THE EMPLOYMENT VALUE OF AN UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE IN THEATRE ARTS IN THE U.S.

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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by

MELANIE DREYER-LUDE

Dr. Cynthia MacGregor, Dissertation Advisor

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled:

THE EMPLOYMENT VALUE OF AN UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE IN THEATRE ARTS IN THE U.S.

presented by Melanie Dreyer-Lude

a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, is worthy of acceptance.

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Dr. Cynthia Macgregor

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Dr. Kennedy Ongaga

____

Dr. Marissa Weaver

____

Dr. A. Leslie Anderson

DEDICATION

This document is dedicated to my husband Peter and my son Cassidy both of whom never doubted for a moment that I could do this.

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ABSTRACT

During lean times, administrators must make hard decisions about which programs stay and which must go. Arts departments are particularly vulnerable when traditionally derived enrollment and employability factors are used to determine where to implement cuts. While only a minority of Theatre Arts graduates will find work as artists, most do find employment in a variety of fields. Because current labor statistics fail to capture the complexity of the employment patterns of these graduates, Theatre Arts departments are vulnerable to downsizing. This study investigated the employment patterns of theatre graduates in the United States, the skills applied to current employment, and their perceptions of the value of their theatre arts degree. Findings from a survey of 487 participants provided a new map of the employment patterns of Theatre Arts graduates, identifying how and where graduates found employment and whether the skills acquired with a Theatre Arts degree contributed to a perception of value for dollars spent.

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE DISSERTATION-IN-PRACTICE

Background

A college education has become expensive (Lipka, 2019; Plante, 2016; Selingo, 2013). According to Forbes, the price of an education in the United States has more than doubled in the last thirty years, and wages have not kept pace with tuition inflation (Maldonao, 2018). In the U.S., a post-secondary education is necessary to attain upward economic mobility and retain a position in the middle-class (Selingo, 2013). These two pressure points, necessity and cost, have repositioned the frame in which many students and parents view the value of an undergraduate education (Poon, 2006). Historically considered an experience of enrichment and personal development, advanced education is now viewed as a commodity in which tuition dollars are traded for employment skill sets (Kaye, Bickel, & Birtwistle, 2006; Plante, 2016; Ybarra, 2018). Although contemporary market trends suggest that the skills acquired with a liberal arts degree may be attractive to potential employers (Anders, 2017; Comunian, Faggian, & Jewell, 2011; Hawkins, 2015, Landy, 2010, Pink, 2005; Stross, 2018), the expense of a college degree has pressured students and parents to question the value of an arts education.

Employment numbers and salary figures tend to be lower for graduates with arts degrees than those in other fields (Comunian et al., 2011; Haukka, 2011; Rantisi, Leslie, & Christopherson, 2006). The performing arts, of which theatre is a member, represent some of the lowest rates of earning potential (Ball, Pollard, & Stanley, 2010; Bridgstock & Cunningham, 2016). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the performing arts experienced a 5.1% unemployment rate in September 2019 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019, Art, entertainment, and recreation). This is higher than the U.S. average of 3.5% during the same timeframe. Despite grim employment prospects, some institutions continue to matriculate and graduate hundreds of aspiring actors, directors, designers, and

technicians, hoping they will somehow find a way to make a living (Ybarra, 2018; Zazalli, 2016). Some in the field of theatre have claimed that it is unethical to grant so many degrees to students who graduate with exorbitant debt and enter a job market with few prospects (Ybarra, 2018, Zazalli, 2016).

One argument suggests that the skills acquired with an arts degree contribute positively to economic growth (Florida, 2014; Leach, 2014; Rantisi et al., 2006; Stern & Seifert, 2008) and that such skills may be a strong match for an economy that is beginning to favor the creative industries (Robinson, 2011). Many of the skills that are a core component of a theatre degree are valuable in a number of job markets (Comunian, Faggian, & Li, 2010). Studies also reveal that those graduating with an arts degree can find gainful employment in unexpected sectors of various industries (Anders, 2017) or construct a blended career that allows arts graduates to participate in professional arts practice with limited economic sacrifice (Comunian et al., 2010; Cunningham, 2013; Hauka, 2011). The average debt burden for a college student during the 2019-2020 academic year stood at $35, 359, a 6% increase from 2018 (Kurt, 2019). The cost of acquiring a post-secondary education merits concern when the debt burden of that education must be weighed against the prospects for future employment.

Statement of the Problem

Problem of Practice

Higher education administrators are under pressure to justify the cost of acquiring a college degree (Selingo, 2013). State funding for higher education continues to disappear forcing many provosts and deans to choose between increasing the price of tuition or cutting programs in order to balance budgets (Carey, 2019; Mangan, 2017;

Supiano, 2019). Because an increase in tuition triggers objections from the public and can result in a reduction in student applications, cutting programs is often the chosen tool for balancing a budget in crisis. Programs that cannot contribute to employability numbers may be the first to go. Graduates from departments who move immediately into a job in their field of study provide more accessible employability statistics (Abel & Dietz, 2019). Departments like business, engineering, and education can often identify how many and where their graduates get work (Carnevale, Cheah, & Strohl, 2013). Those in the arts and humanities often struggle to create a direct link between field of study and employment upon graduation. Research suggests that graduates in these fields often apply their studies to other fields or shift or refine professional goals at some during their career (Gallagher, 2016). Further complicating the employment data on which administrators rely is the finding that although students may work in their chosen field immediately upon graduation, they sometimes shift fields several times over the course of their careers (Selingo, 2016).

The job market has become dynamic and graduates who are able to adapt to a changing marketplace have greater success in finding employment (Gallagher, 2016; Selingo, 2017). Employers are seeking applicants who can provide a number of skills like leadership, teamwork, creativity, problem-solving, and cultural sensitivity (Selingo, 2016; Wagner, 2014). Because of a growing trend toward skill specialization in fields like engineering and business, students may be graduating with ample technical expertise but are unable to communicate properly or adapt to a changing work environment (Selingo, 2016). An English major who joins the advertising department of a cosmetics company or a philosophy major who makes a living as a simulated patient in a medical

school may not be counted in the statistics for each of those disciplines. If administrators are relying on flawed data to determine the employability of various disciplines, an inaccurate perception of employment value may lead them to eliminate the programs that are providing the skill sets employers are seeking. This is a problem of practice that recommends a reconsideration in employment tracking methods, particularly in arts fields like theatre.

Existing Gap in the Literature

Current measures of arts employment in the United States (U.S.) are inaccurate and misleading (Carnevale et al., 2013). Those pursuing arts careers often follow a non-traditional career trajectory, one that includes freelance work, blended careers, and regular job transitions (Ball et al., 2010; Bridgstock & Cunningham, 2016; Comunian et al., 2011). This paradigm does not fit well within traditional employment success measures and may complicate tracking the data. While there are employment statistics in the U.S. market for graduates who join the traditional theatre workforce and comply with standard employment categories (Creativity Connects, 2015; Higher Education Research Institute, 2018; O*Net Online, 2018; Strategic National Arts Alumni Project, 2017), there is little available data tracking those graduates who shift careers or who participate in a blended career (part-time work in the arts/part-time work outside of the arts). Most of the detailed studies on employment trends for careers in the arts have been conducted in the United Kingdom (U.K.) and Australia (Ball et al., 2010; Bridgstock, & Cunningham, 2016; Comunian et al., 2011; Comunian et al., 2010; Haukka, 2011; Kaye et al., 2006). Studies on the economic impact of an arts career in the U.S. are currently limited in

scope. The lack of reliable data on arts employment in the U.S. is a research gap that should be addressed.

Employers complain that university graduates lack the skills that are critical to success in the contemporary job market (Anders, 2007; Selingo 2013). Skills like leadership, organization, interpersonal communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking are missing in the skill sets of many graduates (Petrone, 2019; Robles, 2012). A theatre degree develops many of these skill sets (National Association of Theatre Schools [NAST], 2019), indicating that theatre graduates may provide qualifications employers are now seeking (see Appendix C). Although it is not uncommon for theatre artists to find entrepreneurial opportunities for leveraging their skill sets (Connolly, 2018), no statistical data exists on whether the skills acquired with a theatre degree have been applied to employment opportunities outside of theatre practice. This represents another gap in the research.

Artists' perceptions of the value of their employment do not always match measurements of economic relevance (Hawkins, 2015). Recent literature reveals a shift away from earning potential and toward quality of life indicators, as many artists accept that this career path may yield little monetary gain but provides ample rewards by other measures (Ball et al., 2010; Haukka, 2011). The value of an arts degree has primarily been determined through job placement and salary numbers (Ball et al., 2010; Bridgstock & Cunningham, 2016; Comunian et al., 2011; Comunian et al., 2010; Haukka, 2011; Kaye et al., 2006). Employment that pays less but is emotionally satisfying may hold as much personal value as high-earning potential (Bille, Fjællegaard, Frey, & Steiner, 2013). Currently, prospective theatre students must rely on anecdotal information regarding

long-term professional happiness. Learning how theatre artists have constructed careers and whether their professional choices were satisfying represents a third deficit in prior research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to determine the employment value of an undergraduate degree in theatre in the United States. The study followed three nodes of inquiry. First, it identified the complexity of theatre employment providing more accurate information regarding employability and the shape of a career post-graduation. Disaggregated labor statistics revealed how and where theatre graduates found employment, and the types of employment those graduates acquired. Second, this study examined skills application to current employment and determined whether the skills acquired with a theatre education were applicable to employment in the field of theatre and in industries outside of theatre. Because most theatre practitioners must necessarily support themselves through work in other fields for at least part of their careers (Ball et al., 2010; Bridgstock, and Cunningham, 2016; Comunian et al., 2011; Comunia, et al., 2010; Haukka, 2011), it was important to understand if and how their theatre education served these endeavors. Third, examining the perceived level of satisfaction with a career in the theatre yielded insights that were independent of monetary measures. Although a theatre career can be challenging and is often unconventional, it was important to examine graduates' levels of satisfaction regarding their career choices after having experienced this complex professional trajectory. Accurate data on employment statistics for theatre degree graduates, the applicability of theatre program skill sets to other fields, and the level of professional happiness of theatre graduates revealed important statistical

data that may be used by administrative decision makers when choosing whether and where to allocate budget dollars.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study were:

1. Where do graduates of four-year undergraduate theatre programs in the United States find work, and what is the pattern of that work over time and at any one time?
2. Which skills acquired with this theatre degree have been applied to employment?
3. How satisfied are graduates of these theatre programs with the employment value of their theatre degree?

Conceptual Frameworks

Research questions one and three engaged a modified version of the Creative Trident framework as developed by Australian economists Higgs, Cunningham, and Pagan (2007). The Creative Trident decouples the "human capital/creative workforce dynamics from the fortunes of the creative industry sectors" (Cunningham, 2013, p. 120) and allows for the application of a new measurement paradigm which relies less heavily on traditional measures of economic success. Through this decoupling, the employment numbers for arts workers can be measured within multiple industry paradigms rather than purely from within the creative sectors of the economy. This methodology provides a framework for capturing arts workers who work outside of, alongside, or partially within arts organizations as well as those arts workers who are employed full time as artists. In the Creative Trident, arts workers are divided into three groups: Specialist Creative Workers (creative occupations in creative sectors); Embedded Creative Workers (creative

occupations in non-creative sectors); and Support Workers (non-creative occupations in creative sectors). The fourth quadrant of the Creative Trident is reserved for those employed outside of creative sectors and is not considered in standard Creative Trident measurements (Figure 1).

		Creative and Cultural Sector	
		Yes	No
Cultural and Creative Occupations	Yes	**Specialist Creative Workers** (*creative occupations in creative sectors*)	**Embedded Creative Workers** (*creative occupations in non-creative sectors*)
	No	**Support Workers** (*non-creative occupations in creative sectors*)	(un-named in the Creative Trident) (*non-creative occupations in non-creative sectors*)

Figure 1. The Creative Trident as developed by Higgs et al. (2007).

The Creative Trident was modified for this study of theatre graduates with renamed and reassigned categories (see Figure 2) to apply the employment concepts used in this framework more directly to the field of theatre. Specialist Creative Worker became Working Artist (working full time in the theatre industry), Embedded Creative Worker became Shifted Career with Creative Skills Application (working outside of the theatre industry but applying theatre skills to current employment), and Support Worker became Blended Career (working in multiple jobs inside and outside of the theatre industry). The fourth quadrant captured those graduates who had shifted fields and no longer participated in theatre practice nor applied theatre skills to their employment (Shifted Career/Has Left the Field). The disaggregation of employment as mapped by the

Modified Creative Trident framework allowed this study to more accurately determine how employment for theatre graduates was distributed and applied within a variety of employment paradigms.

		Theatre Industry	
		Yes	No
Utilization of Creative Skills for Employment	Yes	**Working Artists** *(working full time in the theatre industry)*	**Shifted Career Creative Skills** *(working outside of the theatre industry applying theatre skills)*
	Yes and/or No	**Blended Career** *(working inside and outside of the theatre industry)*	**Shifted Career Has Left the Field** *(working full time outside of the theatre industry)*

Figure 2. Modified Creative Trident

Research question three used the Modified Creative Trident to gauge participants' satisfaction with the value of their degrees in light of current employment circumstances. Employment satisfaction is often linked to the norms of the field and can influence motivation and passion for work (Bridgstock, 2013). Satisfaction with employment value can help determine the kind of career an artist will pursue and which forms of employment she might find attractive (Bridgstock, 2013). Using data gathered with the survey, this study captured and coded information regarding the individual satisfaction of the employment experience and determined the ways in which the career trajectory influenced professional happiness.

For research question two, this study utilized a version of 21st Century skills adapted to identify and capture those skills sought by employers that are most relevant to

a degree in theatre (Gagnon, Vough, & Nickerson, 2012; Hoffman, Utley, & Ciccarone, 2008; Essig, 2009; Stager 2013). These skills included leadership, problem-solving, adaptability, teamwork. interpersonal communication, organization, and cultural sensitivity. 21st Century skills have been identified as important to the contemporary job market and are currently a consideration in national conversations regarding curricular development. Studies on 21st Century skills provided a variety of models with related but inconsistent skill categories (Carnevale, 2016; Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Fadel, 2015; Association of American Colleges and Universities & Hart Research Associates, 2013; Petrone, 2019; Pink, 2005; Silva, 2009; Rotherham, & Willingham, 2010). Using a combination of the primary investigator's professional experience in theatre education and practice, archival data acquired in an exploratory survey conducted in the Fall of 2018, and an aggregation of the most common skill sets present in research on 21st Century skills, the survey for this study included questions that captured information on skills relevant to this framework (See survey items 10, 11, and 12 in Appendix A).

Design of the Study

This study utilized a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach (Creswell, 2014) with a concurrent nested design (Creswell, Plano-Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003) to gather quantitative and qualitative data about the employment circumstances, skills application, and levels of satisfaction with a theatre degree. A convergent parallel mixed-methods design provided the opportunity to compare and contrast quantitative and qualitative data to better understand the research problem and the emergent findings (Creswell, 2014). This mixed-methods approach allowed for the integration, analysis, and comparison of statistical employment data against the value of the degree as perceived by

participants (Creswell, 2014). Quantitative and qualitative data was gathered in parallel using a 19-question online survey comprised of 15 quantitative and 4 qualitative items (see Appendix A).

Quantitative data measured the participants' career identification as mapped in the Modified Creative Trident, specific fields of employment, an aggregated version of 21st century skills as applied to job tasks within those fields, salary range, spans of unemployment, levels of satisfaction with having majored in theatre, and other demographic data (age, location, year of degree, size of institution, gender). Qualitative questions were used to request additional information about the quantitative data asking participants to describe why they chose to major in theatre, their current profession, their current theatre practice, and how satisfied they were with their employment situation. The survey also included one open-ended question capturing information the survey failed to ask but that participants found important to communicate. For a sample of all survey questions, see Appendix A.

Setting

The setting for this study was theatre programs in four-year universities offering Bacherlor of Arts and/or Bachelor of Fine Arts degrees in various specialties within the field of theatre. Target participants for this study were granted an undergraduate degree in Theatre Arts from a four-year institution located in the United States.

Participant Selection

An original attempt to utilize alumni databases from universities across the U.S. was unsuccessful due to poor data collection by individual departments and lack of access to alumni. A Facebook network of theatre practitioners and educators assisted in

gathering participants using snowball sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) on several virtual platforms.

Data was gathered from 1343 participants who identified as graduating with an undergraduate Theatre Arts degree in the United States. The original pool of participants was narrowed to a subset of 487 comprised of those who had graduated between 1990 and 2009. This allowed the study to focus on those participants who had well-established careers and to set-aside those just entering the job market or those heading toward retirement. The subset population of 487 participants provided numbers that were slightly imbalanced in each decade with 67% of participants having graduated between 2000 and 2009 and 33% having graduated between 1990 and 1999. Slightly more than half of the participants (55%) graduated from public universities with 41% graduating from private universities, and the remaining 4% from other kinds of institutions. The majority of participants indicated residence in the Midwest (34%), North East (32%), or West (21%), with a minority living in the south (11%) and the final 2% indicating other locations. Two-thirds of participants were women (68%) with 29% identifying as male and 3% choosing not to identify or to self-describe. These numbers almost precisely match the gender diversity present in the larger data set (68% women, 28% men, 4% choosing not to identify or to self-describe). A slight majority of participants (59%) currently make between $30,000 and $75,000 per year, with 26% earning more than $75,000 per year and 13% making $30,000 or less.

Data Collection Tools

This study utilized an online cross-sectional survey (Fink, 2017) of the graduates of undergraduate theatre programs in the United States using Qualtrics Survey Software.

The survey was calibrated to capture data about employment positioning (which job constructs were present and in which fields), skill set application (how and if the skills acquired with a theatre degree were applied to this employment context), and the level of career satisfaction in relationship to the perceived value of a theatre education. The survey consisted of 19 questions, 15 quantitative, and 4 qualitative (see Appendix A). The 19 questions fell under the following categories: Demographic data (1, 2, 16, 17, 18), research question one (4, 5, 6, 6a1, 6a2, 6b1, 6b2, 6c1, 6c2, 6d1, 6d2, 8, 13a, 13b), research question two (10, 11, 12), and research question three (3, 7, 9, 14, 15). Question 19 was an open-ended qualitative question designed to capture information participants wished to communicate but which had not been asked on the survey. Before gathering data, this study was submitted to and approved by the Institutional Research Board in the Office of Research and Development at the University of Missouri in compliance with research ethics and standards (Appendix B).

Data Analysis

The quantitative data was analyzed and considered in multiple comparative contexts using Microsoft Excel and Stata statistics software to extract descriptive statistics and determine relationships among the data variables (Fink, 2017). The Modified Creative Trident and the 21st Century skills frameworks were used to establish construct validity for the survey items (Field, 2013). Qualitative data was analyzed using open coding to identify patterns, followed by axial coding to group these patterns into themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The information provided by these data analyses was integrated using the side by side comparison outlined by Creswell (2014). The results of

these comparisons were displayed in frequencies and percentages using appropriate bar graphs and pie charts.

During data analysis, the primary investigator examined statistical patterns in relationships between a variety of variables to identify how theatre graduates categorized their work according to the Modified Creative Trident, which skill sets acquired with their theatre degree were used in their current employment, and to what degree graduates were satisfied with the value provided by their undergraduate education in Theatre Arts. This study extracted non-statistical information from the qualitative data that provided insight into the range of industries in which graduates were working, the obstacles they had encountered while building a career, and the ways in which other factors supported or hindered their professional trajectories.

Because the primary investigator received an undergraduate degree in theatre and has experienced many of the complex career trajectories available to a theatre artist, there was concern regarding bias in the collection and analysis of the data. As chair of a theatre department currently negotiating budgetary pressures, the primary investigator had a vested interest in the findings from this study. These circumstances represented potential for bias. Members of the dissertation committee cross-checked the study proposal and the findings to help mitigate validity concerns. The initial Facebook network was comprised of friends and acquaintances of the primary investigator representing another potential for bias. It is believed that the snowball networking that evolved from these 383 Facebook contacts and the email contacts used to supplement this source of data resulted in an unbiased sample of 1343 survey participants.

Limitations, Assumptions, and Design Controls

Sampling methods represent one possible limitation for this study. Access to the survey was dependent upon a connection of networks that evolved from the initial Facebook contacts and the supplementary emails. The choice to participate in the survey could have been influenced by personal perceptions of the participant's career to date. This could have resulted in a skew toward a more positive or a more negative view of the relationship between the theatre degree and current employment. Whether these limitations presented a threat to the validity of the data may be unknowable, but the process of soliciting participants for the study has exposed a need for access to alumni information for studies of this nature.

This study assumed that an aggregate of response data would represent the typical experience of a theatre graduate from a university in the United States. Although programs may not have offered a precise match in curriculum, this study assumed that participants acquired skills similar to those in accredited NAST institutions (Appendix C) and had therefore acquired common knowledge with their theatre education. This study assumed that all participants applied their studies to theatre production at some point during their education, and that this 'production laboratory' provided its own teaching environment. It is also assumed that differences in specialization (acting, directing, stage management, dramaturgy, etc.) were not an important influence on the data. Finally, this study assumed that participants shared a common understanding of all terms used in the survey and that this understanding was positioned from within a general Theatre Arts context.

Definitions of Key Terms

21st Century skills. A collection of skill sets considered critical for success in the current employment marketplace. The rise of global and digital economies has encouraged educators to consider which skills are most critical for employment. Although there is no consensus on which skills represent 21st Century skills, those often considered as belonging to this category include: critical thinking, analytical reasoning, problem-solving, teamwork, written communication, and interpersonal communication (Carnevale, 2016; Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Fadel, 2015; Association of American Colleges and Universities & Hart Research Associates, 2013; Petrone, 2019; Pink, 2005; Silva, 2009; Rotherham, & Willingham, 2010).

Arts Worker. Someone who is employed in arts practice in any arts discipline (e.g. actor, dancer, painter, poet). This includes part-time and full-time employees as well as those who work for pay, for free, or for barter (Higgs, Cunningham, & Pagan, 2007).

Blended Career. A category in the Modified Creative Trident that identifies a theatre graduate working part-time in theatre and part-time in another field (as in a playwright who works in a coffee shop).

Creative Industries. An economic designator referring to those areas of practice that use creative endeavor to contribute knowledge to a specific industry. This includes but is not limited to the following industry sectors: advertising, architecture, art and antiques, computer games/leisure software, crafts, design, designer fashion,

film and video, music, performing arts, publishing, software, television, and radio (Hartley, Potts, Flew, Cunningham, Keane, & Banks, 2012).

Creative Trident. A theoretical framework developed by Australian economists Higgs, Cunningham, and Pagan (2007) which recategorizes arts employment shifting the focus from industry specific categories (painter, dancer, actor) to employment group types (Specialist Creative Worker, Embedded Creative Worker, Support Worker). This regrouping disaggregates arts employment from the creative industries and allows for a finer-grained examination of arts employment.

Embedded Creative Worker. A category in the Creative Trident that identifies arts workers employed full time in a field outside of the arts. These workers may be using arts skills in this form of employment (as in a graphics designer working for a bank) (Higgs, Cunningham, & Pagan, 2007).

Modified Creative Trident. A version of the Creative Trident adapted for this study's application to theatre practice.

Performing Arts. Includes forms of embodied artistic expression that are performed or enacted before the public, such as theatre, dance, music, and performance art (Hartley, Potts, Flew, Cunningham, Keane, & Banks, 2012).

Private University. An institution of higher education that does not receive direct funding from local, state, or federal governments but is supported by other means like private donors, charities, and tuition (Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2017).

Public University. An institution of higher education that receives at least part of its funding from local, state, or federal governments (Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2017).

Shifted Career / Has Left the Field. A category in the Modified Creative Trident that identifies a theatre graduate that has left the field and is working in another field with no recognizable application of theatre skills to this employment (as in a former stage director who has become a corporate lawyer).

Shifted Career with Creative Skills Application. A category in the Modified Creative Trident that identifies a theatre graduate working full time in a field other than theatre and applying theatre skills to this employment (as in a dramaturg who is the public communications specialist with a technology firm).

Specialist Creative Worker. A category in the Creative Trident that identifies arts workers employed full time as specialists in arts fields (as in a documentary film maker) (Higgs, Cunningham, & Pagan, 2007).

Support Worker. A category in the Creative Trident that identifies someone working in an arts field who is not an arts worker (as in the bookkeeper for a dance company) (Higgs, Cunningham, & Pagan, 2007).

Theatre Arts Graduate. Someone who has graduated from a 4-year institution of higher education with a Bachelor of Arts (BA) or a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) in Theatre Arts inclusive of all disciplinary specialties (acting, directing, design, stage management, production, dramaturgy).

Working Artist. A category in the Modified Creative Trident that identifies a theatre graduate working full time in the theatre industry (as in the artistic director of a theatre company).

Significance of the Study

Scholarship

As the job market continues to evolve, information from this study indicated that a theatre degree provided skill sets useful to multiple industries. This lays the groundwork for future studies investigating income levels of graduates in other arts industries over the course of an evolving career. Additional future research may help map career transition patterns and their relationships to economic health and/or government funding for the arts. An important next step will be to investigate employers who hire theatre graduates to determine if the theatre degree had a direct influence over hiring decisions. Although the 21st Century skills framework offered a starting point for determining a link between skills acquired with the degree and skills used in employment, a more direct study of employers' perceptions of the skills theatre graduates bring to the marketplace would contribute a more refined perspective.

Practitioners and educators in theatre programs can use the findings in this study to shape future curricular paths for a theatre degree, adjusting current offerings to better match the needs of the employment marketplace. As trends in theatre training continue to evolve to include teaching certifications, double majors, or interdisciplinary education, this study can help provide insight into which skills are currently most important and should be deeply embedded within the pedagogy of the degree.

This study is only a first step in the possibilities of future scholarship surrounding the evidence-based values of pursuing a degree in the arts, contributing to the growing body of international research on the impact of arts degrees on a transitioning global economy, and adding data from the U.S. marketplace to the intellectual debate (Ball et al., 2010; Bridgstock, & Cunningham, 2016; Comunian et al., 2011; Comunian et al., 2010; Haukka, 2011; Kaye et al., 2006).

Practice

The findings of this study may assist several constituencies in their decision-making regarding the employability of a theatre degree. Students and parents can now be better informed regarding job placement possibilities for a theatre graduate. The findings in this study offered a map of actual career trajectories and possible futures should a graduate with a theatre degree decide to shift careers at a later date. University administrators can use this data while making critical budgetary decisions regarding degree employability and the application of skill sets to multiple fields. This study offered evidence that could be used by an institution's board of directors to determine the value of a theatre degree in relation to dollars spent supporting a Theatre Arts department.

The Department of Drama at the University of Alberta is currently undergoing an intensive re-envisioning process in response to a large reduction in Provincial budget allocations for higher education and the possible loss of faculty positions. In order to compete with departments like medicine, economics, and business for scarce resources, the Department of Drama needs tools like this study to demonstrate how a degree in

theatre is important for a thriving institution, a healthy economy, and the future employability of their students.

Summary

As budgets shrink and the cost of tuition continues to rise, liberal arts programs are faced with the threat of reduction or extinction (Kaye et al., 2006; Plante, 2016; Ybarra, 2018). Aspiring future theatre professionals face a difficult decision when determining whether to choose a theatre degree or to allow their interest in the performing arts to transition to a hobby. Employability is a major concern for parents who recognize that, either they must shoulder the debt for an undergraduate degree or allow their children to take on that burden (Selingo, 2013). Without evidence that demonstrates potential employability and future professional satisfaction, it will be challenging to continue to attract and retain majors in theatre programs (Filewod, 2013).

Currently, job placement measures track only those graduates who move into full-time arts careers, creating a perception of under-employment (Cunningham, 2013). According to these statistics, only a small percentage of graduates of arts programs end up working as full-time artists (O*Net Online, 2018). Most either construct a blended carrier that includes arts practice and other employment, or shift careers to another field (Comunian et al., 2011; Cunningham, 2013). Those graduates who do not end up in full-time arts employment are not currently tracked or included in job placement data (Bridgstock & Cunningham, 2016). Research trends suggest that measurements of employment value should include personal satisfaction indicators that are not directly linked to salary earned (Communian et al., 2010), Hawkins, 2015).

This study identified actual employment trajectories for Theatre Arts graduates, mapping several employment paradigms, revealing a wide variety of employment fields, and identifying the perceived value by graduates of the tuition spent to acquire the degree. Additionally, this study demonstrated a link between the skills acquired with the degree and the skills used in employment, revealing which skills currently used in theatre training are helpful and which are less so. Finally, this study provided a first step to uncovering the complex landscape and surprising trajectory of the career paths for theatre graduates, exposing the obstacles and opportunities that play an important role in finding work.

SECTION TWO - PRACTITIONER SETTING FOR THE STUDY

Introduction

The knowledge generated by this study is intended to assist deans at institutions of higher education, particularly in the United States, when making important decisions regarding resource allocation. Positions of administration in higher education have evolved over time and the position of dean, once primarily focused on student advising, has evolved into a one with managerial responsibility. Deans must now oversee and approve personnel matters, raise funds for their college of study, initiate and implement innovative ideas, and manage budgets. As money for higher education continues to diminish, deans are left in the unenviable position of having to determine who gets support and who does not. These problematic decisions may be further frustrated by their own moral compass that recognizes the value and significance of all departments and programs under their charge and a personal wish to support all equitably. Provosts and presidents make top-down decisions that directly influence what is possible for deans who are then responsible for distributing budget money. The upper administration may have the good of the institution in mind when asking for budget cuts, but deans are those who must implement the details of those decisions and deliver the bad news to individual departments (Montez, Wolverton, & Gmelch, 2003).

Deans share the upper administration's motivation to act in the best interest of the institution. Should they make the wrong decision by underfunding or eliminating departments and programs, they could unintentionally damage the institution's national rankings, future donors, and research funding. Important decisions about budget allocations and appropriate resource distribution are best made based on facts and data. Current labor statistics suggest that liberal arts degrees, particularly those in the

humanities and the arts, are not producing graduates who acquire gainful employment in their fields (Comunian et al., 2011; Haukka, 2011; Rantisi et al., 2006). In arts disciplines, this is particularly problematic as arts study is considered frivolous by some. Employers complain that current college graduates lack critical skills for success in their industries (Anders, 2007; Petrone, 2019; Robles, 2012; Selingo 2013). Arts and humanities programs provide some of the skills the job market considers important (Gallagher, 2016). While deans may hold philosophical positions that support ideas like "art for art's sake" and "the humanities create critical thinkers," they need hard evidence to persuade administrative officials, federal and state governments, and the general public of the economic value of these courses of study.

Current employment statistics aggregate all arts employment and measure only those arts graduates who work full time in their fields. This represents a mere 25-40 % of arts graduates who are actually employed (Cunningham, 2014). By disaggregating employment data and determining if and where theatre graduates are working and how their degrees have informed their careers, this study can provide more accurate data. A report from this study will be provided to deans through their respective professional associations. This report will map a detailed picture of the employment landscape for graduates of theatre programs, helping deans understand more clearly the relative value of this course of study. Armed with evidence regarding the employment value of a theatre degree, deans can confidently support theatre programs or cut them, knowing that these hard decisions were made not on speculation but on data.

History of the Organization

Introduction

Post-secondary education has been a part of educational practice since the founding of the early American colonies (Cohen, 1998; Rudolph, 1990). Two major evolutionary shifts, one following the Revolutionary War and the other following World War II, marked a time of important developments in curriculum and research. During these periods of growth, universities began to adapt their curricular offerings to address the needs of contemporary society and the demands of emerging industries (Cohen, 1998).

The administrative infrastructure required to support the growing complexity of institutions of higher education also evolved over time. Initially, deans were considered friendly student advisors with few administrative duties (Montez, et al., 2003). Over time, their responsibilities grew to include budget oversight, personnel management, and fund-raising (Cohen, 1998). As former faculty members, deans can find their position challenging when they are asked to make hard decisions regarding resource support for departments whose needs they understand well (Montez, et al., 2003).

During 1960s and 1970s theatre departments began to emerge as a component of curricular offerings (Berkeley, 2008). This represented a time of plenty that allowed both higher education and professional theatre practice to flourish (Cohen, 1998). Today, arts departments are viewed with skepticism as they appear to provide an education in fields that offer little but the promise of unemployment (Zazzali, 2016). This represents a challenge for deans who have fewer resources to distribute and who must respond to demands for accountability and impact.

The emergence of University Associations in the early 20th century began to provide opportunities for colleagues to gather and share best practices (Greenwood, Suddaby, & Hinings, 2002). Two associations currently serve the needs of deans in the United States: Association of American Universities and American Association of University Administrators (American Conference of Academic Deans, 2019a; American Association of University Administrators, 2019a). These professional associations provide useful resources for deans in higher education and are an important access point for the dissemination of policy information that could influence decision-making.

A Brief History of Higher Education

Higher education in the United States began shortly after the first settlers arrived on the continent (Cohen, 1998; Rudolph, 1990). Unclear how precisely to form the emerging higher education system, the early colonies relied on models from their European counterparts, religious institutions, and their own independent ideas regarding what comprised a good education (Cohen, 1998; Rudolph, 1990). Few young Americans even considered attending college, as a college education was not a critical component of future employment. College governance was loosely established initially by a board of lay citizens, often with religious affiliations, who oversaw the finances of the fledgling institutions and advised on curricular matters when relevant (Cohen, 1998).

Following the Revolutionary War (1775-1783), higher education institutions began to expand and complexify, adding extracurricular activities to the classic curriculum, struggling to find faculty to teach, and fighting to survive as financial systems of support had not yet been uniformly determined by either the government or the private sector. Attendance increased as society saw college as a character-building

opportunity to help unruly teenagers mature into adults (Cohen, 1998; Rudolph, 1990). It was following the Civil War (1861-1865) that the university system expanded in earnest. The time spent acquiring a degree increased from three to four years and funding pressures finally eased with the introduction of the Morrill Act, which provided land upon which to build new institutions (Nevins, 1962). Academic admissions standards began to enter the conversation as did concerns about student preparedness for university instruction (Cohen, 1998). Concerns emerged regarding issues like return on investment and vocational training as all constituents began to consider the role of higher education in future employment prospects (Gallagher, 2016). Curriculum evolved and adapted as the humanities and social sciences were recognized as legitimate subjects of study (Cohen, 1998). Colleges began to develop fields of study with faculty affiliating more directly with a particular area of specialization (Goldin & Katz, 1999). Administrative bureaucracies began to develop as governance of these growing and evolving institutions continued to complexify.

Another major shift in higher education occurred following World War II (1939-1945). The focus of a college education began to shift from an opportunity available to the elite to equal access for all. This laudable goal met with only marginal success, as women and people of color continued to experience bias (Cohen, 1998). Between 1945 and 1975, university enrollment increased by 500 %, in part due to the availability of funds through the G.I. Bill (Olsen, 1973). Innovation in curriculum and instruction followed demand as did legislation with the establishment of the Higher Education Act, created to provide more financial resources to students who wished to study (Griffith, 1986). More legislation and larger student bodies led to a need for more administration

and the establishment of centers like financial aid and affirmative action (Cohen, 1998). The continued interest in vocational accountability led to a surge in professional schools for students interested in medicine, law, and business. Research efforts began to find connections to industry creating more funding opportunities for institutions and departments (Cohen, 1998; Goldin & Katz, 199). An increase in population, complexity, administrative expenses, and financial access legislation lay the groundwork for fiscal problems that would grow over the next fifty years.

During the 1980s, a troubling idea began to emerge in relationship to higher education. Deregulation and trickle-down economics began to place pressure on institutions, posing questions regarding relative public value for tax dollars spent (Cohen, 1998). Tuition prices began to climb, government grants to diminish, and acquiring some level of debt to achieve a college degree became the norm for the average student (Rhoades & Slaughter, 1997). Graduate and professional school education became important new areas for universities wishing to demonstrate value in the marketplace. Governance, regulation, and accountability were ever more dominant issues in the 1990s as state officials negotiated the realities of budget reductions as a result of tax cuts (Cohen, 1998). Institutional governance became more hierarchical and decentralized. Budgetary decision making began to shift from a centrally located process overseen by the president and provost's office, to a shared responsibility in which deans of individual colleges were asked to help determine how much money would be allocated to individual departments and administrative programs. This created a new challenge for deans in higher education, as suddenly they were tasked with determining relative value among departments with varying educational missions (Cohen, 1998). As public funding and

philanthropy for higher education continued to decrease and demand for resources within colleges continued to increase, the pressure on deans to allocate budget dollars fairly continued to grow.

The Development of the Theatre Arts Degree

The study of theatre began to emerge in the U.S. in the 1940s and 1950s as a component of larger programs like English and Speech Communication (Berkeley, 2008). Theatre Arts became an independent program of study at institutions across the country during the 1960s and 1970s (Berkeley, 2008) in the middle of what Cohen labeled the Mass Higher Education push (1998). Although theatre was initially introduced as the study of dramatic literature, colleges and universities soon added the instruction of practice (acting, directing, design, stage craft) which significantly improved the quality of the university productions presented to the public (Berkeley, 2008). Adding classes in performance and practice was also motivated by the regional theatre movement and the development of not-for-profit theatres that started with the Works Progress Administration (WPA) (Landro, 1998). The WPA decentralized theatre practice by providing money to producers willing to establish theatres outside of New York City during the Great Depression. The seeds of this enterprise created ideal ground for the regional theatre movement in which major cities in the United States were investing in large not-for-profit theatres to improve the quality of living and attract businesses and investors (Landro, 1998). Large cities with a university and a regional theatre were the ideal place to establish formalized and professionally recognized theatre systems (Ziegler, 1973). Both the WPA and the regional theatre movement created a need across the country for stage ready theatre professionals. As a result, pre-professional theatre

programs at the undergraduate (BA/BFA) and graduate (MFA) levels began to proliferate.

University Associations

The University Transformation Era (1870-1944) as identified by Cohen (1998) began the introduction of university associations to higher education. Founded in 1900, the Association of American Universities was one of the first associations for university professionals and encouraged and enforced mutually determined standards for educational practice across the nation (Cohen, 1998). Today there are multiple academic associations for every field. These associations serve an important function in that they provide opportunities for specialists to gather, exchange ideas, determine normative practice for their field, and to network with one another (Cohen, 1998).

Professional associations serve several important functions in higher education. They remove attendees from the silos of their work environment and provide the opportunity to experience new perspectives and alternative methods of practice. Associations serve as agencies in which participants can consider best practices, share common experiences through social connection, and encounter new ideas (Greenwood, et al., 2002). Some associations are opportunities for discovery and invention while others devote their efforts to enforcing established norms and traditional practice. In even the most progressive of professional associations, change is hard as challenging long-established norms is easy to consider in the enclosed environment of like-minded colleagues, but difficult to implement when returning to one's home institution (Noordegraaf, 2011). Because most associations formalize the exchange of information through conference presentations or publication, they remain an important locus of

influence for professional behavior and practice (Noordegraaf, 2011). Greenwood, Suddaby, and Hinings (2002) argued that associations are critical for institutional change because they create the opportunity to theorize about current issues and concerns and to consider alternatives.

In the U.S., there are two primary professional associations for academic deans. The American Conference of Academic Deans (ACAD) represents the oldest of these. Founded in 1945 ACAD states as its mission "to create both formal and informal opportunities for deans to meet, network, and offer professional support to their colleagues in their work as academic leaders" (American Conference of Academic Deans, 2019a, History). The conference web page identifies the following as important for consideration: "Parents and prospective students are questioning the value of a liberal arts education, and indeed, the value of a college degree" (American Conference of Academic Deans, 2019b, 76th annual meeting). The focus for the ACAD conference indicates a pressing need for hard evidence of the value of any college degree, but particularly for those degrees that do not demonstrate a clear return on investment.

Another organization, the American Association of University Administrators (AAUA), allows membership at all levels of management and administration from chairs of departments to the president of the institution (American Association of University Administrators, 2019a, Home page). AAUA's mission is to promote professional development, support professional and ethical standards, and cultivate mutual interests. This organization boasts a varied menu of services including leadership seminars, an awards program, an ethical and professional standards document, liability and life insurance, and a journal for publication. According to the website, the Journal for Higher

Education Management (JHEM) “has established an enviable reputation for rigorous, high standards; fewer than 40 % of submitted manuscripts are accepted for publication” (American Association of University Administrators, 2019b, The journal). Both of these professional associations, although different from one another in focus and mission, provide opportune practitioner settings for the dissemination of the knowledge generated by this study.

Organizational Analysis

Theatre programs today offer a number of potential career trajectories, but the primary degrees available to an aspiring theatre undergraduate are a Bachelor of Arts (BA) or a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) either as a generalist or in a specific area of specialization (acting, design, production, stage management). A Bachelor of Arts in theatre is often a generalist degree providing students with some education in all areas of scholarship and practice, while a BFA is considered a pre-professional degree preparing students for careers in a particular area of professional practice in the theatre. In spite of the economic pressures present at many institutions of higher education, and the lack of evidence of the employability of the degree, the number of theatre programs currently offering BA and BFA degrees in the United States is at an all-time high (Zazzali, 2016).

Within a university, theatre programs are organizationally situated within a college of study. Colleges of study tend to group together departments with similar missions and curricular types, as in the College of Engineering, the College of Education, or the College of Business. Each college is led by a dean who functions as the primary administrator for all departments and programs belonging to that college. Sometimes arts departments will live together in a college of study that is exclusively

dedicated to an arts education, as in the College of Arts and Architecture at the University of North Carolina Charlotte (2019). More often, departments like theatre are housed together with departments who have missions and curricular agendas very different from their own. A college of study housing a theatre department might include departments in science like the College of Arts and Sciences at Cornell University (2019) and Washington University St. Louis (2019), or it may include departments in the humanities like the College of Arts and Letters at Missouri State University (2018) or the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences at the University of Denver (2019). Comparing departments with distinct and incomparable profiles creates a challenge for a dean responsible for the needs of all faculty and staff in that college of study.

A dean's role lives within a vertical organizational structure that reports to the provost's office above and oversees the work of the chairs in departments below. Most deans mitigate the top-down nature of this relationship through regular meetings with all chairs within the college of study under their management (Bolman & Deal, 2014). These meeting are intended to provide an opportunity to communicate important information from their own and the provost's office, and to gather data about current needs in individual departments from the chairs in attendance. When these meetings occur at irregular intervals or are too widely spread apart, deans can develop system blindness (Bolman & Deal, 2014), unable to see or understand the competing needs of the various groups under their leadership. Deans necessarily work within the organized anarchy of higher education institutions (Manning, 2012), and sometimes struggle to balance the needs of multiple constituencies at various ranks within and outside of the organization.

Organizationally, budget allocations create a particular challenge for a dean as inevitable acts of competition arise, pitting one department against another for their share of the resources (Levi, 2017). Political dynamics become prominent when resources are scarce (Bolman & Deal, 2014). Institutional competition between colleges at a university and among departments within a college of study can negatively affect the budgetary allocation available to an arts department. It can be challenging for chairs to communicate the value of an arts education in comparison to the needs and values of other departments within the same college. There is a danger that administrators will sort curricular programs into two groups: those that provide value to the institution and those that do not (Robinson, 2011). Programs like physics, criminology, psychology, and engineering may be determined to provide value while English, foreign languages, philosophy, and visual arts may not. Because the value metric is often linked to job placement and earning potential, universities have begun to behave as businesses simply to survive (Poon, 2006). This means that departments in STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and math) may be given funding priority, while arts and humanities departments may experience a funding reduction or elimination altogether in order to accommodate a budget imbalance (Robinson, 2011). This can result in a funding inequity between departments and within the ranks of faculty, exacerbating tensions and eroding trust (Rhoades, 1997).

The organizational structure of higher education places deans in an unenviable position. They are obligated to meet the needs of all of the departments and faculty under their charge regardless of discipline. They must do this while accounting for productivity, performance, and budgetary spending to provosts and presidents who are ill

equipped to recognize or respond to the complexities that inform this decision-making. More hard evidence regarding employability value can only help administrators who struggle with these challenges.

Leadership Analysis

In the 1800s, as the position of dean emerged in colleges and universities, the duties assigned to this position revolved primarily around student welfare. Deans were positioned as friendly father-figures (positions of leadership at this time were typically held by men), and these human resource managers functioned to some degree *in loco parentis* (Montez, et al., 2003). By the 1980s the dean's position had shifted and became one that included important managerial responsibilities in personnel management and budgetary oversight. In the 1990s, when state funding began to disappear and accountability emerged, deans added representation of the institution, fund-raising, and public relations to their long list of duties (Montez et al., 2003).

As the position of dean continues to evolve, and pressure to balance budgets with limited resources continues to mount, deans find themselves torn between incompatible expectations. Beholden to two separate and competing groups (upper administration and faculty), deans may find themselves directly in the center of controversy and conflict (Rosser, Johnsrud, & Heck, 2003). The faculty and staff in individual departments demand equitable consideration for budget allocations that include research support, salaries, and funding for student programs. The upper administration may insist on fiduciary accountability, evidence of faculty productivity, and a solid record of degree completion with employment upon graduation. Because deans are often recruited from faculty ranks and have experienced the wants and needs of the faculty population, they

may recognize department demands for support as legitimate. In the position of dean, they are now privy to the complexity of running a large institution and know that they must make hard decisions about how money is spent if the institution is to thrive, and individual departments are to survive (Montez et al., 2003). The battle between personal value systems and the challenges and obstacles forced upon them by the circumstances of their position result in short-lived terms for most who choose to serve as dean. Role ambiguity is an additional factor in the execution of this leadership position as incomplete information from central administration makes it challenging to provide answers and justifications for their decisions to the chairs and departments under their supervision (Montez et al., 2003). Rosser, Johnsrud, and Heck identified a paucity of standardized measures of effectiveness, leaving those in the position of dean without a true understanding of how and when they have done their job well (2003).

Although establishing formal systems of communication is important to getting the job done, the morale of individual departments depends more on the establishment of a social architecture “that allow[s] people to do their best” (Bolman & Deal, 2014, p. 49). Downsizing departments by eliminating lines when faculty retire demoralizes faculty who interpret these actions as an indication that they hold little value for the institution. In order for departments to provide the productivity a dean must demonstrate to the central administration the faculty must feel supported and valued. Hope theory could play an important role here. Hope theory provides a form of learned optimism in which participants pursue goals, in spite of formidable obstacles, with the belief that these goals are attainable (Helland & Winston, 2005). Budgetary constraints and financial pressures will always be present, but when money appears to drive all decision-making, faculty and

staff may lose sight of the importance of the work they do. By focusing on a positive future outcome, deans can engage faculty and staff in shifting their worries about present austerity to working actively toward a hopeful goal.

Deans can help faculty and staff find meaning in the challenging circumstances of budgetary constraint by forging a shared set of values that focus energy and intention on a positive way forward (Bennis & Thomas, 2002). Moore and Thomas (2018), both deans themselves, forged a working philosophy of leadership they labeled “Ways of Being.” Based in part on servant leadership (Northouse, 2015), this set of rules helped these leaders construct methods of engagement with their staff and department chairs that improved morale and increased trust. One of their primary tasks was to clearly communicate how each administrative decision, particularly those concerning funding, emerged directly from a set of shared goals.

Establishing a sense of humility in the face of adversity and sending the clear message that people are as important as institutional strategy may go a long way toward assuaging a suffering department in lean times (Collins, 2011). Because decisions that drive budgetary determinations are often made at the presidential, chancellor, or provost level (Alpert, 1985), faculty and staff in a theatre department are not always informed about why they are experiencing a budget cut. In some cases, budgetary allocations may be driven by the upper administration employing a version of Leader-Member-Exchange theory (Northouse, 2015) in which administrators consider the agendas of a variety of in-groups and out-groups, favoring those that serve specific agendas while disfavoring those that do not. This further complicates the role the dean plays in the budget process. Deans

may prefer a social transactional approach that allows them to engage compassion while delivering hard news about budget allocations (Moore & Thomas, 2018).

Budgeting as an organizational process is fairly standardized among higher education institutions, although the particulars in budgeting processes may vary slightly. Deans are provided a sum of money which they then distribute to the departments and administrative units under their charge (Lepori, Usher, & Montauti, 2013). This transaction is managerial and logistical but it also symbolic and charged with signals of power and control (Bolman & Deal, 2014). For this reason, deans may find it easier to negotiate or establish rules or guidelines that help them determine how and why resources are allocated to whom (Lepori et al., 2013).

Several factors may drive the institutional leadership's decisions regarding department resources: the research profile of the faculty, the number of students served, the retention and graduation rates of majors, and the employment records of graduates (Lepori et al., 2013). Employment records are an important tool in our current economy when arguing for the value of a program. The reputation of an alumnus who has achieved success can inspire donations to the institution and encourage students to major in a given field. Employment data can also be problematic if a department is unable to provide evidence that those graduating with a degree are finding adequate employment in the field of study. Deans would be well-served in their leadership efforts and their advocacy for individual departments if they had better access to reliable quantitative data that supports the success of those goals the central administration holds most dear.

Implications for Research in the Practitioner Setting

University administrators are under increasing pressure to account for the monies they receive through student tuition as well as allocations from federal and state governments. A college education is no longer perceived as a rite of passage that builds character and helps shape maturity (Hensley, Galilee-Belfer, & Lee, 2013; Shober, 2016). Four years at a university is considered an investment that demands a rate of return measured in employability and the salary a field can command. As the economy slows, government support for higher education continues to diminish, and public support has begun to erode. Administrators like deans who are accountable for dollars spent, and who must oversee budgetary allocations are faced with difficult choices (Plante, 2016).

STEM fields and emerging technologies once held promise as the labor markets of the future. As curriculum in these fields continues to narrow and specialize, students are graduating with exceptional technical skill but little ability to adapt and problem-solve in situations that fall outside of their norm (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). A STEM degree, once a sure bet for future employment, no longer qualifies graduates for a top job unless they can demonstrate range, adaptability, and communication skills (Selingo, 2016). Employers have begun to complain that educators are failing to graduate students who are equipped to work in a dynamic and evolving job market (Gallagher, 2016; Haukka, 2011; Selingo, 2013). Departments that provide skills that fill that gap struggle to demonstrate evidence regarding how their graduates find work. As a result, they may be overlooked or underserved because deans rely on current labor statistic methodologies which fail to take exceptional circumstances into account (Cunningham 2013). Deans are left with a challenging dilemma. If they support only those programs with reliable

employment statistics, they may eliminate others that provide critical skills for the 21st century job market. If they support programs that cannot demonstrate reliable employment, they risk criticism over accountability from the central administration and the general public.

Gallagher (2016) identified that “better data is needed to create more relevant credentials and higher value connections between higher education and the workforce” (p. 180). The information determined by the research for this study contributes to that effort. Findings and data analysis were outlined in a program evaluation report focused on the employability landscape for graduates of undergraduate theatre programs. By identifying the realities of employment and the application of the skills acquired with a theatre degree, the evaluation report provides support for evidence-based decision making which may help alleviate the moral conflict involved in such decisions and create a stronger platform from which to defend the position taken.

This study intends to function as a model for other arts and humanities programs who struggle with similar issues when attempting to defend the market value of their fields of study. By tracking and carefully outlining the process, these research efforts created a paradigm that can be adapted to gather similar data in other arts and humanities fields. Future research on employer perspectives and possible new education models that directly provide the hybrid education that employers are requesting will supplement this study.

Summary

As higher education continues to succumb to the pressures of a neoliberal marketplace, programs that struggle to demonstrate intrinsic market value will suffer.

Identifying methodologies for accurately tracking employment trajectories for arts and humanities programs may be critical for their future survival. Other than traditional labor statistic databases, there is no disaggregated resource for the employment numbers of graduates from theatre programs. This study provided a dimensional view of the employment landscape for these graduates and gathered evidence that can now be used by deans in the decision-making for institutional resource allocation. Unlike traditional labor statistics, this study provided a discipline-specific picture regarding how and where the alumni of theatre programs were finding employment, if the specific skills acquired were put to use in various employment fields, and participants' relative level of professional satisfaction with their current employment and the contribution of their theatre degree. These three sources of information: accurate employment data, a snapshot of skill sets as applied to employment, and the level of professional satisfaction can help future students and current administrators make better data-driven decisions when choosing which programs to attend and which programs to support (Datnow & Park, 2014).

SECTION THREE - SCHOLARLY REVIEW FOR THE STUDY

Review of the Extant Scholarship

Introduction

In June of 2019, the governor of Alaska announced that he planned to cut 130 million dollars from the state budget allocation for higher education (Carey, 2019). The previous April, the University of Tulsa declared a plan that would "reimagine" its curriculum with cuts to several programs, most of them in the liberal arts (Supiano, 2019). In November of 2017, the University of Wisconsin reported that it was cutting multiple programs, one of which was theatre (Mangan, 2017). These recent examples represent a growing trend in higher education, a trend in which budgetary pressures combine with expectations for employment to inform the allocation of operational funding for educational programming (Plante, 2016; Shober, 2016).

Research provides evidence that employability and wage power are directly linked to the level of education (Selingo, 2013; Wagner, 2014). Although a college education is an important step toward upward mobility, many students are struggling to afford even a bachelor's degree (Rossi & Braun, 2014). Reductions in state funding have forced universities and colleges to either increase tuition or cut programs in order to make ends meet (Selingo, 2013). Those programs that can provide a presumed promise of future employability remain, while those considered less essential are removed from the curriculum or demoted to extracurricular education (Robinson, 2011). Parents are becoming more concerned about the cost-to-debt ratio of a college education and whether those are dollars well spent. "Tell me one thing, is my daughter going to have a job when she graduates?" (Rossi & Braun, 2014).

Alongside these economic pressures, another trend is emerging. Employers have begun to complain that students graduating with a bachelor's degree often lack important skills that are critical to their success in a variety of fields (Gallup, 2019; Wagner, 2014). Skills like innovation, creativity, and communication have become as important to employers as skills in math, science, and technology (Robinson, 2011). Traditional measures of the labor market indicate that spending money on a degree in the arts is a bad investment (Steiner & Schneider, 2013; Throsby & Zednik, 2011). Yet arts education is often the best source for the skills employers say they need (Oakley, 2007). This mismatch between perceived economic drivers (direct employment upon graduation) and actual economic need (skills in innovation and creativity) presents a problem of practice. Administrators of higher education institutions may be inadvertently undermining programs that can fill this skills deficit for graduates moving into our knowledge economy. In order for arts programs to survive, they must provide evidence of job market value.

Several gaps in the literature recommend this inquiry. Although there are employment statistics in the U.S. job market for graduates of theatre programs who become full-time theatre practitioners (Creativity Connects, 2015; Higher Education Research Institute, 2018; O*Net Online, 2018; U.S. Bureaus of Labor Statistics, 2019; Strategic National Arts Alumni Project, 2017), there is little available data regarding U.S. arts graduates who shift careers or who participate in a blended career. A blended career includes those working part-time in the theatre and part-time outside of the theatre. In addition to an employment data gap, there is a geographic gap. Most of the studies on employment trends for careers in the arts have been conducted in the United Kingdom

(U.K.) and Australia (Ball et al., 2010; Bridgstock, and Cunningham, 2016; Comunian et al., 2011; Comunia, et al., 2010; Haukka, 2011). Data trends on the economic impact of an arts career in the U.S. are thus far limited in scope.

The value of an arts degree is often measured through job placement and salary numbers (Caves, 2000; Cruz & Teixeira, 2014).). Research indicates that artists are often happier in their work than the average employee, even when earning less money (Bille, et al., 2013). Problematically, current research assessing arts employment is using data aggregated for all arts professions. Only one study disaggregates the data but only to a limited degree, lumping several categories of artistic practice into one called “performing arts” (Steiner & Schneider, 2013). Careers in music, dance, and theatre (members of the performing arts) provide distinct employment experiences within distinct employment markets. A new study gathering data on the specific experiences of theatre graduates will better determine relative value and employment outcomes.

Background and Context

The practice of theatre has been a component of cultural expression in the United States since early in the country’s history (Nathans, 2003). Melodrama and classical plays dominated U.S. stages through much of the 18th and 19th centuries (Witham, 1996). Broadway emerged as important to the theatre industry in the early 20th century, offering commercial productions that were specifically tailored to please the public (Harris, 2013). This drive toward commercial success limited the range of expression and the possibility of exploration for many theatre makers. In response, a handful of theatre artists determined to try something new (Clurman, 1975). In the 1920s the teachings of Constantine Stanislavski, a renowned Russian director and acting teacher, made their way

overseas and became a part of the conversation on professional training for American actors (Gray, 1964). This approach to acting shifted the focus of live performance from 'showing' the audience what a character was thinking and feeling to inhabiting the psychology of the character and behaving as realistically as possible under imaginary circumstances (Moore, 1984). Simultaneously, theatre design began to develop as an independent and respectable practice with its own set of aesthetic rules (Oenslager, 1975). Stage directing emerged as its own field, shifting away from merely managing actors to a specific discipline that involved conceptualization, artistic vision, and leadership practice (Shevtsova & Innes, 2009). The study of dramatic literature remained a component of English departments until theatre emerged as its own field of study in the 1960s and 1970s (Berkley, 2008). These content shifts became foundational principles in theatre training programs that evolved during the 20th century.

Theatre training was located primarily within the realm of professional practice as internships in theatre companies until the 1940s and 1950s (Berkeley, 2008). During this time, university education began to include classes in dramatic literature and public speaking but there were few opportunities for students to study or participate in theatre practice. Outside of higher education, projects initiated with the support of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) (Landro, 1998) helped extend professional theatre outside of New York. The emergence of smaller theatres located in towns and cities across the U.S. inspired a growing interest in theatre practice in the academy (Chansky, 2005). By the 1960s, the little theatre movement had grown into the regional theatre movement establishing large theatres in major cities and creating a greater need for well-trained theatre specialists living outside of New York City (Ziegler, 1973). The

decentralization of theatre practice and the growth of the higher education sector in the 1960s and 1970s prompted the creation of theatre departments housing theatre programs that could train aspiring artists to work in this growing industry (Berkeley, 2008). High schools began to offer opportunities for students to take classes in theatre practice and to participate in productions, creating feeder systems for university theatre programs (Seidel, 1991). Today the United States offers hundreds of degrees in theatre in all areas of specialization at the undergraduate and graduate levels at institutions in every state. According to Zazzali, there are now far too many theatre programs offering degrees to hundreds of aspiring young artists who will enter a job market that cannot readily employ them (2016). While the film and television industries have grown exponentially, live theatres continue to struggle. Government funding has been eroding for decades as a source of support for live performance (as well as other forms of artistic expression), reducing the number of jobs available in the theatre industry while the number of graduates of theatre programs continues to increase.

The College Degree as a Commodity

Neoliberal influence. Neoliberal ideologies influence contemporary decision making surrounding higher education. Once considered an opportunity for the development of character, civic engagement, and a chance to learn how to learn, an undergraduate education has become a commodity in which the student-customer demands of the university "What's in it for me?" (Axelrod, Anisef, & Lin, 2001; Ayers, 2005; Davis, 2013; Shober, 2016). Although some students may see the opportunity to get an education as its own reward, both parents and students recognize that some degrees create an easier transition to that first job than others (Gallagher, 2016). In

California, employment pressures have resulted in a curricular skew toward vocational training (Krupnick, 2017) even while research indicates that, although vocational education may ease the school to work transition, it creates employment disadvantages later in life. Specific expertise in one set of vocational skills may lead to job placement immediately upon graduation, but these skills may become obsolete more quickly later in life, preventing future opportunities for upward mobility and advancement (Hanushek, Schwerdt, Woessmann, & Zhang, 2017). While a bachelor's degree is not for everyone, a college degree results in higher employability and a higher salary than a high school education or a vocational certificate (Carnevale, 2016; Hanson & Smith, 2015).

The influence of industry on higher education emerged in the 20th century as research dollars became attached to specific fields and new government agencies began to provide money for projects of merit (Cohen, 1998). Over time, the interests of the private sector grew to influence the missions of educational institutions, marking a recognizable shift in focus from public good to economic value (Hensley, Galilee-Belfer, & Lee, 2013). Student behavior has also begun to demonstrate a focus on consumerism as students resist taking classes not directly related to their chosen field and challenge grades if they find their mark unfair (Kaye, Bickel, & Birtwistle, 2006). The reduction in government funding and mounting pressure from private interests are requiring university administrators to begin operating their institutions under a business model (Poon, 2006). Using a financial compass to measure the value of a college degree places pressure on ideas like outcome and impact, concepts that are hard to define and identify with an arts degree (Hensley, Galilee-Belfer, & Lee, 2013). Resisting the argument and failing to

provide reliable data on principle only threatens the future of arts education (Belfiore, 2015; Zazzali, 2016).

Rising costs. The need for a college education in order to acquire gainful employment puts students in a bind. College debt is at an all-time high, and college tuition continues to rise (Abel & Deitz, 2019). Getting an education has become a gamble in which students hope that their degree will qualify them for a job which will enable them to pay back the debt burden taken on to acquire it (Selingo, 2013). In spite of the cost, research indicates that, in order to compete in the contemporary job market, an undergraduate education is a must (Wagner, 2014). College graduates are less likely to be under or unemployed, will earn more money over the course of their careers, and will enter the workforce with a higher salary than their counterparts who do not acquire an undergraduate degree (Hanson & Smith, 2015). Even some undergraduate education has been shown to provide economic benefit, even if the student fails to graduate (Carnevale, 2011).

Parental decision-making regarding which institution is best for their child has become less about the appropriate cultural/social/emotional fit, and more about networking and access to an elite employment market (Robinson, 2011). Even if a moderately-priced college degree can provide a solid education in many fields, some parents consider taking on tens of thousands of dollars of extra debt to get an edge in the job market for their children (Rossi & Braun, 2014). The exorbitantly high price of tuition at some institutions creates the understandable expectation that the money exchanged for education should result in gainful employment (Robinson, 2011). Accountability pressures continue to mount both within universities and from outside

organizations who are demanding data to support the value of specific majors as measured against the cost of a degree (Selingo, 2017).

Economic precarity, a shifting job market, and the cost of a degree have eroded public trust in the value of higher education (Selingo, 2013). Allocations from state governments help colleges and universities balance budgets, keep tuition rates steady, and provide financial aid to those in need. Without government support, universities are obliged to raise tuition, further eroding public trust, or to cut programs, potentially comprising curriculum. Leveille's (2006) report on the state of public trust in higher education provided a well-researched comprehensive overview of the current situation. He offered reasonable recommendations for restoring the public's trust through three initiatives: improving the performance of college educators, engaging in better assessment measures to determine the value of a field of study, and monitoring the messaging used to convey this information to the public.

The Complexity of Arts Employment

When using employability and earning potential as the primary indicators of the value of a college education, the arts fail to compete (Throsby & Zednik, 2011). Professional work as an artist pays less than work in many other fields (Steiner & Schneider, 2013). This grim fact paints an inaccurate picture of arts employment. There is a problem with how employment value has been measured in arts fields (Cruz & Teixeira, 2014). Patricia MacGuire (2019) contended that a paucity of data on arts employment is not the primary problem. What is needed is attention to appropriate and accurate metrics, metrics that reconsider standard methods of accountability like post-graduate salary level.

Many artists engage in unconventional careers, often serving as employees in arts and non-arts fields simultaneously (Lindemann & Tepper, 2012). Arts careers often comprise a long-standing relationship with gig jobs, within the field and without, requiring a carefully maintained reputation and professional network to continue to book jobs and retain employment (Cunningham, 2014). This dynamic complex relationship with employment makes tracking who is working where and when more complicated than the information provided by a standard employment database. Because labor statistics often rely on census and unemployment insurance data, only those artists who identify as full-time practitioners are counted in the arts category (American Association of Colleges and Universities, 2014; Caves, 2000; Cruz & Teixeira, 2014). This aggregated number does not represent the entire contribution of artistic practice to the general economy and suggests that all artists earn only a subsistence living. In fact, artists often supplement their arts practice by working for another industry, usually one that pays more than their arts practice (Lindemann & Tepper, 2012).

Cunningham's (2013) research indicated that much of the artistic workforce is employed at least part-time in another field. This is partially due to the ways in which an artist builds a career. Aspiring artists often work for little or no pay at the beginning of their careers and supplement their meager artistic income with non-artistic employment (Haukka, 2011). Part-time or low paying artistic work is the norm at the beginning of an arts career. Extensive research by economists in Australia and the United Kingdom have provided the largest body of evidence supporting the claim that arts employment must be disaggregated in order to provide accurate data (Higgs et al., 2007). Although arts practice in these countries bears similarities to arts practice in the U.S., more research on

the arts market will help determine the accuracy of employment data in arts sectors in the U.S.

The Creative Trident. Economists in Australia were among the first to recognize the problem with capturing appropriate data on employment in the arts. Inspired in part by research in the United Kingdom on the creative industries (Department of Culture, Media, and Sport [DCMS], 1998), Higgs, Cunningham, and Pagan (2007) determined to reconsider measurements of arts employment and its contribution to the economy. They recognized multiple issues with using census and unemployment data as indicators of employment in the arts. Most aspiring artists spend several years establishing work in the field. This can create a delay in capturing relevant employment data for full-time artists (Caves, 2000). The majority of those who identify as artists work in multiple fields simultaneously but can only credit one source of income for national data purposes (Higgs et al., 2007). The complexity of arts employment created obstacles to accurately capturing arts employment data.

It took multiple attempts to find the right solution to the problem. The first attempt by scholars in the U.K. utilized the original concept of creative industries as determined by DCMS (DCMS, 1998). The second, conducted by the University of Hong Kong (2003), broadened the reach of industry types that identified employment categories for artists but failed to include careers that mixed arts and non-arts work. Richard Florida's book, *The Creative Class* (2002), further inspired re-conceptualization, as his research pressed economists to reconsider the revitalization potential of locating creative industry hubs in urban areas. Although Florida's hypotheses about the ways in which the creative workforce would drive the economy proved untrue, the controversy

surrounding his research brought much attention to the emerging creative industries. The result of multiple attempts at finding new ways to measure arts employment ultimately became the Creative Trident (Higgs et al., 2007).

The Creative Trident starts by disaggregating arts employment. Rather than using one arts-related identifier (actor, musician, filmmaker), arts employment is divided into three distinct groups. These groups are determined by intersections between the creative sector and creative occupations (See Figure 1). The first group is Specialist Creative Workers. These are artists working exclusively as artists within artistic fields. Embedded Creative Workers comprise the second group. This category identifies artists embedded in work outside of the arts industry. This may include the application of creative skills in tasks that are not directly arts-related such as arts therapy in the health industry (Malchiodi, 2017) or social media in the business industry (Stross, 2018). The third category, Support Workers, captures data from non-artists working within the arts industry. Bookkeepers, building managers, and lawyers would fall into this category. The fourth category, non-creative workers in non-creative occupations, identifies those working outside of artistic practice and in a non-arts industry. These would include those who began their career as artists and then shifted to another field, leaving their arts career and education behind. The "trident" in the Creative Trident is evident in the three-pronged shape created by the three primary fields in this chart.

		Creative and Cultural Sector	
		Yes	No
Cultural and Creative Occupations	Yes	**Specialist Creative Workers** *(creative occupations in creative sectors)*	**Embedded Creative Workers** *(creative occupations in non-creative sectors)*
	No	**Support Workers** *(non-creative occupations in creative sectors)*	(un-named in the Creative Trident) *(non-creative occupations in non-creative sectors)*

Figure 1. The Creative Trident as developed by Higgs et al. (2007).

The Creative Trident framework allowed researchers in Australia and the U.K. to more accurately determine who in the arts industries were working and how they were making a living. This framework disentangled human capital from general economic indicators in the creative industries, preventing the concept of precarity in the creative industries (the volatility of employment in the emerging creative economy) from skewing the data measuring the workforce supporting them (Cunningham, 2013). Some of the findings from this research were unexpected, revealing that “the creative workforce is growing at a faster rate than the general economy and that, on average, the creative workforce earns salaries above national averages” (Bridgstock, Goldsmith, Rodgers, & Hearn, 2015, p. 336). They discovered that the emerging creative workforce in these countries was growing and feeding other sectors of the economy as well (Cunningham, 2013). Although the Creative Trident has improved the ways in which economists can track arts employment, it is far from perfect (Cunningham, 2014). Economic scholars

continue to explore and refine methodologies that capture the complicated landscape of arts employment.

Research on the application of the Creative Trident to the arts economy in the U.S. is sparse. One study by Kemeny, Nathan, and O'Brien (2019) attempted to apply this paradigm to arts employment. Their research, which involved a cross-comparison of U.K. and U.S. creative markets using the Creative Trident, failed to account for multiple factors that influenced the data. The authors identified urban differences (London-centric versus aggregated cities in the U.S.), exposing a fundamental misunderstanding of how arts industries operate in the United States. New York functions differently from Los Angeles, for example, in that New York provides a greater balance of arts industries, while Los Angeles focuses heavily on film and television. Chicago, a well-known theatre city, relies on a large population of small to mid-sized theatres, while New York utilizes a complex balance of large commercial theatres and not-for-profit theatres of many sizes. Additionally, the authors relied heavily on census data with one exception, a survey of 1% of the U.S population located in Minnesota. It was unclear why the authors used census data as a primary resource when this practice was documented as problematic by the originators of the Creative Trident. Using a small sample size in one geographic area of the U.S. to serve as representative of the entire U.S. arts market created validity concerns as arts practice in Minnesota is culturally and geographically specific. All three authors are economists located in the United Kingdom and appeared to be unaware that arts practice in the U.S. is strongly influenced by the cultural environment in which it is situated. Although there may be value in examining similarities and differences between

the creative industries in these two countries, this study failed to capture useful information for arts employment in the U.S.

Skills Needed for a Contemporary Workforce

While parents and college students express concern over the employment prospects of various majors upon graduation, the employment market is experiencing a deficit in qualified applicants (Selingo, 2013). What employers are missing in their current workforce is innovation, creativity, and a collection of skills that can turn the technically proficient into problem solvers (Wagner, 2014). The work world has become more complicated, and the World Economic Forum predicted that "by the beginning of the next decade, more than one-third of skills considered important in today's work force will have changed" (Selingo, 2017, p. 7). As automation continues to disrupt traditional career paths and push the labor market into the knowledge economy (Powell & Snellman, 2004), adaptability and learning how to learn are critically important to remaining competitive. Important, too, is the adaptability of the educational environment. Traditional field-specific undergraduate education prepares students for a job-market paradigm that no longer exists. Economists predict that the employment market will continue to complexify as digital technologies evolve and markets diversify in response. Higher education may be left behind if administrators are unwilling or unable to adjust curricular focus (Selingo, 2017).

Employers are seeking employees who "write well, speak clearly, work effectively in teams, and know how to analyze complex problems" (Anders, 2017, p. 30); have "the capability to find the answers to the questions of tomorrow that we cannot envision asking today" (Selingo, 2013, p. 149); and "can be creative problem solvers or

innovators" (Wagner, 2014, p. 162). Current job postings list the following skills as most critical for aspiring applicants: communication, organization, problem-solving, planning, and someone who is detail oriented (Selingo, 2016). Employers are seeking applicants who are curious and creative and able to adapt to a constantly changing work environment where problems arise without notice and decisions must be made quickly (Selingo, 2017). Many of the skills they seek are already embedded in the learning outcomes of liberal arts degrees (Gallagher, 2016). A recent survey suggested that a liberal arts degree may actually improve an applicant's prospects for employment (Neem, 2019).

Some hiring managers have begun to express interest in seeing more applicants with a liberal arts education (Gallup, 2019). Employers agree that although technical knowledge in the field will help an applicant land the job, a much broader range of skills is required for them to advance in the industry. Howkins (2002) posited that the developing interest in these skills sets is another stage in the evolution of the creative economy, an economy in which creative and independent thinkers can thrive.

21st Century skills. The concept of 21st Century skills was developed in part by the National Education Association (NEA). This framework is now a standard component of the Partnership for the 21st Century skills initiative (P21) (NEA, 2012). The skills considered 21st Century differ depending on the model and study under consideration. Trilling and Fadel (2009) collected these skills into three primary categories: learning and innovation, digital literacy, and career and life skills. A study from the job site LinkedIn identified the following based on advertisements in their job database: creativity, persuasion, collaboration, adaptability, and time management (Petrone, 2019). Wagner

(2014) grouped 21st Century skills into seven primary categories which included critical thinking/problem solving, collaboration across networks/leading by influence, agility/adaptability, initiative/entrepreneurialism, effective oral/written communication, accessing/analyzing information, and curiosity/imagination. There is some disagreement among scholars regarding the value of these "soft skills." Even if they are determined to have pedagogical value, including them in educational settings and measuring learning outcomes is a challenge, as they are often attributed to intangibles like personality, attitudes, and behaviors (Robles, 2012).

A theatre artist will encounter many of these 21st Century skills as a normal component of her education and practice. Stager (2013), a former actor, argued for the value of acting training in developing interpersonal skills for organizational training programs. Consider the process of mounting a theatre production, a standard activity in theatre education and professional theatre settings. The director constructs a team that includes a dramaturg (the literature specialist), stage managers, designers, actors, and technicians, and convinces them to participate in the complicated endeavor of mounting a play for public viewing (leadership and persuasion). The dramaturg analyzes the play, the historical context of the story, all specific cultural references, and shares them with the team (critical thinking, cultural sensitivity, interpersonal communication). The designers plan and construct set, costume, lighting, sound, and projection elements to support the production, all of which must be coordinated logistically and aesthetically (creativity, innovation, collaboration, teamwork). The director guides the actors during the rehearsal process, helping them realize a credible public performance (leadership, empathy, interpersonal communication, persuasion, time management). The actors present the

show to the public (public speaking, interpersonal communication, teamwork) while the stage managers coordinate all technical aspects of the production (leadership, teamwork, initiative, self-direction, persuasion, interpersonal communication, problem-solving, and time-management). Every production is unique and presents its own set of challenges and opportunities, requiring all team members to be flexible and adaptable while applying these skills to the multiple problems one encounters in mounting a play. These are all skills identified in the several paradigms assessing what employers are currently seeking in applicants.

One important study that linked theatre arts skills with employability was Nancy Kindelan's *Artistic Literacy: Theatre Studies and a Contemporary Liberal Education* (2012), which made a laudable attempt to articulate the value of theatre education and its applicability to many fields. What was missing in her analysis was data-driven evidence that theater majors have applied these skills on the job market. Kindelan elegantly took the reader through the history of theatre practice and the evolution of theatre education and argued passionately for the value of the skills acquired. Rather than positioning her argument from a data-driven perspective, she relied on the traditional paradigm of historical context and critical literary analysis common in the humanities. This resulted in constructing an argument geared to an audience that was already on her side. What was missing were concrete data measuring whether or not the skills acquired in a theatre education aligned with the 21st century skill set. Such data might more effectively persuade readers from others disciplines regarding the value of a degree in theatre. This study worked to bridge that gap by asking graduates of theatre programs to identify

which of these 21st Century skills they have used in their current employment and whether a theatre arts education provided the skills they needed for that employment.

Professional Satisfaction

Employment statistics and skills applicability are two important factors in determining the value of a theatre arts degree. However, salary and practicality are not the only elements of career satisfaction (Adamuti-Trache, Hawkey, Schuetze, & Glickman, 2006). One of the most important factors driving professional happiness is connecting employment to a higher purpose or calling. This is particularly true for the younger workforce (Gallup, 2019). Having some creative value in employment activities is important for artists, even when their work may reside outside of the arts sector (Bridgstock & Cunningham, 2016). Artists are often willing to accept a lower salary and less ideal employment as long as they can continue to participate in artistic practice (Bille, et al., 2013). Some studies indicated that despite the lower-income and the volatility of the arts marketplace, artists are often happier with their employment situation than non-artists (Bille, et al., 2013).

Education can contribute to professional happiness as the intent of the degree is to lead to employment in the preferred field of study. Current employment statistics fail to capture intangibles like a sense of belonging and purpose, well-being, and workplace engagement (Gallup Corporation, 2014). Lindemann and Tepper (2012) found that many arts graduates were satisfied with their training and education, even when they were under or unemployed. Not all arts graduates agreed with this assessment and would have preferred a stronger link between the degree and employment possibilities (Ball et al., 2010). For a theatre artist, professional happiness may depend on multiple factors,

including the quality of education and the degree of success constructing a theatre career. According to a study by Ball, et al. (2010), 77 percent of graduates in creative fields were satisfied with their professional path, even when that path involved regular free-lance work. Free-lance work is often attractive to those in arts industries like theatre. Although working free-lance may result in lower income overall, the flexibility, freedom, and some degree of control over employment appeared to be attractive features (Caves, 2000). This is further evidence that employment statistics fail to capture all value metrics for those in creative industries, and that we need to consider the ways in which the individual may find meaning in a career (Meijers, 1998).

More research into contemporary job trends for theatre artists and their professional levels of happiness may suggest new ways to link theatre education to employment in the larger economy as well as the field of theatre. Currently, both the knowledge economy and the emergence of creative industries are changing the landscape for artists seeking a creative career. This has the potential to influence fields of study, as emerging data may show that an arts career provides skills that support the knowledge economy and that professional happiness need not be centered around monetary gain.

Summary

A review of the literature for this study revealed that neoliberal ideologies are converting a college education from a character-building endeavor to a commodity in which learning is exchanged for employment. Students no longer consider what they will contribute to society but now ask, “What’s in it for me?” Recent state funding cuts have placed pressure on the upper administration of many institutions, forcing them to choose between raising tuition to cover costs or cutting programs in order to balance budgets.

When employability is the primary indicator for retention, theatre arts programs become vulnerable to budget cuts. Measurement tools for arts employment are well-developed in Australia and the United Kingdom but have not been applied to the arts market in the U.S. Current employment measures in the U.S. indicate that theatre degrees lead to unemployment or underemployment, skewing the assessment of the value of undergraduate education in theatre. Employers are seeking skills that are missing in the education of many graduates with college degrees. Although theatre programs may already be teaching the skills these employers need, there is currently no data-driven research providing evidence that supports this. Professional happiness is an important factor in career decision-making. Research indicated that a sense of purpose and the opportunity to contribute may be of higher importance than earning potential.

This study addressed gaps in the research on arts employability in the U.S. by using the Creative Trident framework to measure employment for theatre graduates. This study also used the 21st Century skills framework to identify skills acquired with a theatre degree, and how graduates had applied these skills to employment inside and outside of arts fields. Levels of professional happiness were measured as well as the perceived value for dollars spent on a theatre degree. The findings in this study may help administrators more accurately measure the employment value of a theatre degree and could provide a workable paradigm for other fields with similar needs.

SECTION FOUR - CONTRIBUTION TO PRACTICE

Plan for Dissemination of Practitioner Contribution

Who: Deans of colleges and faculties housing theatre departments, chairs of theatre departments, a network of theatre professionals.

What: Infographic, program evaluation report.

When: Spring/Summer 2020, Academic year 2020-2021.

How: Email the study findings to a constructed list of 224 chairs across the country, partner with a dean to present findings at a gathering of American Conference of Academic Deans, submit a proposal to present at a conference gathering of the American Association of University Administrators, submit a proposal to present findings at a conference gathering of Association for Theatre in Higher Education, share study findings with a network of theatre professionals on Facebook.

Rationale for This Contribution Type

A program evaluation report provides a useful format for documenting the investigative process, sharing the findings, and offering recommendations for consideration. According to Newcomer, Hatry, and Wholey (2015), program evaluation reports provide evidence-based information that can be used to inform national, state, and local agencies.

Outline of Proposed Contents

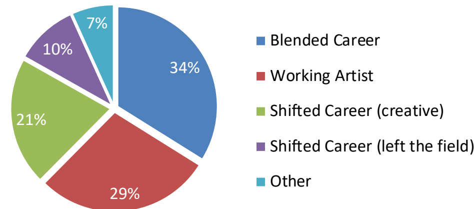
1. Infographic: For those needing only an overview of findings.
2. Executive Summary: Includes an overview of the report highlighting the most important findings and offering recommendations. This section may be distributed independently to those who would be better served by a shorter document.

3. Program Evaluation Report: Offers more detailed information on all aspects of the study.

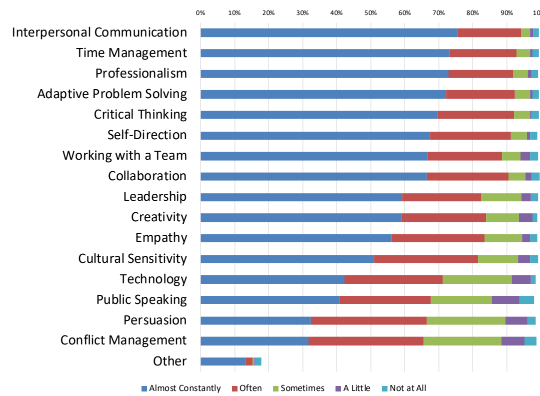
EMPLOYMENT VALUE OF A THEATRE DEGREE

Where and how theatre majors construct a career and how they apply their degree to employment.

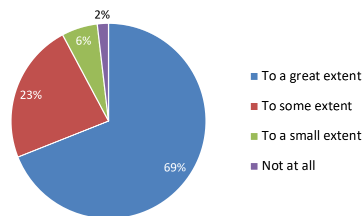
WHAT KIND OF WORK?



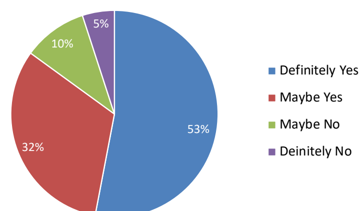
THEATRE SKILLS USED IN EMPLOYMENT



CONTRIBUTION OF DEGREE TO EMPLOYMENT



IS A THEATRE DEGREE A WORTHY INVESTMENT?



- Graduates are finding work in a variety of fields.
- Many graduates use the skills acquired with the degree in current employment.
- Most graduates believe their degree was worth the money spent.

Dr. Melanie Dreyer-Lude

Executive Summary

Overview

During lean times administrators must make hard decisions about which programs stay and which must go. Arts departments are particularly vulnerable when traditionally derived enrollment and employability factors are used to determine where to implement cuts. While only a minority of Theatre Arts graduates will find work as artists, most do find employment in a variety of fields. Because current labor statistics fail to capture the complexity of the employment patterns of these graduates, theatre arts departments are vulnerable to downsizing. This study focused on three research questions related to the employment of Theatre Arts graduates:

1. Where do graduates of four-year undergraduate theatre programs in the United States find work, and what is the pattern of that work over time and at any one time?
2. Which skills acquired with this theatre degree have been applied to employment?
3. How satisfied are graduates of these theatre programs with the employment value of their theatre degree?

The findings from a survey of 487 participants provided a new map of the employment patterns of Theatre Arts graduates, identifying if and where graduates found employment and whether the skills acquired with a Theatre Arts degree contributed to a perception of value for dollars spent.

Findings

Participants

Participants were comprised of a simple random sample and were limited to those who graduated with a four-year degree in theatre. The population of 487 participants provided numbers that were slightly imbalanced in each decade with 67% of participants having graduated between 2000 and 2009 and 33% having graduated between 1990 and 1999. An original attempt to utilize alumni databases from universities across the country to locate participants was unsuccessful due to poor data collection by individual departments and lack of access to alumni. A Facebook network of theatre practitioners and educators assisted in gathering participants using snowball sampling on several virtual platforms.

Work Patterns

The Creative Trident framework was used to map where and how participants found work. The majority (34%) had crafted a Blended Career - working in the arts and in another job simultaneously – while just over one quarter of participants (29%) identified as Working Artists or full-time theatre professionals. Those who had Shifted Careers but still applied Creative Skills comprised 21% of participants with 10% of participants having fully left the field (Shifted Career/Has Left the Field). The remaining 7% of participants chose “Other,” naming categories they believed to be a better definition of their current employment than those provided by the survey.

Where Graduates Work

Working Artists found more work as technicians and administrators than as artists. Those with a Blended Career spent 59% of their time working in a field outside of

theatre with education serving as the area of employment for most. The majority of those who had Shifted Careers but still applied Creative Skills found jobs outside of the arts in fields like law and the ministry. Those with Shifted Careers who had Left the Field worked primarily in business but also in a variety of other fields like real estate and the tech industry. The most important finding was the dominance of the category "Other" which when coded resulted in a variety of employment fields.

Applying the Skills Acquired

Of the 16 selected skills from the 21st Century skill set, 50% were indicated as "Almost Constantly" used in current employment. Interpersonal Communication, Time Management, Professionalism, and Adaptive Problem Solving were the skills that presented as most utilized. The Not at All selection for the application of skills to current employment was fairly consistent ranging from 1% to 4%. Most participants indicated that their degree contributed to their current employment To a Great Extent at 69% with To Some Extent following at 23%. Only 8% of participants found that their degree did not contribute to their current employment.

Satisfaction with the Degree

Participants overwhelmingly answered 'yes' they were satisfied with having majored in theatre (87%). They also believed that a theatre degree was a worthy investment of tuition dollars (85%). Several participants volunteered that their theatre degree helped them on the job market, while others mentioned the financial pressure they experienced when trying to work in the theatre and a few indicated that having a career in the theatre and having a family may be incompatible.

Implications

The findings in this study offered several implications for institutions providing undergraduate degrees in Theatre Arts:

- Graduates from these programs were able to negotiate an acceptable employment paradigm by at least one decade after graduation.
- The degree provided dimensional value in the acquisition of the 21st Century skills that are currently sought by employers as well as valuable skills that employers may not be anticipating.
- Theatre educators should thoughtfully consider adapting curriculum to include a stronger focus on the skills applicable to the current job market.
- Because the training acquired with a theatre degree amplifies employment value and provides an adaptable skill set, administrators could consider adding theatre classes to other disciplines to help students in fields outside of theatre become more employable.
- Although eliminating theatre programs may help balance budgets, this decision could remove an educational resource that is well-equipped to serve a 21st Century job market.

Program Evaluation Report

Introduction

Background

A college education has become expensive (Lipka, 2019; Plante, 2016; Selingo, 2013). According to Forbes, the price of an education in the United States has more than doubled in the last thirty years, and wages have not kept pace with the increasing cost of tuition (Maldonao, 2018). In the U.S., a post-secondary education is necessary to attain upward economic mobility and retain a position in the middle-class (Selingo, 2013). These two pressure points, necessity and cost, have repositioned the frame in which many students and parents view the value of an undergraduate education (Poon, 2006). Historically considered an experience of enrichment and personal development, advanced education is now viewed as a commodity in which tuition dollars are traded for employment skill sets (Kaye, Bickel, & Birtwistle, 2006; Plante, 2016; Ybarra, 2018). Although contemporary market trends suggest that the skills acquired with a liberal arts degree may be attractive to potential employers (Anders, 2017; Comunian, Faggian, & Jewell, 2011; Hawkins, 2015; Landy, 2010, Pink, 2005; Stross, 2018), the expense of a college degree has pressured some to question the value of an arts education.

Employment numbers and salary figures tend to be lower for graduates with arts degrees than those in other fields (Comunian et al., 2011; Haukka, 2011; Rantisi, Leslie, & Christopherson, 2006). The performing arts, of which theatre is a member, represent some of the lowest rates of earning potential (Ball, Pollard, & Stanley, 2010; Bridgstock & Cunningham, 2016). Despite grim employment prospects, some institutions continue to matriculate and graduate hundreds of aspiring actors, directors, designers, and

technicians, hoping they will somehow find a way to make a living (Ybarra, 2018; Zazzali, 2016). Some in the field of theatre have claimed that it is unethical to grant so many degrees to students who graduate with exorbitant debt and enter a job market with few prospects (Ybarra, 2018; Zazzali, 2016).

Higher education administrators are under pressure to justify the cost of acquiring a college degree (Selingo, 2013). State funding for higher education continues to disappear forcing many provosts and deans to choose between increasing the price of tuition or cutting programs in order to balance budgets (Carey, 2019; Mangan, 2017; Supiano, 2019). Because an increase in tuition triggers objections from the public and can result in a reduction in student applications, cutting programs is often the chosen tool for balancing a budget in crisis. Programs that cannot contribute to employability numbers may be the first to go. Graduates from departments who move immediately into a job in their field of study provide more accessible employability statistics (Abel & Dietz, 2019). Departments like business, engineering, and education can often identify how many and where their graduates get work (Carnevale, Cheah, & Strohl, 2013). Those in the arts and humanities often struggle to demonstrate employability in their field. Research suggests that graduates in these fields often apply their studies to other fields or change professional goals at some point during their career (Gallagher, 2016). Further complicating the employment data is the finding that although students may work in their chosen field immediately upon graduation, they sometimes shift fields several times over the course of their careers (Selingo, 2016).

The job market has become dynamic and graduates who are able to adapt to a changing marketplace have greater success in finding employment (Gallagher, 2016;

Selingo, 2017). Employers are seeking applicants who can bring skills like leadership, teamwork, creativity, problem-solving, and cultural sensitivity (Selingo, 2016; Wagner, 2014). Because of a growing trend toward skill specialization in fields like engineering and business, some students may be graduating with ample technical expertise but are unable to communicate properly or adapt to a changing work environment (Selingo, 2016). For fields like theatre that provide more generally applicable skills, it can be challenging to trace a direct line from a specific major to employment in a field of study. An English major who joins the advertising department of a cosmetics company or a philosophy major who makes a living as a simulated patient in a medical school may not be counted in the statistics for each of those disciplines. If administrators are relying on flawed data to determine employability in various fields, an inaccurate perception of employment value may lead them to eliminate the programs that are providing the skill sets employers are seeking.

Objectives

This study intended to provide a more accurate employment map for undergraduates of theatre programs showing if and where graduates are working and how they have constructed careers. This study also identified those skills acquired with the degree and those applied to employment revealing a relationship between current curricular practice in theatre education and the needs of the job market. Finally, this study determined whether graduates of theatre programs were satisfied with the degree and the money spent to acquire it.

Intended Outcomes

The results of this study are intended to provide a more accurate picture of the employment patterns of Theatre Arts graduates to administrators in higher education who are making decisions about resourcing and support for theatre departments. Rather than relying on standard aggregated labor statistics from the U.S. government that capture only a piece of the employment picture (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019, Art, entertainment, and recreation), the results of this study provided data that can serve leaders and decision-makers when considering funding allocations or when advocating on behalf of theatre programs.

Stakeholders

There are several stakeholders for this report. First, deans and chairs working in higher education institutions in the United States responsible for funding allocations and resource support for theatre departments may benefit from this information. Second, prospective students and their parents may benefit from reviewing the number of potential fields of employment uncovered by this study. Third, a network of theatre artists working in a variety of employment paradigms could benefit from a broader understanding of the current employment landscape.

Purpose of the Study

Needs and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to provide more accurate employment data to deans and other stakeholders regarding if, and where theatre graduates have found work, if the skills they acquired with the degree were being used in their employment, and how they felt about having acquired this degree given the trajectory of their career.

Existing Gap in the Literature

Current measures of arts employment in the United States (U.S.) are inaccurate and misleading (Carnevale et al., 2013). Those pursuing arts careers often follow a non-traditional career trajectory, one that includes freelance work, blended careers, and regular job transitions (Ball et al., 2010; Bridgstock & Cunningham, 2016; Comunian et al., 2011). This paradigm does not fit well within traditional employment success measures and may complicate tracking the data. While there are employment statistics in the U.S. market for graduates who join the traditional theatre workforce and comply with standard employment categories (Creativity Connects, 2015; Higher Education Research Institute, 2018; O*Net Online, 2018; Strategic National Arts Alumni Project, 2017), there is little available data tracking those graduates who shift careers or who participate in a blended career (part-time work in the arts/part-time work outside of the arts). Most of the detailed studies on employment trends for careers in the arts have been conducted in the United Kingdom (U.K.) and Australia (Ball et al., 2010; Bridgstock, & Cunningham, 2016; Comunian et al., 2011; Comunian, Faggian, & Li, 2010; Haukka, 2011; Kaye et al., 2006). Studies on the economic impact of an arts career in the U.S. are currently limited in scope. The lack of reliable data on arts employment in the U.S. represents a research gap.

Employers complain that university graduates lack the skills that are critical to success in the contemporary job market (Anders, 2007; Selingo 2013). Skills like leadership, organization, interpersonal communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking are missing in the skill sets of many graduates (Petrone, 2019; Robles, 2012). A theatre degree develops a number of these skills (National Association of Theatre Schools

[NAST], 2019), suggesting that theatre graduates may provide some of the qualifications employers are now seeking. Although it is not uncommon for theatre artists to find entrepreneurial opportunities for leveraging their skill set (Connolly, 2018), no statistical data exists on whether the skills acquired with a theatre degree have been applied to employment opportunities outside of theatre practice. This represents another gap in the existing research.

Artists' perceptions of the value of their employment do not always match measurements of economic relevance (Hawkins, 2015). Recent literature reveals a shift away from earning potential and toward quality of life indicators, as many artists accept that this career path may yield little monetary gain but provide ample rewards by other measures (Ball et al., 2010; Haukka, 2011). The value of an arts degree has primarily been determined through job placement and salary numbers (Ball et al., 2010; Bridgstock & Cunningham, 2016; Comunian et al., 2011; Comunian et al., 2010; Haukka, 2011; Kaye et al., 2006). Employment that pays less but is emotionally satisfying may hold as much personal value as high-earning potential (Bille, Fjællegaard, Frey, & Steiner, 2013). Currently, prospective theatre students must rely on anecdotal information regarding long-term professional happiness. Learning how theatre graduates have constructed careers and whether their professional choices were satisfying represents a third deficit in prior research.

Methodology

Research Questions

This study was guided by three research questions:

1. Where do graduates of four-year undergraduate theatre programs in the United States find work, and what is the pattern of that work over time and at any one time?
2. Which skills acquired with this theatre degree have been applied to employment?
3. How satisfied are graduates of these theatre programs with the employment value of their theatre degree?

Theoretical Frameworks

Employment patterns were measured using a modified version of the Creative Trident framework as developed by Australian economists Higgs, Cunningham, and Pagan (2007). The Creative Trident decouples the "human capital/creative workforce dynamics from the fortunes of the creative industry sectors" (Cunningham, 2013, p. 120), allowing for the application of a new paradigm which relies less heavily on traditional measures of economic success. In the Creative Trident, arts workers are divided into three groups: Specialist Creative Workers (creative occupations in creative sectors); Embedded Creative Workers (creative occupations in non-creative sectors); and Support Workers (non-creative occupations in creative sectors). The fourth quadrant of the Creative Trident is reserved for those employed outside of creative sectors and is not considered in standard Creative Trident measurements (Figure 1).

		Creative and Cultural Sector	
		Yes	No
Cultural and Creative Occupations	Yes	**Specialist Creative Workers** *(creative occupations in creative sectors)*	**Embedded Creative Workers** *(creative occupations in non-creative sectors)*
	No	**Support Workers** *(non-creative occupations in creative sectors)*	(un-named in the Creative Trident) *(non-creative occupations in non-creative sectors)*

Figure 1. The Creative Trident as developed by Higgs et al. (2007)

The Creative Trident was modified for this study of theatre graduates with renamed and reassigned categories (Figure 2) to apply the employment concepts used in this framework more directly to the field of theatre. Specialist Creative Workers became Working Artists (working full time in theatre practice), Embedded Creative Workers became Shifted Career with Creative kill Application (working outside of theatre practice but applying theatre skills to current employment), and Support Workers became Blended Career (working in multiple jobs both inside and outside of the theatre industry). The fourth quadrant captured those graduates who had shifted fields and no longer participated in theatre practice nor applied theatre skills to their employment (Shifted Career/Has Left the Field). The disaggregation of employment as mapped by the Modified Creative Trident provided a more precise determination of how employment for theatre graduates was distributed across industries.

		Theatre Industry	
		Yes	No
Utilization of Creative Skills for Employment	Yes	**Working Artists** *(working full time in the theatre industry)*	**Shifted Career Creative Skills** *(working outside of the theatre industry applying theatre skills)*
	Yes and/or No	**Blended Career** *(working inside and outside of the theatre industry)*	**Shifted Career Has Left the Field** *(working full time outside of the theatre industry)*

Figure 2. Modified Creative Trident

Research question three used the Modified Creative Trident to gauge participants' satisfaction with the value of their degrees in light of current employment circumstances. Employment satisfaction is often linked to the norms of the field and can influence motivation and passion for work (Bridgstock, 2013). Satisfaction with employment value can help determine the kind of career an artist will pursue and which forms of employment she might find attractive (Bridgstock, 2013). Using data gathered with the survey, this study captured and coded information regarding the individual satisfaction of the employment experience and determined the ways in which the career trajectory influenced professional happiness.

For research question two, this study utilized a version of 21st Century skills adapted to identify and capture those skills sought by employers that are most relevant to a degree in theatre (Gagnon, Vough, & Nickerson, 2012; Hoffman, Utley, & Ciccarone, 2008; Essig, 2009; Stager 2013). These skills included leadership, problem-solving, adaptability, teamwork. interpersonal communication, organization, and cultural

sensitivity. The 21st Century skill set has been identified as important to the contemporary job market and is currently a consideration in national conversations regarding curricular development. Studies on 21st Century skills provided a variety of models with related but inconsistent skill categories (Carnevale, 2016; Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Fadel, 2015; Association of American Colleges and Universities & Hart Research Associates, 2013; Petrone, 2019; Pink, 2005; Silva, 2009; Rotherham, & Willingham, 2010). Using a combination of the primary investigator's professional experience in theatre education and practice, archival data acquired in an exploratory survey conducted in the Fall of 2018, and an aggregation of the most common skill sets present in research on 21st Century skills, this study included questions that captured information on skill sets relevant to this framework.

Design of the Study

This study utilized a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach (Creswell, 2014) with a concurrent nested design (Creswell, Plano-Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003) to gather quantitative and qualitative data about the employment circumstances, skill set application, and levels of satisfaction with a theatre degree.

Participant Selection

Participants were comprised of a simple random sample of theatre graduates from four-year programs who received their degrees between 1990 and 2009. Participants were limited to those who graduated with a four-year degree. An original attempt to utilize alumni databases from universities across the country was unsuccessful due to poor data collection by individual departments and lack of access to alumni. A Facebook network

of theatre practitioners and educators assisted in gathering participants using snowball sampling on several virtual platforms.

Data Collection Tools

Data was collected using a 19-question online cross-sectional Qualtrics survey (Fink, 2017). Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered in parallel with 15 quantitative and 4 qualitative questions. Before gathering data, the study acquired permission from the Institutional Research Board in the Office of Research and Development at the University of Missouri in compliance with research ethics and standards.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected by this study was analyzed and considered in multiple comparative contexts using Microsoft Excel and Stata statistics software to extract descriptive statistics and to determine relationships among the data variables (Fink, 2017). Qualitative data from the survey was analyzed using open coding to identify patterns, followed by axial coding to group these patterns into themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The information provided by these data analyses was integrated using the side by side comparison outlined by Creswell (2014).

Findings

Participants

The subset population of 487 participants provided numbers that were slightly imbalanced in each decade with 67% of participants having graduated between 2000 and 2009 and 33% having graduated between 1990 and 1999. Slightly more than half of the participants (55%) graduated from public universities with 41% graduating from private

universities, and the remaining 4% from other kinds of institutions. The majority of participants indicated residence in the Midwest (34%), North East (32%), or West (21%), with a minority living the south (11%) and the final 2% indicating other locations. Two-thirds of participants were women (68%) with 29% identifying as male and 3% choosing not to identify or preferred not to say. A slight majority of participants (59%) currently make between $30,000 and $75,000 per year, with 26% earning more than $75,000 per year and 13% making $30,000 or less.

Participant Selection

Participants were comprised of a simple random sample of theatre graduates from four-year programs who received their degrees between 1990 and 2009, and were limited to those who graduated with a four-year degree. An original attempt to utilize alumni databases from universities across the country was unsuccessful due to poor data collection by individual departments and lack of access to alumni. A Facebook network of theatre practitioners and educators assisted in gathering participants using snowball sampling on several virtual platforms.

Employment Patterns for Theatre Arts Graduates

The majority of Theatre Arts graduates (77 %) began their degree with the intention of finding work in the field of theatre, with 19% indicating Maybe and 4% selecting No. The Creative Trident framework identified how these aspirational objectives played out over time by capturing actual employment in various fields between 10 and 20 years following graduation (1990 through 2009). Of the 487 participants who fell within this time frame, Blended Career - those working in the arts and in another job simultaneously - represented the largest subsection with 34% (Figure 3). Just over one

quarter of participants (28%) identified as Working Artists or full-time theatre professionals. Shifted Career/Creative Skills comprised 21% of participants with 10% of participants having fully left the field (Shifted Career/Has Left the Field). The remaining 7% of participants chose "Other," naming categories they believed to be a better definition of their current employment than those provided by the survey.

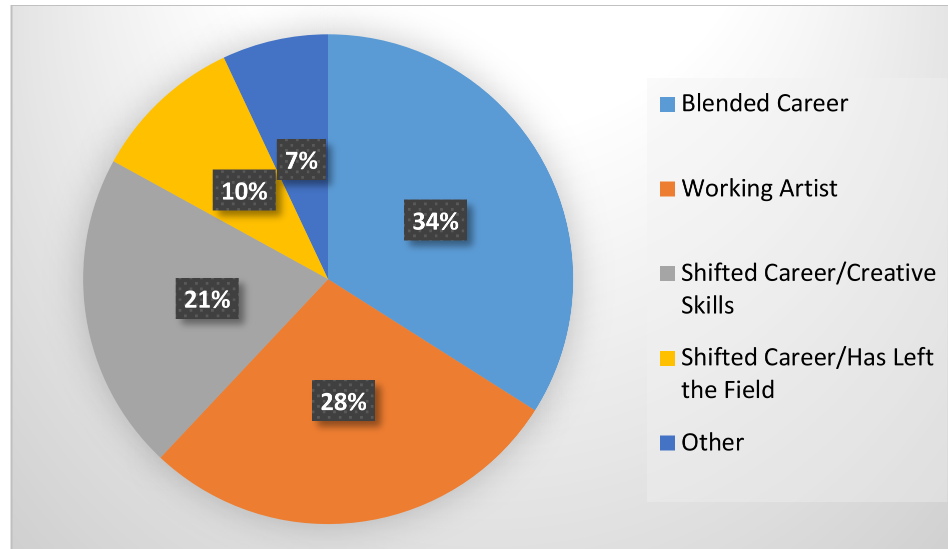


Figure 3. Where Theatre Graduates Are Finding Work

Working Artist. Participants in the Working Artist category were asked where they found work and to indicate all that apply. Although the survey provided a selection of standard positions in the field of theatre, "Other" emerged as the dominant category (30%) for these 139 participants. Of those positions listed for selection, technicians and designers appeared to have found employment in the field more often than performers, producers, or administrators (Figure 4).

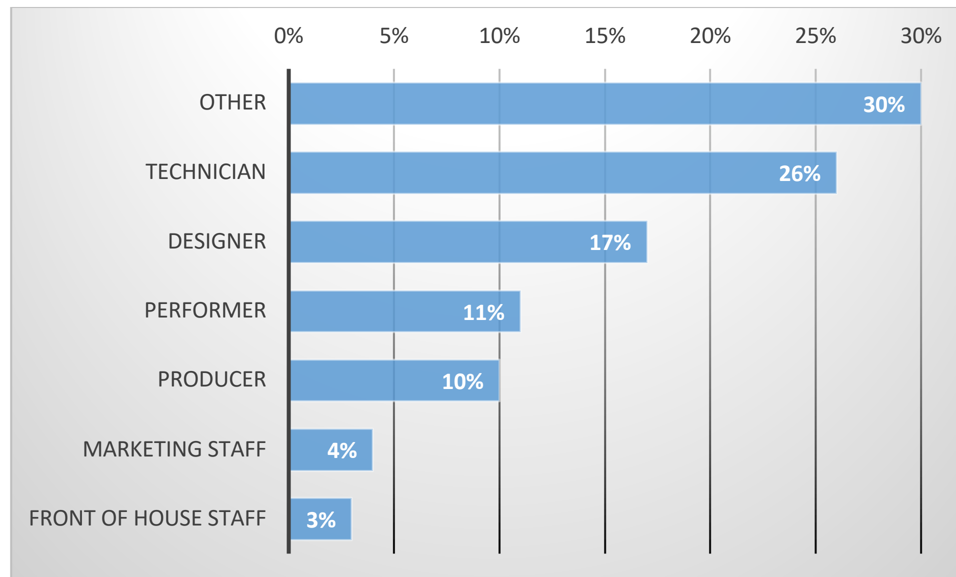


Figure 4. Specific Jobs for Working Artists

"Other" was a qualitative category allowing for multiple responses from each participant. The 74 responses of "Other" were compiled and coded revealing a large collection of positions, most of which fell under management (62%). These included titles like artistic director, managing director, and stage manager. Education took second place in the ranking with 20% followed by technical positions at 15%. Film and TV work comprised the final position with (3%). When including the coding for "Other," the primary categories for employment for Working Artists become management and technical positions.

Blended Career. For this category, the 165 participants were asked to distinguish work hours inside of the field and outside of the field. The survey revealed that Blended Career participants spent an average of 41% of their work time within the industry and 59% working in other fields. When asked in which fields outside of theatre Blended Career participants worked (choose all that apply), Education dominated with a response

rate of 47% (Figure 5). "Other" again arose as an important answer (23%) with all other results falling below 10%.

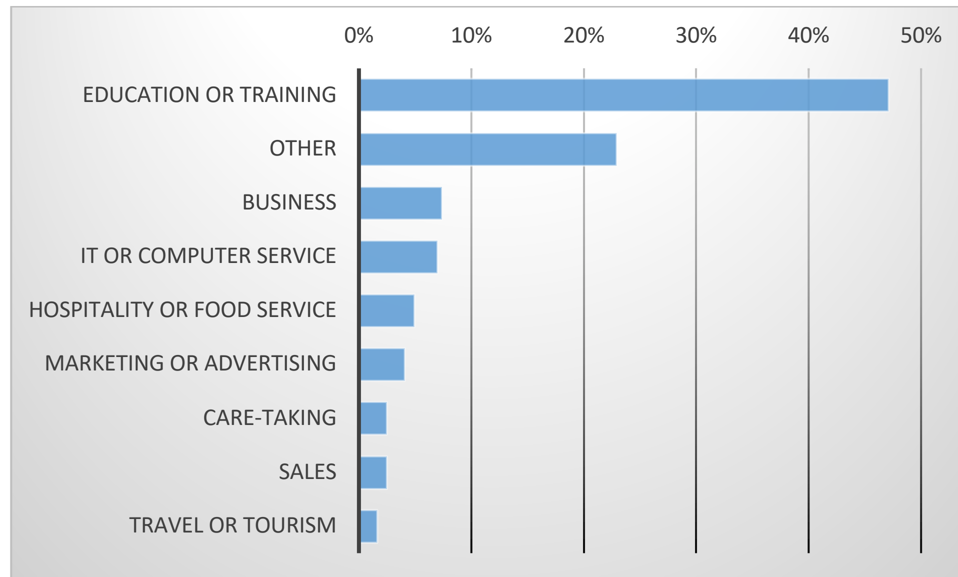


Figure 5. Blended-Career Employment Categories Outside the Field of Theatre

Grouping the 56 "Other" responses by themes yielded a variety of forms of employment inside and outside of the entertainment industry. Here there was no dominant theme, with four themes having coded as top responses. Of the top four, "Other Arts" included designations such as interior design and musician, "Management" included names like project manager and event planning, "Development" included positions in not-for-profit companies and philanthropic work, and "Other Non-Arts" included retail and ride-sharing.

Shifted Career/Creative Skills. When the 101 participants in this category were asked to choose all that apply, Education emerged as important (23.7%), although "Other" received the greatest percentage of responses (34.6%) (Figure 6). A variety of other industries were present, but none produced similarly strong results.

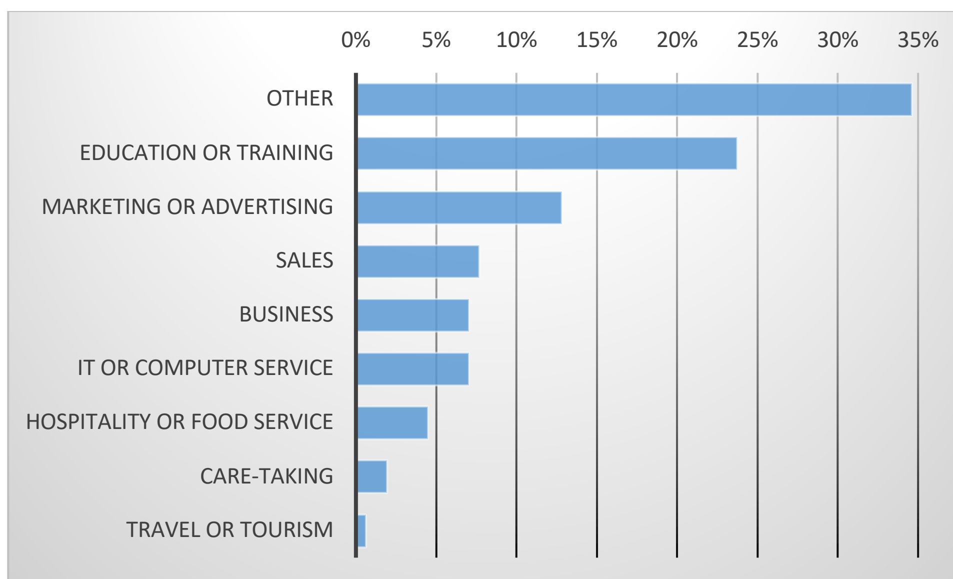


Figure 6. Shifted Career/Creative Skills – The Other Field in Which You Work

Coding and grouping the 54 selections of “Other” into themes revealed levels of complexity and variety in the employment fields under this category. “Other Non-Arts” ranked as the most coded category at 38%, including fields like corporate law, the ministry, construction, and working for the government. “Healthcare” was second at 16%, with “Literature” (writing, editing) and “Development” (philanthropy, advocacy volunteer work) tying for third.

Shifted Career/Has Left the Field. When asked to choose all that apply from the categories provided by the survey, the 49 participants in this category overwhelmingly chose “Other” (38%) when identifying where they currently work (Figure 7). Business was second at 30%. Education came in third at 14%, with all other employment selections under 10%.

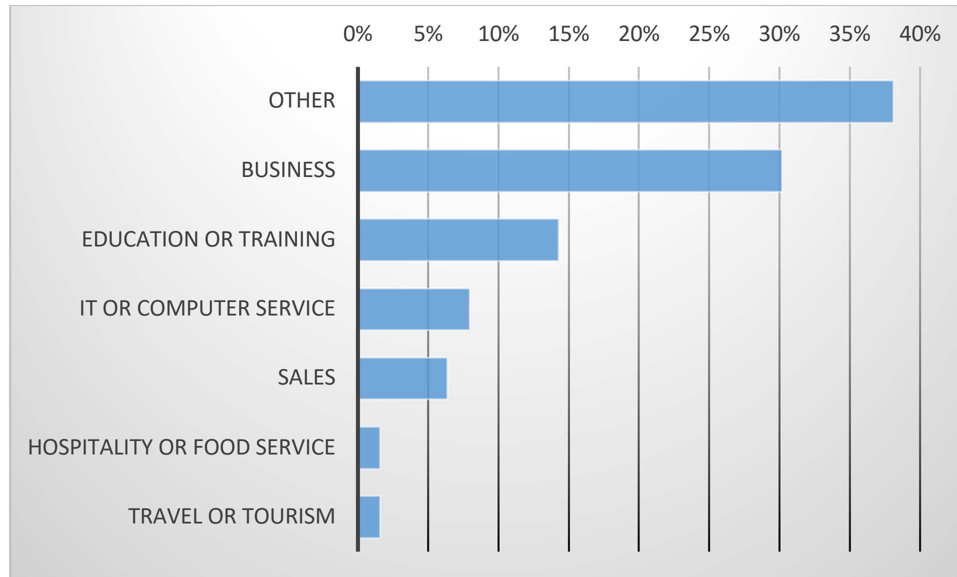


Figure 7. Shifted Career/Has Left the Field – The Other Field in Which You Work

Coding the 24 qualitative responses for "Other" revealed "Other Non-Arts" as the most frequent at 56% containing government, law, manufacturing, quality assurance analyst, religious organization, real estate, retail, sexton, tech entrepreneur, and transportation. "Healthcare" came in second at 17% with psychiatric case worker and social worker. "Management" (administration and event management), "Literature" (editing and journalism), and "Development" (non-profit) comprised the other themes.

When asked to choose all that apply regarding why they had left the theatre, participants in both Shifted Career categories identified similar reasons with differing weights (Figure 8). Of the categories provided by the survey, "Other" was the strongest answer for both (26% and 24%) followed by "Needed More Stability" (22% and 23%).

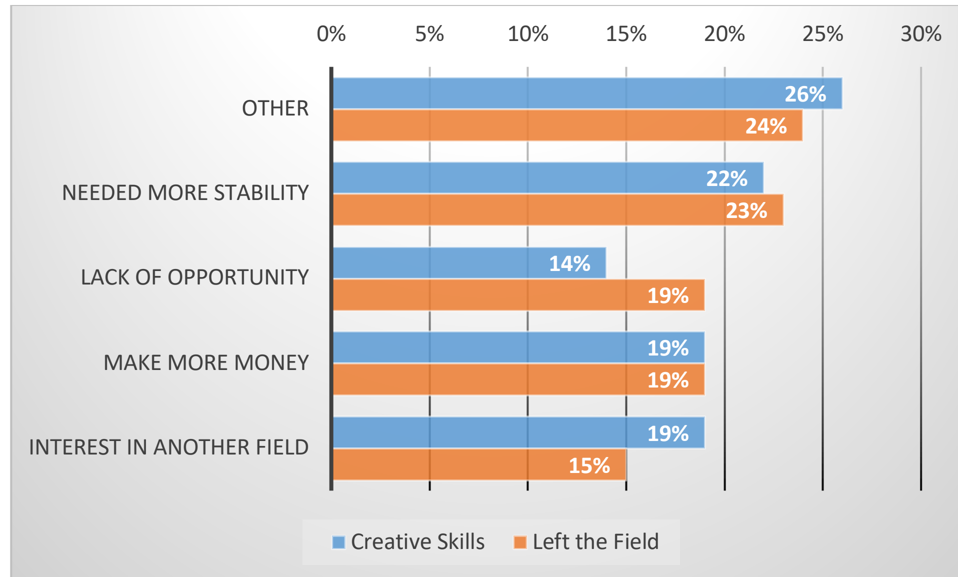


Figure 8. Shifted Career Comparison – Why Did You Leave the Theatre?

There were 30 qualitative entries of "Other" for the Shifted Career/Creative Skills category and 11 entries of "Other" for Shifted Career/Has Left the Field. After coding "Other" on the question "Why did you leave?" for both groups, two common dominant themes emerged: the need for a different lifestyle and the need to attend to family concerns.

Application of Skills to Current Employment

Using the list of 16 selected skills, participants were asked to consider each separately and to indicate whether and to what degree these skills contributed to current employment. Half of the skills in the list were selected as Almost Constantly at least 60% of the time (Figure 9). Interpersonal Communication, Time Management, Professionalism, and Adaptive Problem Solving were the skills that presented as most utilized. Technology, Public Speaking, Persuasion, and Conflict Management were the skills that received the fewest selections of Almost Constantly. The Not at All selection

for the application of skills to current employment was fairly consistent ranging from 1% to 4%.

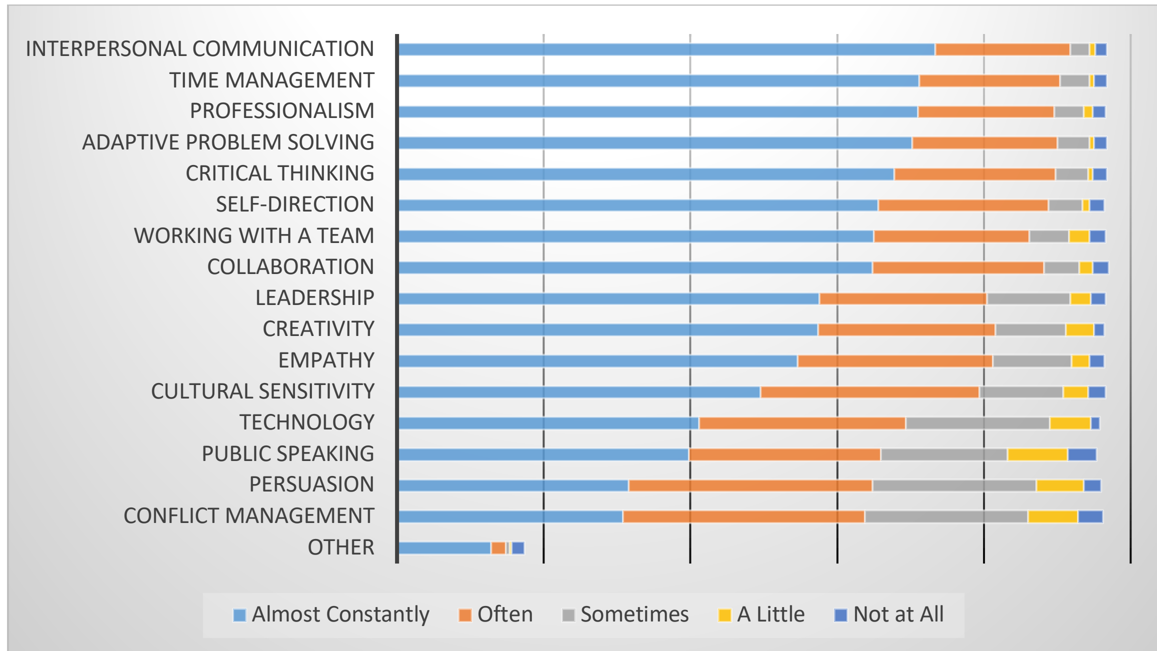


Figure 9. Skills Used in Current Employment (Not all participants responded to all skills listed.)

The “Other” option received 87 selections (18%) from the 487 participants. Compiling and coding these responses uncovered a variety of additional skills that participants found relevant to employment that were not included in the original list of 16. Interpersonal skills dominated (23%) and included identifiers like “active listening” and “a positive communication style.” Organizational skills came in second at 16% with descriptors like “meets deadlines” and “multi-tasking.” Analytical skills came in third at 14% with identifiers like “research skills” and “text analysis.”

To better understand the link between skills applied to employment and skills acquired with the degree, participants were asked to again review the list of 16 skills and select those they had acquired with their Theatre Arts degree. This question did not use a

Likert scale but prompted for a binary response: Yes (select the radio button) or No (leave the radio button blank). Participants indicated more than 50% of the time that most of the skills on the list had been acquired with the degree. Public Speaking stood out as the most selected skill at 98% (Figure 10). Three skills fell below the 50% mark: Persuasion, Conflict Management, and Technology.

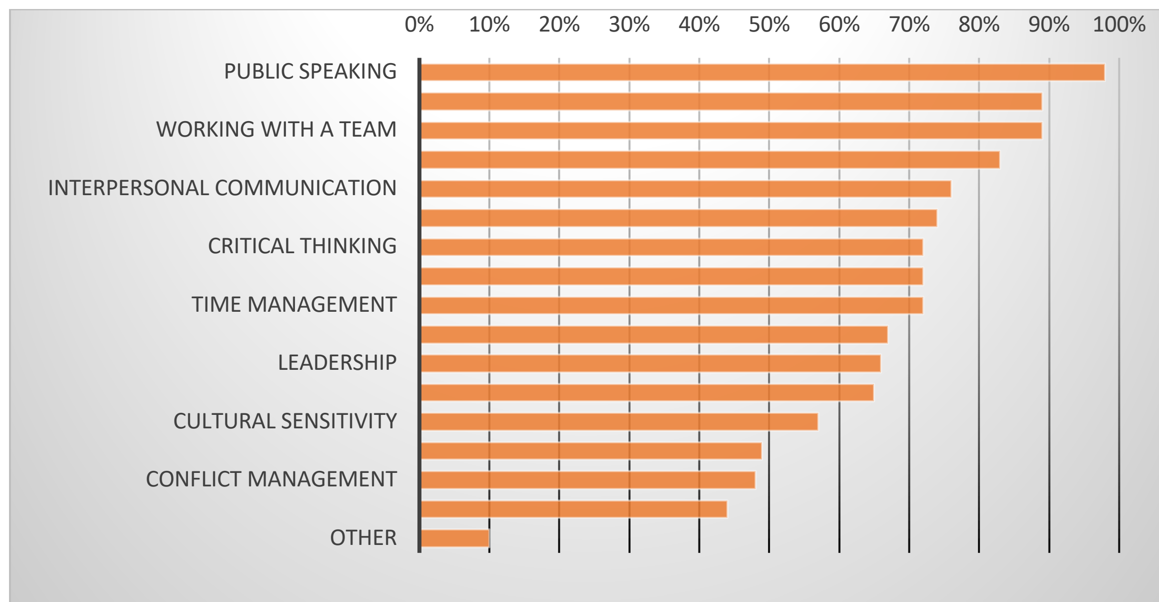


Figure 10. Skills Acquired with a Theatre Arts Degree

Comparing the two categories - Skills Used in Current Employment against Skills Acquired with the Degree – evidence emerged that some skills used on the job aligned with the priority given in the degree while others did not. Persuasion, Conflict Management, and Cultural Sensivity shared similarly low scores in both data sets. Adaptive Problem Solving, Critical Thinking, and Self-Direction were also listed at roughly the same rank. Interpersonal Communication, the top-ranked skill on the job was listed as fifth in importance in the degree. Time management was the second most important skill in employment but fell to ninth place in the degree. Professionalism, in

third place as an important skill on the job, was listed in tenth place under skills acquired with the degree. Creativity was ranked as tenth in importance on the job but was the fourth most important skill in the degree. Public Speaking, a skill commonly taught in theatre departments, was ranked last in usefulness to employment.

On the Skills Acquired with the Degree question, “Other” received only a 10% response rate (49 selections) with 38 of those participants providing qualitative explanatory data and 11 of them choosing not to explain their choice. Intrapersonal skills (self-awareness and self-control) was the strongest theme with 21%. This included entries like “drive,” “flexibility,” and “independence.” Analytical skills demonstrated prominence with 18%, including “critical reading” and “text analysis.” Comparing “Other” from Skills Acquired with Employment to Skills Acquired with Degree, interpersonal skills and analytical skills emerged as important to both. One theme (“none”) suggested that not all participants believed their degree was responsible for their skill set. “None” received 16% of the thematic coding or six entries. This was often a dispute over attribution with indications that these skills may have been a part of their training, but the degree was not necessarily responsible for their acquisition.

Finally, participants were asked to what extent they believed their Theatre Arts degree contributed to their current employment. The largest answer was To a Great Extent at 69% (Figure 11) with To Some Extent following at 23%. Only 8% of participants found that their degree did not contribute to their current employment with To a Small Extent at 6% and Not at All at 2%.

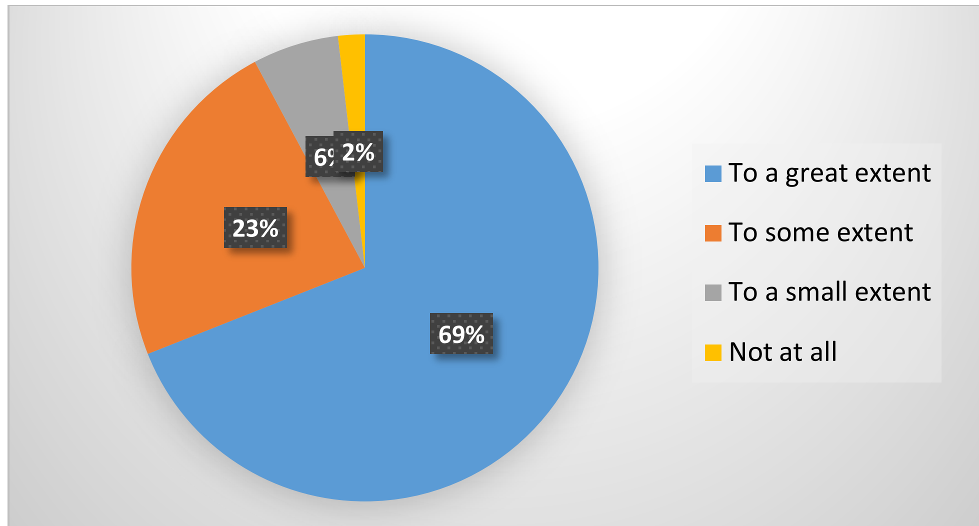


Figure 11. Did Your Degree Contribute to Your Employment?

Level of Satisfaction with the Degree

To determine satisfaction with employment value, participants were asked to identify why they chose to major in theatre. In this open-ended qualitative question, participants sometimes offered more than one answer. After coding, answers were grouped into 10 primary themes. Of the 646 entries, 221 participants indicated that personal passion or interest was a strong motivating factor (Figure 12). Practicality or Choice of Career was the second dominant theme (128 participants) suggesting that some had chosen theatre with professional intent and had considered majoring in Theatre Arts a practical choice. Other strong indicators were the influence of a middle or high school program (84 participants) or the knowledge that this field was a good fit (76 participants).

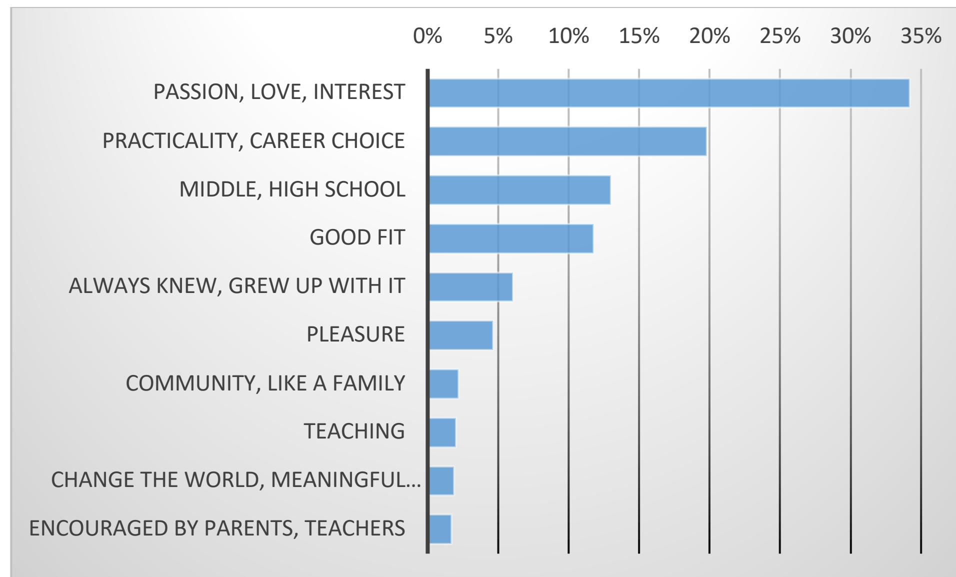


Figure 12. Why Did You Decide to Major in Theatre? *n=646*

If participants majored in theatre because of strong interest but only 29% of participants identified as full-time artists later in their careers, would there be a disconnect between the value of the degree and current employment? This inquiry was divided into several components. First, participants were asked about the level of satisfaction with their current employment. Most indicated at least some level of satisfaction with Very Satisfied at 47% and Moderately Satisfied at 44%. Dissatisfaction was indicated only 9% of the time with Moderately Dissatisfied receiving 7% and Very Dissatisfied receiving 2%.

Hindsight can provide insight about earlier choices made while acquiring a degree. Given that a minority of participants found full-time work as artists, would they choose the same degree if they had it to do all over again? Participants overwhelmingly answered yes with 89% (64% Definitely Yes, 24% Maybe Yes). Only 12% of participants answered Maybe No (7%) or Definitely No (5%) to this question.

Finally, participants were asked if they believed that a theatre degree was a worthy investment of tuition dollars. The response was positive with 53% replying Definitely Yes and 32% replying Maybe Yes for a combined affirmative total of 85%. Only 15% of participants selected Maybe No (10%) or Definitely No (5%).

Other Thoughts from Participants

Anticipating that the study could inadvertently fail to capture important information, the survey offered participants one final open-ended qualitative question: "Is there any information that you would like to share that was not captured by the questions on this survey?" Approximately one third of the 487 participants chose to contribute to this item with a total of 173 responses. Coding identified a number of themes. The most dominant entry was the belief that their theatre degree helped them on the job market (66 entries): "my degree ensured I was professional, courteous, a team player, and confident in front of the public"; "hiring managers…looked for candidates with a theatre degree"; "[As a nurse] I can read my patient's emotional needs… these skills come directly from my training as an actor."

Several participants also wanted to discuss graduate education offering mixed opinions on the value of acquiring a graduate degree (30 entries): "I gained far more from my graduate degree (MFA) in Theater than I did from my undergrad (BA)"; "Bachelor's degree was worth it, master's degree was NOT." Some respondents identified the financial pressure they experienced when trying to work in the theatre (21): "…given the high cost of tuition…I am not sure I would elect a Theatre major again;" "Jobs in the performing arts are greatly underpaid compared to jobs in other sectors… I am still trying to catch up from trying to be employed in the arts." Family concerns also emerged as a

theme (15 entries): “I currently work part-time and am also a stay at home parent, theatre allows for this flexibility”; “I have two Autistic children... Theater has played a HUGE role in their therapy”; “I work part-time by choice as I balance my workload with childcare/family responsibilities.”

Conclusions

Finding Work

Participants were able to find employment in a variety of field within 10 years of graduating with a degree in Theatre Arts. The extensive use of the category “Other” in several of the survey items testified to the broad array of employment opportunities with which participants are currently engaged. Less than one third of the study population found full-time work in the field within 10 to 20 years after graduation. When including the employment picture for Blended Career participants who work in the field part-time, the number of graduates more than doubled.

Looking more closely at each employment category yielded useful information about where graduates were working and why some had left the field. Working Artists were finding more work in management and technical positions than as practicing artists. Although a number of aspiring theatre professionals might hope to become artists, they may end up in other sub-disciplines if they wish to earn a living in the field. Many Blended Career participants supplemented their arts income through a parallel career in education with a number of fields playing a role for others. A graduate degree in theatre is required to work in a post-secondary institution, obligating those interested in education to pursue further qualification, but students can certify at the undergraduate level to work in K-12. This finding supports the emergence of more education degrees in

theatre at the undergraduate level. Blended Career graduates also indicated work in a variety of other fields outside of theatre including healthcare, broadcasting, and music, suggesting that multiple employment opportunities were available to those who wished to construct a Blended Career. Both Shifted Career groups (Creative Skills and Has Left the Field) flagged "Other" as their dominant work category revealing a wide array of possible professions for those who choose to leave the theatre. This finding indicated that it is not uncommon to leave the field of theatre entirely at some point in a career, and that there are a variety of alternate career possibilities with a degree in Theatre Arts.

Applying Skill Sets

Most of the skills in the 16-item list were identified by participants as used in their current employment Almost Constantly or Often. This aligns with the 21st Century skills sought by the contemporary job market. The "Other" category revealed that theatre graduates were engaging a wide range of skills in their employment, some of which are not currently considered in the 21st Century skills paradigm.

A majority of participants indicated that they had acquired all but four of the 16 skills with their degree. A comparison of the two data sets – Skills Used in Employment and Skills Acquired with the Degree – revealed an alignment for some skills and disconnect for others. "Other" again revealed useful information for this question, presenting a rich array of skills that go beyond those listed in the 21st Century paradigm.

Putting these two findings together – skills used in employment and skills acquired with the degree – most participants believed that their degree in Theatre Arts contributed to their current employment, even though the majority of participants ended up working outside of the field 10 - 20 years after graduation.

Level of Satisfaction

Participants chose to major in theatre primarily because of passion or interest. Some had determined to make theatre their career, some had been encouraged by teachers or parents, and others found theatre a good fit for their personality. In spite of a strong interest in theatre as a career and the low level of full-time employment in the field, a strong majority indicated that they were satisfied with their current employment. Even though less than thirty percent of graduates went on to work full time in the field, the majority of participants indicated that they would major in theatre again if they had the chance and believed the degree was a worthy investment.

Concerns were raised by participants in the final open-ended question. Some suggested that a graduate education played a factor in their employment, others mentioned worry over finances, and several identified that they had to leave the profession temporarily or permanently in order to have a family. Many who contributed to this final question indicated that their theatre degree helped them find a job.

Recommendations

Employability

The findings in this study indicate that Theatre Arts graduates are able to negotiate an acceptable employment paradigm by at least one decade after graduation. Although post-graduation employment may include full-time work in the theatre for only a minority of graduates, there are multiple opportunities in a wide variety of other fields, including the possibility of retaining part-time work in the theatre. This has implications for theatre educators and administrators. Although standard theatre curriculum may be important for aspiring professionals who hope to become artists, educators might

consider offering supplementary training in other sub-disciplines in the field to increase employment qualification. Students may also be well-served by professional orientation programs that embrace and consider career transition opportunities for those who may wish to move out of theatre practice and into other fields at a future point in their careers. Providing candid statistics about where and how theatre graduates can find jobs and which other fields might provide a match can help theatre students better understand future employment possibilities. This data can also assist chairs, deans, and members of the upper administration as actual employment statistics for theatre graduates can better guide those responsible for the allocation of funding and resources.

Helping students identify a variety of fields in which to work part-time is important for those who construct a Blended Career. Although serving in a restaurant or working retail may be recognized as default options for some, the variety of fields in which Blended Career participants are working indicated that many fields may offer flexible part-time work to aspiring artists. The most important "Other" field for Blended-Career participants was education. Preparing some Theatre Arts graduates for a teaching career at the undergraduate level or for further study in graduate school for those aspiring to teach in a university may be important for this group.

An even wider array of possible fields emerged for the Shifted-Career participants. This finding suggested that the standard list of job opportunities within the field (actor, director, designer…) should include a list of potential future professions outside of the field (business, law, technology…). Reframing the message around employment with a degree in Theatre Arts to include this range of employment possibilities could attract more students to the degree, provide a more truthful picture of

potential future employment, and signal to administrators that a degree in theatre is a bridge to opportunity rather than a poor investment in education.

Skill Sets

A number of the skills on the 16-set list were a match with the skills used in employment. Several were not. Public speaking was the most dominant skill acquired with the degree but was indicated as less important to employment. If this is a curricular requirement in some programs, it may merit reconsideration. Creativity was an important skill for a Theatre Arts degree but was indicated as less of a priority for employment. This flags a disconnect between skills the participants are using in employment and the skills indicated as attractive to employers on many of the 21st Century skill indicators. This may suggest that either creativity has become unimportant to the job market or that educators need to find ways to more directly link this skill to a variety of learning paradigms that can be applied to multiple fields. Interpersonal skills were ranked as the most utilized skill in current employment but fifth in the degree. Coding of the category "Other" also revealed the importance of this category. Educators might consider how teaching interpersonal skills functions as a conscious component of the curriculum. Professionalism and time management emerged as strongly utilized skills in current employment but ranked only ninth and tenth in the skill sets acquired with the degree. This again suggested that these two skills should be developed as stronger components in a Theatre Arts curriculum. A Theatre Arts education that focuses entirely on full-time work in the field may be failing to address other kinds of professional development that can help students more easily transition from an undergraduate degree in theatre to the complex job market

An important finding was that the degree provided the acquisition of skills that employers may not be anticipating. The list of skills that emerged from decoding the "Other" category indicated that theatre graduates were engaging a wide range of skills in their employment, some of which are not currently considered in the 21st Century skills paradigm. This implied that some graduates may be exceeding the value sought by employers by bringing additional skills to current employment and suggested that the 21st Century skill set may merit reconsideration to include a broader range of capabilities. Because of the demonstrated value of skills acquired with a theatre degree to current employment, program administrators at institutions of higher education could consider adding theatre classes to the pre-requisites of other disciplines to help students in fields outside of theatre become more employable. These findings also provided evidence that, although eliminating theatre programs may help balance budgets, such decisions could remove an educational resource that is well-equipped to serve a contemporary job market.

Satisfaction

Given that only a minority of participants found full time work in the field, it was surprising that a majority were satisfied with current employment and a strong majority would choose to major in theatre again. This supported research that indicated that financial rewards are not always the primary reason for pursuing a career (Adamuti-Trache, et al., 2006; Bridgstock & Cunningham, 2016). Although salary may not be the dominant motivator when entering a Theatre Arts program, money becomes a necessary concern at some point following graduation. Working Artists and Blended Career participants appeared content constructing careers that were less remunerative or were

supplemented by other industries. This supported the assertion by Lindemann and Tepper (2012) that being under employed is acceptable to some in creative sectors. Shifted Career participants provided evidence that it is not uncommon to change professions over time and that what is meaningful in employment may be constructed individually in ways that are challenging to predict (Meijers, 1998). Working outside of the field of theatre in a wide variety of industries did not emerge as a problem in the study. Rather, the degree appeared to provide a solid foundation of adaptable skills that were applied in a range of industries within paradigms constructed to best meet the needs of individual graduates.

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SECTION FIVE - CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOLARSHIP

Target Journal

My target journal is *Cultural Trends* published by Taylor and Francis. This is a peer-reviewed journal with a readership that includes "administrative bodies; local and central government officials…consultants and academics, and by those concerned with the promotion and development of the cultural and creative sectors" (Cultural Trends, 2019a).

Rationale for this Target

Cultural Trends targets arts and culture specifically. A quick key word search revealed 359 articles related to theatre. Of further significance, this journal believes that "cultural policy should be rooted in empirical evidence" (Cultural Trends, 2019a).

All four primary mission objectives of *Cultural Trends* align with the goals of this study:

- stimulate analysis and understanding of culture and the creative sectors based on relevant and reliable data;
- provide a critique of the empirical evidence upon which policy on culture and the creative industries may be based, implemented, evaluated and developed;
- examine the soundness of measures of the performance of government and public sector bodies pertaining to the cultural and creative sectors; and
- encourage improvements in the coverage, timeliness and accessibility of data on culture and the creative industries. (Cultural Trends, 2019a)

Outline of Proposed Content

The author guidelines ask for the following structure:

- title page
- abstract
- keywords
- main text introduction
- materials and methods
- results
- discussion
- acknowledgments
- declaration of interest statement (as appropriate)
- references
- appendices (as appropriate)
- table(s) with caption(s) (on individual pages) [to be included when submitting]
- figures [to be included when submitting]
- figure captions (as a list). [to be included when submitting]

The journal also asks for a word count and states that articles should be no more than 8000 words (Cultural Trends, 2019b).

Plan for Submission

Who: Manuscripts are submitted to the Editorial Manager.

When: The article will be submitted shortly after the defense of the dissertation.

How: The Editorial Manager automates the process of review, return, and re-submission.

The Employment Value of an Undergraduate Degree in Theatre Arts in the U.S.

Melanie Dreyer-Lude, Cynthia MacGregor, Kennedy Ongaga

Department of Drama, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB Canada

Word Count: [to be included when submitting]

Abstract

During lean times, administrators must make hard decisions about which programs stay and which must go. Arts departments are particularly vulnerable when traditionally derived enrollment and employability factors are used to determine where to implement cuts. While only a minority of Theatre Arts graduates will find work as artists, most do find employment in a variety of fields. Because current labor statistics fail to capture the complexity of the employment patterns of these graduates, Theatre Arts departments are vulnerable to downsizing. This study investigated the employment patterns of theatre graduates, the skills applied to current employment, and their perceptions of the value of their theatre arts degree. Findings from a survey of 487 participants provided a new map of the employment patterns of Theatre Arts graduates, identifying how and where graduates found employment and whether the skills acquired with a Theatre Arts degree contributed to a perception of value for dollars spent.

Keywords: theatre; employment value; creative trident; commodification; neoliberalism; 21st century skills

Introduction

A college education has become expensive (Lipka, 2019; Plante, 2016; Selingo, 2013). According to Forbes, the price of an education in the United States has more than doubled in the last thirty years, and wages have not kept pace with the increasing cost of tuition (Maldonao, 2018). In the U.S., a post-secondary education is necessary to attain upward economic mobility and retain a position in the middle-class (Selingo, 2013). These two pressure points, necessity and cost, have repositioned the frame in which many students and parents view the value of an undergraduate education (Poon, 2006). Historically considered an experience of enrichment and personal development, advanced education is now viewed as a commodity in which tuition dollars are traded for employment skill sets (Kaye, Bickel, & Birtwistle, 2006; Plante, 2016; Ybarra, 2018). Although contemporary market trends suggest that the skills acquired with a liberal arts degree may be attractive to potential employers (Anders, 2017; Comunian, Faggian, & Jewell, 2011; Hawkins, 2015; Landy, 2010, Pink, 2005; Stross, 2018), the expense of a college degree has pressured some to question the value of an arts education.

Employment numbers and salary figures tend to be lower for graduates with arts degrees than those in other fields (Comunian et al., 2011; Haukka, 2011; Rantisi, Leslie, & Christopherson, 2006). The performing arts, of which theatre is a member, represent some of the lowest rates of earning potential (Ball, Pollard, & Stanley, 2010; Bridgstock & Cunningham, 2016). Despite grim employment prospects, some institutions continue to matriculate and graduate hundreds of aspiring actors, directors, designers, and technicians, hoping they will somehow find a way to make a living (Ybarra, 2018; Zazzali, 2016). Some in the field of theatre have claimed that it is unethical to grant so

many degrees to students who graduate with exorbitant debt and enter a job market with few prospects (Ybarra, 2018; Zazzali, 2016).

Higher education administrators are under pressure to justify the cost of acquiring a college degree (Selingo, 2013). State funding for higher education continues to disappear forcing many provosts and deans to choose between increasing the price of tuition or cutting programs in order to balance budgets (Carey, 2019; Mangan, 2017; Supiano, 2019). Because an increase in tuition triggers objections from the public and can result in a reduction in student applications, cutting programs is often the chosen tool for balancing a budget in crisis. Programs that cannot contribute to employability numbers may be the first to go. Graduates from departments who move immediately into a job in their field of study provide more accessible employability statistics (Abel & Dietz, 2019). Departments like business, engineering, and education can often identify how many and where their graduates get work (Carnevale, Cheah, & Strohl, 2013). Those in the arts and humanities often struggle to demonstrate employability in their field. Research suggests that graduates in these fields often apply their studies to other fields or change professional goals at some point during their career (Gallagher, 2016). Further complicating the employment data is the finding that although students may work in their chosen field immediately upon graduation, they sometimes shift fields several times over the course of their careers (Selingo, 2016).

The job market has become dynamic and graduates who are able to adapt to a changing marketplace have greater success in finding employment (Gallagher, 2016; Selingo, 2017). Employers are seeking applicants who can provide a number of skills like leadership, teamwork, creativity, problem-solving, and cultural sensitivity (Selingo,

2016; Wagner, 2014). Because of a growing trend toward skill specialization in fields like engineering and business, some students may be graduating with ample technical expertise but are unable to communicate properly or adapt to a changing work environment (Selingo, 2016). For fields like theatre that provide more generally applicable skills, it can be challenging to trace a direct line from a specific major to employment in a field of study. An English major who joins the advertising department of a cosmetics company or a philosophy major who makes a living as a simulated patient in a medical school may not be counted in the statistics for each of those disciplines. If administrators are relying on flawed data to determine employability in various fields, an inaccurate perception of employment value may lead them to eliminate the programs that are providing the skill sets employers are seeking.

This study was guided by three research questions:

1. Where do graduates of four-year undergraduate theatre programs in the United States find work, and what is the pattern of that work over time and at any one time?
2. Which skills acquired with this theatre degree have been applied to employment?
3. How satisfied are graduates of these theatre programs with the employment value of their theatre degree?

Materials and Methods

Employment patterns were measured using a modified version of the Creative Trident framework as developed by Australian economists Higgs, Cunningham, and Pagan (2007). The Creative Trident decouples the "human capital/creative workforce dynamics from the fortunes of the creative industry sectors" (Cunningham, 2013, p. 120),

allowing for the application of a new measurement paradigm which relies less heavily on traditional measures of economic success. In the Creative Trident, arts workers are divided into three groups: Specialist Creative Workers (creative occupations in creative sectors); Embedded Creative Workers (creative occupations in non-creative sectors); and Support Workers (non-creative occupations in creative sectors). The fourth quadrant of the Creative Trident is reserved for those employed outside of creative sectors and is not considered in standard Creative Trident measurements (Figure 1).

		Creative and Cultural Sector	
		Yes	No
Cultural and Creative Occupations	Yes	**Specialist Creative Workers** *(creative occupations in creative sectors)*	**Embedded Creative Workers** *(creative occupations in non-creative sectors)*
	No	**Support Workers** *(non-creative occupations in creative sectors)*	(un-named in the Creative Trident) *(non-creative occupations in non-creative sectors)*

Figure 1. The Creative Trident as developed by Higgs et al. (2007)

The Creative Trident was modified for this study of theatre graduates with renamed and reassigned categories (Figure 2) to apply the employment concepts used in this framework more directly to the field of theatre. Specialist Creative Workers became Working Artists (working full time in theatre practice), Embedded Creative Workers became Shifted Career with Creative Skill Application (working outside of theatre practice but applying theatre skills to current employment), and Support Workers became Blended Career (working in multiple jobs both inside and outside of the theatre industry).

The fourth quadrant captured those graduates who had shifted fields and no longer participated in theatre practice nor applied theatre skills to their employment (Shifted Career/Has Left the Field). The disaggregation of employment as mapped by the Modified Creative Trident provided a more precise determination of how employment for theatre graduates was distributed.

		Theatre Industry	
		Yes	No
Utilization of Creative Skills for Employment	Yes	**Working Artists** *(working full time in the theatre industry)*	**Shifted Career Creative Skills** *(working outside of the theatre industry applying theatre skills)*
	Yes and/or No	**Blended Career** *(working inside and outside of the theatre industry)*	**Shifted Career Has Left the Field** *(working full time outside of the theatre industry)*

Figure 2. Modified Creative Trident

To measure the value of what was learned with the degree, a collection of 21st Century skills were identified. Sixteen skills from several 21st Century skills lists were chosen for relevance, selecting those that were most sought by current employers and those most relevant to a degree in theatre (Gagnon, Vough, & Nickerson, 2012; Hoffman, Utley, & Ciccarone, 2008; Essig, 2009; Stager 2013). Survey participants were asked to identify which of the 16 skills were used in current employment and which were acquired with the Theatre Arts degree. Levels of satisfaction were then measured by asking participants to indicate whether they would choose to major in theatre again and if they believed their degree to have been worth the money spent.

Using a cross-sectional survey with 19 questions, data was gathered from 1343 participants who identified as graduating with an undergraduate Theatre Arts degree in the United States. The survey contained both quantitative and qualitative questions to capture the widest possible definitions of employment patterns and skills application. The original pool of participants was narrowed to a subset of 487 comprised of those who had graduated between 1990 and 2009. This allowed the study to focus on those participants who had well-established careers and to set-aside those just entering the job market or those heading toward retirement.

Findings

Participants

The subset population of 487 participants provided numbers that were slightly imbalanced in each decade with 67% of participants having graduated between 2000 and 2009 and 33% having graduated between 1990 and 1999. Slightly more than half of the participants (55%) graduated from public universities with 41% graduating from private universities, and the remaining 4% from other kinds of institutions. The majority of participants indicated residence in the Midwest (34%), North East (32%), or West (21%), with a minority living the south (11%) and the final 2% indicating other locations. Two-thirds of participants were women (68%) with 29% identifying as male and 3% choosing not to identify. A slight majority of participants (59%) currently make between $30,000 and $75,000 per year, with 26% earning more than $75,000 per year and 13% making $30,000 or less.

Participant Selection

Participants were comprised of a simple random sample of theatre graduates from four-year programs who received their degrees between 1990 and 2009, and were limited to those who graduated with a four-year degree. An original attempt to utilize alumni databases from universities across the country was unsuccessful due to poor data collection by individual departments and lack of access to alumni. A Facebook network of theatre practitioners and educators assisted in gathering participants using snowball sampling on several virtual platforms.

Employment Patterns for Theatre Arts Graduates

The majority of Theatre Arts graduates (77 %) began their degree with the intention of finding work in the field of theatre, with 19% indicating Maybe and 4% selecting No. This suggested that a majority of theatre graduates planned to establish a career in the theatre when they chose the degree. The Creative Trident framework identified how these aspirational objectives played out over time by capturing actual employment in various fields between 10 and 20 years following graduation (1990 through 2009). Of the 487 participants who fell within this time frame, Blended Career - those working in the arts and in another job simultaneously - represented the largest subsection with 34% (Figure 3). Just over one quarter of participants (28%) identified as Working Artists or full-time theatre professionals. Shifted Career/Creative Skills comprised 21% of participants with 10% of participants having fully left the field (Shifted Career/Has Left the Field). The remaining 7% of participants chose "Other," naming categories they believed to be a better definition of their current employment than those provided by the survey.

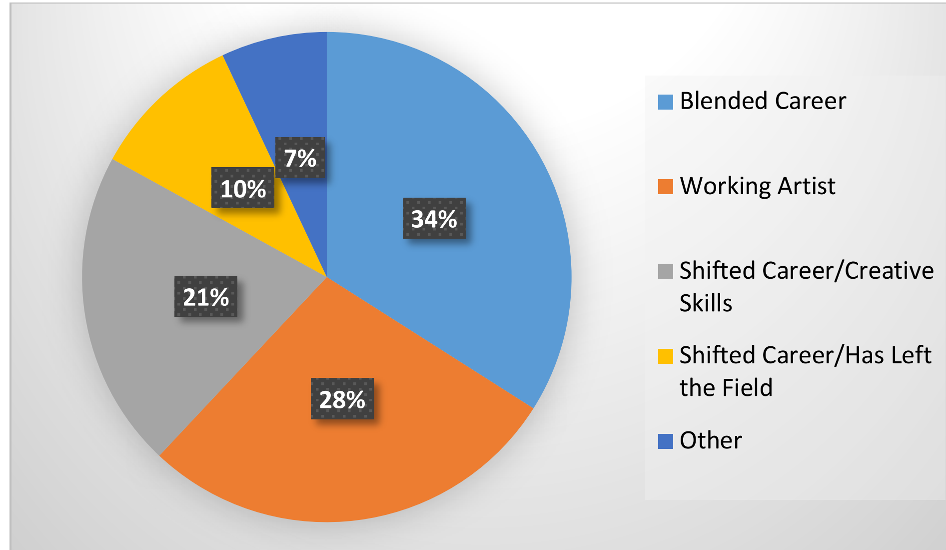

Figure 3. Findings from the Creative Trident

Working Artist. Participants in the Working Artist category were asked where they found work and to indicate all that apply. Although the survey provided a selection of standard positions in the field of theatre, "Other" emerged as the dominant category (30%) for these 139 participants. Of those positions listed for selection, technicians and designers appeared to have found employment in the field more often than performers, producers, or administrators (Figure 4).

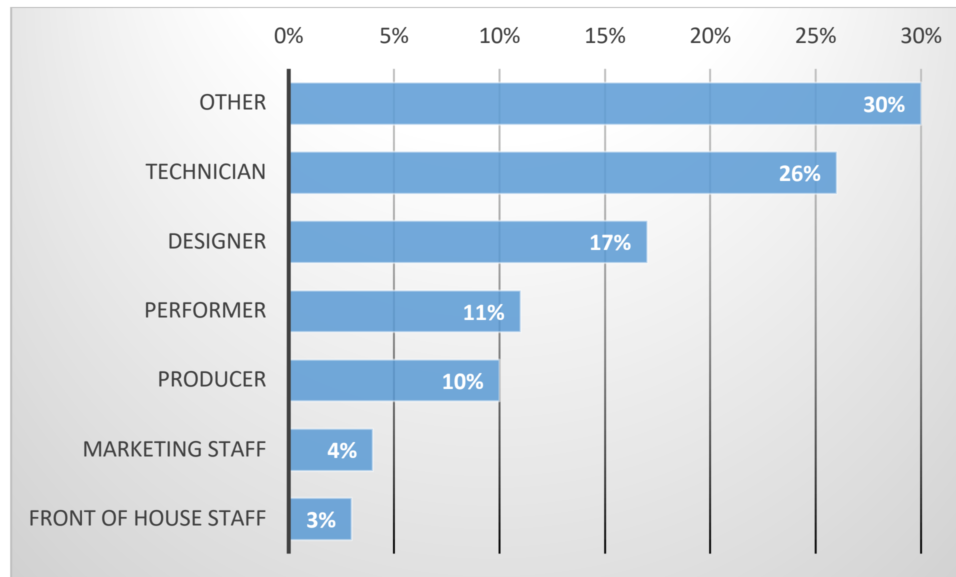

Figure 4. Specific Jobs for Working Artists

"Other" was a qualitative category allowing for multiple responses from each participant. The 74 responses of "Other" were compiled and coded revealing a large collection of positions, most of which fell under management (62%). These included titles like artistic director, managing director, and stage manager. Education took second place in the ranking with 20% followed by technical positions at 15%. Film and TV work comprised the final position with (3%). When including the coding for "Other," the primary categories for employment for Working Artists become management and technical positions.

Blended Career. For this category, the 165 participants were asked to distinguish work hours inside of the field and outside of the field. The survey revealed that Blended Career participants spent an average of 41% of their work time within the industry and 59% working in other fields. When asked in which fields outside of theatre Blended Career participants worked (choose all that apply), Education dominated with a response

rate of 47% (Figure 5). “Other” again arose as an important answer (23%) with all other results falling below 10%.

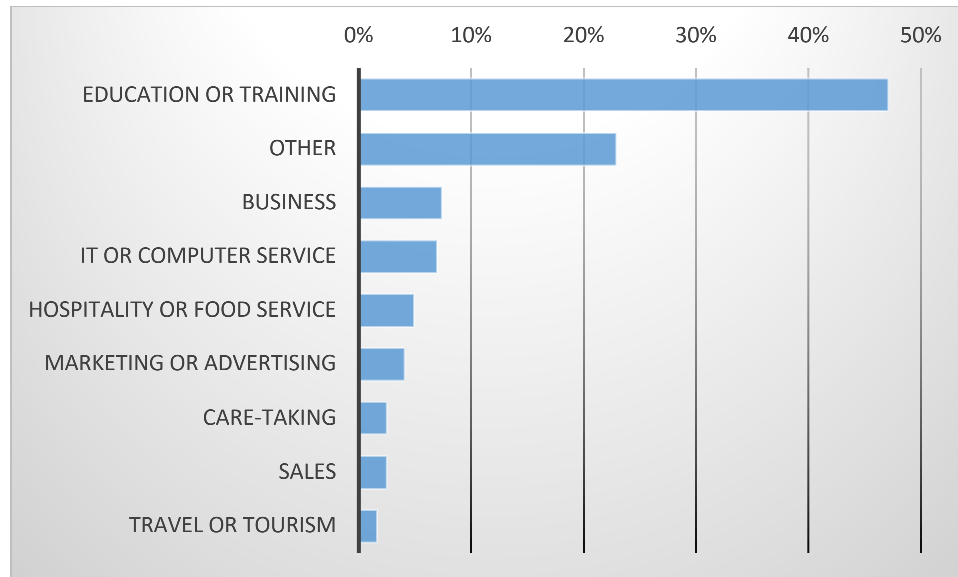

Figure 5. Blended-Career Employment Categories Outside the Field

Grouping the 56 “Other” responses by themes yielded a variety of forms of employment inside and outside of the entertainment industry. Here there was no dominant theme, with four themes having coded as top responses. Of the top four, “Other Arts” included designations such as interior design and musician, “Management” included names like project manager and event planning, “Development” included positions in not-for-profit companies and philanthropic work, and “Other Non-Arts” included retail and ride-sharing.

Shifted Career/Creative Skills. When the 101 participants in this category were asked to choose all that apply, Education emerged as important (23.7%), although “Other” received the greatest percentage of responses (34.6%) (Figure 6). A variety of other industries were present, but none produced similarly strong results.

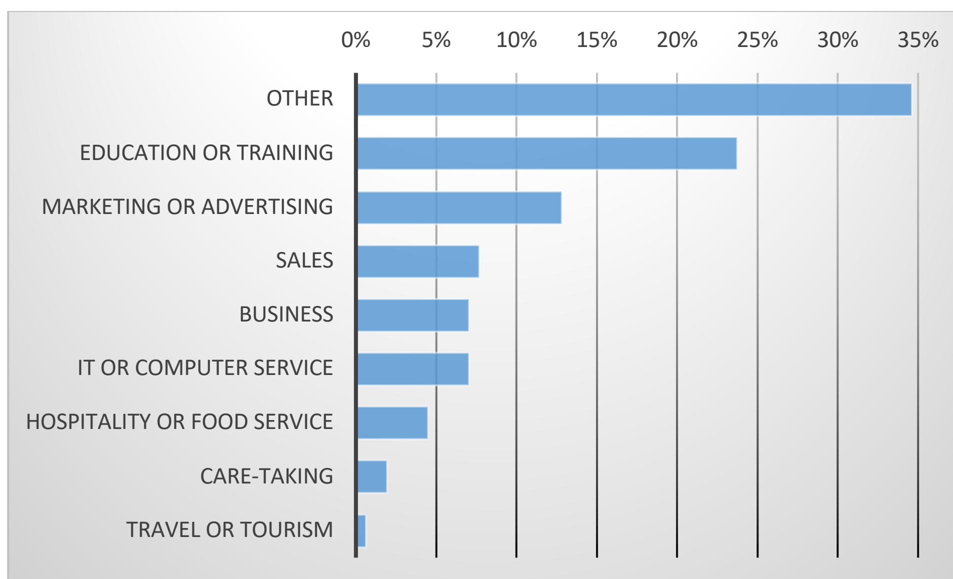

Figure 6. Shifted Career/Creative Skills – The Other Field in Which You Work

Coding and grouping the 54 selections of "Other" into themes revealed levels of complexity and variety in the employment fields under this category. "Other Non-Arts" ranked as the most coded category at 38%, including fields like corporate law, the ministry, construction, and working for the government. "Healthcare" was second at 16%, with "Literature" (writing, editing) and "Development" (philanthropy, advocacy volunteer work) tying for third.

Shifted Career/Has Left the Field. When asked to choose all that apply from the categories provided by the survey, the 49 participants in this category overwhelmingly chose "Other" (38%) when identifying where they currently work (Figure 7). Business was second at 30%. Education came in third at 14%, with all other employment selections under 10%.

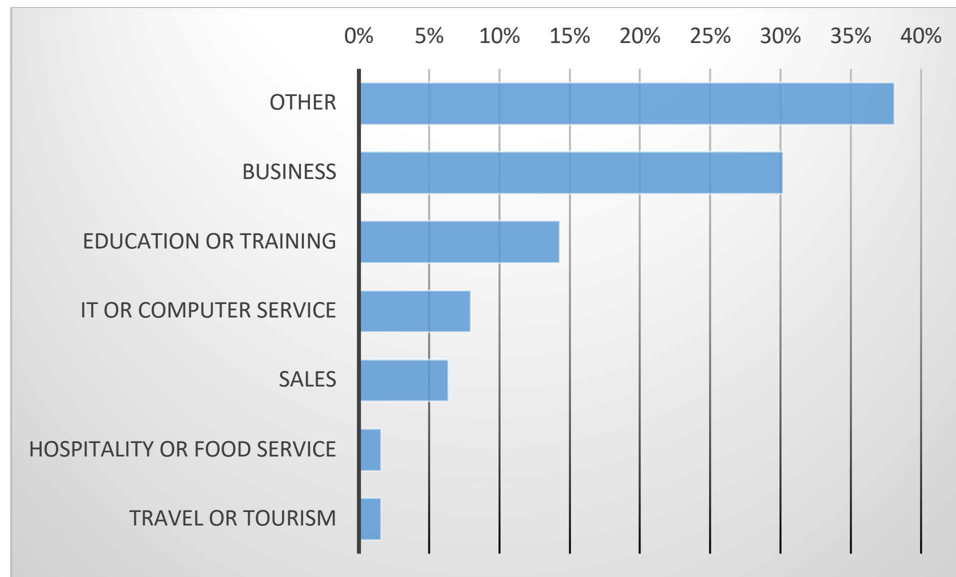

Figure 7. Shifted Career/Has Left the Field – The Other Field in Which You Work

Coding the 24 qualitative responses for "Other" revealed "Other Non-Arts" as the most frequent at 56% containing government, law, manufacturing, quality assurance analyst, religious organization, real estate, retail, sexton, tech entrepreneur, and transportation. "Healthcare" came in second at 17% with psychiatric case worker and social worker. "Management" (administration and event management), "Literature" (editing and journalism), and "Development" (non-profit) comprised the other themes.

When asked to choose all that apply regarding why they had left the theatre, participants in both Shifted Career categories identified similar reasons with differing weights (Figure 8). Of the categories provided by the survey, "Other" was the strongest answer for both (26% and 24%) followed by "Needed More Stability" (22% and 23%).

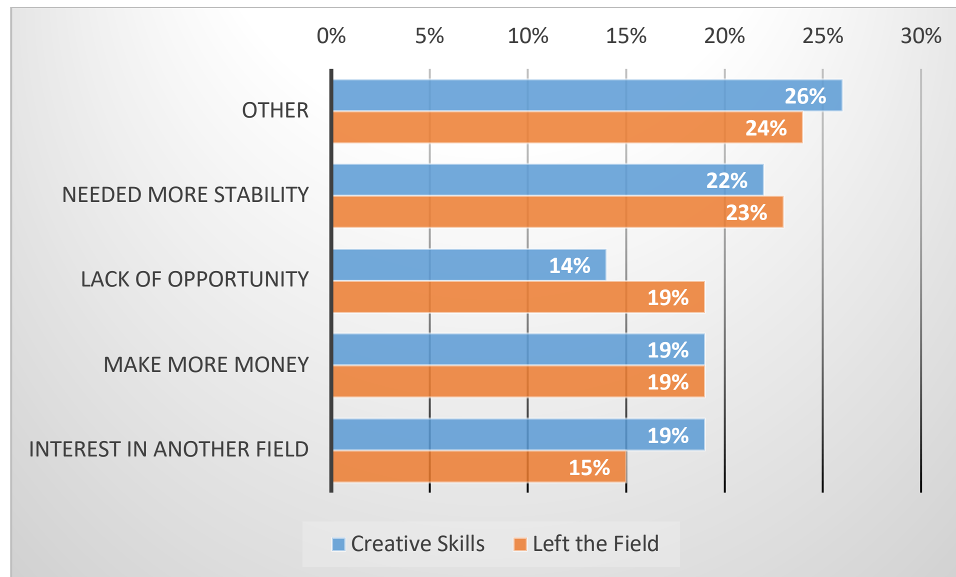

Figure 8. Shifted Career Comparison – Why Did You Leave the Theatre?

There were 30 qualitative entries of “Other” for the Shifted Career/Creative Skills category and 11 entries of “Other” for Shifted Career/Has Left the Field. After coding “Other” on the question “Why did you leave?” for both groups, two common dominant themes emerged: the need for a different lifestyle and the need to attend to family concerns.

Application of Skills to Current Employment

Using the list of 16 selected skills, participants were asked to consider each separately and to indicate whether and to what degree these skills contributed to current employment. Half of the skills in the list were selected as Almost Constantly at least 60% of the time (Figure 9). Interpersonal Communication, Time Management, Professionalism, and Adaptive Problem Solving were the skills that presented as most utilized. Technology, Public Speaking, Persuasion, and Conflict Management were the skills that received the fewest selections of Almost Constantly. The Not at All selection

for the application of skills to current employment was fairly consistent ranging from 1% to 4%.

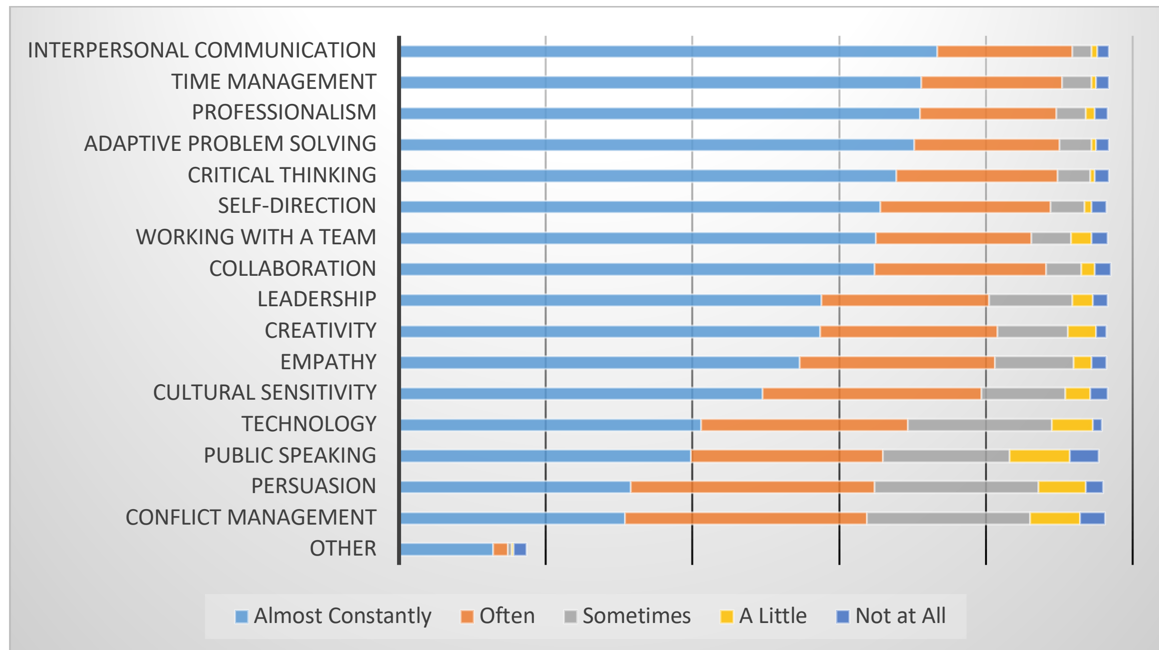

Figure 9. Skills Used in Current Employment (Not all participants responded to all skills listed.)

The “Other” option received 87 selections (18%) from the 487 participants. Compiling and coding these responses uncovered a variety of additional skills that participants found relevant to employment that were not included in the original list of 16. Interpersonal skills dominated (23%) and included identifiers like “active listening” and “a positive communication style.” Organizational skills came in second at 16% with descriptors like “meets deadlines” and “multi-tasking.” Analytical skills came in third at 14% with identifiers like “research skills” and “text analysis.”

To better understand the link between skills applied to employment and skills acquired with the degree, participants were asked to again review the list of 16 skills and select those they had acquired with their Theatre Arts degree. This question did not use a

Likert scale but prompted for a binary response: Yes (select the radio button) or No (leave the radio button blank). Participants indicated more than 50% of the time that most of the skills on the list had been acquired with the degree. Public Speaking stood out as the most selected skill at 98% (Figure 10). Three skills fell below the 50% mark: Persuasion, Conflict Management, and Technology.

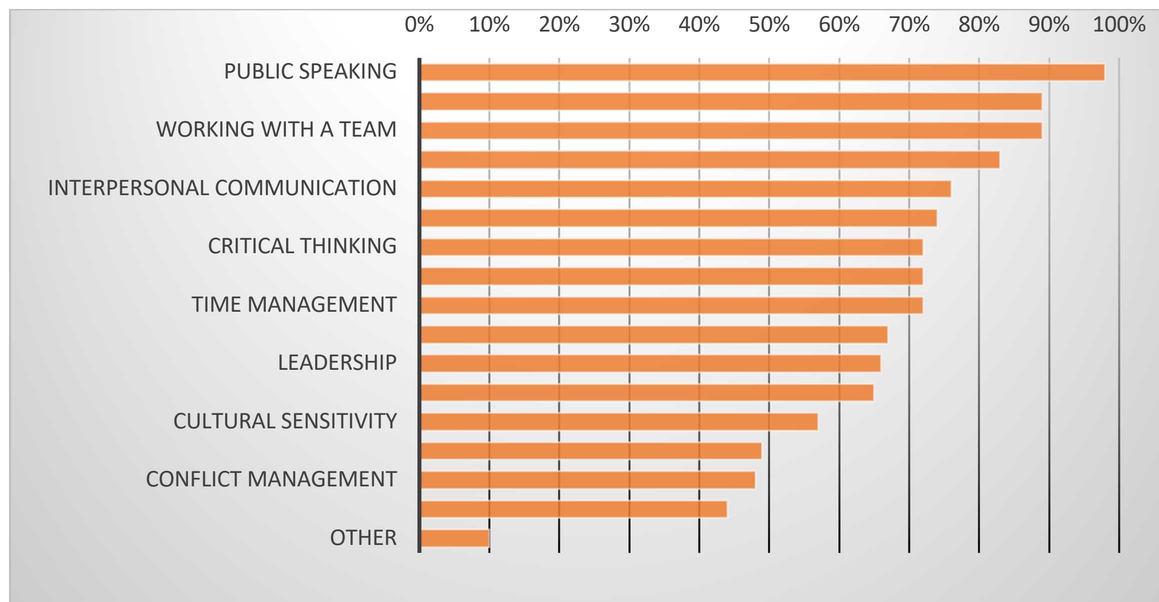

Figure 10. Skills Acquired with a Theatre Arts Degree

Comparing the two categories - Skills Used in Current Employment against Skills Acquired with the Degree – evidence emerged that some skills used on the job aligned with the priority given in the degree while others did not. Persuasion, Conflict Management, and Technology shared similarly low scores in both data sets. Adaptive Problem Solving, Critical Thinking, and Self-Direction were also listed at roughly the same rank. Interpersonal Communication, the top-ranked skill on the job was listed as fifth in importance in the degree. Time management was the second most important skill in employment but fell to ninth place in the degree. Professionalism, in third place as an

important skill on the job, was listed in tenth place under skills acquired with the degree. Creativity was ranked as tenth in importance on the job but was the fourth most important skill in the degree.

On the Skills Acquired with the Degree question, “Other” received only a 10% response rate (49 selections) with 38 of those participants providing qualitative explanatory data and 11 of them choosing not to explain their choice. Intrapersonal skills (self-awareness and self-control) was the strongest theme with 21%. This included entries like “drive,” “flexibility,” and “independence.” Analytical skills demonstrated prominence with 18%, including “critical reading” and “text analysis.” Comparing “Other” from Skills Acquired with Employment to Skills Acquired with Degree, interpersonal skills and analytical skills emerged as important to both. One theme (“none”) suggested that not all participants believed their degree was responsible for their skill set. “None” received 16% of the thematic coding or six entries. This was often a dispute over attribution with indications that these skills may have been a part of their training, but the degree was not necessarily responsible for their acquisition.

Finally, participants were asked to what extent they believed their Theatre Arts degree contributed to their current employment. The largest answer was To a Great Extent at 69% (Figure 11) with To Some Extent following at 23%. Only 8% of participants found that their degree did not contribute to their current employment with To a Small Extent at 6% and Not at All at 2%.

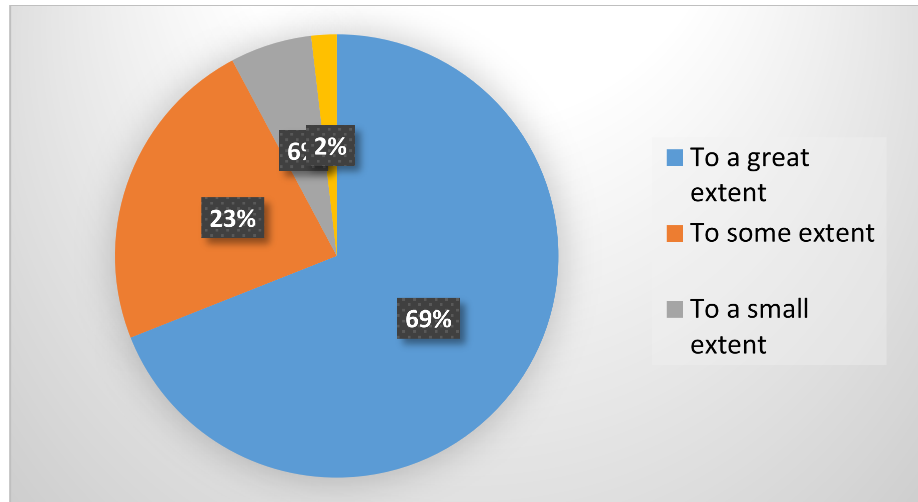

Figure 11. Did Your Degree Contribute to Your Employment?

Level of Satisfaction with the Degree

To determine satisfaction with employment value, participants were asked to identify why they chose to major in theatre. In this open-ended qualitative question, participants sometimes offered more than one answer. After coding, answers were grouped into 10 primary themes. Of the 646 entries, 221 participants indicated that personal passion or interest was a strong motivating factor (Figure 12). Practicality or Choice of Career was the second dominant theme (128 participants) suggesting that some had chosen theatre with professional intent and had considered majoring in Theatre Arts a practical choice. Other strong indicators were the influence of a middle or high school program (84 participants) or the knowledge that this field was a good fit (76 participants).

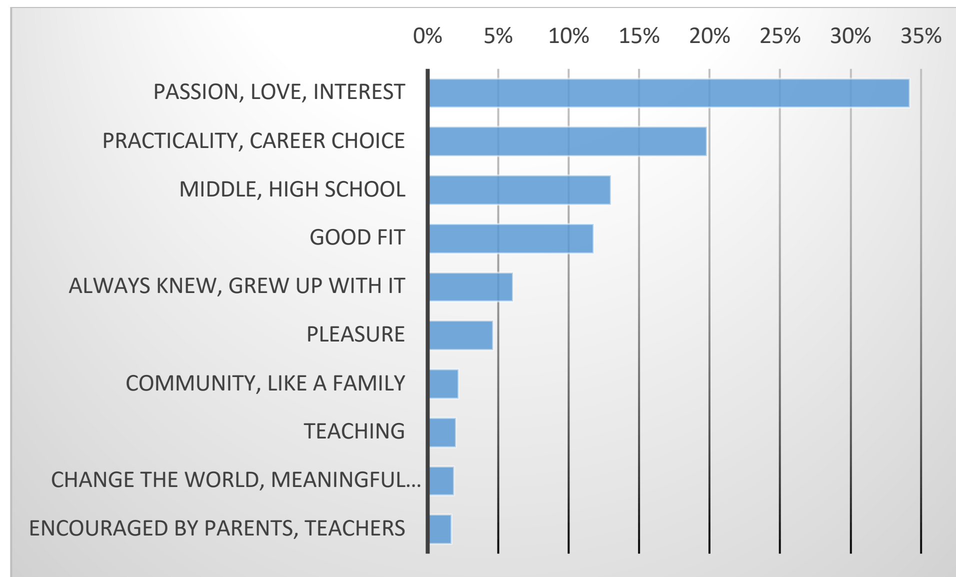

Figure 12. Why Did You Decide to Major in Theatre? *n=646*

If participants majored in theatre because of strong interest but only 29% of participants identified as full-time artists later in their careers, would there be a disconnect between the value of the degree and current employment? This inquiry was divided into several components. First, participants were asked about the level of satisfaction with their current employment. Most indicated at least some level of satisfaction with Very Satisfied at 47% and Moderately Satisfied at 44%. Dissatisfaction was indicated only 9% of the time with Moderately Dissatisfied receiving 7% and Very Dissatisfied receiving 2%.

Hindsight can provide insight about earlier choices made while acquiring a degree. Given that a minority of participants found full-time work as artists, would they choose the same degree if they had it to do all over again? Participants overwhelmingly answered yes with 89% (64% Definitely Yes, 24% Maybe Yes). Only 12% of participants answered Maybe No (7%) or Definitely No (5%) to this question.

Finally, participants were asked if they believed that a theatre degree was a worthy investment of tuition dollars. The response was positive with 53% replying Definitely Yes and 32% replying Maybe Yes for a combined affirmative total of 85%. Only 15% of participants selected Maybe No (10%) or Definitely No (5%).

Other Thoughts from Participants

Anticipating that the study could inadvertently fail to capture important information, the survey offered participants one final open-ended qualitative question: "Is there any information that you would like to share that was not captured by the questions on this survey?" Approximately one third of the 487 participants chose to contribute to this item with a total of 173 responses. Coding identified a number of themes. The most dominant entry was the belief that their theatre degree helped them on the job market (66 entries): "my degree ensured I was professional, courteous, a team player, and confident in front of the public"; "hiring managers…looked for candidates with a theatre degree"; "[As a nurse] I can read my patient's emotional needs… these skills come directly from my training as an actor."

Several participants also wanted to discuss graduate education offering mixed opinions on the value of acquiring a graduate degree (30 entries): "I gained far more from my graduate degree (MFA) in Theater than I did from my undergrad (BA)"; "Bachelor's degree was worth it, master's degree was NOT." Some respondents identified the financial pressure they experienced when trying to work in the theatre (21): "…given the high cost of tuition…I am not sure I would elect a Theatre major again;" "Jobs in the performing arts are greatly underpaid compared to jobs in other sectors… I am still trying to catch up from trying to be employed in the arts." Family concerns also emerged as a

theme (15 entries): “I currently work part-time and am also a stay at home parent, theatre allows for this flexibility”; “I have two Autistic children... Theater has played a HUGE role in their therapy”; “I work part-time by choice as I balance my workload with childcare/family responsibilities.”

Conclusions

Finding Work

Participants were able to find employment in a variety of field within 10 years of graduating with a degree in Theatre Arts. The extensive use of the category “Other” in several of the survey items testified to the broad array of employment opportunities with which participants are currently engaged. Less than one third of the study population found full-time work in the field within 10 to 20 years after graduation. When including the employment picture for Blended Career participants who work in the field part-time, the number of graduates more than doubled.

Looking more closely at each employment category yielded useful information about where graduates were working and why some had left the field. Working Artists were finding more work in management and technical positions than as practicing artists. Although a number of aspiring theatre professionals might hope to become artists, they may end up in other sub-disciplines if they wish to earn a living in the field. Many Blended Career participants supplemented their arts income through a parallel career in education with a number of fields playing a role for others. A graduate degree in theatre is required to work in a post-secondary institution, obligating those interested in education to pursue further qualification, but students can certify at the undergraduate level to work in K-12. This finding supports the emergence of more education degrees in

theatre at the undergraduate level. Blended Career graduates also indicated work in a variety of other fields outside of theatre including healthcare, broadcasting, and music, suggesting that multiple employment opportunities were available to those who wished to construct a Blended Career. Both Shifted Career groups (Creative Skills and Has Left the Field) flagged "Other" as their dominant work category revealing a wide array of possible professions for those who choose to leave the theatre. This finding indicated that it is not uncommon to leave the field of theatre entirely at some point in a career, and that there are a variety of alternate career possibilities with a degree in Theatre Arts.

Applying Skill Sets

Most of the skills in the 16-item list were identified by participants as used in their current employment Almost Constantly or Often. This aligns with the 21st Century skills sought by the contemporary job market. The "Other" category revealed that theatre graduates were engaging a wide range of skills in their employment, some of which are not currently considered in the 21st Century skills paradigm.

A majority of participants indicated that they had acquired all but four of the 16 skills with their degree. A comparison of the two data sets – Skills Used in Employment and Skills Acquired with the Degree – revealed an alignment for some skills and disconnect for others. "Other" again revealed useful information for this question, presenting a rich array of skills that go beyond those listed in the 21st Century paradigm.

Putting these two findings together – skills used in employment and skills acquired with the degree – most participants believed that their degree in Theatre Arts contributed to their current employment, even though the majority of participants ended up working outside of the field 10 - 20 years after graduation.

Level of Satisfaction

Participants chose to major in theatre primarily because of passion or interest. Some had determined to make theatre their career, some had been encouraged by teachers or parents, and others found theatre a good fit for their personality. In spite of a strong interest in theatre as a career and the low level of full-time employment in the field, a strong majority indicated that they were satisfied with their current employment. Even though less than thirty percent of graduates went on to work full time in the field, the majority of participants indicated that they would major in theatre again if they had the chance and believed the degree was a worthy investment.

Concerns were raised by participants in the final open-ended question. Some suggested that a graduate education played a factor in their employment, others mentioned worry over finances, and several identified that they had to leave the profession temporarily or permanently in order to have a family. Many who contributed to this final question indicated that their theatre degree helped them find a job.

Discussion

Employability

The findings in this study indicate that Theatre Arts graduates are able to negotiate an acceptable employment paradigm by at least one decade after graduation. Although post-graduation employment may include full-time work in the theatre for only a minority of graduates, there are multiple opportunities in a wide variety of other fields, including the possibility of retaining part-time work in the theatre. This has implications for theatre educators. Although standard theatre curriculum may be important for aspiring professionals who hope to become artists, educators might consider offering

supplementary training in other sub-disciplines in the field to increase employment qualification. Students may also be well-served by professional orientation programs that embrace and consider career transition opportunities for those who may wish to move out of theatre practice and into other fields at a future point in their careers. Providing candid statistics about where and how theatre graduates can find jobs and which other fields might provide a match can help theatre students better understand future employment possibilities.

Helping students identify a variety of fields in which to work part-time is important for those who construct a Blended Career. Although serving in a restaurant or working retail may be recognized as default options for some, the variety of fields in which Blended Career participants are working indicated that many fields may offer flexible part-time work to aspiring artists. The most important "Other" field for Blended-Career participants was education. Preparing some Theatre Arts graduates for a teaching career at the undergraduate level or for further study in graduate school for those aspiring to teach in a university may be important for this group.

An even wider array of possible fields emerged for the Shifted-Career participants. This finding suggested that the standard list of job opportunities within the field (actor, director, designer…) should include a list of potential future professions outside of the field (business, law, technology…). Reframing the message around employment with a degree in Theatre Arts to include this range of employment possibilities could attract more students to the degree, provide a more truthful picture of potential future employment, and signal to administrators that a degree in theatre is a bridge to opportunity rather than a poor investment in education.

Skill Sets

A number of the skills on the 16-set list were a match with the skills used in employment. Several were not. Public speaking was the most dominant skill acquired with the degree but was indicated as less important to employment. If this is a curricular requirement in some programs, it may merit reconsideration. Creativity was an important skill for a Theatre Arts degree but was indicated as less of a priority for employment. This flags a disconnect between skills the participants are using in employment and the skills indicated as attractive to employers on many of the 21st Century skill indicators. This may suggest that either creativity has become unimportant to the job market or that educators need to find ways to more directly link this skill to a variety of learning paradigms that can be applied to multiple fields. Interpersonal skills were ranked as the most utilized skill in current employment but fifth in the degree. Coding of the category "Other" also revealed the importance of this category. Educators might consider how teaching interpersonal skills functions as a conscious component of the curriculum. Professionalism and time management emerged as strongly utilized skills in current employment but ranked only ninth and tenth in the skill sets acquired with the degree. This again suggested that these two skills should be developed as stronger components in a Theatre Arts curriculum. A Theatre Arts education that focuses entirely on full-time work in the field may be failing to address other kinds of professional development that can help students more easily transition from an undergraduate degree in theatre to the complex job market

An important finding was that the degree provided the acquisition of skills that employers may not be anticipating. The list of skills that emerged from decoding the

“Other” category indicated that theatre graduates were engaging a wide range of skills in their employment, some of which are not currently considered in the 21st Century skills paradigm. This implied that some graduates may be exceeding the value sought by employers by bringing additional skills to current employment and suggested that the 21st Century skill set may merit reconsideration to include a broader range of capabilities. Because of the demonstrated value of skills acquired with a theatre degree to current employment, program administrators at institutions of higher education could consider adding theatre classes to the pre-requisites of other disciplines to help students in fields outside of theatre become more employable. These findings also provided evidence that, although eliminating theatre programs may help balance budgets, such decisions could remove an educational resource that is well-equipped to serve a contemporary job market.

Satisfaction

Given that only a minority of participants found full time work in the field, it was surprising that a majority were satisfied with current employment and a strong majority would choose to major in theatre again. This supported research that indicated that financial rewards are not always the primary reason for pursuing a career (Adamuti-Trache, et al., 2006; Bridgstock & Cunningham, 2016). Although salary may not be the dominant motivator when entering a Theatre Arts program, money becomes a necessary concern at some point following graduation. Working Artists and Blended Career participants appeared content constructing careers that were less remunerative or were supplemented by other industries. This supported the assertion by Lindemann and Tepper (2012) that being under employed is acceptable to some in creative sectors. Shifted

Career participants provided evidence that it is not uncommon to change professions over time and that what is meaningful in employment may be constructed individually in ways that are challenging to predict (Meijers, 1998). Working outside of the field of theatre in a wide variety of industries did not emerge as a problem in the study. Rather, the degree appeared to provide a solid foundation of adaptable skills that were applied in a range of industries within paradigms constructed to best meet the needs of individual graduates.

Future Research

The findings in this study provided several opportunities for future research. Because earning potential is important for students considering a Theatre Arts degree and for administrators constructing performance metrics, a detailed analysis of earned income for the two decades following graduation would be informative. This investigation revealed a wide array of industries where participants are currently employed suggesting that Theatre Arts graduates are finding employment in multiple sectors. A future study on how participants migrated to these sectors, whether they required additional education or training, and whether they intend to remain in these industries for the rest of their careers or whether they anticipate an additional shift could reveal important trends. A study focusing on the employers within these industries, their motivation for hiring Theatre Arts graduates (if they did so consciously) and if specific skills acquired with the degree have contributed to their hiring practices would be an important step to understanding the link between theatre education and the job market. Investigating the employers' point of view would help inform educators regarding skills preparation , and a deep investigation of the skills applied to current employment and their relationship to the current

curriculum in a Theatre Arts degree may reveal important ways to adapt, adjust, or expand pedagogy to better equip graduates for employment.

Finally, as this study is concluding, the arts markets around the globe are experiencing extreme unemployment across all sectors as a result of a worldwide pandemic. The impact of this global event on creative sectors may change how, if, and where societies choose to engage with public events like theatre productions. This investigator anticipates that arts markets and the jobs associated with them will undergo a tectonic shift because of societal changes that may result from this global event. This may alter future employment for arts graduates in ways that are currently unimaginable.

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SECTION SIX - SCHOLARLY PRACTITIONER REFLECTION

Introduction

It is not possible to separate the educational experience of my studies from the benefits I received through my dissertation process. The scaffolded learning structure of the ELPA program is designed to prepare students for the dissertation process almost from day one. My dissertation became the ultimate capstone project, allowing me to weave together multiple concepts and to put my learning into action. I shall therefore address the important aspects of my education that directly influenced my current practice and informed the ways my dissertation has provided a doorway to a new area of professional expertise.

Influence on Practice as an Educational Leader

I began this degree with the intention of moving into administration upon graduation. I felt called to become the chair of a department in my field, and I sought training that would help qualify me for such a position. I unexpectedly achieved this goal two years ahead of schedule. Throughout the ELPA program, I encountered information that was directly relevant to my aspirations and then to my current position. I was drawn to the concept of authentic leadership (George, Sims, McLean, & Mayer, 2007; Northhouse, 2016) which I endeavored to put into practice. The core principles in this leadership philosophy matched my own inclinations: I learn by making mistakes and I do not mind admitting them; I prefer transparency and shared governance; I am comfortable making unpopular decisions if they serve a broad interest; and my leadership is driven by a strong moral compass. It is this compass that serves me when I must choose a path that may inspire objection from those who must follow.

Policy analysis was also an important component of my education (Anderson, 2015; Bardach and Patashnik, 2015; Davis, 2013; Fowler, 2013). Learning how to read and analyze policies within a variety of frames, to recognize the value of stakeholders, to consider the ways in which a program analyst must take care to behave ethically and not drive an agenda – all of these tools have become important to my future practice. The concept of using policy analysis to influence decision-making was a core component of my dissertation study, and I anticipate work on policy will continue to be a part of my career. The ideal learning environment provides ample opportunity for the student to link new content to personal need. This process can result in transformational learning (Merriam & Bierema, 2014; Mezirow, 2009). It certainly did for me. Not all topics in the program were applicable to my current job, but most helped me gain the perspective I needed to be a more informed and thoughtful leader.

The most important learning event of my degree was constructing the study for my dissertation. One year into the program, while chatting with a colleague about possibilities, I chanced upon an idea that seemed right. From that point forward, I began to see the ways in which deep research could influence my field. Initially, Bolman and Deal's (2017) organizational framing lessons were abstract concepts. I revisited them in light of my dissertation topic. I then began to recognize how organizational structures are linked through a variety of interconnected lenses, and that each of these lenses influence and are influenced by policy. When we learned about data-drive decision making (Bond-Huie, 2018), I also understood how I could begin to become a part of those conversations by gathering quantitative data about pressing issues in post-secondary education.

In 2017, I witnessed the governor of Missouri use budget deficits as a rationale for deep funding cuts to higher education (Erickson, 2017). Back then I worried that the Department of Theatre and Dance at Missouri State University (MSU) would feel the impact. I had just been through severe budget cuts while working at Cornell University and watched the dean of Arts and Sciences cut the budget for the department of Theatre, Film, and Dance in half resulting in a number of layoffs. The president of MSU was not as hasty as the dean at Cornell, and my department survived the governor's short-lived decision with little impact. This put me on high alert as I watched other theatre departments across the country suffer elimination or extreme downsizing (Carey, 2019; Mangan, 2017; Supiano, 2019). These experiences helped lead me to my dissertation topic as I began to recognize the vulnerability of theatre programs to the neoliberal decision-making that was becoming the norm in funding decisions for higher education.

Shortly after arriving at the University of Alberta to serve as chair of the Department of Drama, I was informed that the institution would be adopting a new budget model. This model would be used to determine funding for individual departments by basing budget allocations on the number of students served by the courses in each department and by the amount of research funding a department's faculty could attract. Such metrics (number of students and research dollars) are advantageous for departments like business, engineering, and economics that enjoy large student populations and ample access to federal and provincial funding sources. The chairs of the three Fine Arts departments at the University of Alberta (Art & Design, Drama, and Music) knew we would struggle to meet these metrics. A performance class (acting, movement, voice, directing) or a production class (design, stage management, or set

construction) in Drama cannot contain more than 25 students for safety reasons. Even our largest lecture class is capped at 100 because we do not have a room that can seat more students. Under these metrics, Drama is hampered by the pedagogical needs of our discipline and by the availability of architecture to support large class sizes. It was evident that the three Fine Arts departments would need to identify value using other measures if they were to protect their budget dollars. Research funding in large amounts is not available to scholars and artists in the field of theatre. There are no six figure government grants for researchers in arts disciplines. It appeared to me that our new budget model was positioning us for down-sizing. I began to consider the relevance of my study for a Canadian paradigm, wondering if I could transfer the knowledge gained from my dissertation from one country to another.

In October of 2019, the province of Alberta elected a new conservative government. This government announced a series of deeps cuts to the funding upon which higher education institutions in Canada depend. The University of Alberta received a 6.9% budget cut for the current fiscal year requiring the administration to scramble to find resources to cover this gap without placing the burden on departments who were already half-way through the fiscal year. In February 2020, the provincial government announced a budget cut of an additional 11% bringing the total cuts to 18% within a six-month period. This circumstance exceeded my experience at Cornell or Missouri State University, and I knew that my department was vulnerable. The biggest threat to the funding for the Department of Drama from the Provincial government was the introduction of performance metrics which would be implemented immediately. These metrics would function as a score card, and departments and faculties receiving a high

score would receive more funding. Among the thirteen metrics are several which are of great concern to several humanities departments at the University of Alberta but are particularly difficult for three Fine Arts departments. These include:

- graduate employment rates
- median graduate incomes
- graduate skills and competencies
- work-integrated learning opportunities
- sponsored research revenue
- enrollment

Here again I recognized potential value in my dissertation study. My study was designed to capture actual employment patterns for theatre graduates and did not rely on government labor statistics. This could prove important when demonstrating the employability of the degree. My study captured salary numbers for graduates in a variety of fields and demonstrated that theatre graduates earned a middle-class income within ten years of graduation. My study examined 'skills and competencies' not just as applied to positions in the field of theatre, but across a variety of industries. Whether the provincial government and the central administration would consider these factors in the financial and programming cuts they would inevitably have to make, I could not be certain. Regardless, I then determined that the next step in my research would be to apply the methodology from my dissertation study to the theatre graduates in Canada, allowing drama departments nation-wide to benefit from a more accurate picture of the employment landscape.

During our program, we learned about the significance of data-driven decision making (Bond-Huie, 2018). What has been lacking for arts departments is data. My dissertation study has equipped me to help my department and other arts and humanities departments across the continent by providing one possible way to gather employment data and to demonstrate employment value. Theatre departments are accustomed to using stories to persuade, leaving the number crunching to other fields of study. This reluctance to engage in data analysis leaves us vulnerable to elimination or reduction in times of economic precarity. I will be sharing my study with as many leaders in my field as possible. Perhaps I can convince them to join me in the collection of data that can protect our field.

Influence on Scholarship

In the field of theatre, creative activities like acting, directing, or designing are considered equivalent to publication in books or journals. My vita was initially populated primarily by creative activities. In 2007, I embarked on a complex international theatre collaboration and made a number of discoveries that I wanted to share with my colleagues in the academy. To accomplish this, I learned how to publish in the important journals in my field. An important factor in my educational journey in ELPA was that I did not bring with me any training in the social sciences. In my field, research and publication involves focus on literary analysis, historical context, and conceptual framing, all supported by ample reference documents. I was proud of my previous publication accomplishments. I became a better writer. I learned to win research grants through carefully crafted prose. I constructed program reports and student communication that was articulate and effective. These skills served me well when I

entered the ELPA program. What I did not realize was how many holes there were in my educational background in comparison to most of my colleagues who had masters' degrees in education.

From the moment I entered the program, I began to encounter new ways to investigate and communicate knowledge. I remember Dr. Watkins explaining post-positivism on our orientation day and feeling completely overwhelmed. I had heard of terms like qualitative analysis and quantitative data from my Communication Studies colleagues, but I did not really understand what they meant. Unlike many of my colleagues, I had never taken a class in statistics, but I found the process of gathering, analyzing, and charting data an important new ability. As my studies increased in complexity and my instructors' demands for credible data-driven research became the norm, I began to reflect on Nancy Kindelan's *Artistic Literacy: Theatre Studies and a Contemporary Liberal Education* (2012). I had found Kindelan's book while witnessing the mounting economic pressure on liberal arts programs and wondered if anyone in my discipline might offer a response. Kindlen's book appeared to accomplish just what I was seeking – a beautifully researched argument about the importance of a theatre education. At the time (2014), I was certain that this text would persuade decision-makers about the relevance of a theatre degree. I was surprised and disappointed when it did not. My studies in ELPA helped me recognize the problem. What was missing from her book was data. She was constructing a passionate and articulate argument for the value of a theatre education but (understandably) relying solely on the tools of an arts scholar. Her book was well researched providing ample historical and literary context, but her arguments lacked numbers to support them. What my field needed, I surmised, was for someone to

gather the data to support Kindelan's impulse to tell the story of the value of the degree. Although I had not intended my dissertation to be a response to or continuation of Kindelan's book, I am pleased to have found in my dissertation study a way to support her argument.

How has my dissertation contributed to my work as a scholar? I now know how to conduct social science research and to gather data to investigate educational issues of import. Texts like Creswell's *Research Design* (2014) and Galvan and Galvan's guide for writing literature reviews (2017) have become invaluable tools that allow me to continue to traverse this new intellectual landscape with confidence. Theoretical frameworks were a conceptual but distant idea that has transformed into a tool for investigation. I have learned how to use data to inform and persuade an audience outside of my discipline to take action on policy issues (Bond-Huie, 2018). I have learned how to write using APA as my citation method rather than Chicago or MLA which are the norms for theatre scholars. I will have acquired a second terminal degree in a new field that now qualifies me to advise doctoral students in education and in theatre, increasing opportunities for service at my institution. The number of new skills I have acquired as a scholar through my education in ELPA and the construction of my dissertation study are important and empowering and will serve me well in my future career.

Conclusion

My dissertation alone did not change my educational leadership or my scholarly practice. The entire educational journey of the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis program at the University of Missouri must be credited for that. I have a much broader understanding of the field of education, and I can analyze and/or create policy

guidelines with a confidence I did not formerly possess. Most importantly, my successful participation in this program has demonstrated to me, that my career will continue to be a journey of life-long learning and a path of advocacy for those issues in education that are most dear to me.

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APPENDIX A

Online questionnaire items

Overview:

19 questions: 4 qualitative; 15 quantitative.

Items relate to the following research categories:

- Demographic data (5 questions): #s 1, 2, 16, 17, 18
- R1 = Where do graduates find work? (5 questions plus sub-questions): #s 4, 5, 6, 6a1, 6a2, 6b1, 6b2, 6c1, 6c2, 6d1, 6d2, 8, 13a, 13b
- R2 = Which skills are beneficial? (3 questions): #s 10, 11, 12
- R3 = How do they perceive the value of the degree? (5 questions) #s 3, 7, 9, 14, 15
- Item #19 is an open-ended question.

Qualifying question:
Did you graduate with a four-year degree in Theatre Arts in the United States? (any specialization)
o Yes *(required to continue with the survey)*
o No *(participant not allowed to take the survey)*

1. What year did you graduate with a degree in theatre?	*Quant* Demographic
2. How would you categorize your institution? a. Small private university. (0 – 2,500 students) b. Medium-sized private university. (2,501 – 10,000 students) c. Large private university. (> 10,000 students) d. Small public university. (0 – 2,500 students)	*Quant* Demographic

<table>
<tr><td>e. Medium-sized public university. (2,501 – 10,000 students)
f. Large public university. (> 10,000 students)
g. Ivy League institution. (Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, University of Pennsylvania, Princeton, Yale)</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>3. How or why did you decide to major in theatre?</td><td>Qual

R3</td></tr>
<tr><td>4. Did you plan to work professionally in the theatre when you chose to major in theatre?
a. Yes.
b. No.
c. Maybe.</td><td>Quant

R1</td></tr>
<tr><td>5. In what areas of theatre were you primarily interested? (choose all that apply)
a. Acting.
b. Design.
c. Stage Management.
d. Technical Production.
e. Construction (sets, lights, costumes).
f. Marketing.
g. Producing.
h. Other (please specify).</td><td>Quant

R1</td></tr>
<tr><td>6. How would you categorize your current professional relationship to theatre practice? (choose one)

Definition of terms:<table><tr><td>Working artist</td><td>Someone whose paycheck comes entirely from work in the theatre industry.</td></tr><tr><td>Blended-career</td><td>Someone whose paychecks come from multiple sources, at least one of which is in the theatre industry. (The ‘paycheck’ for an artistic endeavor can be considered an in-kind contribution to an arts organization if the artist is working for free.)</td></tr></table></td><td>Quant

Nested #1

(next 5 items are nested)

R1</td></tr>
</table>

	NOTE: If you are a theatre teacher or theatre professor, you are probably a Blended Career.
Shifted-career / creative skills	Someone who works outside of the theatre industry but uses creative skills as a component of job tasks.
Shifted-career / has left the field	Someone who has left the theatre field and has shifted careers.

a. **Working artist** (making a living in the theatre industry).

(1) You currently work in:

1. Theatre.
2. Film/TV.
3. Trade Shows.
4. Cruise Ships.
5. Other (please specify).

(2) You are employed as:

1. Performer.
2. Designer.
3. Technician.
4. Front of House Staff.
5. Marketing Staff.
6. Producer.
7. Other (please specify).

[6. How would you categorize your current professional practice in theatre? (circle one)] b. **Blended-career** (working in another field while still practicing theatre). (1) What percentage of your work hours do you spend working in theatre? 1. 0-25% 2. 26-50% 3. 51-75% 4. More than 75% (1) What percentage of your work hours do you spend working in another field? 1. 0-25% 2. 26-50% 3. 51-75%	*Quant* *Nested #2* R1

4. More than 75% (2) Generally speaking, what is the other field in which you work? 1. Education or training. 2. Business. 3. Hospitality or food service. 4. Marketing or advertising. 5. IT or computer service. 6. Care-taking (child or elderly care, for example) 7. Travel or tourism. 8. Sales. 9. Other (please specify).	
[6. How would you categorize your current professional practice in theatre? (circle one)] c. **Shifted-career with applied creative skills** (in another field). (1) Generally speaking, what is the other field in which you work? (choose all that currently apply) 1. Education or training. 2. Business. 3. Hospitality or food service. 4. Marketing or advertising. 5. IT or computer service. 6. Care-taking (child or elderly care, for example) 7. Travel or tourism. 8. Sales. 9. Other (please specify). (2) Why did you shift your field of employment? (choose all that currently apply) 1. Lack of opportunities in the theatre. 2. Developed an interest in another field. 3. Wanted to make more money. 4. Needed more stability in my career. 5. Other (please specify).	*Quant* *Nested #3* R1
[6. How would you categorize your current professional practice in theatre? (circle one)] d. **Shifted-career** (has left the field). (1) Generally speaking, what is the field in which you work? (choose all that currently apply)	*Quant* *Nested #4* R1

1. Education or training. 2. Business. 3. Hospitality or food service. 4. Marketing or advertising. 5. IT or computer service. 6. Care-taking (child or elderly care, for example) 7. Travel or tourism. 8. Sales. 9. Other (please specify). (2) Why did you shift your field of employment? (choose all that currently apply) 1. Lack of opportunities in the theatre. 2. Developed an interest in another field. 3. Wanted to make more money. 4. Needed more stability in my career. 5. Other (please specify).	
7. How would you describe your level of satisfaction with your employment situation? o Very satisfied o Moderately satisfied o Moderately unsatisfied o Very unsatisfied	*Qual* R3
8. When asked to describe your profession to other people, what do you say? (artist, graphic designer, entrepreneur, etc.)	*Qual* R1
9. Please describe your current theatre practice? (free-lance director, community theatre designer, board member, etc.)	*Qual* R3
10. Please indicate which skills you use in your current employment and to what degree. (Select all that apply.)	*Quant* R2

Adaptive problem solving	Not at All ○	A Little ○	Some-times ○	Often ○	Almost Constantly ○
Collaboration	Not at All ○	A Little ○	Some-times ○	Often ○	Almost Constantly ○
Conflict management	Not at All	A Little	Some-times	Often	Almost Constantly

	○	○	○	○	○
Creativity	Not at All ○	A Little ○	Some-times ○	Often ○	Almost Constantly ○
Critical thinking	Not at All ○	A Little ○	Some-times ○	Often ○	Almost Constantly ○
Cultural sensitivity	Not at All ○	A Little ○	Some-times ○	Often ○	Almost Constantly ○
Empathy	Not at All ○	A Little ○	Some-times ○	Often ○	Almost Constantly ○
Interpersonal communication	Not at All ○	A Little ○	Some-times ○	Often ○	Almost Constantly ○
Leadership	Not at All ○	A Little ○	Some-times ○	Often ○	Almost Constantly ○
Persuasion	Not at All ○	A Little ○	Some-times ○	Often ○	Almost Constantly ○
Professionalism	Not at All ○	A Little ○	Some-times ○	Often ○	Almost Constantly ○
Public speaking	Not at All ○	A Little ○	Some-times ○	Often ○	Almost Constantly ○
Self-direction	Not at All ○	A Little ○	Some-times ○	Often ○	Almost Constantly ○
Technology	Not at All ○	A Little ○	Some-times ○	Often ○	Almost Constantly ○
Time-management	Not at All ○	A Little ○	Some-times ○	Often ○	Almost Constantly ○
Working within a team	Not at All ○	A Little ○	Some-times ○	Often ○	Almost Constantly ○

	Other: (please specify)	Not at All ○	A Little ○	Some-times ○	Often ○	Almost Constantly ○	

Question	Type
11. Please indicate which of the following skills you acquired with your theatre degree? (select all that apply.)	*Quant* R2

Skill	
Adaptive problem solving	○
Collaboration	○
Conflict management	○
Creativity	○
Critical thinking	○
Cultural sensitivity	○
Empathy	○
Interpersonal communication	○
Leadership	○
Persuasion	○
Professionalism	○
Public speaking	○
Self-direction	○
Technology	○
Time-management	○
Working within a team	○
Other: (please specify)	○

Question	Type
12. To what extent has your degree in theatre contributed to your current employment? a. To a great extent. b. To some extent. c. To a small extent. d. Not at all.	*Quant* R1
13. Since graduation with your theatre degree, have you experienced periods of unemployment?	*Quant*

a. No. b. Yes. How long were you unemployed? Less than six months. Six months to one year. One to two years. More than two years.	R1
14. If you had it to do all over again, would you choose to major in theatre? a. Definitely yes. b. Maybe yes. c. Maybe no. d. Definitely no.	*Quant* R3
15. Do you believe that a theatre degree is a worthy investment of tuition dollars? a. Definitely yes. b. Maybe yes. c. Maybe no. d. Definitely no.	*Quant* R3
16. Where are you currently located? a. Northeast (ME, NH, VT, MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, DE, PA, MD) b. Southeast (VA, WV, GA, FL, NC, SC, AL, LA, MS, KY, TN, AR) c. Midwest (OH, MI, WI, IL, MN, IN, MO, IA, ND, SD, NE, KS, OK, TX) d. West (WA, CA, OR, MT, ID, NM, CO, WY, UT, NV, AZ, HI, AK) e. U.S. territory f. International g. Other (please specify)	*Quant* Demographic
17. What is your gender? a. Female b. Male c. Non-binary/third gender	*Quant* Demographic

d. Prefer to self-describe e. Prefer not to say	
18. What is your current level of income? a. $0-$15,000 b. $15,001-$30,000 c. $30,001-$50,000 d. $50,001-$75,000 e. $75,001-$100,000 f. >$100,0001 g. Prefer not to say	*Quant* Demographic
19. Is there any information that you would like to share that was not captured by the questions on this survey?	*Qual*

APPENDIX B

Consent to Participate in a Research Study
University of Missouri Columbia
CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

NAME OF RESEARCHER: Melanie Dreyer-Lude
PROJECT IRB #: 2018451

STUDY TITLE: The Employment Value of an Undergraduate Degree in Theatre Arts in the U.S.

This research study is about more accurately measuring if, where, and how graduates of theatre programs are finding employment, if and how they are applying the skills acquired with this degree to their work, and how satisfied they feel about their degree given their current professional circumstances. This study is intended to provide more accurate data on the employability of a theatre degree.

The researcher invites you to take part in this study, because you have been identified as a graduate of a four-year program in theatre at a university in the United States. This consent form tells you why the researcher is doing the study, and what will happen if you join the study.

Please take as much time as you need to read this consent form. You can discuss it with your family, friends, or anyone you choose. If there is anything you do not understand, please ask the researcher to explain. Then you can decide if you want to take part in the study or not.

Research studies help us to answer questions that may improve our understanding of human behavior, attitudes, beliefs, and interactions. Taking part in a research study is voluntary. You are free to say yes or no. You will only be included in this study if you give the researcher your permission first by signing this consent form.

Why Is This Study Being Done?

The purpose of this research is to provide more accurate employment data to deans and provosts regarding how, if, and where theatre graduates are finding work, if the skills they acquired with the degree are being used in their employment, and how they feel about having acquired this degree given the trajectory of their career. Theatre programs are currently under the threat of elimination as universities continue to experience budget cuts. Programs that cannot prove employability are the first to be removed from the

curriculum. Current labor statistics for theatre graduates only track those who work full time in the field of theatre, representing a minority of this population. Most theatre graduates create careers that are a more complicated combination of arts and non-arts work. In order to better represent the employability value of theatre education and to protect departments from elimination, this study will provide data to deans and provosts who make important decisions about which departments receive support and which do not.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL BE IN THIS STUDY?

Between 500 and 1000 people will take part in this study comprised of individuals from universities across the United States.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

If you agree, you will:

Take a 20-minute questionnaire that captures information about you, your theatre studies, and your current employment.

HOW LONG WILL I BE IN THE STUDY?

Your survey data will be in this study for approximately one year.

CAN I STOP BEING IN THE STUDY?

Yes, you can stop being in the study at any time without giving a reason. Just tell the researcher or study staff right away if you wish to stop taking part.

Also, the researcher may decide to take you off this study at any time, even if you want to stay in the study. The researcher will tell you the reason why you need to stop being in the study. These reasons may be:

You were a minor rather than a major in theatre.

You graduated from a program outside of the United States.

You graduated from a two-year theatre program rather than a four-year theatre program.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

While there is no direct benefit to participating in the study, the information gathered may help the researcher better understand the employment landscape for theatre majors in the United States and may provide important data for decision makers determining the future of those programs.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS FROM BEING IN THIS STUDY?

There are no known risks to participating in this study. You may skip any questions on the questionnaire that you do not want to answer.

WHAT OTHER CHOICES DO I HAVE IF I DON'T TAKE PART?
Instead of being in this study, your choices may include:
Reading a copy of the study when data analysis is complete.

WILL INFORMATION ABOUT ME BE KEPT PRIVATE?
The information collected about you will be stored in computer or paper files. Computer files will be protected with a password that will only be known to the researcher. Paper files will be kept in a locked drawer in a locked office.

The researcher will give your records a code number and they will not contain your name or other information that could identify you. The code number that connects your name to your information will be kept in a separate, secure location. Information that may identify you may not be given to anyone who is not working on this study without your written consent, or if required by law.

The researcher will ensure that your personal information from this study is kept private but cannot guarantee total privacy. The researcher may give out your personal information if the law requires it. If the researcher publishes the results of this study or presents them at scientific meetings, the researcher will not use your name or other personal information.

The researcher will keep the information collected from you for this study to use in future research and to share with other investigators to use in future studies without asking for your consent again. Information that could identify you will be removed from your research information so no one will know that it belongs to you.

WILL I BE PAID FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?
You will not be paid for taking part in this study.

WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS AS A STUDY PARTICIPANT?
Taking part in this study is voluntary. If you do decide to take part, you have the right to change your mind and drop out of the study at any time. Whatever your decision, there will be no penalty to you in any way.

The researcher will tell you about any new information discovered during this study that might affect your health, welfare, or change your mind about taking part.

WHO CAN I CALL IF I HAVE QUESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR COMPLAINTS?

If you have more questions about this study at any time, you can call Melanie Dreyer-Lude at 780-720-5366 or her advisor, Dr. Cynthia MacGregor at 417-836-6046.

You may contact the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board (IRB) if you:

- Have any questions about your rights as a study participant;
- Want to report any problems or complaints; or
- Feel under any pressure to take part or stay in this study.
- The IRB is a group of people who review research studies to make sure the rights of participants are protected. Their phone number is 573- 882-3181.

If you want to talk privately about your rights or any issues related to your participation in this study, you can contact the University of Missouri Research Participant Advocacy by calling 888-280-5002 (a free call), or emailing MUResearchRPA@missouri.edu.

I will give you a copy of this consent form. Please keep it where you can find it easily. It will help you to remember what we discussed today.

Signature of Participant

Consent to Participate in Research

By signing or typing my name in the box below, I confirm the following:

- I have read or had read to me this entire consent form.
- All of my questions were answered to my satisfaction.
- The study's purpose, procedures and activities, potential risks and possible benefits were explained to me.
- I voluntarily agree to take part in this research study. I have been told that I can stop at any time.

Subject's Signature	**Date**

APPENDIX C

Excerpt from National Association of Theatre Schools Handbook (2019, pp. 92-93)

B. Common Body of Knowledge and Skills

1. **Production.** Students must acquire:

   a. Technical skills requisite for artistic self-expression in at least one major area of production (for example, acting, design/technology, playwriting, directing) and those skills must be progressively developed to the highest level appropriate to the particular area of concentration. Technical proficiency standards should be established for each level of study. The achievement of a specified level of proficiency in technique should be required for retention at each level and must be required for graduation.
   b. An overview understanding of the major aspects, techniques, and directions in the area of concentration.
   c. Fundamental, comprehensive understanding of the various elements and basic interrelated processes of creation, interpretation, performance, and production.
   d. Fundamental, conceptual understanding of the expressive possibilities of theatre.
   e. Knowledge and skills sufficient to work in both collaborative and individual roles in matters of theatre interpretation.
   f. Growth in artistry, technical skills, collaborative competence, and knowledge of repertory through regular performance and production experiences. Students must have such experiences throughout the degree program.

2. **Repertory.** Students must acquire:

   a. Familiarity with theatre literature of various historical periods, cultural sources, and modes of presentation.
   b. Experience with specific repertories and comparative standards of production quality through performance, academic study, and attendance at productions.

3. **Theoretical and Historical Studies**

   a. Students must acquire:
      (1) The ability to analyze plays perceptively and to evaluate them critically.

(2) An understanding of the common elements and vocabulary of theatre and of the interaction of these elements, and be able to employ this knowledge in analysis, including analyses of their productions.
(3) The ability to place works of theatre in historical and stylistic contexts and have some understanding of the cultural milieu in which they were created.

(4) The ability to develop and defend informed judgments about theatre.

b. The competencies listed in Standards for Accreditation VIII.B.3.a. are achieved by coursework and studies in such fields as repertory, playwriting, theatre history, theatre criticism, philosophy of theatre, dramaturgy, performance studies, movement, anatomy and kinesiology, and production design.
c. In certain areas of specialization, such as costume and scenic design, it is advisable to require that students study the historical development of works within the specialization.

4. **Technology.** Students must acquire a working knowledge of technologies and equipment applicable to their area(s) of specialization.
5. **Synthesis.** While synthesis is a lifetime process, by the end of undergraduate studies students should be able to work independently on a variety of professional problems by combining, as appropriate to the issue, their capabilities in performance, repertory, theory, history, and technology, as well as other fields they have studied.

VITA

Melanie Dreyer-Lude is an American theatre artist/scholar, born and raised in Denver, Colorado. She received a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre (acting) with a minor in Music (voice) from the University of Denver in 1983. In 1992, she graduated with a Master of Arts in Dramatic Literature from Washington University St. Louis. She received a Master of Fine Arts in Directing (stage) from Northwestern University in 2000.

Melanie began her career as a free-lance actor working during the day as a temporary worker in the corporate industry and performing and studying with master acting teachers at night. In 1988, she began working in academia as an adjunct instructor at Washington University St. Louis and was soon contracted as a Teaching Artist. In 2000, with terminal degree in hand, she began as a Lecturer at the University of Pittsburgh. Within three years, she was promoted to Assistant Professor. She relocated to work at Cornell University in 2008 as an Assistant Professor and relocated again in 2014 to Springfield, Missouri to take a position as Assistant Professor at Missouri State University (MSU). In 2017 she was promoted to Associate Professor (MSU). She has served as an Associate Professor and chair of the Department of Drama at the University of Alberta since July 1, 2018.

Melanie's professional career has expanded and evolved in response to her personal interests, market trends, and opportunities provided by arts organizations. She began as an actress, shifted into directing and producing, added international theatre collaboration when she became fluent in German, and is currently recognized as a member of the sub-genre Performance as Research. She has co-founded and served as co-

artistic director for two theatre companies: ShatterMask Theatre in St. Louis, Missouri, and International Culture Lab based in New York City. Important creative works include serving as a guest artist at the Performance as Research Festival in Ottersberg, Germany in 2012, where she and her collaborators presented a multilingual performance intervention investigating place and space. In 2011, she directed and produced *S/he* in Ithaca, New York and Istanbul, Turkey, a bilingual production with Turkish theater artists exploring the female body as a battleground. In 2007, she directed a bilingual production of *Outside Inn*, presented in collaboration with German theater artists from Theater Rampe Stuttgart, which played in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, New York City, and Stuttgart, Germany.

Fluent in German, Dreyer-Lude translates and directs contemporary German plays, which have been produced in the United States and Canada and published in international magazines and anthologies. A two-time Fulbright scholar, she is currently interested in refugee stories, and adapting and staging traditional folktales with the Ndere Center in Kampala, Uganda. She continues to enjoy an ongoing relationship with Cornell University, where she regularly gives workshops on research communication skills.