience.<sup>295</sup>

When asked if refunds were available for those who did not want to participate, William, the house manager, replied, "If they refused, we were equipped with hospital booties because we anticipated that. Sometimes they felt that that was even more humiliating than without their shoes."<sup>296</sup> This example reveals that not everyone wants to participate in performance preparation events. As explored throughout this chapter, with everything

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<sup>294</sup> Mary, interview by author, tape recording, Columbia, MO, July 6, 2005.

<sup>295</sup> William, interview.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

having the potential to influence the performance some “performance preparation” can have a negative consequence.

An extreme example of “being volunteered” occurred during a performance of the *Bacchae*. The audience gathered in a tiny hallway prior to the show. There appeared to be only one escape, which was blocked by a fire in a metal drum. The room had limited air circulation and audience members were pressed together tight enough that bodies had to touch. The audience stayed in this position for about 20 minutes until Bacchus came out onto the balcony to give the prologue. The doors of the auditorium then opened and the audience rushed to their seats. A few audience members were upset enough to leave immediately, while others waited until intermission. The director shared with the respondent that this mixed reaction was desired, and the director was glad to have included the pre-performance experience.<sup>297</sup>

At the Court Theatre’s production of *The Piano* the lobby was once again linked to the performance: “We had 250 people standing here in the lobby along with a piano that was rolled in from outside and two actors performing a scene on top of it.”<sup>298</sup> The play began in the lobby and then moved into the auditorium for the rest of the performance. When asked if the lobby could hold 250 people, William shared:

Yeah it’s all crammed but I think it was also very exciting, it was very different, it was something that hadn’t been tried before. And we had sort of set up a different kind of lighting or a different kind of sound design for the lobby for that performance and so it immediately ushered them in to a different kind of a world and so I think, even though it feels crammed, I don’t think, from my recollection, anyone complained about it.<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> Hank, interview by author, Springfield, MO, December 30, 2009.

<sup>298</sup> William, interview.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid.

These two stories exhibit the range of audience response. Some may like the closeness, while others may reject it; these are part of the risks of theatre.

### **In Summary**

This chapter is an exploration of a few specific examples of the audience's perspective about the theatre lobby. As a number of theorists predicted, some audience members experience the anticipation of the theatre-going experience, respond to social connections presented, and take advantage of the concession stand. Additionally, the audience may engage in a transition from the outside world into the world of the play. Some choose to participate in performance preparation activities, while others are hesitant. Theorists and the participants in this study addressed all of these lobby functions. All of the examples demonstrate how the theatre lobby can be used to serve the theatre. The next chapter will convert this raw data into a cohesive and comprehensive theory about the lobby experience.

## **CHAPTER 5 – THE ANALYSIS**

### **Introduction**

What meaning does the audience give to the lobby space? Chapter Four highlights stories gathered directly from audience members who participated in this study. This chapter is the report on the analysis of the data using grounded theory procedures and methodology, and includes definitions formed from the coding of the data, a visual representation of the emergent theory developed via analysis, and explanations of key elements of the theory.

### **Significant Terms**

It is necessary to understand some of the terminology shaped by the analysis of the data before revealing the theory of the lobby experience. Definitions include the categorization of participants, an exploration of events and outings, and the types of lobby experiences. With this information, the matrix and subsequent explanation become clearer.

### **Participants Categorized**

As analysis began, it became clear almost immediately that the background and training of each respondent affected his or her understanding of the experience of theatre.

If the participant was experienced with the process of producing a play, then that individual's perceptions and priorities were different from someone who was not familiar with the process. After only a few interviews, it seemed useful to divide respondents into two categories: the *theatre-insider (TI)* and the *theatre-supporter (TS)*.

*Theatre-insiders* are individuals who have knowledge of the production process. This knowledge comes either from the direct experience of having participated in a production in some capacity, or from an education focusing on theatre, as a student or instructor. It is possible that the *theatre-insider* could be an audience member who has attended a large number of performances without actually having worked backstage, which would give him or her significant insight about the process. Regardless of how the *theatre-insider* developed his or her knowledge, this type of audience member understands theatre production practices. These audience members have 'inside' information.

*Theatre-supporters* are those individuals who attend performances but have no significant background or training in theatre. These individuals may have an extensive history of attending performances but minimal knowledge of what it takes to create a production. *Theatre-supporters* can be donors, volunteers, or members of 'the auxiliary.' More importantly, they are individuals who attend theatre, frequently or infrequently.

Both types of audience members are important to theatre. Every theatre audience is comprised of individuals with divergent experiences and education. For this study, stories about lobby activities focused on performances that the respondent witnessed as a member of the audience rather than as part of the production crew, which changes the perception of the theatre-going experience and of the lobby experience.

During the course of this study, two additional sub-classifications of theatre participants were developed. *Theatre-makers* are individuals who are part of the production process: directors, performers, production designers, playwrights, lyricists, composers, producers, craftspersons who built the show and backstage technicians who run the show. A *theatre-maker* becomes a *theatre-insider* when he or she attends a performance that he or she did not help create. As the theatre world is full of gossip and ‘inside’ information, *theatre-insiders* may have more information because friends are part of the production. For this study, I made an effort to avoid anyone currently involved in a production, as I wanted the perspective of audience members separate from the production staff.

The second classification, *theatre-manager* is primarily for the convenience of this researcher. *Theatre-manager* deals with the front-of-house operations, including building maintenance and administrative functions. The *theatre-manager* is not connected directly with the creation of the performance, but rather is responsible for the marketing of the performance to an audience and managing the audience once it arrives at the theatre building. House managers, box office staff, administrative personnel, concessionaires, and security are examples of *theatre-managers*. I established this category to divide theatre practitioners into those who deal directly with the audience and those who may not.<sup>300</sup> Some of the participants in this study are *theatre-managers* and are included as they have direct experience with the audience and offer a specialized perspective on lobby experiences.

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<sup>300</sup> I recognize that actors may deal directly with the audience, but it is a special relationship that is part of theatre. Actors would not qualify as theatre-managers, although there are some companies in which the actors are asked to perform front-of-house duties. Regardless, actors are part of the performance and make theatre, thus are categorized as theatre-makers.

## Events and Outings

In addition to the type of participant, a second divisor revealed through the interview process involves the concept of expectation. Some theatregoers anticipate an *event experience*. According to psychologist professor Barbara Tversky, events are composed of both activities and understanding: “Events have two structural bases: one at the raw level of changes in amount of activity, the other at the level of understanding.”<sup>301</sup> For purposes of this study, I define an *event experience* as an occurrence at the theatre that the participant imbues with significance. Signs of significance include clear long-term memories of the event or extensive use of descriptive word choices indicating an emotional or intellectual response to the experience. *TS Michelle* describes her anticipation of the theatre-going experience:

We talked about what a wonderful day we were going to have out together as mother and daughter and I was talking about how beautiful the theatre is inside – she has never been here before until today. So we talked about the architecture in the theatre and I couldn’t wait for her to see it.<sup>302</sup>

Anticipation may be important to an *event experience* and is demonstrated by any of the following: tickets purchased well in advance; coordination with several individuals to create a group; or specific clothing purchased. Other activities, outside of the performance, may add to the significance of the experience and result in the creation of an *event experience*. These activities may include dinner before the performance, coffee and drinks afterwards, a willingness to travel a distance to the theatre, or a special

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<sup>301</sup> Barbara Tversky, Jeffrey M. Zacks, and Bridgett Martin Hard, “The Structure of Experience,” in *Understanding Events: From Perception to Action*, ed. Jeffrey M. Zacks and Thomas F. Shipley, Oxford series in visual cognition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 436-66, <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195188370.001.0001>> (accessed March 31, 2010).

<sup>302</sup> Michelle, interview.

celebration linked to the performance. An *event experience* may be common to *theatre-supporters* as it takes effort to attend a performance.

*Theatre-insiders* also might anticipate an *event experience* but not for every performance. For some *theatre-insiders*, attending a show may be a job assignment or a class requirement. These types of theatre-going experiences, defined by the level of anticipation, I call an *outing experience*. A theatre *outing experience* is an experience for which the respondent gives no significant meaning. This lack of significance may be indicated by the words like “job assignment” or “required” or “I’m going because my friend is in the show.” Other indications that the performance may be an *outing experience* include the last minute decision to go, no adjustment in dress, going alone or just attending the performance with no involvement in pre-show or post-show activities.

Because of the number of performances a *theatre-insider* might attend, he or she may have some negative experiences at a theatre. In at least one instance, the *theatre-insider* expressed expectation of a negative experience due to the anticipated quality of the production.<sup>303</sup> The accumulation of negative experiences may lower expectations for the *theatre-insider*, who may still attend a performance regardless.

TS Nancy’s repeated attendance at the theatre is example of an *outing experience*, demonstrated by her pre-show activity: “For me, I don’t really look around that much. I mean, every once in a while I try and see what’s coming the rest of the season. I do check out to see what they’re selling, but I kind of sit down, ‘cause I’ve seen the place so many times.”<sup>304</sup> Nancy is a *theatre-supporter*, which suggests that the type of participant

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<sup>303</sup> Adam, interview.

<sup>304</sup> Nancy, interview.



and the kind of experience are not directly related. *Theatre-supporters* generally try for an *event experience*, but may also just settle for an outing. For *theatre-insiders*, the expectation has so many variables that it is not possible to make a blanket declaration.

### **Lobby Experiences**

Some lobby experience for some audience members is a meaningful event that may affect their appreciation and understanding of theatre. *TS* Brad suggests a lobby experience is not something individuals can plan for: “I don’t expect to have a lobby experience. So when I have, whatever happens in the lobby, or whatever experience I do have, is usually something that I’ve picked up. If you have no expectations it is usually going to be positive.”<sup>305</sup> Not every lobby experience is positive, but at least one audience member anticipates the reward of having one. Audience members appear to enjoy themselves when a lobby experience happens, as demonstrated by the abundance of positive stories collected for this study.

In searching for an appropriate definition of a lobby experience, *TI* Eric provided this perspective: “For me [playing the ‘what show is that’ game with pictures in the lobby] was almost like a full lobby experience because it kept me engaged and got me kind of tuned in [to] what was going to happen, what to expect.”<sup>306</sup> To paraphrase Eric, the definition of a lobby experience for this study is ‘something in the lobby that engages the individual.’ Preparation, as described by Eric, is only one type of lobby experience. Through analysis of the data, four categories of lobby experiences emerge:

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<sup>305</sup> Brad, interview.

<sup>306</sup> Eric, interview.

Private experience  
Public experience  
Experiencing the static  
Performance preparation

These lobby experiences are reflections of the experiences collected during this study.

Before exploring the consequences of a lobby experience within a particular category for a specific kind of participant, it is important to provide working definitions with an example for each category.

***Private Event***

A private event experience is a happening that the participant may not intend to share with others outside of his or her party, including activities for which the participants rent or 'borrow' the lobby space for their own personal use. A private event experience can be planned, i.e. a formal dinner party in the lobby, an organized gathering of friends in the bar, or a marriage proposal at intermission. Private events are not related directly to the performance. Rather private events take place near the performance - one activity follows the other.

A private event can also be something that is unplanned or spontaneous. One example would be latecomers who have to watch part of the show in the lobby via closed circuit television until they can take their seats. Alternatively, a private event could be a health related issue such as someone vomiting in the trashcan or requiring medical attention. These private events are not meant to be shared nor experienced by anyone other than the affected participants. These types of private events are also not related to the performance, except that the event takes place in the lobby because the participants are at a performance. However, some private events may affect a response to the performance if individuals miss part of the act or disrupt others when entering or exiting

the theatre. Unfortunately, in most situations, the *theatre-makers* do not have control over private events, and yet have to deal with the consequences of a private event happening that may include the loss of the audience member.

### ***Public Event***

A public event is something that happens when interacting with other individuals. These connections can be between audience members and theatre-managers. Alternatively, a social event can be between the audience and *theatre-makers* if the event takes place within the lobby. A social event also happens between two or more audience members in a group formed prior to the performance, a spontaneous interaction between audience members known *a priori*, or between audience members who have just met while waiting in the lobby. These social event experiences may not be directly related to the performance except that a gathering happens because all parties involved are seeing the same production. As in the case of the private event, *theatre-makers* have little control over the social event, even though a social experience can influence how receptive an audience member may be to the performance.

### ***Experience the Static***

Experiencing the static describes the interaction between an audience member and an object that is a relatively permanent part of the performance environment. The static represents architectural elements such as decorations or physical layout or displays linked to the building, such as the building's history or future changes. The static can also include the performance company's history, notable alumni, or information about the local community. The static does not include items directly associated with the performance, rather materials that are presented long-term or for events in the future. An audience member has the option to view these materials or to interact with the space, or

not, spending as much or as little time as desire and interest dictates. *Theatre-makers* exercise the choice of where to present a performance, but the architecture and the building's history are outside of their control. *Theatre-managers* have some influence over the static in terms of building conditions and cleanliness of the facilities. The static may have some effect on the reception of the performance because of a positive or negative response to the static.

### ***Performance Preparation***

Performance preparation is the opportunity to establish a connection with the performance before the show. These experiences are crafted by *theatre-makers* in an effort to put the audience in an 'appropriate frame of mind' ready for what is to happen on the stage. Performance preparation events can include displays comprised of posters, samples of design work, actors' photographs, and specific decorations pertaining to the current performance. Performance preparation can also include interactive experiences such as games or activities in the lobby, i.e. contact with the performers as characters, or show-related movement into the auditorium. Additionally, performance preparation consists of materials used to educate the audience, to help them understand what they are about to witness. An audience member may be presented with a choice to participate, but not always. Some performance preparation events force the audience to take part in the experience. The risk is that a lack of choice may alienate the audience from the performance.

Along with the development of the above terms, a theory emerged from the data regarding how the lobby is perceived and utilized.

## **Theatre-Going Experiences**

This study is about the lobby experience, activities that take place in the lobby and are memorable to the participants. I recognize that the lobby experience is only a part of the totality of the theatre-going experience that may include all activities prior to the performance: purchasing tickets, coordinating the group, dressing up, listening to the soundtrack, reading of scripts, etc. These activities indicate a certain level of anticipation. Also included, as part of the theatre-going experience, are actions typically associated with ‘going to the theatre,’ which might be dinner at a restaurant, sightseeing around the theatre, shopping in town, meeting friends, dealing with traffic, coordinating with babysitters, etc. Activities associated with the theatre-going experience that take place in the theatre building include socializing in the lobby, purchasing concessions or souvenirs, and activities inside the auditorium, such as reading the playbill, the performance, and visiting with seat mates. The theatre-going experience continues through the post-show: collecting signatures at the stage door, going out for drinks and dessert, follow-up conversations with other audience members, reviewing the playbill at home, etc. From this list, by no means inclusive, if an audience member engages in just a handful of these activities, they are having a theatre-going experience of which the lobby experience is just one part.

## **Attention**

Business management scholars Thomas Davenport and John Beck define attention as “focused mental engagement on a particular item of information.”<sup>307</sup> To gain

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<sup>307</sup> Thomas H. Davenport and John C. Beck, *The Attention Economy Understanding the New Currency of Business* (Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2001), 20.

our attention an item has to come into our awareness; we then attend to the item and we decide to act. Attention happens between awareness and action. Although something may, ‘catch the eye’ if an individual does not consider some kind of action, then attention has not really been given to the item.<sup>308</sup> A relatively recent development that has crossed several disciplines is the concept of “the attention economy.” Economics is the study of scarce resources and due to the increase in information presented to audiences, attention is in short supply.<sup>309</sup> Theatre is no different from anything else that is trying to grab our attention. Even being present in the building does not guarantee attention, as evidenced by the multi-tasking that may take place during a performance. Attention is a conscious act requiring focus, concentration and decision-making, and necessary for an experience.

## **Theory**

The theory about the lobby experience, because of my interpretation of the analysis of the data collected for this study is:

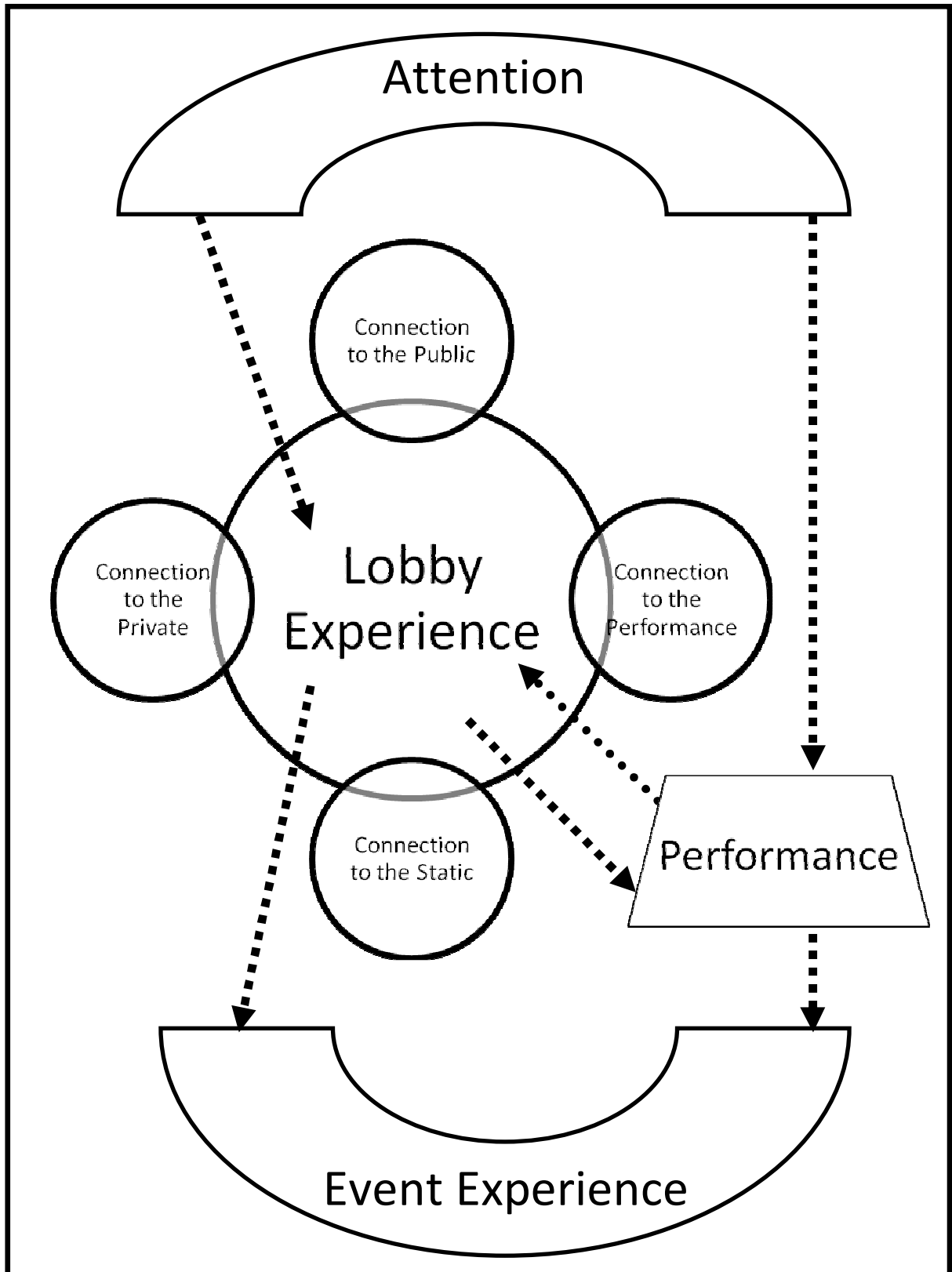
An audience member with enough time, space, and awareness encounters a person, an activity or some material good that seizes his or her attention, resulting in a connection with the static, the public, the private or the performance. As a consequence, the audience member experiences an individualized and memorable event experience.

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<sup>308</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>309</sup> Richard A Lanham, *The Economics of Attention: Style and Substance in the Age of Information* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), xi.

Figure 2: Theory of the Lobby Experience



## Explanation of the Theory of the Lobby Experience

As displayed in figure 2, a lobby experience is just one part of a fluid experience that has the potential to be circular, has a multitude of options, and may lead to an *event experience*. At any time in the process, an audience member may enter or leave the flow chart. An individual makes the choice to participate, with limited influence by *theatre-makers* or other audience members. The entire experience is shaped by the participant and is unique to that individual.<sup>310</sup>

Attention is required to start the process. Attention begins with awareness of surrounding, which may be the result of anticipation or preparation, which may include the reading of the script, listening to the score, or remembering previous incarnations of the production. Preparation might also consist of reviewing the layout of the theatre building or reflecting on previous performances experienced at that locale. Because of an individual's anticipation or preparation, an audience member may enter the building aware of the surroundings and ready to give attention to something that catches his or her eye.

Perhaps none of the above takes place. Rather at the last minute, the audience member decides to go to the performance. Tickets are purchased at the door and the audience member enters the building. Perhaps the audience member is a *theatre-insider* with lowered expectations. There is no significant anticipation, except what might be generated by a basic knowledge of theatre. These individuals have not been building their expectations until they walk through the doors. Some audience members may

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<sup>310</sup> Reference Figure 2 throughout the explanation section of this paper.



choose to head directly to the auditorium, bypassing the lobby to take their seats and enjoy the performance. These individuals did not have a lobby experience at that time. Perhaps something happens in the lobby that stops these individuals and grabs their attention and they are made aware of their surroundings and then may have a lobby experience.

For an *event experience* to take place, attention must be given to either something in the lobby or something in the performance. Within a theatre lobby, attention can be given to one of three categories: the static, people and activities. Attention given to any of these may lead to a lobby experience, which may lead to an *event experience*.

Attention to the static involves the active consideration of any items contained within the building. These items can include physical building elements, decorations or displays about past, current or future performances. Attention to the static can lead to a *connection with the static*, which is a lobby experience for the audience member, where the individual has an experience with the static. Attention to the static may lead to a *connection to the performance* lobby experience for the audience member who examines the performance preparation materials in the lobby. Attention to the building, an example of the static, may lead to a *connection with the private* lobby experience when two or more individuals do not desire an audience. Any of these connections with the static experiences in the lobby may be significant enough to create an *event experience* for the audience member. Any of these connections may be independent of the performance.

Attention to people is defined as any contact among individuals in the lobby. These exchanges may be between audience members, or audience members with theatre-managers or with *theatre-makers*. The dealings could be minimal exchanges of

information or deep and meaningful relationships. These connections with people may lead to any one or all of the four lobby experiences. Contact with another individual may lead to a *connection with the private*, in that the individuals participating may not seek others, or may not wish to have their experiences made public. Even in a situation in which contact is not hidden, the experience is still between individuals and remains a private lobby experience. *Connection to the public* is a social event that takes place between two or more individuals in the social setting of an open lobby, which can involve loud and boisterous exchanges, introductions and shared networking, or contacts with a celebrity where others serve as witnesses. Attention to people may lead to the observation of others in the time-honored tradition of ‘people-watching.’ Attention given to people may lead to a *connection to the static* experience by observing what others may be looking at. Observation of others may lead an audience member to a *connection with the performance* if what others are doing is examining performance preparation materials. Finally, attention given to people may bring an audience member into contact with *theatre-makers* who may be leading some performance preparation activity. Some of these lobby experiences may be significant enough to create an *event experience* for the audience member independent of the performance. Alternatively, these lobby experiences may present some material or activity that will connect the audience member to the performance. Either way, attention to people can lead to an *event experience*.

Giving attention to activities in the lobby is to notice what others are doing in the lobby or to participate directly. Such activities can include using restrooms, or participating in performance preparation and other pre-show happenings. Attention to an activity can lead to a *connection to the private*, *connection to the public*, *connection to*

*the static or connection to the performance.* As with the other categories of attention, there are a number of things an audience member gives attention to which can lead to a range of experiences. Once again, these experiences may lead directly to a memorable event or may affect how the performance is experienced.

Inside the auditorium, something may take place that affects the audience member's attention in the lobby that may result in a lobby experience. Perhaps a performer's work interests the audience member, leading him or her to examine the actor's bio or photo in the lobby. Maybe the story is confusing, which requires the audience member to look for dramaturgical materials in the lobby. It may be possible that an acquaintance is spotted in the auditorium and located during intermission. Thus, the performance leads to a lobby experience at intermission. However, it also could be that at intermission a lobby experience takes place that affects the response to the performance. Perhaps the audience member has the time and interest to look around the lobby, to discover friends, and to make a social connection. Alternatively, while waiting, the audience member locates educational material that alters his or her perception of the performance. Maybe a private activity takes place in the lobby at intermission that changes the audience member, affecting his or her attendance for the remainder of the performance. These activities are just some of the possibilities of what can happen at intermission that may lead to a lobby experience after connecting with the performance.

The response to the performance can also create a post-show lobby experience. Perhaps the performance was so moving that the audience member does not want to leave the theatre and lingers in the lobby - meeting friends or just 'hanging out.' Maybe the actors come out into the lobby after the show to shake hands or sign autographs, creating

a *connection with the public* experience. It is possible that post-show the audience member has some extra time and chooses to view materials from past productions. Each of these experiences in the lobby can create an *event experience*.

While attending the theatre an audience member may give attention to people, the static, or activities. The attention may be the result of the individual's preparation, anticipation, and awareness. Once attention is given, the audience member may make connections to the private, the public, the static, or the performance, which may lead to an *event experience*. It is possible that the performance may create a connection between the participant and other people or materials or activities while in the lobby during intermission or post-show, which may also result in an *event experience*. It is also possible that none of the connections lead anywhere.

For many *theatre-supporters*, the *event experience* may be the anticipated outcome. For some *theatre-insiders*, the *event experience* can also be the expected outcome. For other *theatre-insiders*, because of some connection with the *static, private, public* or *performance preparation* in the lobby or the performance itself, the expected outing may convert into an *event experience*.

TI Eric succinctly presents his perception of a relationship between the audience, the performance, and the lobby:

I want to have a good time. I want them to be successful and so I'm pulling for them 100%. And for me, if I just ran in there and I jumped, just plopped down and sat down like I'm sitting in front of the TV, it's not the same experience. I really kind of want to get in the mind set of "Okay, I'm ready to be entertained now. You guys can go ahead." The lobby experience helps me to do that. If there's something in the lobby for me to do, it doesn't have to be show-specific. It can just be something to get me kind of thinking along the lines of musical theatre or drama or whatever it is.<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> Eric, interview.

For *TI* Eric, a theatre-going experience is much more than a performance. It is a reflection of the attitude of the audience. An attitude that may be shaped by events outside of the auditorium, which may prepare the audience for what is about to happen inside the auditorium. These events may possibly merge with events that take place during the performance. All of these events/activities make up the totality of a theatre-going experience aided by a lobby experience.

### **Grounded Theory Paradigm**

Corbin and Strauss established three significant aspects of a good grounded theory:

1. There are conditions. These allow a conceptual way of grouping answers to the questions about why, where, how, and what happens.
2. There are inter/actions and emotions. These are the responses made by individuals or groups to situations, problems, happenings, and events.
3. There are consequences. These are the outcomes of inter/actions or emotional responses to events. What happened as a result of those responses?<sup>312</sup>

The remainder of this chapter addresses these three issues.

### **Conditions**

Three conditions are required for attention: space, time and something or someone compelling to the individual audience member, thus inducing that particular audience member to give his or her attention and connect with that object or other individual.

Space is a condition to draw attention, for without enough space, the lobby becomes a hallway that merely transports the audience from the outside into the

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<sup>312</sup> Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research* (2008), 89.

auditorium with reduced opportunities to have a lobby experience. *TS Brad* knows how much space he needs: “I like a lobby that is big enough that you can move around in.”<sup>313</sup>

If there is not enough space, *TS Brad* felt crushed and avoided the lobby entirely:

I guess it’s not a lot of, there’s not room to go and do what you want to do or see what you want to see. So yes, I guess it is somewhat of a negative experience. If it’s too tight, [I can’t] really get a lot of enjoyment out of it. So often, what happens is when it’s that tight, one will either stay at their seats, or they will actually go outside and stand on the sidewalk in front of the theatre during intermission, rather than staying in the lobby itself.<sup>314</sup>

*TS Brad* points up an issue regarding the lobby experience, where does a lobby experience take place? For purposes of my study, I defined the lobby as an interior space, excluding audience activities outside the theatre building. I would suspect that in a non-directed interview some audience members might consider just outside the lobby doors as part of the lobby experience.

In contrast to *TS Brad*, *TS Diane* prefers a smaller space to facilitate her lobby experience:

I always liked it, because I actually prefer smaller more intimate areas over big expanses. You are almost forced to sit and talk to people in smaller areas, than if you go into a big open space and you could just kind of be lost, you know you don’t have to talk to anybody.<sup>315</sup>

*Diane* warns, however, if a lobby is too small, then it has a negative affect on her opportunities to connect: “You know you can’t get through the front door because there’s a line going down for people waiting to get their paper cups of coffee.”<sup>316</sup>

Because she has a history at this particular theatre, she is properly prepared: “But when

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<sup>313</sup> Brad, interview.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

<sup>315</sup> Diane, interview.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

you go into it knowing it's going to be that way, then, you know, that's fine. Sometimes, like I said, it's enjoyable."<sup>317</sup>

For *TS* Leon, the lack of space tended to keep him away from the theatre:

At one point, it was, you almost didn't want to go because of the inconvenience of having to stand in line at a restroom for you know. It took all of intermission to get in line and go to the restroom and get back out. And now with the facilities that they have on hand, it's not an inconvenience. They've opened up parts of the spaces and have invested in returning it to its original condition and so it's a pleasurable experience.<sup>318</sup>

Fortunately, for his theatre the changes to the facilities drew Leon back.

The second condition for attention is time. Without enough time, the lobby once again serves as a hallway: "I may look at a few pictures, but once it gets down to fifteen, it's time to go in. Traditionally, I'm not there that early."<sup>319</sup> *TI* Eric has a set routine for himself prior to the performance. At 15 minutes before curtain, he will take his seat in the auditorium to read the program and prepare for the production. This time allotment is "sacrosanct," and anything that interrupts his preparation can become a point of great contention for *TI* Eric. He has even trained his friends to respect his routine.

For some audience members, getting there early is part of their theatre-going experience. They want to have good parking, to spend a little time in the lobby and to work their way slowly to their seats. For others, time is precious and they choose to arrive as close to the curtain as possible, even risking a late arrival. Without time, there is limited opportunity for an audience member to have a pre-show lobby experience.

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<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

<sup>318</sup> Leon, interview.

<sup>319</sup> Eric, interview.

Intermission and post-show activities may provide additional opportunities for a lobby experience, but that can happen only if something grabs the audience member's attention.

The third condition for attention is that something or someone must capture the focus of the individual audience member. For example, *TI* Frank's attention was captured by the history of the theatre he was attending:

My favorite thing in the lobby is when the theatre's history is in the lobby. And that's the thing I think of as the most pleasant thing for me. That feeling of the provenance of the building and what's happened there before.<sup>320</sup>

The materials on the walls captured *TI* Frank's focus, leading him to give his attention to the history of the theatre. This connection with the static appeared to be a positive experience for *TI* Frank, based on his word choice.

*TI* Tonya had focus grabbed by something that was not initially considered appealing:

There's something odd in an odd sort of way. The crappy stuff there too just hanging on the wall in a crappy sort of layout. It wasn't very polished or anything like that. But it was kind of cute at the same time and enchanting in a way. Actually, if I was an eighteen-year-old girl wanting to be an actress I'd think that was just the coolest thing. And it seems to work, I mean they certainly have a big audience base there.<sup>321</sup>

Although, her first reaction was "crappy stuff," after giving attention to the materials, she altered her interpretation, recognizing that it may appeal to an 18-year-old girl. What grabs an audience member's focus is going to be particular to the participant. And whether to give the item attention is also a decision specific to the individual. Attention

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<sup>320</sup> Frank, interview.

<sup>321</sup> Tonya, interview.



is both awareness and action, thus even the most eye-catching object may not capture an audience's attention.

To get attention, it is necessary to have space in order to move and observe, to have time enough to focus on selected objects, and to draw the focus of the individual. Without all three of these elements, attention cannot be grabbed and the individual will not have a lobby experience.

### **Inter/actions**

Under the right conditions, an audience member gives attention to the building, including its contents, people, and activities inside. The attention leads to an interaction with these various elements. The interaction or connections are the tactics and strategies of this lobby experience theory. As already identified, there are four types of connections, each having the potential to create a connection to the performance or to a personalized *event experience*.

#### ***Connect with the Static***

For many of the participants, the contact with the static results in a connection to the theatre as revealed by their memories of the experience. An example of the *connection with the static* is TS Diane's emotional account of her typical pre-show activities: "I love to stare at pictures. I love to check out the star pictures as far as what they look like. And even if the play sucked, you are at a nice place. The play might have been bad, but the staircase and the light fixtures were awesome."<sup>322</sup> TS Diane's desire to *connect with the static* continues all the way into the restrooms:

At the Seattle Opera House, they have this kind of women's lounge. I'm not talking about the actual bathrooms, which are really nice too. When I

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<sup>322</sup> Diane, interview.

say the bathrooms, I'm actually talking about the women's lounge, before you get into the bathroom. It has the circular cushion. You know a comfy circular chair, and then there's this thing that comes out of the center. I can't remember exactly, if it's a just a big arrangement or something, I can't remember. But, anyway, around it along the wall, are these big gilded mirrors, and the lighting is just perfect and everybody just hushed, everybody's just floating and you know it just adds to it.<sup>323</sup>

*TS Diane's* experience includes static items such as gilded mirrors and a circular chair.

At this point of her theatre-going experience, regardless of what happens on the stage, *TS Diane* is having an *event experience*.

*TS Brad's* attention to the static includes the artwork exhibited at one local theatre: "One of the theatre lobbies that I go to has local artwork, changing exhibits, and going through and looking at the paintings and the art work that they have exhibits, is a good thing to do while I am waiting."<sup>324</sup> *TS Brad's* experience with the static at another theatre building results from both the size of the lobby and contents placed by theatre-managers:

The lobby at the Vandivort Theatre ... It's often fairly tight, but then there's this corridor leading to it, with the restrooms at the end of the corridor, so the lobby kind of extends down that corridor to the restrooms. The lobby experience does also. And, at that particular theatre, they hang posters of shows that have occurred in the past and things like that. You can take your time walking down there and looking at those posters.<sup>325</sup>

For *TS Brad* and *TS Diane*, these connections are about things unrelated to the performance, yet appear to be integral to their experiences.

*TS Leon* also connects to the static, but his perspective is based on his history with the theatre:

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<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

<sup>324</sup> Brad, interview.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid.

I love the lobby at Springfield Little Theatre and the renovations that have taken place during the last ten years in particular have really brought the grandeur of the lobby back to where it was. I remember fifteen, twenty years ago going when I was in high school and college and it was not well lit; it wasn't well decorated; the gold gilding on some things had kind of faded and gone from some of the fixtures and they've really done a good job of bringing it back. It's not opulence but it's a very nice experience to walk into the lobby at Springfield Little Theatre now. It's an inviting and warm atmosphere.<sup>326</sup>

For some audience members their memories of past experiences at a theatre building may enhance their present *event experience*.

Not every *connection to the static* will be positive. In contrast to *TS Brad* and *TS Diane*, *TI Eric* does not like the artwork in the lobby: "It's a good way for an artist to showcase their work but I'm not that interested in art work."<sup>327</sup> From *TI Peter's* perspective, his arrival to the lobby was too early, which caused him some discomfort:

I got here around 2:00 of course my goal is to get here around 2:30, I think a half an hour before the show but, I got here a little too early, in that the lobby was empty. I had some time to kill so I was thinking I'd go grab a bite or something. It wasn't crowded and I felt a little out of place. Because the lobby was empty except for someone working the box office, of course. I just didn't want to be here before the show. I felt the equivalent of being behind in the scenes. It's like, "you're not supposed to be here, go away, it's a surprise, you can't see the bride before the wedding," that kind of thing. So I thought okay I'll just come back maybe around 2:30 when I believe the house opens normally. Of course I got here at 2:35 and it was full.<sup>328</sup>

At the production *TI Peter* references, the house did not open at the usual time, which caused the lobby to be packed with audience members waiting to get in. The packed lobby led to a different type of connection for *TI Peter*.

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<sup>326</sup> Leon, interview.

<sup>327</sup> Eric, interview.

<sup>328</sup> Peter, interview.

*TI* Tonya suggests that a *connection with the static* is based in part on her theatre-going experience. She knows what to expect and plans accordingly:

There is sort of different etiquette for different theatres. I guess I was thinking about in Austin and then you'd have like a theatre that was outside and you sat on the hay bales. I remember doing that once. So you're not going to come early to that, 'cause if someone took your hay bale there's somewhere else to go. Which is different then going someplace like a playhouse in Cleveland where there's much more to see and do, there's even a shop. So you're gonna come early so you can shop. Different expectations of what you are wearing and how you're even walking and presenting yourself and the air you put on. It's gonna be different than university theatre where you don't need to be as formal - it's gonna be with students and they're gonna be yakking. You know they're going to be less quiet in the audience and less respect for the production and all of those different things. So yeah, I think there's different levels of theatre and expectations, different set of rules that go along with that.<sup>329</sup>

Tonya's connection with the static depended on the rules at the theatre as revealed by repeated experiences with the theatre.

Concerning university level theatre, house manager Xaviera shared her perception of the response to the static: "People look at [founder's history room] all the time. They love looking at it. We got somebody who donated a bunch of old Stephens' yearbooks and I've been sitting out here reading those and noticing people come up and flip through them."<sup>330</sup> *TI* Yolanda, while visiting the same theatre, described her experience of *connecting with the static*:

I loved the photographs. I did notice, I think there was a sign as you're facing the theatre it would be, I guess. And it said something about the performing arts and yet it had pictures of women looking through microscopes, you know former Stephens College photographs, but it didn't have anything to do with the performing arts. Although it could be creative in math and sciences, creative if nothing else. But, I did

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<sup>329</sup> Tonya, interview.

<sup>330</sup> Xaviera, interview.

remember those big photographs and then, of course, all of the [founder's] things. All around the place.<sup>331</sup>

These stories demonstrate how the audience makes a *connection to the static* and reveal that although the connection may not directly affect the response to the performance, this connection can create a memorable *event experience* for the participant.

Although given only minimal attention in this study, the concession stand is a permanent part of the building, which means those who use it are experiencing the static.

*TI* Mary tells of her experiences while visiting a theatre in Europe in which she experienced the static concession stands:

I remember going to pick up my ticket and get my program. And, I think they were selling some books, and I think I bought a copy of the play with a forward by the director, so these were special copies of the script. I got there fairly early as I recall, and I may have gone, I think I got into the bar, I probably had a coke. One of the things I like about European theatres, they have these bars, a lot of them do. You can go in, and if it's not too crowded, you can sit down and you can get something to drink, and they usually sell little nibbly things. I just had dinner, so I don't believe I ate anything.<sup>332</sup>

There is nothing in this story to suggest that this *connection with the static* had any impact on the performance.

*TI* Frank, like *TI* Mary, was a tourist in a small town in the Midwest in which a theatre lobby contained more than theatre information:

In Amana, there's information about what's going on in town. And maps, I like that the Amana bulletin always has a map, which I do find

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<sup>331</sup> Yolanda, interview.

<sup>332</sup> Mary, Interview. This story is an example of the challenge in creating categories for a qualitative study. Was Mary's experience in the bar a connection with the static, as it involved a permanent fixture, or was it a connection with the public, as Mary also had to deal with the staff? This example demonstrates an aspect of researcher choice in qualitative studies. Because Mary discussed her activities with things rather than with people, it seems appropriate to categorize this as a connection with the static experience.

interesting. It gives me a sense of the place I'm in. I do enjoy that. I like to look at brochures of what's coming up at the theatre and this production in the context of the season, what kind of shows that the theatre does. If they're offering classes, sometimes I am interested in it. Most places have some children's classes but some places have more than that. I think it's good too, not in the city so much, but when you have a theatre too, people have, there are restaurant ads and things, naturally useful to people who are just flying in and don't know what's available to them. So I don't mind any of that.<sup>333</sup>

The static is anything found in the lobby of the theatre that can create a memorable and significant experience for the individual who interacts with the material. All of these experiences may happen because the individual gives attention to his or her surroundings.

### ***Connect with the Private***

A private experience is something that happens in the lobby between two or more individuals who are using the lobby space. The clearest example of a *Connection with the Private* is a marriage proposal that took place at intermission in a theatre lobby:

It was during the Seattle Opera's *Nutcracker*. We had done intermission, so we were walking around looking at the artwork and things that were in the lobby area of the opera house. My husband was gently trying to move me over to a certain area, kind of out of the way of the other people. He then got down on one knee and proposed.<sup>334</sup>

When asked why the Seattle Opera, TS Diane replied:

I don't think he knew exactly where he was going to do it. It's just the lobby of the Opera House is really nice, it's very impressive, it's intimate, and there is all these little, separate little rooms like you would find at the museum. It would have different gallery rooms and what not, with paintings and stuff. And I thought maybe during the intermission when he was walking around thinking "where am I going to do this?" It probably came to him that this was a good spot. They're very intimate small little areas, even though there were still some people that could hear what was going on and I'm sure that he was like "I better do it now, if not we're going back in and then afterwards it's over and I've lost my chance."<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>333</sup> Frank, interview.

<sup>334</sup> Diane, interview.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid.

This private event turned into a public presentation: “There were some people that were kind of standing around and they saw the whole thing happen.”<sup>336</sup> When asked if these observers said or did anything, *TS Diane* replied:

Oh, you know, when they see somebody, you know, get proposed to, it’s kind of mushy gushy, I guess. One of them went “Oh my husband did this this way oh oh.” You know, and a couple of people come over to us, and they were congratulating [my fiancé]. I was shocked because I wasn’t expecting it at all. And it’s very hard to surprise me, but he did.<sup>337</sup>

*TS Diane* reported that she did not know any of the observers, which made this a *connection with the public event* when *TS Diane* started interacting with other people.

The lobby experience in this story is a *connection with the private* for the two involved in the proposal. The lobby appeared to be the ideal location with the expectation of some privacy established by the configuration of the rooms, as well as one of the participants being particularly connected to the building’s decorations. Timing was important as they were about to run out of it; they were having a private and intimate date at the theatre. The most telling aspect of this lobby experience is that it took place at a theatre, but was not connected to the performance. Both events just happened to coincide in time and place.

One additional consideration regarding the marriage proposal is the perspective of the observers. They too shared the private experience. Their lobby experience was the observation of the event. Although none of the participants were interviewed, it may be possible that they too remembered the experience for some time, particularly if their

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<sup>336</sup> Ibid.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

involvement moved into a *Connection with the Public* by making contact with the engaged couple. This example demonstrates how lobby experiences can overlap, fit into more than one category, or change categories rapidly.

A second example of the private experience as reported by *theatre-manager* Xaviera focuses on the health issues of the audience:

From the summer theatre at Okoboji I had, well I don't know if it was just because it's summer or most of the audience was elderly, but I had in the same show on two different nights, I had one woman come out of the theatre and vomit into an ashtray. Which was exciting to say the least. It was definitely an experience. And then at another time we had a man come out who was having heart troubles. Which was kind of scary, but he was fine. His wife was with him and he had it often and she knew exactly what to do so she took care of it.<sup>338</sup>

These two stories demonstrate that not all private events in the lobby are positive ones.

In addition, it is not likely that there was a desire for observers or others to share the experience. Like other *Connections with the Private* events, these personal events had an effect on the reception of the performance for the participants as their time in the auditorium was interrupted. Even though these individuals were not interviewed directly, it is possible that they remembered their time at the theatre, even if not fondly.

The last example of a *Connection with the Private* experience is *TI Tonya's* story about being late for the performance: "I went outside to have a cigarette and the guy yells at us 'the show is starting.' And we had to run in. I had thought the play was at 8 instead of 7:30 so that sort of ruined it."<sup>339</sup> The consequence of this private experience in the lobby tainted *TI Tonya's* response to the performance experience:

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<sup>338</sup> Xaviera, interview.

<sup>339</sup> Tonya, interview.



It made me grumpy for the first part ‘cause then I was mad at the audience, then by being mad at the audience I’m mad at the whole theatre and everything involved with it so I assume this is what the people are like here – pretentious, they don’t really care, they dressed up more than I’m used to and like people had you know skirts on and fancy coats and so I was mad at all of them. It’s not only you know, “please tell me why are you dressing up so much to go to college theatres.” Secondly, they take my seat and you know as the show is going on I’m thinking about I should have said something like I’m a reviewer. Do you know who I am? And so they would all have felt bad. And I was like you know my whole thoughts that go through your head and as the play is going on you don’t really care about it.<sup>340</sup>

*TI* Tonya spent a portion of the performance in another world. She imagined what she could have said that might have evoked a response from the staff. Unfortunately, the pre-show distractions meant she was not giving the performance her attention. In addition, from *TI* Tonya’s description of her experience, there really was nothing a *theatre-maker* could do except be clearer about the show time when tickets were purchased. *Theatre-makers* should understand that some lobby experiences are not good preparation for the performance.

### ***Connect with the Public***

The *Connection with the Public* experience is the result of interacting with others, which is identified as experiencing a social event. These contacts with other people may affect the response to the performance or can lead to an *event experience* unrelated to the performance. As explored in Chapter Four, the social experience is important to many audience members: “That’s part of the whole thing. I mean, to me part of the whole experience is seeing other people and visiting with other people.”<sup>341</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> Ibid.

<sup>341</sup> Zachary, interview.

For some audience members, the *Connection with the Public* is a positive experience that affects their response to the performance. *TS* Carla shared that going with a group influenced her response to the performance: “I think probably having made it an event, and going with other people, probably does make more of an impact.”<sup>342</sup>

*TS* Oscar’s primary *Connection with the Public* was with theatre-managers, although he admitted that he also saw people he recognized:

There was the usher of course and the ticket taker. And the ticket taker was very cordial and hoped that we had an enjoyable experience and pointed us towards the direction of the seats even though she pointed to the wrong door to go into. And - and then again several other people that I know who they are or know what they do or that my relationship with them is not to the level of friendship that I would go out of my way to go talk to them at that.<sup>343</sup>

Although, he did not actually visit with his acquaintances, he did give them his attention.

Each of these encounters is a *connection with the public*, even if tenuous.

Having a *Connection with the Public* is to reach out to other audience members or theatre-managers. For some audience members, the reach is extended to friends and family. For other audience members, they may make an effort to connect with strangers.

For *TI* William, he will only reach out to strangers at one location:

The Shaw Festival in Canada, because you’re sort of in the community of theatre lovers who are all there for the same reason from all over the world, you do tend to sort of talk to strangers about what have you seen, what have you been doing here during your stay, what would you recommend or that sort of thing. You know, where’d you come from? I don’t really see that so much here at Court Theatre. I think it’s people who are here after work or you know just wanting to do something for the weekend and they’ve decided to come here.<sup>344</sup>

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<sup>342</sup> Carla, interview.

<sup>343</sup> Oscar, interview.

<sup>344</sup> William, interview.

This story is an example of how history can alter the expectation. At the Shaw Festival, *TI* William expects that he might find others who share his interest in theatre, so he is willing to open up to strangers. In contrast, when at the Court Theatre *TI* William does not have that same experience. He observes that individuals are hesitant to talk to strangers. *TI* William did not report whether either of these experiences influenced his response to the performance, but they did create a memorable *event experience*.

*TI* Frank's willingness to talk with strangers is not related to a specific theatre, but rather to how much space is available:

[Q: Do spontaneous conversations ever just erupt?] Yeah, they do. I find that more at the seat than in the lobby but again I'm used to these lobbies that are so small that people just don't leave their seats. They are in a line for the toilets downstairs or they're smoking out front. As the place gets less crowded I find more chat inside the theatre with people you don't know, than outside. But that's, I think that's not as true when you're in a luxurious lobby, spatially luxurious which has plenty of room for people to mill around and look at a picture and comment to the person standing beside them about it. In that sense, I would be much more prone to talk to strangers in the lobby.<sup>345</sup>

As previously discussed, there has to be space for a lobby experience to occur; yet the need for a social connection is strong enough that some audience members will find a way to connect to others, whether in the auditorium or outside. Some individuals want a social event experience regardless of where it takes place.

*TS* Leon has the habit of going to performances where there are more organized opportunities to visit with others. He likes to go on opening nights when he knows several parties are planned:

Normally, I mean, it just depends, but normally we like to go on the patrons' night, which is the opening night of the production. And so,

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<sup>345</sup> Frank, interview.

before the show there was some patrons gathering and a party. We normally enjoy the hors d'oeuvres and cocktails before the show and then go to the show and then there is a patrons' gathering after where we were able to mingle and meet the cast.<sup>346</sup>

Leon includes the activities both before and after the performance in his *event experience*. Opportunities to visit with others, either audience members or theatre-makers, are integral to his enjoyment of the entire evening. Additionally, the party after the performance, where *TS* Leon meets the cast, is an example of the performance creating a lobby experience that can lead to an *event experience*.

During *TI* Peter's interview, he revealed that he was alone at a particular performance. Although he accepted the situation, it was not without regret:

I'm used to doing things on my own but also, you know, sometimes maybe it would have been nice to have brought one of my friends along. Sometimes I guess there is that feeling of awkwardness, like, "ooh here I am in the lobby, okay. Just waiting for the show to start, seeing others having all these conversations, everything going on around me." But, you know, I see it's not going to kill me to go somewhere by myself.<sup>347</sup>

*TI* Peter might have preferred company, if the opportunity presented itself. In contrast to *TI* Peter, *TI* Eric often goes to the theatre alone and takes advantage of intermission to socialize: "Yeah, I may be a little more social at intermission if I'm by myself."<sup>348</sup> Going to the theatre alone is one of the differences that distinguished *theatre-insiders* and *theatre-supporters*. The only individuals interviewed who chose to go to the theatre alone were *theatre-insiders*. One *theatre-supporter* ended up going to a show by himself,

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<sup>346</sup> Leon, interview.

<sup>347</sup> Peter, interview.

<sup>348</sup> Eric, interview.

but only because of last minute health issues with the other member of his party. Every other *theatre-supporter* interviewed always went with someone else.

Not every *Connection with the Public* resulted in a positive experience. *TS*

Michelle shared how her contact with theatre-managers left her slightly uncomfortable:

I felt as though some of the staff, elderly staff particularly, were a little bit, how do you put it, cranky. The last time I was here, one or two were, but for the most part, they were very accommodating. But today it seemed like we happened into several rude - not rude but just people who acted as though they don't care whether we're here or not.<sup>349</sup>

This experience with the staff may not have directly affected Michelle's response to the performance, but it did color her memories of the theatre-going experience.

These stories are just a few examples of *Connecting to the Public* and how these experiences may result in an *event experience* for some audience members, even if the experience was negative.

### ***Connect with the Performance***

To experience performance preparation, either as a static display or an interactive event in the lobby, is a *Connection to the Performance*. This connection can affect how the performance is received which may result in an *event experience*. Connecting with the performance has previously been explored in Chapter Four. One of the challenges for this study was to find participants who had direct experience with interactive performance preparation activities.

As examined earlier, *TI Adam's* reading of the displays set out for *Assassins* provided more than one form of preparation:

I hadn't read or seen the show in quite a while actually, or listened to the cast recording. So I think number one, it reminded me of who these

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<sup>349</sup> Michelle, interview.

people were. I also think that it's helped me draw the line between fact and fiction and where the librettist had taken some liberties and what he had invented.<sup>350</sup>

TI Adam had familiarity with the story as he had witnessed other productions.

Nevertheless, he still appreciated the refresher material in the lobby. He was prepared for the performance because of a Connection to the Performance experience in the lobby: "I always like it when there is some kind of supplementary material in the lobby to get you ready for the show or to provide a context for the production."<sup>351</sup>

TI Frank appreciates the efforts some theatres take to prepare for the performance: "Some theatres do a theme/display for the show they're doing, sometimes there's something fun in the lobby, and I enjoy that."<sup>352</sup> When asked, "Do you find it valuable or necessary for you?" TI Frank replied, "[w]ell it's fun. And in some plays it helps you enter the play."

Even though Frank and Adam are *theatre-insiders*, performance preparation can be appreciated by both *theatre-insiders* and *theatre-supporters*. TS Brad valued the reading materials in the lobby: "Maybe it's looking for something to occupy my time, but it's nice because it kind of gets me ready for the show."<sup>353</sup> When asked if the preparation helps, TS Brad replied, "I think being prepared for it and knowing what to expect makes a difference in how much you enjoy it."

One divisor between *theatre-supporters* and *theatre-insiders* is a willingness to participate in the performance preparation. From the *theatre-supporters* interviewed,

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<sup>350</sup> Adam, interview.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid.

<sup>352</sup> Frank, interview.

<sup>353</sup> Brad, interview.

combined with the struggle of finding respondents, it may be that some *theatre-supporters* prefer the chance to connect with performance preparation materials as volunteers, choosing how much effort to devote to the task. In contrast, *theatre-insiders* seem to look forward to performance preparation, particularly enjoying the more interactive events.

### ***The Performance Inspires a Lobby Experience***

In addition to the connections with the *private, public, static* and *performance*, there is one more interaction that can influence a lobby experience, and it happens inside the auditorium. Perhaps a performer inspires an audience member to examine the actor's photographs. It may be possible that the setting of the story requires more understanding of some history, challenging an audience member to read the materials placed in the lobby. Alternatively, someone is spotted in the auditorium and contact is made between friends in the lobby during the intermission. Either these types of lobby experiences take place at intermission or after the performance; they are part of the theatre-going experience and may lead to an *event experience*.

*TS Brad's Connection with the Public* experience is his response to the performance: "I want to share it with somebody. I mean there is the feeling that I would like to share with somebody and if I see somebody in the lobby or that I know and we can connect on something, then that enhances the experience."<sup>354</sup> *TS Brad's* total experience is enhanced because he was able to share his feelings generated by the performance. The lobby experience does not need to take place before the show to qualify as an experience.

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<sup>354</sup> Ibid.

TI Frank's post-show experience is not a need to share with others, but rather it is to spend time in the space, reflecting on what he just saw. Frank's observations of other audience members imply that they too might have a desire to connect to the static or to other people post-show:

Sometimes people linger longer just because there's such a positive energy going on. And that's the thing that does happen in the lobby sometimes. People will then stop and look at the pictures again and comment on moments in the show and stuff. The audience will hover, not wanting to quite give it up. And that's a lovely thing, I think.<sup>355</sup>

What do *theatre-makers* think if they evoke a strong enough response to the performance that the audience does not want to vacate the building? Unfortunately, theatre is too ephemeral to leave anything but lasting memories.

For some audience members, the desire to stay connected to the performance is strong enough that they will wait for the performers:

If there's someone that I knew who was in the show, I may want to go congratulate them or talk to them, or chat. Just even a wave and a "good show!" Depending upon the theatre and what their policy is, I mean, a lot of the theatres here in Columbia, as you know we've talked about Columbia Entertainment Company. I like to have the opportunity to say "hey, good job! Good show!" Or something to that effect. So, it really depends upon where you go. If you go out to the Lyceum, I mean, if you want to see them, you gotta go backstage and wait for them to come out the stage door. If I feel real strongly about it, I'll go find a particular person or two.<sup>356</sup>

Not every theatre offers the opportunity to visit with the performers. Moreover, not every audience member may want to make such contact. At The Old Creamery Theatre, there are two doors for the audience to leave the theatre; one leads to the performers and one

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<sup>355</sup> Frank, interview.

<sup>356</sup> Eric, interview.



leads to an exit. Both doors are used as the audience leaves the theatre, which may indicate that not everyone desires a post-show lobby experience.

The connection with the private, public, static and performance can lead to a lobby experience regardless of when the connection takes place. A lobby experience can happen at any time under the right conditions. What are the consequences of a lobby experience and for whom?

### **Consequences**

A lobby experience can lead to a connection to the performance. *TI* Adam considered himself prepared, because of learning some facts about presidential assassins before seeing *Assassins*, or about the artist Van Gogh prior to seeing *Van Gogh*. *TS* Gina reported feeling prepared because of her experience at *Preflections* prior to a performance at the Studio Arena Theatre. She understood the plot and appreciated the requirements to create the production. *TI* Eric was in an appropriate frame of mind because of his game with the historical photographs at the dinner theatre. *TS* Diane became emotionally enticed by visiting the restrooms. These examples are just some of the tales about the lobby experience enhancing the performance.

A lobby experience can also lead to a significant *event experience* outside of the performance. *TS* Diane was engaged to be married while attending a show. *TI* Yolanda had the opportunity to see her daughter, swapping hugs and kisses. *TI* Adam bumped into a Broadway star. *TS* Leon and *TS* Michelle reflected on their high school experiences. These stories are examples of an emotional response to something happening at the theatre, without necessarily being dependent upon what is happening on the stage.

Regardless of the path undertaken, either through the lobby into the performance or straight into the performance and then into the lobby, the results of connecting to the lobby or to the performance can be a significant and memorable *event experience*. If the expectation for the theatre-going experience is an *event experience*, a lobby experience may enhance the *event experience* as revealed by ‘clear long-term memories or extensive use of descriptive word choices revealing a passionate response to the experience.’ If the expectation is just an *outing experience*, it is possible that because of a lobby experience, the *outing* could evolve into an *event experience*. A lobby experience can alter the response to the performance, which may lead to an *event experience*. According to audience members, the lobby can influence the theatre-going experience. A lobby experience can change perspectives, attitudes, emotions, and expectations.

Who has this lobby experience? The individual who connects to the *private*, *public*, *static* or *performance*. Responses to theatre are personal and individualized. The lobby experience that leads to an *event experience* is no different. Regardless of the category of the audience member, *theatre-supporter* or *theatre-insider*, the resulting *event experience* is unique for that individual. No two experiences are the same; the perspectives of the participants are as different as their backgrounds. What is to be expected is that the theatre-going experience may be an *event experience* for some theatregoers, but the nature of the *event experience* is impossible to generalize.

### **Not for Everyone**

A lobby experience may lead to an *event experience* but it is not guaranteed.

First, not everyone believes in the need for a lobby:

I wouldn't care, if you, truly, it wouldn't make any difference to me if there was absolutely nothing in the lobby and you just walked right into

the theatre. I wouldn't care. I mean a pretty lobby, a nice lobby with gilded stuff is nice, and all that but I can't honestly say it matters to me one way or the other. If they didn't have the artwork at Hammons I'm not sure it would matter to me one way or the other really. I'm all about being there to see the play.<sup>357</sup>

It will take something especially eye-catching to attract the attention of this respondent.

When asked what a children's theatre in Columbia did for a lobby, *TI* Eric reported "nothing memorable" and suggests that a lack of lobby is related to a lack of permanent space:

I would say nothing memorable; nothing is popping into my mind right now. A lot of the kids' shows, the problem with the kids' shows they have here in town, they don't have a home base. They're performing in high school gymnasiums, college gymnasiums, even high school theatres like Rockbridge or the theatre at Columbia College or wherever, but they're the kind of a traveling troupe so they don't really have a static location to set up, like this play or anything along that line. They may put out a few flyers for upcoming productions or auditions or workshops, but by far, they don't do a whole lot.<sup>358</sup>

*TI* Eric's explanation shows how space is a factor in a lobby experience. Additionally, his story implies that theatre-managers have to establish a lobby in a non-traditional building, and the audience has to spend some time in the temporary lobby space. Again, the lobby experience is not guaranteed.

A lobby experience may not take place if someone is worrying more about others than about him/herself:

When I go with friends or family, I tend to talk before the show, maybe peruse the playbill, and I guess the way that I could differentiate it is when I go by myself I feel like it's more of a maybe a cultural experience or a personal aesthetic choice or an educational experience perhaps. Whereas when I'm with someone else, I think maybe I'm a little concerned if they're liking the show or, particularly my mom because our tastes don't

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<sup>357</sup> Carla, interview.

<sup>358</sup> Eric, interview.

always align. So, I think that sense of doubt or it's a little uncomfortable maybe to worry about whether the person that's comes with me, my guest, whatever you want to call them, is having a good time.<sup>359</sup>

Although, *TI* Adam admits to worrying about others to his own detriment, it could be said that he is having a *connection with the public* lobby experience. Of course, that is if he gives himself time to acknowledge the lobby experience. It is possible that his attention is totally directed to someone or somewhere else.

Similarly, *TI* Frank puts his attention on others in his party:

Because I'll try to accommodate. I go so often, if I'm with someone who doesn't go very often. I try to figure out how they'll enjoy it the most, because it is a rarity for so many people. People who go less often may want to go early and kind of savor being there. That's fine. If somebody's having a good time, I'm always happy to share it. And if it is the lobby that offers a reason to be in it other than just a passageway, that's fine with me too.<sup>360</sup>

*TI* Frank puts his attention on his guest, rather than on himself, which may result in a lobby experience for *TI* Frank, which he admits he enjoys. Nevertheless, he is not looking for it, nor expecting it. His attention is directed elsewhere.

These examples of a lack of lobby experiences reflect individual viewpoints. It must be accepted that lobby experiences are not mandatory. It is possible to enter the auditorium treating the lobby as a hallway. For some, the response to the performance is also temporary and uninvolved. Some productions may evoke a pleasant performance experience but do not move audiences to deeper connections.

In addition to all of the above, it is also possible that the lobby experience might in some instances force a disconnect from the performance. Something happens in

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<sup>359</sup> Adam, interview.

<sup>360</sup> Frank, interview.

dealing with the staff that persuades the audience member to leave. Alternatively, perhaps for health reasons, an audience member is taken from the theatre. Even the conditions of the building can contribute to audience members disconnecting with the performance.

If one enters the building unprepared to give attention to anyone or anything and chooses to continue the lack of attention, there is no opportunity for a lobby experience. Perhaps an individual does not have any time, or nothing catches his or her eye, in which case there will be no perceivable lobby experience, until or unless inspired by the performance or someone else.

All of these possibilities demonstrate one primary element of the theatre-going experience – it requires the participation of the individual. No matter how many may join a group, no matter who may be within the party, the experience is dependent upon the individual participant's responses and reactions. *Theatre-makers* can present opportunities for experiences. *Theatre-managers* can hire and train the best staff to create a potentially enhanced experience. Friends and family may pay for the tickets, provide a meal, and purchase souvenirs in an attempt to create a positive experience. However, it is still up to the participant to choose to engage, accept the results, and remember the experience. Then it becomes an *event experience*.

## CHAPTER 6 – THE DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

### Introduction

What does the data and analysis in Chapters Three, Four and Five mean? We know that some members of the audience appreciate their experiences in the lobby. Some do not consider the lobby important, but are pleased if something happens while in the lobby. The lobby can assist in shaping an audience member's response to the performance, and the performance can inspire a lobby experience. We know that the lobby is a part of the theatre-going experience. For some it is a significant component of the theatre-going experience in its entirety.

While we have learned a great deal through this study, there is so much more that is not yet known. One of the challenges with any research project is learning what we do and do not know which is particularly true for a grounded theory research project. Over the course of the study, as we learn what we do not know, the study evolves in an effort to answer some of the questions. For every question posed, an answer may be found, but twice as many questions are raised. This study is no different. For all that was discovered, there is still more to explore. In this chapter, I discuss and compare the perspectives of the theorists and the audience. In addition, I make a few suggestions for

*theatre-makers*, explore the limitations of this study, present possibilities for future projects, and provide a few closing thoughts.

### **Is This Study Appropriate?**

The lobby experience, in all manifestations, is only a portion of the entire theatre-going experience. The purpose of this study was to determine what meaning the audience gave to the lobby experience. As reviewed in Chapter One, grounded theory theorist Charmaz identified four qualifications for an appropriate study: credibility, resonance, originality, and usefulness.

‘Credibility’<sup>361</sup> is demonstrated by the depth of research presented in this report, the process of analysis, and the rigor applied to the research of what others have said about the theatre lobby. The summary of this research is found in Chapters Three, Four and Five.

‘Resonance’ is the concept of novel meaning and analytic interpretations.<sup>362</sup> Understanding how the lobby is experienced, providing insight into the lobby experience process, and researching the audience’s perspective of the lobby are innovative approaches to this kind of research, particularly when compared to other research conducted (or assumptions made) about the theatre audience.

‘Originality’<sup>363</sup> is applicable to the coding process. As revealed in Chapter Five the selection of codes, definitions of processes, and identification of the four types of

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<sup>361</sup> “Credibility consists of several aspects: the researchers own familiarity with the research topic and setting, sufficient data for claims that are made in the research, and systematic analysis development between categories and observations.” Charmaz, *Constructing Ground Theory*, 528.

<sup>362</sup> Ibid.

<sup>363</sup> “Originality refers to the categories developed in the analysis: are they new, do they have significance, do they challenge, refine and change the current ideas and concepts?” Ibid.

lobby experiences demonstrate originality. The comparison of previously published theories to data collected during this study meets the definition of originality, as the results of the comparison “challenge, refine or change current ideas and concepts.”

‘Usefulness’<sup>364</sup> asks if the information in a study is practical. In this chapter, I pose a few suggestions that some may find helpful in utilizing the lobby space to support the performance or to enhance the lobby experience for their theatre audience.

## **Lobby Experience**

The overriding premise of the theatre-going experience is that it is an event or an occasion. In 1963, the audience’s perspective was given consideration, if not actual voice: “The theatrical experience from the audience’s point of view ought to be a big event.... What is needed in the vernacular as well as in the technical sense, for effective drama, is to make a real production out of it.”<sup>365</sup> This statement was made at a conference on the future of theatre in America. The conference was comprised of scholars and scholar/artists, but not audience members. The audience was not asked their opinion, and since that time, the audience’s perspective has not always been given its due. Throughout this study, I have focused on what the audience thinks and how it responds to activities outside of the auditorium.

Four categories of lobby experiences arise from the data: the social or public event, the private event, experience with the static, and performance preparation. On the other hand, from the perspective of scholars and theatre-makers, the lobby fulfills at least

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<sup>364</sup> “Usefulness refers to the practical aspects of the usefulness of the research results.” Ibid.

<sup>365</sup> Donald B. Gooch, *Theatre and Main Street: A Conference on the Future of the Theatre in American Society* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 1963), 162.



one of the following: serves as a social center; facilitates the transition of the audience into the world of the theatre; prepares the audience for the performance; and generates revenue.

After reviewing a number of scholars' and respondents' perspectives it is clear that there is some agreement between the two perspectives, as well as some disagreement. It is also clear that there is agreement and disagreement among scholars, as well as among respondents. The summary that follows compares the perspectives from both scholars and audience members.

### **Social Experience**

Whether it is called a "social" center or the site of a "public event," both perspectives seem to agree that the theatre-going experience is about the social. The disagreements arise from the definition of the concept "social."

Grossman-Ziegler, McGrath, and Hardy consider theatre specifically a community experience. In contrast, Blau and Bennett suggest that the theatre-going experience is both a communal and an individual experience. Nevertheless, all appear to write about the importance of the "social" as an element of the theatre-going experience. Some theorists, such as McAuley and McGrath, contend that the social aspects of the theatre-going experience may in fact be of greater importance than the performance.

Most respondents in this study recognize the significance of the social to the theatre-going experience. *TS* Carla shared her story of a group purchasing season tickets together to facilitate sharing the evening. *TS* Zachary reported that looking around the theatre for people he knew was important to his experience, even going so far as to say that the social event was why he went to the theatre. *TI* Adam would go to the theatre

alone, but then would end up meeting new people and sharing the theatre-going experience with them. *TS* Brad has been known to stand in line and just blurt out comments to see if anyone will respond. There seems to be a need for social interaction while at the theatre.

Not everyone, however, will go so far as to reach out to strangers or even mere acquaintances. *TS* Oscar admitted that he once recognized some fellow audience members, but did not establish contact. *TI* Peter mentioned that he was a little disappointed that he did not have a friend go with him to the performance, but he was not willing to reach out to total strangers. *TI* Frank, in an effort to avoid social interaction prefers not to wait in the lobby. *TI* Adam also mentioned some distaste for social interactions with strangers. In at least two instances, *TI* Adam overheard conversations that negatively affected his response to the theatre-going experience. There are a number of reasons why an individual would not reach out to total strangers even while at the theatre. Theatre-manager William suggested that a reluctance to connect with strangers was based on the local theatre community. According to William, at the Shaw Festival there are like-minded individuals who are willing to reach out to strangers and open conversations. However, in William's hometown, even he is hesitant to speak first to a stranger.

When asked directly, "would you go to the theatre alone?" *theatre-insiders* seemed more willing to attend the theatre alone. *TS* Diane said she would go to the theatre alone, but admitted that she never had; she always ended up going with someone. *TS* Oscar has gone to the theatre alone, but only on those occasions when his spouse was too ill to attend.

Architect scholars and theatre scholars agree on the social aspect of theatre, and the audience appears to be in agreement as well. This study suggests that given an option, when going to the theatre, almost everyone would prefer to go to the theatre with a companion or find someone he or she knows at the theatre to share the experience. As the lobby is the site of many social experiences, it could be labeled a social center. As revealed in some of the stories collected in this study, there appears to be a strong enough desire for a social experience when going to the theatre, that some individuals may interact with others outside, in the auditorium, or at a restaurant prior to performance or afterwards. All of these social experiences can be related to the theatre-going experience.

One type of social activity that may be a solo experience is people-watching. Theorists such as Bornemann, Hardy, McAuley, and Ham support the theory that the lobby is a place to see others and to be seen by others. *TI* Adam dressed according to the theatre he was attending, out of respect for the performers, he reported, but perhaps for his own pleasure as well. *TS* Carla described the ideal location for looking at others and to compare dresses is the line for the ladies' room. *TS* Diane admitted to being a people-watcher, but did not indicate that she wanted others to see her. It seems that people-watching, seeing others, is significant to the participants of this study, but *being seen* by others did not emerge as a significant aspect of the lobby experience in the interviews.

### **Performance Preparation**

A common function of the lobby for both theorists and audience members is the concept of performance preparation, where the audience is provided information or context to help prepare them for a particular performance. The study suggests that preparation of the audience can be categorized into the “static” and the “interactive.”

I define “the static” as any materials found in the lobby that are directly connected to a specific performance and available for review - by choice. Posters, pictures, models, costume displays, and reviews are examples of static performance preparation. The *theatre-makers* do not have to do anything once these materials are in place. The audience can choose to examine the information either before the show, at intermission, or after the show. They may also choose to ignore the materials. The audience controls the degree of contact with the materials.

An example of the static in the lobby is the theatre review in the lobby. Carlson theorized that this is a version of performance preparation. *TI* Adam appreciates this type of performance preparation, as he likes to read the reviews prior to the performance. In contrast, *TI* Frank wants nothing to do with the reviews. He even takes offense if he overhears a conversation in the lobby about the review of the play. His goal is to experience the play with minimal input from other opinions.

*Theatre-makers* like director Akalaitis assert that the audience should get information about the performance in advance. *TI* Adam accepts this tenet. If given the opportunity, he will read the script and listen to the score prior to attending the performance. *TS* Brad, like *TI* Adam, enjoys any lobby experience that includes performance preparation, but he does not engage in any performance preparation activities, i.e. read the script, listen to the music, etc., prior to his arrival to the theatre.

Performance preparation can be as simple as posting photographs, which both *TS* Diane and *TS* Leon confirmed that they appreciated. Performance preparation can be a little more costly in terms of time and money, such as a helicopter in the lobby for *Miss Saigon*, which did have some effect on *TS* Oscar in terms of being memorable.

A second approach to performance preparation is the “interactive,” which might be something in the lobby that requires the audience members to make contact with performers or staff to ‘get ready’ for the show. Examples include the Court Theatre’s presentation of *The Endgame* for which the *theatre-makers* set up a carnival in the lobby, or Schechner’s maze entrance into *Makbeth*, or Dolan’s ‘pornography do’s and don’ts midway’ for *Etta Jenks*. These interactive performance preparation events presumably were intended to set a mood and prepare the audience. *TI* Mary’s story about waiting for the show to begin seems to indicate that this theory may be valid for some. *TI* Mary’s reporting of her experience at the Maeterlink performance indicated that she understood what was going on, appreciated the prologue, and responded positively to the process. In contrast, theatre-manager William reported that some audience members did not enjoy having to take their shoes off to see *The Romance Cycle*. In addition, *TI* Hank shared that people walked out of the theatre after enduring the opening of *The Bacchae*. These stories were shared by *theatre-insiders*. Efforts to locate *theatre-supporters* who had experienced an interactive performance preparation were beyond the limitations of time and financial resources available for this study.

Realistically, a tremendous amount of time and sometimes money goes into setting up an event in the lobby. Yet, performance preparation events may not be appreciated, as interactive events in the lobby are not common. The static appears to be more common in a range of theatres including community, university, regional, and even the occasional Broadway venue, as revealed by the stories collected in this study. The static seems to be appreciated by both the *theatre-insider* and *theatre-supporter*.

Theorists and *theatre-makers* consider performance preparation useful and desirable. Audience members who are *theatre-insiders* appear to share this perception, often enthusiastically responding to the materials. In contrast, *theatre-supporters* are a little more hesitant to participate in interactive events, but do enjoy the static if they have time. Admittedly, social connections can take precedence over performance preparation. *TI* Adam mentioned that if he is alone, he embraces the performance material. If he is with someone, the material in the lobby is not as important as what his companion may need and want to do.

### **Transitional Passageway**

Theorists suggest that one of the major functions of the theatre lobby is to transition the audience from the outside world into the world of the play. Participants in this study discussed their experiences with the building, decorations, and other fixed items. Because of the respondents' experience with the static, they reported that their theatre-going experience was affected. Therefore, there appears to be some conjoining of concepts between the theorists' interpretation and the respondents' interpretation of the concept of transition in the theatre lobby.

According to theorists Hays and Bloom, the theatre building is fundamental to the theatre-going experience. *TS* Michelle reported being drawn to the performance space at the Fox Theatre, which added to the excitement of the day with her daughter. *TS* Diane gives consideration to the theatre building as she prepares for her theatre-going experience. The building affects her anticipation of the event.

Not all audience members need a connection to the building to have a theatre-going experience. *TS* Leon mentioned that having to deal with some of the challenges of

going to an older building diminished his desire to go to the theatre. *TS* Nancy felt that she had been to the same theatre so often that she could ignore the decorations.

A general definition of a lobby is the area that transitions from the outside world to the inside world. Does the theatre lobby fulfill this purpose? The architect and interior designers determine the size and shape of the lobby. What is presented on the walls or in displays depends on the theatre company and the interests of the *theatre-makers*. In New York City, the theatre lobby is generally quite small, with much of the socializing and waiting taking place outside. *TI* Frank noted that some theatres have a second waiting room in the basement that serves as a bar, with restrooms and visiting space. This second space might have appealed to Mielziner, who expressed a need for two spaces, one for transactions, and one for transitions.

The theory of the transition function of the theatre lobby suggests two types of transitions. One is the transition from a collection of single individuals into a cohesive community known as an audience. The second transition is the shift from the outside world into the world of the play.

From the perspective of the audience, stories about moving from individuals into a group were non-existent. No one talked about this process. It may be a theory in which this is the ideal or theoretical happening, but does not actually take place in a real world scenario. A study may be designed to explore this specific issue and answer the question.

The second type of transition is from the outside into the sanctuary of the theatre. I label this transition as “passage.” Scholars who took part in the survey for *World Theatre* considered the passage function of the theatre lobby. Bloom also theorized about the movement from outside to inside. Deal made an effort to develop a theory and create

a label for the passage area. Carlson, Joseph, Labiner, and Roche are all committed to theories about the passage function of the theatre lobby.

*TI* Eric affirms the theory of passage in his stories of waiting in the lobby and looking at photos from previous performances. *TS* Brad shared that the passage experience is helpful to his response to the performance, 'being prepared is better than not.' *TS* Diane likes to take her time in the lobby, drink coffee and gather her wits, rather than enter the theatre in a 'chaotic state.' This story seems to suggest a transition from one emotional state to another. *TI* Frank told a lengthy story about how many staff members he dealt with before the performance and how each had the potential to affect his passage.

Theorist Schubert declared that the function of the lobby was to help the audience make contact with each other in order to facilitate their contact with the actors. *TI* Eric expanded on this theory with the idea that the show began when he made contact with the actors, even if that took place in the lobby. *TI* Eric was not necessarily interested in meeting other audience members in the lobby, but he appreciated meeting the actors. Perhaps there are some productions where more opportunities to experience an actor or character in the lobby preshow would be possible, rather than just at the small theatre companies that cannot afford a dedicated house staff?

Although there are different interpretations of what happens in the course of a transition, it seems that for some audience members, a kind of transition does take place. Theorists may have an idealized concept of the transition as compared to the more practical applications of the theatre audience. Nevertheless, there appears to be agreement that some kind of transition happens. *TI* Eric comments on getting ready for a



show, *TS* Diane talks about settling from a chaotic state into a calm state. It seems that *theatre-insiders* may be willing to work harder than *theatre-supporters* to make the transition happen, if nothing is concretely developed by the building or the production company. However, *theatre-supporters* still recognize the value of shifting their focus and attention from the outside world into the world of the play.

### **Revenue Generator**

Theorists and theatre-makers declare the lobby to have an impact on the economics of the theatre. As an economic indicator, the revenue generator function of the lobby is easy to quantify. More importantly, it is part of the theatre-going experience. Bloom, Mell and Bennett all reported a strong support of the lobby serving a financial function: “Anything that can support the financial well-being of a theatre ... is of vital importance to the stability of the institution.”<sup>366</sup>

*TS* Brad agrees to a point. If what is for sale is produced by the artist and the money goes to the artist, *TS* Brad will gladly buy something to give a little extra financial support to the artist. Likewise, *TI* Eric makes an effort to purchase something from the concession stand, recognizing that it is a supplemental funding stream. *TS* Nancy does not express a desire to supplement the theatre financially, but rather to add to her collection. *TI* Peter made a one-time purchase of a script, as it was available and convenient to use the in-house bookstore. *TS* Leon, while attending a theatre that does not normally sell souvenirs, was willing to make a purchase for his child. *TI* Frank mentioned that the merchandise booths in New York City always seem to be filled with younger people making purchases. It appears that there is something about buying

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<sup>366</sup> Bloom, *Accommodating the Lively Arts*, 15.

something while at the theatre that has appeal. The visit to the merchandise booth or concession stand is part of the theatre-going experience for a majority of the participants in this study.

The selling of merchandise is not something that all theorists or all audience members appreciate. *TI* Adam will not buy something at the theatre because of having to deal with the lines and the need to remember to take his purchase with him. *TS* Brad will not support the big shows with the purchase of merchandise. *TS* Diane mentioned that she may have bought something once, but it was so long ago, she could not remember what it was. *TI* Frank goes so far as to say it is a real turn off to see the huckstering that takes place at the theatre. Likewise, architect Kelly bemoans that merchandising in the lobby is a conflict with theatre as art. Unfortunately, my experiences of the realities of theatre management today are such that it is not possible to ignore revenue generation opportunities available in the theatre lobby.

This need to purchase something may be related to *TI* Frank's story that there are times when he does not want to leave the theatre, but rather marinate in the post-show emotional response. Schechner would understand this response, as a demonstration of his theory that the theatre-going experience includes the process of dispersing.<sup>367</sup> It is possible that the purchase of an item helps the memories of the experience linger and delay the dispersing process.

### **The Theatre-going Experience**

The lobby experience is part of the theatre-going experience. What have theorists and audience members said about the theatre-going experience? Architects Hardy,

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<sup>367</sup> Schechner, *Performance Theory*, 169

Sexton, and Kelly theorized that design could influence the experience in the lobby in anticipation of the performance. *TI* Adam's description of the Lincoln Center, *TS* Diane's story about the restrooms at the Seattle Opera, *TS* Leon's discussion about the restoration of the lobby at Landers, and *TS* Michelle's experience at the Fox Theatre in St. Louis all seem to substantiate the theory that decoration and good design can awaken the senses and inspire appreciation for the events to come.

Theorists may be looking at the consequences of the lobby experience only as it relates to the performance. The private event is part of the theatre-going experience for some audience members, but may not be connected to the performance, except in the extreme cases of taking the audience away from the performance. The private event experience is one aspect of the lobby experience ignored by theorists.

This brief discussion explores the relationship between published theories and the perspectives of participants in the study regarding the purposes of the theatre lobby, i.e. a social center, a revenue generator, a location for preparing for the performance and a passageway from one world into another. Theorists and audience members agree that as a social center the lobby is valuable and serves the function well. As a performance preparation site, *theatre-insiders* would agree with the theorists, but *theatre-supporters* may not be giving attention to the issue when at a performance. As a passageway, theorists and audience members both agree there is one, but they may not agree on what the concept of passageway means. The transition from individuals into a cohesive audience is not something that participants reported on in this study, although they did seem to recognize some transition of mood or emotional state. Some also suggest a desire to share/connect, which may be a part of becoming a community. However, no

one specifically used the term transition when talking about being an audience member. Finally, both theorists and audience members agree and disagree about the importance and value of the lobby as a revenue generator. Most audience members and some theorists appreciate the concession stands. Some audience members and at least one theorist do not want the merchandise booths in the lobby. Unfortunately, the need for revenue is integral to contemporary theatre.

## **Applications**

With this comparison of the data, what practical applications might arise as a result of this study? I will address three areas that may be beneficial to *theatre-makers*. One of the results of this study was the possible division of the audience into *theatre-insiders* and *theatre-supporters*. It is possible that understanding this division might be useful to *theatre-managers* and *theatre-makers*. As to be expected, a small professional theatre company in rural Iowa has one type of audience that is considerably different from a regional theatre in urban St. Louis. However, to know the audience includes understanding the percentage of *theatre-insiders* compared to *theatre-supporters*. A university's theatre performance might have a greater percentage of *theatre-insiders*. A small theatre company with a reputation for a particular brand of theatre may over time train their audience to be *theatre-insiders* of their company. *Theatre-insiders* respond to performance preparation differently than do *theatre-supporters*. The *theatre-supporter* may not be aware of a 'pre-performance' activity or may not be interested in being forced to do anything. Rather, the *theatre-supporter* may attend the theatre for a number of reasons: a social event, part of a party, spousal pressure, etc. The *theatre-supporters'* different perspective may mean a different theatre-going experience. Rather than get

frustrated that the audience does not understand the production or have the expected response to the performance, *theatre-makers* should know that the audience might not be demanding that kind of theatre-going experience. As the *theatre-maker* develops a lobby experience, this study suggests that perhaps it is possible to offer something for everyone, both the safe, passive display and the interactive high impact pre-show.

The second suggestion that arises from this study relates to time. In terms of educational materials or 'the static,' time is a most precious commodity. There has to be enough time spent in the lobby for the audience to have a lobby experience, either spontaneous or designed. Some audience members get there very early; some will arrive just in time for the curtain. It is advised that if the production requires advance preparation in order for the audience to 'get it,' then either build in something at the top of the show or delay the curtain. The challenge with performance preparation is, unless it is considered part of the show, some audience members will not spend the time to look at it. Thus, it may not be desirable to create a show that requires audiences to have some foreknowledge without building some method of helping them obtain this needed foreknowledge. *Theatre-makers* should be aware that a handful of audience members might look at materials in the lobby during intermission, but not all. Most are interested in taking care of business and visiting with friends. In certain situations, there may be a few people who stick around after the performance to glean what information they may have missed, but this response is not common. If the audience needs to know something, expect that not all of the audience will get that information in a timely manner. For some audience members pre-show information does not matter. They are perfectly happy to see the show, to be entertained and then leave. As a *theatre-maker*, it is easy to get

frustrated over these individuals. Remember some are *dedicated theatre-supporters*, and *theatre-makers* should be glad the audience is there.

Finally, no matter how much time is spent on the performance preparation, or even if the audience is entirely comprised of *theatre-insiders*, the response may not be what *theatre-makers* expect. Audiences are still collections of individuals and each individual has his or her own concerns, priorities, interests, etc. All of the performance preparation material is based on reception by chance, and forcing it on the audience may have negative consequences.

The theatre-going experience in its totality is unique for each individual. The *theatre-makers* can only affect a portion of the theatre-going experience. They have to accept that any one of the other elements of the experience can affect how the individual audience member responds to the performance. Most of these outside influences are beyond the control of *theatre-makers*, and yet *theatre-makers* suffer the consequences, or reap the rewards of all that affects the theatre-going experience.

## **Limitations**

Unfortunately, as with any research project, it is not possible to meet completely the researcher's goals. Time, money, and accessibility are limitations for every research project. For a grounded theory project, these limitations are even more of a challenge. Saturation is reached, but is the research really finished? There is always the ability to dig a little deeper, to get one more interview to verify one more concept. The researcher may find him/herself going down a dead end path, and now has to go in a different direction, with time and resources lost. Grounded theory methodology is also particularly challenging in that data can be examined a number of different ways and with analysis

produce an appropriate and yet different result. No two researchers will look at the same data and come up with the same analysis. This disparity is the nature of qualitative studies. More importantly, the same data can actually reveal several different paths, each just as valid as the other and again the researcher must go where he or she is led having to put aside the “path not taken.” These challenges are issues when doing a grounded theory study.

With regards to a grounded theory study, a diversity of demographics is not a pressing concern. The quest for saturation of data is the goal, not a broad representation by participants. For this study, the participants were between 18-80, Caucasian and had gender diversity. The initial interviews were based on convenience samples. Subsequent interviews were driven by a desire to substantiate the emerging theory or expand the dimensions of the emerging central code. Perhaps future studies could explore other demographic pools.

## **Future Studies**

In addition to possible projects identified in the limitations section of this study, there are other possibilities for future research. The lobby experience is part of the theatre-going experience, but exactly how much of an impact does the lobby experience have on the performance experience? Most of the respondents did not seem to make a direct connection between a lobby experience and the performance. Perhaps a differently designed study as a future project might be a particularly fruitful. In regards to the concept of “being seen,” how much are individuals aware that they are part of a parade? People-watching seems to be a common activity in the lobby, but is having others watch you important? How much does the audience participate in its own performance?

Theorist Hilton mentioned it takes time to tune in. Is this a theory that individual experience would support? Do individuals consider themselves tuned-in after a certain amount of time? Do they even know whether they are tuned-in or not? Are they aware of the process or the results? Is there anything that could be done to shorten the time? Although the tuning in process may take place in the auditorium, it is also part of the audience preparation. Is tuning in something for only those interested in reception theory? Or perhaps some other methodology is appropriate for exploring audience preparation?

When does the show start? What preparation does an audience go through to go to the theatre? How does anticipation play a part? When does anticipation begin? Do any of these issues have an impact on the performance? These issues take place outside of the theatre building and yet are part of the theatre-going experience.

As discussed previously, does the audience become a single entity? Or perhaps a cohesive collection of individuals with a like focus? Is anyone in the audience aware of a transformation from individuals into a community? Countless possible questions could be explored on this subject.

Which lobby activities engage the audience, either as volunteers or by coercion in an effort to prepare them for the rest of the performance? Which ones have a greater impact? This study has looked at some of the consequences reported by participants, but perhaps a more focused study could provide even greater understanding. These kinds of practical questions can provide some insight for those who craft pre-show activities.

How important is food or drink to the theatre-going experience? Going out before or after the show is relatively common, but why? What does it mean for the audience?



How is going out for dinner different from dinner theatre? Or is it? These are just a few questions that could be explored in understanding the theatre-going experience in its totality.

The audience, outside of the auditorium, is so under-researched that there are countless possibilities for future projects that could evolve from this study. There are also a number of methodologies that may reveal other aspects of the lobby experience. To learn more about the theatre audience and the theatre lobby could lead to expanding the theatre-going experience.

### **The Value of a Lobby Experience**

Creating a lobby experience can take considerable time and money. As schedules are crammed and performances are created on shoestrings, there may not be any interest or money to develop a pre-show performance preparation event. What is important is to recognize that for many patrons the performance begins when they walk in the front door. They have time to ponder and prepare. They are transitioning from the outside world into the world of the play. They are forming social groups and making connections. They may be transforming into something else. Why let this valuable opportunity of time and space go to waste?

For this study of the audience's perspective, simply being an audience member makes *TI* Adam an expert. And as such, he presented a theory on how the lobby assists the transition of the audience into the world of the play:

I don't know how I would feel to just have to jump from the outside world into the theatre. And maybe if that wasn't present we would do it ourselves. Make that transition. In that sense, I think that it is very important. Almost like an airport, you know that liminal space between these two worlds. And as a theatre artist, it is important to me. It's almost like the theatre becomes a temple or a sacred space. Because for me

theatre is very spiritual. And I think that the lobby helps that transition, that shift.<sup>368</sup>

Perhaps there is something in this study that can inspire others to re-examine their own lobby and make some changes. The lobby experience is one part of a theatre-going event experience.

The lobby can be useful. It provides services for basic audience functions, the purchase of tickets, the storage of outer garments, the answer to nature's call, or the infusion of sustenance. The lobby as the entrance to the building can be rich in history or decoration, setting a tone for the evening. The lobby can be the start of a special performance, providing an introduction to what is to be found in the inner sanctum. The lobby may also be the social center of the theatre-going experience, where audience members can visit with old friends or make new ones. With contemporary theatre auditoriums darkened and everyone facing in the same direction, the lobby has the potential to be the site of social intercourse, where audiences make connections – review the play and catch up on each other's lives, in short making connections.

In looking from a practitioner's perspective, Architect Dave Shrader wrote that art is about the audience and about being human:

Public arts spaces tell us who we are and who we might become. But they focus not on productions (although there is certainly growing pressure to do so), but rather upon the processes of human experience. If there were a premise of the arts, it would be that happiness lies in connection with others, past present and future.<sup>369</sup>

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<sup>368</sup> Adam, interview.

<sup>369</sup> Dave Shrader, "Rousing Collective Experience," in *Hardy, Holzman Pfeiffer Associates Theatres* (Mulgrave, Australia: Images Pub. Group, 2000), 200.

The theatre lobby provides humans the opportunity to connect with others, the past, the present and even the potential. It is possible that any of these connections will lead to a positive reaction. In the meantime, the lobby contributes to a theatre-going experience.

## APPENDIX 1

### RESEARCHER ASSUMPTIONS

The following is a preliminary list of my assumptions for this study:

1. I assume the theatre lobby is important to the theatre-going experience.
2. I assume the lobby space has minimally three major functions:
  - a. The lobby is an element of the physical building used to transition from outside of the building into the auditorium and back to outside.
  - b. The lobby is a space in which individuals gather and connect as a community.
  - c. The lobby serves as space to supplement the performance either from design or supplemental materials, unique to the performance, are displayed.
3. I assume that there are others who share my concern for the lobby experience. Although I may be very interested in this topic, I have to assume that there are others who also want to know what is happening in the theatre lobby.
4. I assume the audience is aware of the lobby space. I assume the audience's primary interest is in the service functions of the lobby, i.e. bathrooms, and concessions.
5. I assume that theatre is a social event. Thus, I assume that each individual is aware of others and this awareness affects their theatre-going experience. I also assume that each individual present wants to connect with someone else sometime during the theatre-going experience.
6. I assume that there are audience members who are able to communicate their understanding about their experience in the lobby.

## APPENDIX 2

### CAMPUS IRB EXPEDITED OR FULL BOARD APPLICATION

**Project Number: 1142557**

**Review Number: 77633**

#### SECTION A - Project Summary

Name	Dept.	Role	Educational Training Date
Cheryl Black	Theatre	Advisor	08-29-2007
Suzanne Burgoyne	Theatre	Advisor	03-30-2007
David Kilpatrick	Theatre	Student Investigator	06-30-2007

#### **(1) Research Staff (students must have an advisor listed)**

**Restriction:** All key personnel are required to be certified for completion of a protection of human research participants education program that is approved by the Campus IRB. Applications will not be reviewed if the key personnel have not certified approved training.

**Restriction:** All applications must have a primary investigator selected unless they are a student. A student should list themselves as a "student investigator".

**Restriction: (STUDENT INVESTIGATORS):** Student applications must have an advisor listed. Applications will not be reviewed until:

- The student and advisor have current human subject training certification
- The advisor has completed the Advisor Approval Form for this

application.

**NOTE:** (The Advisor Approval Form may be accessed under the IRB Forms section of eIRB, and must be submitted by your advisor before submitting this Application to the Campus IRB.)

#### **(2) Project Title \***

*Please provide the title of the proposed project.*

The Theatre Lobby: What the Audience Experiences

#### **(3) Project Description \***

*Provide a full description of the proposed research methodology.*

The method that best meets the needs of my study is grounded theory analysis as developed by sociologist Anselm Strauss:

"The methodological thrust of the grounded theory approach to qualitative data is toward the development of theory, without any particular commitment to specific kinds of data, lines of research, or theoretical interests. So, it is not really a specific method or technique. Rather it is a style of doing qualitative analysis that includes a number of distinct features, such as theoretical sampling, and certain methodological guidelines, such as making of constant comparisons and the use of a coding paradigm, to ensure conceptual development and density." (Anselm L. Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 5).

Grounded theory, with roots in American Pragmatism, which emphasizes action and problem solving, and traditions in Chicago Sociology, which emphasizes field observations and interviews, seems especially suited for the exploration of the complex, under-studied social situation, the theatre lobby. Theatre experts declare the theatre lobby to be a center of social activity. Therefore, it seems appropriate to use a sociological methodology.

Grounded theory methodology is a qualitative method of analysis that "emphasizes the need for developing many concepts and their linkages in order to capture a great deal of the variation that characterizes the central phenomena studied."

For my study, I'm seeking first hand experiences from those who actively utilize the lobby as it seems they know best. "Experiential data are essential data, because they not only give added theoretical sensitivity but provide a wealth of provisional suggestions for making comparisons, finding variations, and sampling widely on theoretical grounds."

Proper grounded theory analysis requires attention given to three general concepts. First, "both complex interpretations and the data collection are guided by successively evolving interpretations made during the course of the study." Interpretations begin with the first interview and continue throughout the entire process, evolving over the course of the study. Second, the data provided is conceptually dense, with many concepts and links between concepts throughout. The data should not fall into a neat, linear pattern of cause and effect, but rather a complex web of ideas and thoughts must prevail. Third, it is necessary to do a detailed intensive, microscopic examination of the data. This examination will reveal the "amazing complexity of what lies in, behind, and beyond the data."

The researcher using grounded theory has three major responsibilities: "(1) genuinely checking or qualifying original data; (2) interacting deeply with his or her own data; and (3) developing new theory on the basis of a true transaction between the previous and newly evolving theory."

For this project, as the researcher, I will utilize interviews that I conduct personally. I will not be relying on second-hand sources or indirect experiences. Rather first hand accounts. Because I will be directly involved with the respondents, and follow up with analysis personally, I anticipate being immersed in the data leading to a close understanding of the experiences and meanings. Although no major study of the theatre lobby has explored my primary issue, there are some writings about the lobby that I can compare against my findings. However, following proper grounded theory methodology, I am not seeking to test current theories in a setting. Rather, I hope to let the data from the interviews reveal what is happening in the theatre lobby from the perspective of the audience.

Grounded theory methodology seems the ideal approach to exploring the complexity of the social situation of the theatre lobby experience. Using experiential data collected from

the sources directly, with constant analyses, I hope to reveal an emerging theory about the lobby experience, grounded in the data collected.

**(4) Research Activity**

**A. Is the proposed activity a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation?\***

Yes  No

**B. Is the activity designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge?\***

Yes  No

**(5) Human Subjects \***

*Are you are planning to obtain data about living individuals through one or more of the following? (Check all that apply)*

- Physical procedures performed on those individuals
- Manipulation of those individuals
- Manipulation of those individuals` environments
- Communication with those individuals
- Interpersonal contact with those individuals
- Information that is both private AND individually identifiable

**(6) Appropriate Forum**

*If you mark "YES" to any item below, please contact the Campus IRB (882-9585) to determine if your project must be submitted to the Health Sciences IRB.*

**A. Is the research regulated by the Food and Drug Administration?\***

Yes  No

**B. Is the research regulated by the Veteran Affairs?**

Yes  No

**C. Affiliation**

*Is the Principal Investigator employed at any of the following? (Check all that apply)*

- Children`s Hospital
- Ellis Fischel Cancer Center
- Howard A. Rusk Rehabilitation Center
- Missouri Rehabilitation Center
- University Hospital and Clinics
- Columbia Regional Hospital
- School of Medicine
- School of Health Professions
- Charles and Josie Smith Sinclair School of Nursing
- School of Veterinary Medicine
- Harry S. Truman Memorial Veterans Hospital
- Missouri Institute of Mental Health

**D. Patients\***

*Does the subject population include patients (either inpatients or outpatients) in any of the institutions listed above?*

Yes  No

**E. Physical stress\***

*Does the research involve physical stress to the subjects (e.g., exercise physiology projects)?*

Yes  No

**F. Blood/Tissue\***

*Does the research involve any collection of human blood or tissue?*

Yes  No

**G. Fetus/Neonate\***

*Does the research involve a delivered fetus, the delivery process, placenta; the dead fetus; macerated fetal material; or cells, tissue, or organs excised from a dead fetus, or hospitalized neonates?*

Yes  No

**SECTION B - Project Information**

**(1) Explain the purpose of the research. \***

Within a theatre building/performance space, there is one significant location, found in almost all theatre buildings in which almost all members of the audience gather, for at least a brief amount of time, and through which all audience members must traverse, the theatre lobby. Theatre designers, theatre historians, and cultural historians have strongly suggested the potential impact theatre lobbies may have on the theatre-going experience. Creators of theatre appear to depend on the lobby to serve important economic, educational and aesthetic purposes. Finally, performance theorists have suggested that the theatre lobby is vital to the social interaction. Yet, despite the theories and assumptions regarding how theatre lobbies may or ought to function, little systematic investigation has explored the actual space and those who use it. Using a grounded theory methodology, I propose to explore the lobby experience from the perspective of audience members in an effort to develop an emergent theory useful to all theatre practitioners and participants.

**(2) Do you certify that the proposed activities have scientific or academic merit? \***

*All research proposals reviewed by the Campus Institutional Review Board (Campus IRB) shall undergo a rigorous review to assess the scientific quality, importance of the research to increase knowledge, and the appropriateness of the study methodology to answer a precisely articulated scientific question.*

*The University of Missouri's mission is to provide a venue for research that is in compliance with the State, Federal and Local laws. It recognizes that research may be conducted for academic purposes only, but requires it to undergo a risk/benefit assessment to assure the methodology is appropriately designed to achieve the aim of the research. All academic research will require the advisor to certify academic merit for the purposes of assuring proper oversight of the student and activities to further protect human subject participants.*

Yes  No



**(3) If YES, provide an explanation briefly confirming the presence of scientific or academic merit.**

*All research proposals reviewed by the Campus Institutional Review Board (Campus IRB) shall undergo a rigorous review to assess the scientific quality, importance of the research to increase knowledge, and the appropriateness of the study methodology to answer a precisely articulated scientific question.*

To date, my research has uncovered no studies that seek to discover how theatre audiences actually use their time in theatre lobbies as connected to the performance. Iain Mackintosh, noted theatre architect, decries this lack of research: How rare it is for more than lip service to be paid to the needs of either actor or audience! How little time is spent in trying to analyze what actually happens when theatrical congress takes place. There are many secondary factors "day of the week, price of the ticket, whether the audience dined before, the presence of coach parties, etc. But the primary factor is "place" and if the phenomenon is to be satisfactorily explained an empirical approach is likely to serve better than theorizing." (Iain Mackintosh, *Architecture, Actor and Audience*, London: Routledge, 1993, 126)

Performance studies scholar Gay McAuley shares Mackintosh's viewpoint: Scholarly emphasis on play, production, and performance has tended to downplay the importance of the social experience occurring in the audience space. (McAuley, Gay. *Space in Performance: Making Meaning in the Theatre*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999, 267).

The purpose of this study is to potentially answer these two scholars.

**(4) Please provide a statement certifying the scientific merit of this research by addressing how the design minimizes bias and has the potential to generate data that will answer the scientific question outlined in the research methodology proposed? \***

*All research proposals reviewed by the Campus Institutional Review Board (Campus IRB) shall undergo a rigorous review to assess the scientific quality, importance of the research to increase knowledge, and the appropriateness of the study methodology to answer a precisely articulated scientific question.*

For this study, potential respondents may include anyone who has experienced the theatre. Although my initial focus will be those individuals who have had a significant experience in the theatre lobby, the nature of grounded theory methodology is that the researcher must endeavor to reach beyond assumptions. I must let the data direct the inquiry. At this stage of the study, my assumption is that frequency of theatre attendance will prove to be the greater divisor between respondents. However, it is not appropriate to limit my potential respondents based on my assumptions. Future respondents may be delimited by education levels, social status, race, gender or some other factor yet to be identified.

**(5) If NO, please provide an explanation of why you believe the proposed activities should be conducted.**

**(6) Describe the procedure(s) to be performed. \***

One of the salient features of grounded theory methodology is that although conventional research practices are used, such as literature reviews, hypothesis generation, data collection and analysis, these activities occur simultaneously rather than a linear sequence of distinct phases. Barbara Bowers succinctly describes the research phase of grounded theory: The ongoing process of data analysis guides the development of the interview questions and sample selection. As data are collected and analyzed, the interview questions, research questions, and hypotheses change. This in turn, leads to changes in data collected and subjects sampled. (Barbara Bowers, "Grounded Theory," in *Paths to Knowledge: Innovative Research Methods for Nursing*, edited by Barbara Sarter. (New York: National League for Nursing, 1988, 33-59): 45).

What must be stressed is that the process evolves over the entire course of the research phase. Therefore, defining a specific and highly detailed research plan is counter to the grounded theory methodology. Until discovery begins, it is not possible to know exactly where this research will lead and what exact steps are necessary to reveal an emergent theory.

Although exact specifics are not available, Anselm Strauss, the father of grounded theory, provides a coherent guide to grounded theory methodology, identifying what must be accomplished, albeit concurrently. Strauss summarizes the research into a triad of analytical operations: data collection, coding, memoing. Data collection leads quickly to coding, equally quickly to memoing. Either will guide the search for new data. Or additional coding or memoing, or inspecting and coding already gathered data. Finally, as the writing begins, it may be necessary to return to the data.

### Data Collection

Grounded theory involves such a tight interconnectedness between data collection and data analysis, that both take place virtually at the same time. However, for organizational purposes the description of collection and analysis procedures are separated. Data collection includes the procedures for choosing respondents, interview format and setting, techniques, framing of questions and identifying researcher assumptions.

### Choosing Respondents

The process used in a grounded theory study to choose respondents is selective sampling and theoretical sampling. Selective sampling is guided by the initial purpose of the study, as well as by constraints such as time, subject availability and researcher interest. For purposes of this study, I will begin with those respondents who are identified as convenience samples. These are respondents in which I know have had some significant experience in the theatre lobby and are able to articulate about that experience. My initial exploration will involve three individuals.

Following grounded theory methods, I will use theoretical sampling, that is sampling directed by the evolving theory to select additional respondents. Theoretical sampling is the process in which a researcher identifies respondents within the context of emerging

theory, rather than determined by a pre-ordained theory or quest for scientific randomness. As my study evolves, I will select respondents to provide further information to fill in the gaps in the emerging theory. The goal of my study is to investigate the lobby experience from a variety of individuals. I will continue with interviews until no new information is collected. This is what researchers call theoretical saturation in which research samples are collected until one is simply confirming the theory already developed, rather than modifying or elaborating it.

### Interviewing Procedures

For this study, the primary method of collecting data is the interview. I'm seeking experiential data from direct sources. I will seek out respondents to explain their personal experience and meaning. I will follow the interview guidelines as outlined by Barbara Bowers: When using formal interview, the grounded theory researcher generally begins the research process with a fairly general research question. The researcher next invites the research subjects to explain or describe the object. It is crucial for the researcher not to provide the subjects with a definition. Early interview questions are also constructed in a way that gives subjects permission to define the object in the way they perceive it. Initial interview questions, therefore, must communicate the researcher's acceptance of the subject as an expert in describing the object being investigated.

Subsequent interviews will be guided by the analysis of the earlier interviews and questions will evolve to meet the needs of my study.

### Interview techniques

During the interview there are two issues that must be considered. The first is to address the primary issue: What happens in the lobby from the perspective of this audience member? The details and variety of perspectives can potentially lead to a more descriptive and richer theory. The second is to aspire to trustworthiness of the interview. This is accomplished by letting the respondent speak his or her words, rather than being coerced, even unconsciously, by the researcher. To address these two issues is to conduct an appropriate interview.

For my study, I anticipate letting the respondent lead the conversation. I want the respondent to finish thoughts and ideas with minimal pressure from me. I will guide the shape of interview by asking questions that arise during the interview and perhaps adding additional questions to inspire the respondent's memories. But I don't intend to ask leading questions or questions that require only a simple yes or no. To increase validity of the study, I will repeat back respondent's answers to insure that it is what the respondent meant, I will ask for clarification of terms that are open to interpretation, and I will strive to be accurate in my understanding of what is said.

The goal of this study is to understand the lobby experience from the respondent's viewpoint. During the interview phase, I will work hard to reassure the respondent that they are the expert on their experience, so it is not possible to be right or wrong. Rather

the goal is to focus on being detailed and complete.

Once initial interviews have been analyzed, subsequent respondents may be asked to comment on emergent theories and experiences by others. The purpose of this approach is to direct a compare and contrast between respondents. This should permit the focus of the study to become more precise.

**(7) Please describe which procedures, if any, are standard treatment for diagnostic or treatment purposes.**

**(8) List and describe all instruments to be used. \***

*List each of the instruments used in your study. When listing your instruments (i.e., surveys, questionnaires, inventories, observational techniques, etc.), define the purpose of each instrument and describe the estimated length of time the subject will be engaged in completing the act described in your study. Please add a statement in your consent form explaining each activity and stating the estimated length of time for each activity. UPLOAD all of your instruments.*

The primary instrument is an open-ended interview that begins with the question: Tell me about a memorable lobby experience? The length of the interview should be 45-60 minutes long and should be conducted in a single sitting. No follow-up should be required.

**(9) Describe the setting in which the research will be conducted. \***

The research is limited to an interview with a single subject. What is required is a place for conversation, in which a tape recorder can record the voices. The emphasis is on comfort and safety of all participants.

**(10) Specify the primary location where you intend to collect your data. \***

There is no specific primary location as each interview is at the convenience of the participant. Every location will be measured by what is safe and appropriate for the the participant and the researcher.

**(11) Experience \***

*In detail, cite the key personnel's experience with this type of research. This includes ALL personnel listed on the IRB application. The Campus IRB will conduct a thorough review of this section to determine if all key personnel have the appropriate qualifications and experience to conduct the research.*

The student investigator has completed IRB training in preparation for this study. The student investigator is a Ph.D. candidate, having completed coursework in methods and qualitative studies. The student investigator completed a departmental workshop, Summer 2005, to practice interviewing techniques.

The co-advisors are certified by IRB and have served as advisors. Both have participated as committee members on a number of dissertations involving IRB and grounded theory methodology.

**(12) Project Dates**

*Provide the estimated start and end dates for your project. If your start date has already passed, please explain within the application.*

**A. Start Date\***

09-01-2005

**B. End Date\***

04-30-2010

**(13) Is this an international human subjects research project? \***

Yes  No

**(14) Is this a collaborative project? \***

Yes  No

**SECTION C - Conflicts of Interest**

**(1) Financial Conflicts of Interest**

**A. Do you have any financial conflicts of interest in this project?\***

*This includes, but is not limited to, disclosing any proprietary interests, equity interests, significant payments (e.g., grants, compensation in the form of equipment, retainers for ongoing consultation, and honoraria), and whether you receive payment per participant or other incentive payments in this project.*

Yes  No

**B. If yes, please explain those financial conflicts of interest and the plan to manage this conflict.**

**C. Do you or other persons responsible for the design, conduct, or reporting of research, and your/their spouses and dependent children have any ownership interest, stock options, or other financial interest related to the research unless it meets the following four tests: 1) less than \$10,000 when aggregated for immediate family member, 2) publicly traded on a stock exchange, 3) value would not be affected by the outcome of the research, and 4) less than 5% interest in any one single entity?**

Yes  No

**D. If yes, please explain.**

**E. Do you or other persons responsible for the design, conduct, or reporting of research, and your/their spouses and dependent children have any compensation related to the research unless it meets the following two tests: 1) less than \$10,000 in the past year when aggregated for immediate family, and 2) value would not be affected by the outcome of the research?**

Yes  No

**F. If yes, please explain.**

**G. Do you or other persons responsible for the design, conduct, or reporting of research, and your/their spouses and dependent children have any proprietary interest related to the research including, but not limited to, a patent, trademark, copyright or licensing agreement?**

Yes  No

**H. If yes, please explain.**

**I. Do you or other persons responsible for the design, conduct, or reporting of research, and your/their spouses and dependent children have any board or executive relationship related to the research, regardless of compensation?**

Yes  No

**J. If yes, please explain.**

**K. If you have disclosed a financial conflict of interest, have you submitted a Conflicts of Interest disclosure statement to the Office of Research Conflicts of Interest Committee?**

*Please view <http://www.research.missouri.edu/complia/coi.htm> for more information about Conflicts of Interest and view <http://www.research.missouri.edu/assets/forms/conflict.pdf> to access a disclosure form.*

Yes  No

**(2) Professional Conflicts of Interest**

**A. Do you have any professional conflicts of interest in this project?\***

Yes  No

**B. If yes, please explain those professional conflicts of interest and the plan to manage the conflict.**

**(3) Institutional Conflicts of Interest**

**A. Are there any institutional conflicts of interest?\***

Yes  No

**B. If yes, please explain those institutional conflicts of interest and the plan to manage the conflict.**

**(4) Personal Conflicts of Interest**

**A. Do you have any personal conflicts of interest in this project?\***

Yes  No

**B. If yes, please explain those personal conflicts of interest and the plan to manage the conflict.**

**(5) Other Conflicts of Interest**

**A. Are you aware of any conflicts of interests of other research team members or persons responsible for the design, conduct, or reporting of research; spouses; or dependent children? \***

Yes  No

**B. If yes, please explain and describe the plan to manage the conflict.**

## **SECTION D - Funding Sources**

**If you are receiving internal or external funds, you must complete this section.**

None

## **SECTION E - Collaborative Activities/Multi-Center Studies**

**(1) If the study involves Collaborative Sites, you must complete this section.**

*If you are involving other sites or institutions, please list them below. Please **UPLOAD** the IRB or research approval from the research site.*

**A. Name**

**B. Type**

**C. Contact Address**

**D. Contact Email**

**E. Contact Phone**

**F. Does the collaborative site have an IRB?**

Yes  No

**G. Has this project been reviewed by the other IRB? \***

*If this project has been reviewed by another IRB, you must submit a copy of the IRB application reviewed, copies of the supportive documents submitted with that IRB application, and that IRB's approval letter.*

Yes  No

**H. If yes, identify that IRB.**

*Remember that if this project has been reviewed by another IRB, you must submit a copy of the IRB application reviewed, copies of the supportive documents submitted with that IRB application, and that IRB's approval letter.*

**I. Has the site granted permission for the research to be conducted?**

Yes  No

**J. If the site has an IRB, do they plan to defer review to the UMC Campus IRB?**

*If yes, please upload the collaborative agreement.*

Yes  No

**K. How do you intend to manage information obtained from multiple sites that may be relevant to the protection of research participants?**

(2) Please explain how you intend to manage information obtained in multi-site research that could be relevant to the protection of research participants, such as reporting unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others.

(3) Please explain how you intend to manage information obtained in multi-site research that could be relevant to the protection of research participants, such as interim results.

(4) Please explain how you intend to manage information obtained in multi-site research that could be relevant to the protection of research participants, such as reporting unanticipated problems involving protocol modifications.

## **SECTION F - System Projects**

**(1) University of Missouri System Projects**

**A. Is this project involving other campuses in the University of Missouri system? \***

Yes  No

**B. If yes, choose the UM campuses involved in the study.**

- Missouri University of Science and Technology
- University of Missouri - Kansas City
- University of Missouri - St. Louis

**(2) Did you obtain IRB or research approval from the research site?**

Yes  No

**(3) Did you upload the IRB approval form or permission letter to this application?**

*Please UPLOAD the IRB approval form or permission letter from an authorized individual.*

Yes  No

**SECTION G - Resources**

**(1) Adequate Resources**

*The Campus IRB must ensure that you have adequate resources to protect participant rights and welfare.*

**A. Do you have adequate resources in terms of access to a population that will allow recruitment of the required number of participants?\***

Yes  No

**B. Please describe your resources in terms of access to a population that will allow recruitment of the required number of participants.\***

The research is limited to those individuals who attend the theatre. On a national average 3% of the population attend theatre. This is a large enough group of participants to gather an appropriate sample.

**C. Do you have adequate resources in terms of sufficient time to conduct and complete the research within the research period?\***

Yes  No

**D. Please describe your resources in terms of sufficient time to conduct and complete the research within the research period. Please describe the amount of time you intend to devote to conduct the research.\***

For the next year, my schedule is dedicated to completing this research. The project began in 2005, the bulk of the data collection was completed at that time. This application is a follow up to permit collection of necessary data in order to complete the project.

Document is attached to application outlining explanation.

**E. Do you have adequate resources in terms of an adequate number of qualified staff?\***

Yes  No

**F. Please describe your resources in terms of an adequate number of qualified staff.\***

This is an individual research project. No additional staff is required to finalize the study.

**G. Do you have adequate resources in terms of adequate facilities?\***

Yes  No

**H. Please describe your resources in terms of adequate facilities.\***

The research process requires only a location to conduct an interview. No specialized facility is required to collect or analyze the data.



**I. Do you have adequate resources in terms of availability of medical or psychological resources that participants might require as a consequence of the research?\***

Yes  No

**J. Please describe your resources in terms of availability of medical or psychological resources that participants might require as a consequence of the research.\***

The risk to the participant is extremely low. Should an unanticipated situation arise, I will seek medical or psychological resources as required.

**K. Do you have adequate resources in terms of a process to ensure that all persons assisting with the research were adequately informed about the protocol and their research-related duties and functions?\***

Yes  No

**L. Please describe your resources in terms of a process to ensure that all persons assisting with the research were adequately informed about the protocol and their research-related duties and functions.\***

The transcriptionists used to process interviews were informed of the nature of the privacy and protection. No other individuals, other than my advisors and participants are involved in this project.

**M. Do you have adequate resources in terms of necessary equipment?\***

Yes  No

**N. Please describe your resources in terms of having necessary equipment to conduct this research.\***

I have a recorder, a transcription device and a computer. This is the only special equipment I need to complete this project.

**O. Do you have adequate ancillary resources?\***

Yes  No

**P. Please describe your ancillary resources.\***

At the present, everything I need to complete this project is available and free for me use.

## **SECTION H - Risks/Benefits**

### **(1) Disclosure of Risks**

**A. Would the disclosure of a participant's identity or response outside the research reasonably place them at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the their financial standing, employability, or reputation?\***

Yes  No

**B. What level of risk will be imposed on the subjects during participation?\***

Minimal Risk

**C. Describe the risks associated with the research.\***

*The IRB is required to assess the risks and potential benefits of the research. The investigator should provide a description of any potential risks of the research, and can be associated with the research.*

The research is based on participants sharing personal experiences associated with attending the theatre. The theatrical event, a public event open to any individual, has presumably already transpired. The research is limited to collecting information about a past experience. The research is the collection individual, personal experiences encountered during the event. There may be unforeseen circumstances that develop, but these are not expected.

**D. Describe all risks imposed on subjects in your project.\***

Since personal experience can be sensitive, emotional reactions may occur. Subjects are free to choose not to answer any questions or to discontinue participation in the interview at any time without suffering negative consequences. Participation is not expected to cause any harm outside of what is normally encountered in daily life. There may be unforeseen circumstances that develop under which the interview may be terminated by the investigator.

**E. How do you intend to minimize the risks to the subjects?\***

By watching and listening closely. Should the subject appear uncomfortable or tense, the student investigator will interrupt the interview or stop it completely as necessary.

**(2) What benefits to society may result from this research? \***

The findings of this study will benefit all who desire to produce or enjoy the "total experience" of theatre. These include theatre architects, theatre managers, the creators of theatre (directors, designers, producers) and most importantly, the audience.

**(3) What benefits to the subject may result from the research? \***

No direct benefit is anticipated for the subject except as a participant in a theatrical experience crafted by those familiar with the findings of this research.

**(4) Does the research plan require provisions for monitoring the data to ensure the safety of participants? \***

*If the research involves more than minimal risk, the Campus IRB requires the researcher to submit a copy of the data safety monitoring plan and report, if applicable.*

Yes  No

**(5) If yes, provide a description of provisions for monitoring the data to ensure the safety of participants.**

**(6) If a DSMB (Data Safety Monitoring Board) is required, please describe the periodic assessments of data quality and timeliness, participant recruitment, accrual and retention, participant risk versus benefit, performance of trial sites, and other factors that can affect study outcome.**

**(7) Please provide a description of the monitoring process external to the study when interpreting the data, such as scientific or therapeutic developments that may have an impact on the safety of the participants or the ethics of the study.**

**(8) Coercion or Undue Influence**

**A. Will some or all of your participants likely be vulnerable to coercion or undue influence?\***

Yes  No

**B. If yes, provide a description of additional safeguards to minimize possible coercion or undue influence.**

**C. If some or all of the participants are likely to be vulnerable, please include a description of additional safeguards that will be included in the protocol.**

## **SECTION I - Subject Characteristics**

### **(1) Number of Subjects \***

*Please identify the number of subjects to participate in your project.*

5-25 anticipated, depending of analysis of the data.

### **(2) Children \***

*NOTE: You do not have to complete this section if children are not involved.*

**A. Will the target subject population include children/youth under 18 years of age?\***

*If the project does not involve participants under 18 years of age, please proceed to question #3.*

Yes  No

**B. If yes, please select the category below that best describes the level of risk posed to participants:**

*Note: The proposed research must fall into one of the categories listed in order to receive IRB approval for use of children.*

Research not involving greater than minimal risk  
 Research involving greater than minimal risk but presenting the prospect of direct benefit to the individual participants

Research involving greater than minimal risk and no prospect of direct benefit to individual participants, but likely to yield generalizable knowledge about the participant's disorder or condition

Research not otherwise approvable, which presents an opportunity to understand, prevent, or alleviate a serious problem affecting the health or welfare of children

### **(3) Wards**

*NOTE: You do not have to complete this section if wards are not involved.*

**A. Will the target population include wards of the State or another agency, institution, or entity?\***

*If the research does not involve wards, please proceed to question #4.*

Yes  No

**B. If yes, is the research related to the children's status as wards OR the research will be conducted in schools, campus, hospitals, institutions, or similar settings in which the majority of children involved as participants are not wards?**

Yes  No

**C. If yes, will one or more individuals be appointed as an advocate for each child who is a ward, in addition to any other individual acting on behalf of the child as guardian or *in loco parentis*?**

Yes  No

**D. If yes, will The advocate or advocates have the background and experience to act in, and agree to act in, the best interests of the child for the duration of the child's participation in the research?**

Yes  No

**E. If yes, will the advocate or advocates be associated in any way (except in the role as advocate or member of the IRB) with the research, investigator(s), or guardian organization?**

Yes  No

**(4) Prisoners**

*NOTE: You do not have to complete this section if prisoners are not involved.*

**A. Will the target population include prisoners?\***

*If the project does not include prisoners, please proceed to question #5.*

Yes  No

**B. If yes, please select all of the following that apply to the proposed research:**

- The research involves the study of possible causes, effects, and processes of incarceration, and of criminal behavior AND the research presents no more than minimal risk and no more than inconvenience to the participants.
- The research involves the study of prisons as institutional structures or of prisoners as incarcerated persons AND the research presents no more than minimal risk and no more than inconvenience to the participants.
- The research is conducted or supported by DHHS; OR the Secretary has consulted with appropriate experts including experts in penology, medicine, and ethics; OR the Secretary has published notice of his intent to approve such research
- The research is on conditions particularly affecting prisoners as a class (e.g., vaccine trials and other research on hepatitis which is much more prevalent in prisons; and research on social and psychological problems such as alcoholism, drugs, etc.)
- The research is on practices, both innovative and accepted, which have the intent and reasonable probability of improving the health or well-being of the participant
- The research does not require the assignment of prisoners to control groups that may not benefit from the research
- The sole purpose of the research is to describe the prevalence or incidence of a disease by identifying all cases OR to study potential risk factor associations for a disease
- The research presents no more than minimal risk and no more than inconvenience to the prisoner-participants AND prisoners are not a particular focus of the research.

**C. Are any possible advantages accruing to the prisoner through his or her participation in the research, when compared to the general living conditions, medical care, quality of food, amenities and opportunity for earnings in the prison, of such a magnitude that his or her ability to weigh the risks of the research against the value of such advantages in the limited choice environment of the prison is impaired?**

Yes  No

**D. Please explain.**

**E. Are the risks involved in the research commensurate with risks that would be accepted by non-prisoner volunteers?**

Yes  No

**F. Please explain.**

**G. Are procedures for the selection of participants within the prison fair to all prisoners and immune from arbitrary intervention by prison authorities or prisoners?**

Yes  No

**H. Please explain.**

**I. Will control participants be selected randomly from the group of available prisoners who meet the characteristics needed for the research project?**

Yes  No

**J. Please explain.**

**K. Does adequate assurance exist that parole boards will not take into account a prisoner's participation in the research in making decisions regarding parole?**

Yes  No

**L. Please explain.**

**M. Will each prisoner be clearly informed in advance that participation in the research will have no effect on his or her parole?**

Yes  No

**N. Please explain.**

**(5) Pregnant Women**

*NOTE: You do not have to complete this section if pregnant women are not involved.*

**A. Will the target population include pregnant women?\***

*If the project does not include pregnant women, please proceed to question #6.*

Yes  No

**B. Were scientifically appropriate, preclinical studies, including studies on pregnant animals, and clinical studies, including studies on non-pregnant women, conducted to assess potential risks to pregnant women and fetuses?**

*Please upload all supportive literature.*

Yes  No

**C. Is the purpose of the activity to meet the health needs of the mother and fetus?**

Yes  No

**D. Please explain.**

**E. Is the risk to the fetus caused solely by interventions or procedures that hold out the prospect of direct benefit for the woman or the fetus?**

Yes  No

**F. Is the risk to the fetus minimal?**

Yes  No

**G. Please explain.**

**H. Is the risk the least possible for achieving the objectives of the research?**

Yes  No

**I. Is the research designed to further the understanding, prevention, or alleviation of a serious problem affecting the health or welfare of pregnant women or fetuses?**

Yes  No

**J. Please explain.**

**K. Are the expectant mother and father legally competent?**

Yes  No

**L. Does the research team intend to seek a waiver of the father's consent?**

Yes  No

**M. If seeking a waiver of the father's consent, please select the reason(s):**

*Check all that apply.*

- He is incompetent
- He is not reasonably available
- He is temporarily incapacitated
- His identity or whereabouts cannot reasonably be ascertained
- The pregnancy resulted from rape or incest
- The research is to meet the health needs of the mother

**N. Will each individual providing consent be fully informed regarding the reasonably foreseeable impact of the research on the fetus?**

Yes  No

**O. Will any inducements, monetary or otherwise, be offered to terminate a pregnancy?**

Yes  No

**(6) Other Vulnerable Subject Populations**

**A. Will the target population include EMPLOYEES?\***

Yes  No

**B. If yes, please list the precautions that will be used to protect the employee participants.**

**C. Will the target population include STUDENTS?\***

Yes  No

**D. If yes, please list the precautions that will be used to protect the student participants.**

**E. Will the target population include WOMEN OF CHILDBEARING POTENTIAL?\***

Yes  No

**F. If yes, please list the precautions that will be used to protect the female participants.**

There is no substantial physical risk to Women of Childbearing potential as the research is limited to verbal interviews.

**G. Will the target population include COGNITIVELY IMPAIRED PERSONS?\***

Yes  No

**H. If yes, please list the precautions that will be used to protect the cognitively impaired participants.**

**I. Will the target population include LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS?\***

Yes  No

**J. If yes, please list the precautions that will be used to protect the low-income participants.**

The target population for this study may include anyone who has attended a theatrical production in the past. This may include low-income individuals. However, as

the research is limited to verbal interviews, no unique precaution is necessary to protect low-income participants.

**K. Will the target population include MINORITIES?\***

Yes  No

**L. If yes, please list the precautions that will be used to protect the minority participants.**

The target population for this study may include anyone who has attended a theatrical production in the past. This may include minorities. However, as the research is limited to verbal interviews, no unique precaution is necessary to protect minority participants.

**M. Will the target population include the ELDERLY?\***

Yes  No

**N. If yes, please list the precautions that will be used to protect the elderly participants.**

The target population for this study may include anyone who has attended a theatrical production in the past. This may include the elderly. However, as the research is limited to verbal interviews, no unique precaution is necessary to protect elderly participants.

**O. Will the target population include INTERNATIONAL SUBJECTS?\***

Yes  No

**P. If yes, please list the precautions that will be used to protect the international participants.**

The target population for this study may include anyone who has attended a theatrical production in the past. This may include international subjects. However, as the research is limited to verbal interviews, no unique precaution is necessary to protect international subjects.

**(7) If your study involves any of the vulnerable subject populations mentioned above, please provide a description of additional safeguards included in your protocol.**

*Vulnerable Subject Categories Include: Children, Wards, Prisoners, Pregnant Women, Employees, Students, Women of Childbearing Age, Cognitively Impaired Individuals, Minorities, Elderly, and International Persons.*

This study is not targeting any of the vulnerable subjects as a primary focus of the research. The nature of interviewing audience members means some individuals may be classified as a vulnerable subject. However, the interest of this research is confined to their experiences at a theatrical event. No significant safeguard is put into place.

**(8) Salient Characteristics \***

*List the salient characteristics of the targeted subject population in your study.*

Those individuals who have attend a theatrical performance in the past. Statistically, the typical audience member is a 55 year old, white, female with some college. I am looking to beyond that limitation in an effort to expand participation. However, this study is limited to those who can afford and choose to go to the theatre.

**(9) Describe your inclusion criteria and explain whether prospective participants may be vulnerable to coercion or undue influence. \***

Individuals will be contacted directly by the student investigator to conduct an interview. As the research evolves and additional subjects are needed, the student

investigator will turn to previous subjects for recommendations and referrals for new subjects. In general, the participants will have a connection to the student investigator as an acquaintance or referral.

**(10) Describe your exclusion criteria. \***

Those individuals who have not attended a theatrical performance in the previous 5 years.

**(11) What activities will your prospective subjects be asked to complete? \***

*How will the subjects participate in the study (i.e., what do the subjects do)?*

The subject will sit down with the student investigator for about 45-60 minutes and participate in a one on one interview. The interview will be recorded on an audio recorder. The subject will be asked about their most recent or memorable theatrical experience and will respond to questions that come out of the interview.

**(12) List the number of times you will be interacting or intervening with your subjects. \***

Generally one time only, unless clarification is needed on a statement.

## **SECTION J - Subject Recruitment and Selection**

**(1) Subject Recruitment \***

**A. Explain your recruitment process and enrollment procedures.\***

The selection of respondents will begin from those individuals with whom I already have an established relationship. At the conclusion of the interview, I may ask for a referral to expand my contacts. Depending on the information gathered, and the direction of the analysis, I may post a notice on a theatre list server to conduct further interviews. This is dependent upon what is revealed in the early phase of the research.

When approaching a potential respondent, I will begin by explaining that I'm conducting a research project on activities in the theatre lobby. I will ask if they have had any memorable experiences in a theatre lobby. If the answer is yes, then I will tell them that "I'm collecting interviews from individuals who have had memorable experiences in the theatre lobby. Would you be willing to participate in this study" I will tell them that I will need about 1 hour for the interview. I will also alert them that the interview will be held in the strictest confidence and is completely voluntary. If they agree, I will set up an appointment according to their schedule and at a location of their choice.

At the beginning of the interview, I will go over the IRB consent form carefully, reminding them that this interview is strictly voluntary. I will emphasize the confidentiality of the process, the ability to refuse to answer and to withdraw later, if they so choose. I will give them a copy of the consent form for their records.

If I have to post to the list server, my request will read something like this:

I'm currently studying activities in the theatre lobby as part of my dissertation. I'm looking for individuals who have had memorable experiences in the theatre lobby and are



willing to talk about them. If you are interested in participating in my study, please contact me at \*\*\*\*\*@mizzou.edu or (\*\*\*) \*\*\*\_\*\*\*\* for more information.

**B. Do you intend to use advertisements to recruit subjects? If so, please upload the final copy the advertisements.\***

*Upload all copies of printed advertisements and/or audio/video taped advertisements.*

Yes  No

**(2) Subject Selection**

*Please describe how subjects are selected and how the selection is equitable.*

For this study, potential respondents may include anyone who has experienced the theatre. Although my initial focus will be those individuals who have had a significant experience in the theatre lobby, the nature of grounded theory is that as the researcher, I must endeavor to reach beyond my assumptions. I must let the data direct the inquiry. At this stage of the study, my assumption is that frequency of theatre attendance will prove to be the greater divisor between respondents. However, it is not appropriate to limit my potential respondents based on my assumptions. Future respondents may be delimited by education levels, social status, race, gender or some other factor yet to be identified.

**(3) Subject Participation**

**A. Will the subject's identity remain anonymous, confidential, or other?\***

*Please select from the following:*

Confidential Data

**B. Please explain.\***

Subjects will be identified in the material with a code name, and identifying characteristics will be altered in an effort to protect the subject. Documents identifying participants will be kept separate from data in a secured location with restricted access. All identifying material will be destroyed 3 years following the publication of the findings.

**C. Does your research involve an investigation into legal matters, illegal activities, admissions of guilt, any acts of violations, breaches of duties or noncompliant matters? \***

Yes  No

**D. If YES, please explain:**

**E. Do you intend to obtain a Certificate of Confidentiality?\***

Yes  No

**F. If you have already obtained a Certificate of Confidentiality, what is the expiration date of the certificate?**

**(4) Subject Inducement**

**A. Are you offering an inducement for the subjects' participation?\***

Yes  No

**B. If yes, describe the offered inducement.**

*Please include information about the amount, method, and timing of disbursement.*

**C. Have you contacted the Accounting Services Department at 882-3051 to assure the proposed payment distribution complies with the policies of the University of Missouri? NOTE: If you are using personal funds, you do not need to**

**submit to the Accounting Services Office for approval. Please state in the application that you are using personal funds, if applicable.**

*You must obtain approval if you are using internal funds or external funds.*

*If you intend to compensate research participants with payments, cash, or non-cash items such as credits to student accounts or other items of value, please contact Accounting Services at 882-3051 to implement a system consistent with accounting protocol prior to the distribution of such compensation. If you have any questions, please click on the above help link.*

Yes  No

**D. If you are offering extra credit incentives for student participation, describe the alternative assignment for students who may decline. The alternative assignment must be comparable in effort and time commitment.**

*Federal regulations require the Board to ensure there are no coercive elements in human research projects. Pursuant to 45 CFR 46.111(b), "When some or all of the subjects are likely to be vulnerable to coercion or undue influence...additional safeguards have been included in the study to protect the rights and welfare of these subjects."*

**E. In your opinion, will the subjects be influenced by the payments offered? Please explain.**

**(5) Access to Student Grades**

**A. Are you requesting information about student's grades through the Registrar's Office?\***

Yes  No

**B. Have you contacted the Registrar's Office?**

*You must UPLOAD the approval from the Registrar's Office prior to IRB approval.*

Yes  No

**C. Did you upload the approval from the Registrar's Office?**

Yes  No

**(6) Privacy**

**A. Please explain how you intend to protect the privacy interests of participants during the research.\***

In general, the respondent is asked for only one hour-long meeting. The place and time to be determined by the participant, thus it is presumed that the participant will be comfortable with the location.

The guidelines for the meeting will be either a public setting where conversations can be conducted, or the home of the respondent. Regardless of location, there will be other individuals near enough to protect both the participant and the researcher, yet far enough away to not be recorded, without permission, and to not affect the responses of the respondent.

**B. Please explain how you intend to protect the privacy interests of participants after their involvement in the research.\***

The identity of participants will be kept separate from the data. Identifying characteristics altered to protect the subject. Raw data and identifying paperwork will be destroyed three years after the completion of the study.

**(7) Questions/Concerns**

**A. Describe the procedure(s) in place for research participants to ask questions and voice concerns or complaints to the research investigator(s).\***

The participant, prior to the interview, will be reminded that participation is strictly voluntary and at any time can stop the interview. During the interview, they will be reminded that they only have to answer what they are comfortable answering. Finally, the written consent form, which they will receive a copy, provides the research participants contact information for post interview questions or concerns.

**B. Describe the procedure(s) in place for participants to discuss problems, concerns, and questions; obtain information; or offer input with an informed individual who is not affiliated with the research project.\***

The written consent form includes contact information for someone outside of the study who can address any concerns or issues the participant may have with the study. This information will be pointed out to the participant prior to the interview, and a copy of the consent form will be given to the participant for future reference.

**SECTION K - Consent Process**

**(1) Informed Consent Process**

**A. What type of consent will be used?\***

- Child/Youth Assent
- Oral Consent (Short Form)
- Parental Consent
- Waiver - Secondary Data
- Waiver of Consent
- Waiver of Parental Consent
- Waiver of Written Documentation (Signature)
- Waiver of Youth Assent
- Written Consent Form
- Written Consent with Electronic Signature

**B. Describe the informed consent process in detail.\***

I have a letter explaining the study that I will give to each participant prior to the interview and confirm that they understand all of the provisions of the letter. I will verbally explain each element as necessary to insure that the participant is completely aware of the risks, benefits and opportunities to withdraw at any time.

**C. Who will conduct the consent process?\***

The student investigator

**D. Describe the person or persons who will give consent or permission.\***

The individual participating in the study will give consent or permission. Individuals must be at least 18 and able to give consent.

**E. What is the waiting period between informing the prospective participant and obtaining the consent?\***

As much time as needed for the participant to feel comfortable.

**F. Describe the steps taken to minimize the possibility of coercion or undue influence.\***

The consent letter, which the participant will have a copy, will outline what to do to in the case of inappropriate actions by the investigator.

**G. Describe the information to be communicated to the prospective participant or the representative.\***

A letter, in English, will outline the details of the study, including contact information to respond to further questions, and procedure for withdrawing from study.

**(2) Parental Consent: For projects involving children, you must complete this section.**

**A. Are children (under 18 years of age) included in the subject population?\***

*If children are not included, please proceed to question #3.*

Yes  No

**B. Does the research team intend to secure consent from both of each child's parents or guardians?**

Yes  No

**C. Does the research team intend to secure consent from only one of each child's parents or guardians?**

Yes  No

**D. If consent will only be obtained from one parent, please select the reason(s):**

*Check all that apply.*

- Research does not involve greater than minimal risk
- Research involves greater than minimal risk, but presents the prospect of direct benefit to the individual subjects
- One parent is deceased, unknown, incompetent, or not reasonably available
- Only one parent has legal responsibility for the care and custody of the child

**E. Does the research team intend to waive the requirement for parental consent?**

Yes  No

**F. If a waiver of parental consent is requested, please select the reason(s):**

*Check all that apply.*

- The research protocol is designed for conditions for which parental or guardian permission is NOT a reasonable requirement to protect the participants
- The research protocol is designed for a participant population for which parental or guardian permission is NOT a reasonable requirement to protect the participants
- An appropriate mechanism for protecting the children who will participate in the research is substituted

**(3) Language Barriers**

**A. Are there any language barriers between you and the subjects in your project?\***

Yes  No

**B. If yes, how do you propose to manage the language barrier?**

The study will limited to only English speaking individuals.

**C. Do you intend to use a translator?**

Yes  No

**D. If you intend to use a translator, please list their contact information below.**

**E. If the research materials (i.e. consent forms, recruitment materials, instruments, etc.) will be presented in a language other than English, have you uploaded the translated documents?**

Yes  No

**(4) Child Assent: For projects involving children, you must complete this section.**

**A. Does the research team intend to seek assent from all capable children?**

Yes  No

**B. Is each child capable of providing assent based on age, maturity, and psychological state?**

Yes  No

**C. Please explain.**

**D. Does the intervention or procedure involved in the research hold out a prospect of direct benefit that is important to the health or well-being of the children?**

Yes  No

**E. If yes, please explain.**

**F. Is the intervention or procedure involved in the research available only in the context of the research?**

Yes  No

**(5) Waiver of Written Documentation (Signature)**

**A. Are you requesting a waiver of the signature requirement for informed consent?\***

Yes  No

**B. Please list which subject population(s) in which you are requesting to waive the signature requirement.**

**C. Would the only record linking the participant to the research be the informed consent document?**

Yes  No

**D. Would the principal risk to participants be potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality?**

Yes  No

**E. Will each participant be asked whether the participant wants documentation linking the participant with the research?**

Yes  No

**F. Will participants be provided with a written statement regarding the research?**

Yes  No

**G. Are you requesting a waiver of signature because this is an online survey?**

Yes  No

**H. Are you requesting a waiver of signature because this is a mailed survey?**

Yes  No

## SECTION L - Data Collection

### (1) Data Anonymity/Confidentiality of Data

#### A. Will the data collected be anonymous, confidential or neither?\*

*Data is anonymous if it is recorded in such a manner that human subjects cannot be directly identified, or through identifiers linked to the subjects. Data collected in a manner where it contains identifiers which can be linked to subjects is not anonymous, but can be kept confidential through means including, but not limited to, aggregate reporting, assigning codes, removal of identifiers, etc.*

Anonymous Data  
 Confidential Data  
 Neither Anonymous Nor Confidential

#### B. How do you intend to protect the confidentiality of the data collected?

The interview will be transcribed with identifying data deleted. The original data interview data and identity key will be locked in a safe location separate in which only a small research team will have access to information. In regards to the audio-taped observation, the subject's name will not appear on the written transcript; a code name will appear instead. The audio recordings will be kept in a secure location, in which only a small research team will have access to the information. The master key list with the names and corresponding code numbers will kept in a secure location separate from the data itself. The recordings along with the master key list will be destroyed three (3) years after completion of the study.

### (2) Data Sharing \*

#### A. Do you intend to publish or share the DATA from this project?\*

Yes  No

B. If yes, identify the person/entity with whom you intend to share or publish the data.

### (3) Result Sharing

#### A. Do you intend to publish or share the RESULTS from this project?\*

Yes  No

#### B. Please explain.\*

This is a study for a dissertation and therefore will be available through standard research material sources. Also there is an expectation of publication in professional journals as applicable.

### (4) Data & Records

A. Are you a member of any one of the following entities: MU Health Care, Student Health Center, Intercollegiate Athletics, the Consultation and Assessment Clinic, the Psychology Clinic, or the Counseling Center?\*

Yes  No

B. Are you sharing data with any one of the following entities: MU Health Care, Student Health Center, Intercollegiate Athletics, the Consultation and Assessment Clinic, the Psychology Clinic, or the Counseling Center?\*

Yes  No

C. Do you possess, or will you be obtaining health information or records of the subjects?\*

Yes  No

### **SECTION M - Blood Information**

**(1) Do you intend to collect blood samples in this project? \***

Yes  No

**(2) If blood will be drawn, enter the following information**

**A. Explain the purpose for drawing blood sample(s).**

**B. Type of blood**

**C. Identify the location from where the blood is drawn.**

**D. How many times will blood be drawn from the subject?**

**E. Identify the amount of blood drawn each instance.**

**F. List the qualifications of the individual drawing the blood sample.**

**G. Identify the location where the blood will be stored.**

**H. Identify the individuals who have access to the blood sample.**

**I. Who is paying for having the blood drawn?**

**J. Identify persons/entities with which you intend to share data from the blood sample.**

### **SECTION N - Other**

**(1) Will the activities involve the use of any type of drugs, herbs, caffeine, food-additives, or tobacco? \***

Yes  No

**(2) If you answered YES to Question 1, please provide a complete description of how you propose to incorporate the substance in the research activities.**

### **APPENDIX 3**

#### **EXPLANATION FOR DISCREPANCY IN START DATES**

MEMO

Date: July 27, 2009  
To: Campus Institutional Review Board  
From: David Kilpatrick

RE: Explanation for discrepancy in Start Dates

In 2005, I began my dissertation study. Prior to any research, I applied for and received IRB approval of my project. I conducted a number of interviews, following appropriate procedures.

In 2006, I started a position that interfered with the completion of my research project. I let the IRB approval lapse. During that time, I did not conduct any interviews.

In the summer of 2009, I found myself returning to my research and analyzing the data already collected. As is appropriate to my methodology, I will need to collect more data (conduct interviews) and therefore am seeking IRB approval. I will not conduct any interviews without full approval of my research project.



## APPENDIX 4

### IRB APPROVAL LETTER

**Comment Number: 234645 (07-29-2009)**

Exempt Approval Letter sent on Jul 29, 2009:

To: BlackC@missouri.edu, BurgoyneS@missouri.edu, DavidKilpatrick@mizzou.edu

BCC: greeningjm@missouri.edu

Subject: Campus IRB Exempt Approval Letter: IRB # 1142557

Dear Investigator:

Your human subject research project entitled The Theatre Lobby: What the Audience Experiences was reviewed and APPROVED as "Exempt" on July 29, 2009 and will expire on July 29, 2010. Research activities approved at this level are eligible for exemption from some federal IRB requirements. Although you will not be required to submit the annual Continuing Review Report, your approval will be contingent upon your agreement to annually submit the "Annual Exempt Research Certification" form to maintain current IRB approval. You must submit the "Annual Exempt Research Certification" form by June 14, 2010 to provide enough time for review and avoid delays in the IRB process. Failure to timely submit the certification form by the deadline will result in automatic expiration of IRB approval. (See form: <http://irb.missouri.edu/eirb/>)

If you wish to revise your activities, you do not need to submit an Amendment Application. You must contact the Campus IRB office for a determination of whether the proposed changes will continue to qualify for exempt status. You will be expected to provide a brief written description of the proposed revisions and how it will impact the risks to subject participants. The Campus IRB will provide a written determination of whether the proposed revisions change from exemption to expedite or full board review status. If the activities no longer qualify for exemption, as a result of the proposed revisions, an expedited or full board IRB application must be submitted to the Campus IRB. The investigator may not proceed with the proposed revisions until IRB approval is granted.

Please be aware that all human subject research activities must receive prior approval by the IRB prior to initiation, regardless of the review level status. If you have any questions regarding the IRB process, do not hesitate to contact the Campus IRB office at (573) 882-9585.

Campus Institutional Review Board

## APPENDIX 5

### IRB CONSENT FORM

**Title of Study:** The Theatre Lobby: What the Audience Experiences

**Principal Investigator:** David Kilpatrick  
drktg6@mizzou.edu  
(319) 530-9144

**Co-Advisor:** Cheryl Black  
Blackc@missouri.edu  
(573) 882-0530  
**Co-Advisor:** Suzanne Burgoyne  
Burgoynes@missouri.edu  
(573) 882-0528

Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the proposed methods. It describes the procedures, benefits, risks, and discomforts of the study. Participation is **purely voluntary** and you may withdraw from the study at any time. **Your participation in this study is confidential.** It is important for you to understand that no guarantees or assurances can be made as to the results of the study.

**Purpose of the study and how long it lasts:**

The purpose of this study is to understand the effect the lobby of a live theatre has on audience members. Because of your experience attending live theatre, you have been in a theatre lobby. You are asked to participate in a 45-60 minute interview at your convenience.

**Description of the study including the procedures to be used:**

You have attended a theatrical performance at some point in your past. Presumably, you have experienced the theatre lobby during your theatre-going experience. Today, you will participate in an individual interview where you will discuss your experiences. To ensure that the researchers have an accurate understanding of your comments, the interview will be audio-recorded.

**Description of procedures/elements that may result in discomfort or inconvenience:**

Since personal experiences can be sensitive, emotional reactions may occur. You are free to choose to not answer any questions or to discontinue participation in the interview at any time without suffering negative consequences. Participation is not expected to cause any harm outside of what is normally encountered in daily life. There may be unforeseen circumstances that develop under which your participation may be terminated by the researcher.

**Benefits to the subject or others:**

Your interview is designed to explore how audience members experience the theatre lobby and how they interpret that experience. Your participation in this study will help to

determine positive and negative effects of the theatre lobby. It is hoped that eventually the information gathered will expand the understanding of the use of the lobby to meet the needs of all users.

**Confidentiality of research records:**

Several safeguards will be taken to protect your confidentiality in this study. The interview will be transcribed with identifying data deleted. The original interview data and identity key will be locked in a safe location separately, in which only a small research team will have access to the information. In regards to the audio-taped interview, your name will not appear on the written transcript; a code name will appear instead of your name. The audio recordings will be kept in a secure location, in which only a small research team will have access to the information. The master key list with the names and corresponding code names will be kept in a secure location separate from the data itself. The recordings along with the master key list will be destroyed three (3) years after completion of the study. You may also contact the researchers at any time prior to March 1, 2010 to request that a particular piece of information you contributed to the study be deleted from the records, or that all identifiers linking your identity to the data be destroyed.

Results from this study may be published in a professional journal, but you will not be identified as an individual.

**Withdrawal from the study:**

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in the study at any time without consequences.

If you have any questions or concerns about participation, you may contact David Kilpatrick. You may contact the Campus Institutional Review Board if you have questions about your rights, concerns, complaints or comments as a research participant.

You may contact the Campus Institutional Review Board directly by telephone or email to voice or solicit any concerns, questions, input or complaints about the research study.

Campus Institutional Review Board

483 McReynolds Hall

Columbia, MO 65277

573-882-9585

Email: [umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu](mailto:umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu)

Website: <http://www.research.missouri.edu/cirb/index.htm>

By completing this form I signify that I understand my rights as a research subject, and I voluntarily consent to participate in this study. Additionally, I understand what the study is about and how and why it is being done.

My signature on this form also affirms that I am 18 years of age or older (individuals must be at least 18 to participate in the study)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
email

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## VITA

David Robert Kilpatrick was born in Edwards, California June 8, 1963. As a military brat, David travelled around the United States and included some time in Isfahan, Iran. After serving 4 years in the military, David began a college career that was continuously being upstaged by theatre work. Administratively, David has done as much as possible, including box office, receptionist, executive assistant, as well as ticketing software support and sales. Moving into production, David worked as a stage manager in the Washington, DC area, for a number of years. Recognizing that he needed some organization to his accumulated knowledge, David focused on a formal education.

David's education includes an Associate of Arts in General Studies from Northern Virginia Community College awarded in June 1988; a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre from George Mason University awarded in 1991; a Master of Arts in Theatre, from Missouri State University, May 2002; and a Doctorate of Philosophy in Theatre from University of Missouri – Columbia, awarded May 2010.

While pursuing an education, David continued to work in theatre. He opened a dinner theatre in Springfield, Missouri, was the executive director of a small professional theatre company in Amana, Iowa, and directs and light designs wherever opportunity presents. David currently lives with his wife and daughter in Amana, Iowa.