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Collaborative College Playwriting and Performance: A Core Course "Trespassing" onto the Dramatic Arts

Gabriella Bedetti
Eastern Kentucky University, USA

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Abstract

Arts integration is relevant in the context of the increased demand for creative thinkers in a global economy. However, reaching across disciplinary boundaries is less common in higher education. Arts integration is one way that a literature class can "trespass" onto the dramatic arts. This paper reports on a study of integrating the dramatic arts into a university general education course. It addresses the relationships between literature and theater and the benefits of integrating artistic practice to cultivate creativity and enhance learning. The study investigates the process and outcomes of making a one-act play. The findings show that art and the process of creation/making promote collaboration and help students synthesize and put into practice what they have learned. Such strategies are necessary to maximize the benefits of general education and are likely to foster creative interdisciplinary approaches beyond the institution. The lack of objective quantifiable results is a study limitation.

Introduction

General education should illuminate students' lives. As Miller (2013) noted, "Historically, one goal of education has been that students acquire an understanding of the basic, overarching concepts that describe and explain across subject boundaries" (p. 2). Learning theorists understand that knowledge interconnects in countless ways. Especially in the digital age, "We derive our competence from forming connections" (Siemens, 2004, "An Alternative Theory," para. 1). In the last two decades, many have responded to the criticism that U.S. schools tend to compartmentalize rather than integrate (Eisner, 1991). This criticism has led some educators to abandon familiar routines in order to push their classes into territory that is more adventurous. Primary school science students in Australia, for example, wrote and performed a script about electricity (Nicholas & Ng, 2008). High school history students in New York turned case studies into plays (Howlett, 2007). At the post-secondary level, there has not been the same level of arts integration, resulting in one review leaping directly from the high school studies to the geriatric landscape (National Endowment for the Arts & United States, 2011). On college and university campuses, however, some teachers have been responsible for having students write, direct, and perform plays (Radulescu & Fox, 2005). Greeley's (2004) survey suggests that the teaching of Introduction to Theatre in the United States has broadened the base of a liberal arts education.

What follows is both an example of and an argument for joining "creative trespassers" (Koestler, 1959) from core academic disciplines onto the dramatic arts. While specialists may continue to see crossing disciplinary boundaries as transgressive acts, the need for "creative trespassers" has begun to be experienced more keenly today. Recently, the U.S. Senate voted to approve the Every Child Achieves Act that retains the arts as a core academic subject for K-12. By reauthorizing of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to ensure that every child achieves, the Senate has acknowledged and begun to address the problem of the narrowing of the curriculum that has taken place under No Child Left Behind for more than a decade (National Association for Music Education, 2015). At the university level, however, the barriers between the isolated "silos" of disciplines (Moss, 2011, p. 4) remain intact. This article addresses the relationships between literature and theatre and the benefits of integrating artistic practice (theatre) to enhance learning. The study investigates the process and outcomes of the making of a one-act play in a university literature course.

Background and Context of Research

The compartmentalization of science and the arts that escalated with the advent of industrialism has peaked in the information age. While technological inventions are advancing quickly, science and technology are not invested in solving society's greatest threats, "threats that if not resolved will traumatize our planet and its inhabitants" (Jaschik & Neff, 2015, para. 3). Creativity or the inventiveness to come up with new ideas, processes, and products that

have value (Robinson, 2011) is part of the normal brain function. Without creativity, we cannot find solutions to problems or develop new models of thinking. If creativity disappears, our music, art, drama, and literature will falter. One of the reasons for the current project is to offer a setting that invites the creative muse in our university students to flourish so they can restore creativity in our culture.

U.S. Creativity Crisis

A number of researchers have forecast a creativity crisis (Bronson & Merryman, 2010; Florida, 2004; Kim, 2011; Merritt, 2014). In their *Newsweek* cover story, Bronson and Merryman report the United States to be at the nerve center of the crisis. They refer to Kim's study of more than a quarter million North Americans from 1966 to 2008 on the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT)-Figural. Despite America's previous success in encouraging creativity in children, creative thinking has declined radically in all Americans since 1990, particularly in children. Their creative abilities that are supposed to mature over a lifetime are never allowed to develop (Kim, 2011). Kim describes the outcome of such early stunting of children's innate creativity:

> The scores from the Checklist of 13 Creative Strengths show creative attitudes are decreasing continuously since 1990. We are becoming less verbally or emotionally expressive or sensitive and less empathetic, less responsive in a [sic] kinesthetic and auditory ways, less humorous, less imaginative, less able to visualize ideas, less able to see things from different angles, less unconventional, less able to connect seemingly irrelevant things together, less able to synthesize information, and less able to fantasize or be future-oriented. (2012, para. 10)

Many researchers attribute the testing and accountability techniques that mushroomed with the enactment of No Child Left Behind in 2001 as part of the problem. While the United States was emphasizing rote learning to prepare students for standardized tests, other countries from China to Great Britain introduced "idea generation" (Bronson & Merryman, 2010, para. 12) as a key component of public education. The European Union designated 2009 as the European Year of Creativity. Meanwhile, the American system focused on achieving quantifiable test results and left little room for creative stimulus. Americans are "systematically training [their] children to be less creative" (Merritt, 2014, para. 6). These studies indicate that for the well-being of young people and the development of our society in the twenty-first century, the United States needs to place a greater focus on supporting the development of creativity in education.

University as Marketplace for Ideas

In mainstream higher education, creativity is not usually addressed outside of the context of individual disciplines. Yet studies demonstrate that cross-pollination encourages "idea generation" (Ghanbari, 2015; Henrkisen, Mishra, DeSchryver, & the Deep-Play Research Group, 2015; Miller, 2013; Warburton, 2003). Because it is part of the normal brain function, some researchers believe that creativity can be taught (Bronson & Merryman, 2010; Florida 2004). Unfortunately, many structures in university life discourage creativity. Bureaucratic and disciplinary barriers to innovation hinder the freedom and openness necessary for creative problem solving (Jaschik & Neff, 2015). Moreover, as Laird (2012) observes, by the time students arrive at the post-secondary environment, most find authentic creativity to be challenging. Resistance to creative approaches can be a persistent problem if the university is to be the powerful "creative hub" in regional development (Florida, Gates, Knudsen, & Stolarick, 2006).

Nevertheless, university researchers can adopt strategies from Google and other high-tech corporations that promote creativity. Researchers can put a premium on innovation, for instance in allowing students 20% of their course grade to come from an original project, and value team approaches (Jaschik & Neff, 2015). They can also find inspiration in unique university venues such as the MIT Media Lab. This diverse community of inventors work as members of research teams doing the things that conventional wisdom says cannot or should not be done. International students comprise nearly half the membership at the lab. Their kind of freedom and cross-fertilization is essential in the marketplace of ideas. To address the big challenges facing society, universities may need to rethink their role in launching the "Dawn of the Creative Age" (Florida, 2004).

Drama Education

Drama is a symbolic language with which to represent the real world. By integrating playwriting and performance in core courses, university researchers can practice a pedagogy that enhances creativity and innovation in education (Sahlberg & Oldroyd, 2010). Drama education has been proven to contribute skills needed in what Moss calls our "Age of Agency" (2011, p. 183). One of the largest studies of students engaged in drama, the DICE Report (Drama Improves Lisbon Key Competences in Education), produced by the European Union in 2011, analyzed data collected from nearly 5,000 school students from 12 European Union countries. It found that,

> compared with pupils who had not engaged in [theatre and drama] activities, these students scored more highly on 22 key indicators, including some that have often been identified (a more developed ability to empathize, for example, or better communication skills) and some that have not been identified (more likely to vote, more innovative and entrepreneurial). (as cited in Lacey, p. 117)

Studies in the United States have identified many of the same benefits of integrated arts education. They found that drama helps with understanding social relationships, complex issues, and emotions, and to improve concentrated thought and story comprehension (Catterall, Chapleau, & Iwanaga, 1999; Dwyer, Knight Foundation, & United States, 2011).

Because of budget cuts and standardized testing, however, schools across the United States have not invested in theatre arts programs. The National Endowment for the Arts outlined what the declines in arts education means for arts participation. According to a study released in 2008: "If these trends continue, the health of the arts ecosystem will be in jeopardy" (Rabkin, Hedberg, & National Endowment for the Arts, 2011, p. 51). It is not surprising given the correlation between education in the arts—the biggest indicator of future attendance—and arts participation that attendance in the arts has declined. A major study of arts attendance in 1982, 1992, and 2002 also identified attrition in the audience for many of the arts—specifically, less attendance in theatre and a gradual decline among almost all age/gender/education groups in rates of attendance at live cultural events (DiMaggio & Mukhtar, 2004). Both of these longitudinal studies clearly find that arts education and attendance are faltering in the United States.

Yet, on July 16, 2015, the United States government may have begun to reverse this trend. By naming the arts as core subjects in the Every Child Achieves Act, the Senate has acknowledged and started to address the problem of dwindling arts education in K-12 (National Association for Music Education, 2015). Because of this recent legislation, education in the arts in K-12 may begin to play a role in closing the creativity gap in America. The researcher's primary goal in the current study is to investigate whether integrating the dramatic arts into the general university curriculum will help develop students' innate cteativity and thereby rebuild the country's "creative class" (Florida, Gates, Knudsen, & Stolarick, 2006, p. 7).

Collaborative Playwriting

Authorial collaboration has existed since Athenian comic theatre (Halliwell, 1989). In a recent example of a professional collaboration, a drama educator and a music educator joined forces to write a children's musical (Posten-Anderson, 2000). Examples of collaborative *student* playwriting, performance, and production in K-12 are abundant (Chesak, 1996; Howell & Corbey-Scullen, 1997; Horn, 1993; Lang, 2007; Melville, 2013; P. Wright, 1999). The dress-up play center is a popular choice in early childhood education, when storytelling and dramatization develop literacy skills, social skills, and creativity (C. Wright, Bacigalupa, Black, & Burton, 2008). Dramatizing is a major way children learn about their lives. Adolescents are developmentally even more interested in congregating, on the one hand, and

in acting out, on the other. As Mazor (2002) observes, "every adolescent wants to control the universe" and "playwriting provides a literal theater in which to play out their scenes of justice" (pp. 3-4). While some K-12 teachers in the United States are including the dramatic arts in their courses, studies show that the inclusion of drama at this crucial stage in the lives of children and adolescents has declined in the last decade (American Alliance for Theatre and Education, 2012; Parsad, Spiegelman, Coopersmith, & National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Along with this decline, invention has become less common as children grow into young adults. Soon children learn "to apply themselves to reality, not to dream" (Rosenberg, 1976, p. 203). By the time they get to college, many students are less interested in thinking deeply about and exploring a broad range of subjects than in training for their job.

Theatre Across the Curriculum

Given the decline in the number of non-musical theater attendees in the United States to less than 10% (National Endowment for the Arts, 2008), college theatre departments need to share the challenges of developing audiences for American theatre. Several generations ago, Rowe argued for playwriting in the liberal-arts curriculum (1939). Recently, Wainscott (2007) noted, "The academy's overall approach to the theatre arts curriculum is responsible for curricular separation and specialization" (p. 27). Together with this compartmentalization, Gardner (2005) documented the conservatism of drama pedagogy in American colleges and universities. On the one hand, theatre majors feel more at home in the theatre building, refining their acting or technical skills, than they do in English classrooms studying literary history. On the other hand, with some exceptions (Eisner, 1991), university theatre teachers are engaged in directing plays, promoting their program in the schools, and teaching their specialties. Seldom are they at liberty to integrate theatre across the curriculum or to engage their undergraduates in playwriting. Despite government funding opportunities for post-secondary interdisciplinary curricula, it is K-12 schools who lead the effort to integrate the arts. Gardner's (2005) study showed that university English departments—including theatre programs—have been the most conservative in maintaining the compartmentalization of the arts.

Playwriting in Kentucky

Recently, however, a student-written and acted play phenomenon has erupted in Kentucky. In the last few years, institutions of higher learning have produced plays that students collaboratively wrote and performed. Each involved the integration of critical and creative thought. None was the exclusive domain of theatre majors. A musical drama, *Higher Ground*, the first in a series of five plays originating at Southeast Kentucky Community and Technical College, explored the epidemic of prescription drug abuse in eastern Kentucky. Community input played a major role in the production's content and structure. Instead of using an ongoing social problem for their inspiration, a group of Centre College students used a myth

to explore personal issues in their play, *After Orpheus* (Droughn, 2013). A Transylvania University play, *Today Is History*, evolved from a semester-long theater course in which students reflected on "coming of age" in their lives and those of their grandparents, translated those experiences into monologues, and collaborated in a public performance (Bowden, 2013). *Hashtag Therapy*, the play written by the participants in the current study, centered on three troubled teenagers who attend a struggling young therapist's free introductory session. In different ways, all of the student-written scripts were the product of collaboration.

The playwrights were able to circumvent the compartmentalizing "academic silos" that, according to a recent report by the Association of American Colleges and Universities and National Leadership Council (2007, p. 18), impede learning. Through teamwork, a requirement for any theatre production, they modeled a more holistic and integrative approach to higher education. In the case of *Today Is History*, for example, each of the five class members wrote his or her own monologues or scenes and selected directors and actors from the Transylvania University campus (Bowden, 2013). Similarly, with *After Orpheus*, writing teams emerged from among the 13 students. In the case of *Higher Ground*, a professional writer, Jo Carson, wove together the research done by dozens of students and community volunteers. A month-long collaborative playwriting and performing group of ten students at Berea College, Kentucky, discovered the form that their *The Grandparents Project* would take through silent writing followed by reading, "without any pointed direction of where this exercise would go" (DeGiacomo, McGee, & Baldwin, 2005). Each of these Kentucky-based plays dealt with an overarching theme or issue.

Each play has a unique structure based on the experiences of the students at their respective universities—a community college in Appalachia, two liberal arts colleges in central Kentucky, and a regional university serving central and eastern Kentucky. Each was the product of the faculty member's initiative and the region's heritage of storytelling. An avid theatregoer, the researcher witnessed the success of the plays. Students wrote *After Orpheus* during summer school, performed the play in Kentucky, and travelled to the Fringe Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland. Students collected oral histories as material for *Higher Ground*, which has toured extensively in the region. The five students who wrote *Today Is History* sold out three performances and published the script. The 10 students who wrote *The Grandparents Project* discovered the play "had legs" when they were asked to perform for alumni, donors, and trustees. Because of their success, a new full-semester course was offered in dramatic writing. The success of each project can be measured by how the audience loved the show and how the students enjoyed their ability to make the audience feel "emotional—it made them think about their own grandparents and their own stories" (DeGiacomo et al., 2005, pp. 136-137). What contributed to the success of these productions?

Research Design

The research questions addressed in the study reported next in this paper were "Is there a value to integrating a playwriting and performing experience in a general education course?" And, if so, "What factors contribute to a successful creative experience in the dramatic arts?" The findings of this practice-based research were then analyzed to gain insights into the approaches to general education likely to lead to the development of creativity. The intention, in the context of the researcher's teaching practice, was to develop students' creative capabilities.

Researcher

The researcher was the instructor of the course observed in spring 2013, and is identified as "researcher" throughout the paper. The narrative of the project is based on the researcher's observations**.** In three decades prior to the current study, the researcher had included a creative project in general education courses as well as in literature courses designed for English majors. Since the current study, the researcher has had three more classes write and perform a play—a modern drama class (fall 2013) and two honors seminars in the arts and humanities (spring 2014, spring 2015). In the researcher's former practice, the creative project was offered as an alternative to the traditional culminating essay in a course. These creative projects—in art, video, music, writing, games, and monologue—were *individual* responses to the course content. Beginning with the current study, however, the researcher's core courses all include a *collaborative* playwriting and performance experience.

Unlike the other instructors behind the Kentucky playwriting phenomenon, the researcher has no specialized training in theatre literature or performance. Observing the other student plays encouraged the researcher to continue including collaborative playwriting and performance in course design. Each of the sister university faculty provided the researcher with a copy of their students' play scripts so they could be shared with the study's participants. These theatre professionals also shared details about their experience, extending themselves—despite the fact that this researcher was interloping on their territory.

The Participants

Course membership was comprised of a blend of undergraduates from first-year to non-traditional students, from Alexis, an Animal Studies major, to Cody, a private in the Kentucky National Guard. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 55. According to the January 16 blog, all nine students who entered the course posted that they enjoyed reading modern drama. Initially, these novice playwrights were apprehensive about writing a play. The two senior theatre students—the only participants who knew each other before the course began—were understandably reticent about mixing with amateurs, but the discomfort soon evaporated as the group bonded. The biographies that participants provided for the play program

demonstrate the range of interests that brought these students together. Only the participants' real first names are given.

> **Alexis** is a 19-year-old junior majoring in Animal Studies. She has been an actor and writer since a young age. The stage is one of her favorite places to be.
> **Jenny** is a 22-year-old senior. She will be graduating in December 2013. She both co-wrote and acted in *Hashtag Therapy*.
> **Morghan** is a 19-year-old freshman majoring in English Teaching. Although she has past experience with creative writing, acting as script editor for *Hashtag Therapy* was her first experience with theater.
> **Melanie** is a senior. She is graduating in December 2013 with a Bachelor's Degree in English and a concentration in Theatre. She has appeared as an actor and technician in numerous main stage shows. This is her first attempt at writing for entertainment.
> **Natalie** is a 22-year-old senior studying English and Theatre. She will be graduating in December of 2013. She helped in the writing process as well as directing the performance of *Hashtag Therapy*. She mostly enjoys acting; this was her first attempt at both writing and directing a show.
> **MaraJean** is a 19-year-old sophomore majoring in English with a minor in theatre and an emphasis in literature. She co-wrote *Hashtag Therapy* and plays Bryce in the performance.
> **Roger** is a 55-year-old (obviously) non-traditional senior. He is an English/Teaching major, and currently works as a full time substitute teacher in Madison County, teaching predominately middle school. In his fleeting spare time, he is a volunteer for Boy Scouts, and a HAM radio enthusiast.
> **Catie** is a 19-year-old sophomore studying elementary education. She enjoys acting and singing and is very excited for you to see the show!
> **Cody** is an 18-year-old sophomore. He will be graduating in fall of 2015 and is enlisted in the Kentucky National Guard. He likes to play sports and hang out with his girlfriend. He is an actor in *Hashtag Therapy*.

None of the participants had taken a college creative writing course. A look at their academic records revealed that the class's grade point average was just below 3.0 (out of 4.0). Students blogged about their hopes for the course in the first week. As Morghan, for example, posted on the class's January 16 blog, "As a shy student, I think that writing our own play will be a stretching experience, but I am excited to see the result!" Morghan turned out to be one of the most analytical discussion leaders. The amateurs relied on Melanie and Natalie for their directing experience. MaraJean had enrolled in theatre courses. Because of their diverse backgrounds and strengths, these nine participants were able to capitalize on what each person did best—writing, acting, directing. The mix of students enrolled in a core course allows for such cross-pollination.

The Course

No credentials in playwriting were required of the participants or researcher—only a commitment to interdisciplinary integrative general education. Given the catalogue description for the course (ENG 335: Modern Drama, "study of representative modern plays from Ibsen to the present"), students expected nothing more than to read modern plays. In order to fulfill an arts distribution requirement, the course required students to do some scene work from plays on the reading list. The course flyer (Figure 1) omitted the playwriting component.

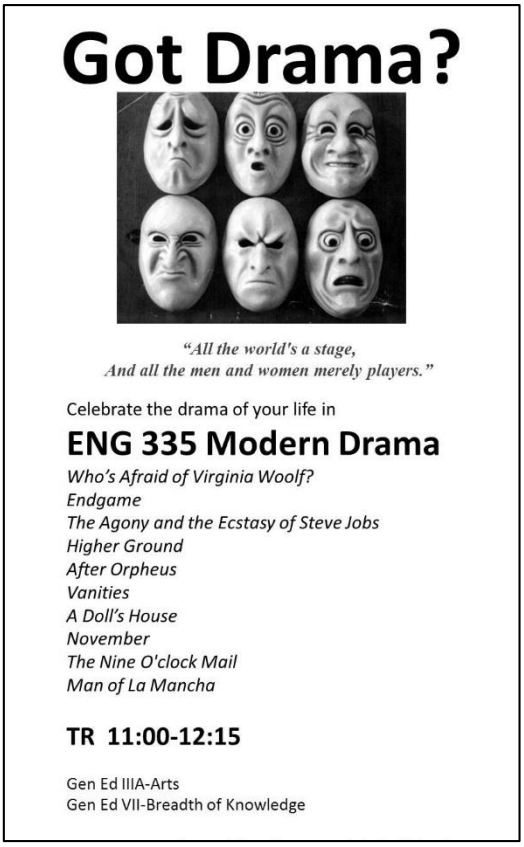

Figure 1. Course promotional flyer

For theatre students, ENG 335: Modern Drama is one of two required literary history courses. The catalogue describes the second course, ENG 430: Dramatic Literature, as a "survey of the major periods and genres of world dramatic literature, from the Greeks to the present." Only two participants in the Modern Drama class were theatre students; the other seven participants were seeking to fulfill a core requirement in two areas of general education—Arts and Breadth of Knowledge—as highlighted on the course flyer.

The general outline of the 15-week course was to read and discuss a play a week and to develop the class play in small weekly increments. The researcher communicated the intention at the first meeting of the class in the context of discussing the course syllabus. Most participants commented on the January 16 course blog following the first meeting that they enjoyed reading plays. In answer to "Why am I in this course? What do I hope to gain from this course?" Roger, a participant studying to be a teacher, posted, "I took this course to get another elective for my degree. But, in hindsight, if it allows me to be a better teacher by encouraging creativity in my students, then this will be a cool class. Seems like it is going to be fun anyway." The group of participants had varied responses when they learned they would be writing a play. One participant stated, "I don't like the idea of writing a play, but that can't be changed now," while another indicated, "I think writing our play will be exciting!" At mid-semester, a student wrote on the weekly survey, "I took this class as filler. I'm glad I did! It's so much fun." The researcher's role throughout was to facilitate the student-centered learning process. Learning was assessed by quality and quantity of participation in discussion, posts, play reviews, scene work, script writing, editing, performing, and directing. The syllabus for ENG 335: Modern Drama Spring 2013 course is available at http://www.people.eku.edu/bedettig/ENG335_Syllabus_Spring_2013.pdf.

The course began with the participants constructing a timeline of the history of theatre, including plays that they had read or seen, or in which they had performed. Included on the timeline, that was posted as the banner on the course's Blackboard site, were the functions of theatre in each period. After the overview, students focused on reading and discussing nine modern plays—including two student-written and acted plays. Classes were 75 minutes long. The course avoided the routine of reading quizzes, tests, and final examination, while targeting both general education and course-specific student learning outcomes. The five course requirements were to (1) respond to the student discussion leader's pre-class play forum, (2) contribute to class discussion, (3) write reviews of two campus plays, (4) post to the course blog, and (5) collaborate to write and perform a play. Students were not only prepared for class but also more than willing to share their opinions, confusions, and personal responses. In this core course, reading and discussing plays blended seamlessly with writing a play.

Data Collected

During the semester, the researcher collected data, including

- **Surveys**: On the last day of each of the 15 weeks, an anonymous survey was administered by the researcher, asking each participant to rate their "Enthusiasm-Motivation-Interest" in the content of the course that week on a scale of 1 (low) through 10 (high) and inviting any "additional observations."

- **Videos and photos**: The researcher shot scene work and rehearsal video and photo; a videographer shot and produced the performance video for publication on YouTube.
- **Blog and forum posts**: The participants posted their play analysis questions, their play reviews, ideas for their play, and script drafts on Blackboard as a starting point for the student-led class discussion.
- **Field notes**: The researcher took detailed notes of each meeting with the participants to document class discussion of the plays read and the development of the class play.

The Method

Discussing the Plays

Tuesday classes focused on play analysis. Seen from the context of creative writing pedagogy, the class discussion of modern classics followed the great works approach to playwriting (Blythe & Sweet, 2008), studying and imitating the masters. After composing the pre-class forum questions about the play, each student led a day's discussion. The researcher summarized the discussion on Blackboard with a quotation drawn from class, such as Cody's observation about the dynamics in *A Doll's House*: "Christine brings the curtain down on Nora's illusions and foreshadows what Nora has to face soon" (field notes from January 24). On comparing the relationships between pairs of characters in the first three plays, for another example, Morghan observed, "In *A Doll's House*, Nora secretly defies Torvald. In *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, Martha and George accept each other's defiance. In *Endgame*, Clov defies Hamm both openly and behind his back" (field notes from February 7). The researcher served as a participant, sometimes a devil's advocate, always aware that that the class was preparing to write a play. The nine plays chosen for the class were representative modern plays; no attempt was made to thrust the class into a modernist perspective.

Yet each modern drama on the reading list indirectly suggested ideas for the participants' play. For example, included was Howard Sackler's *The Nine O'Clock Mail*, a one-act set in the 1960s that the class was unlikely to have read or seen. Would participants unused to paper correspondence relate to a play about receiving snail mail? The play discussion not only echoed the participants' personal issues, but it also informed their own play. According to field notes from February 12, the first idea participants discussed that Tuesday in week 5 of 15 was self-limiting behavior patterns. For them, the compulsive behavior exhibited by Ted, the main character, waiting for the mail was a way for him to compensate for what was missing in his life. Participants were able to connect with the action: seconds after the discussion began, Catie shifted the focus from Ted's behavior to today's obsessive social networking.

Alexis: Ted's over-affectionate Mom might suggest Ted's homosexual tendencies. His affairs are a cover-up.
Morghan: Ted is having affairs with women to prove that he is male.
MaraJean: How did he get this neurotic to begin with? Letters gratify him: When his ego is being stroked, Ted gains confidence.
Catie: We post on Facebook to get a response.
Cody: Ted's compulsive behavior is a way for him to compensate for what's missing in his life.
Cody: Ted is an old-age attention whore.
Melanie: It's a fair trade: mail for sex.

Catie's observation about obsessive Facebook checking metamorphosed into an array of attention-getting behaviors displayed by the characters the participants invented for *Hashtag Therapy*: MaryAnne's narcissism, Bryce's passive aggression, and Brittany's oppositional attitude.

Because the students connected with *The Nine O'Clock Mail*, the discussion deepened. The participants progressed quickly from discussing the behavior to analyzing its negative effects. Roger noted that Ted's obsession with getting mail was pushing away his family and friends. Melanie noted the irony of an attention-getting behavior that distanced rather than connected Ted with those closest to him. Roger and MaraJean related Ted's closeness to the mail carrier to an addict's closeness to his dealer.

MaraJean: Cynthia is not dramatic about Ted losing his job, though she cared he was spending money on magazines.
Roger: Ted tells Cynthia he doesn't need her.
MaraJean: She has the patience of a nun.
Morghan: Internet addicts miss out on conversations.
Melanie: Ted thinks he's opening communication with the outside world, but really he's putting himself in a smaller box. He is disregarding his wife and child.
Jenny: Sending a letter to himself is not as good as getting one from someone else but still something tangible.
Roger: A registered letter involves the personal intervention of a mailman.
MaraJean: A drug dealer is someone you have a close relationship with.

MaraJean, the discussant observing Ted's wife's patience went on to play a character in their play who tests the patience of the other characters. The participants' connection with Sackler's play made them aware of their own need for recognition and relationship and anticipated the setting they ultimately chose for *Hashtag Therapy*.

As discussion closed on *The Nine O'Clock Mail*, participants generalized that true addiction comes from failing to cope with one's insecurities (field notes from February 14). Extrapolating from the 1960s play and from their experience, they agreed that Americans have become a more obsessive culture in the last half-century. The obsession they analyzed in Sackler's play struck a chord with their own self-limiting behaviors. Younger middle school or high school students are less likely to have developed the level of awareness and synthesis shown by these more socially mature post-secondary students.

Morghan: Today's addictions include porn, video games, internet, food, working out, tanning, yoga. Parents and relatives often enable the addicts, while thinking they are "protecting" their child.

Cody: Parents give kids iPhones as status symbols. Cynthia still believes she can change Ted.

Melanie: Ted is detoxing off affairs, but addicts aren't ever cured.

Natalie: Some people are more prone to addiction.

Roger: My students ask, "Can we have our phones?" instead of "What are we going to do today?"

Morghan: Middle school students who are allowed to have phones at lunch don't take time to eat. Why Phyllis, Cynthia, Ted, and the mail carrier's interventions didn't work is that Ted doesn't see the need yet.

Melanie: The only thing that will make him stop is when it hurts enough—when he's turned out of his house. Our parents have raised us to think we're special; when we leave our parents' house, we don't get the recognition.

Morghan: An intervention can help. Intervention leads to recognition.

Melanie eloquently defined the transition from the comforts of home to the challenges of adulthood. Not only did the participants belie the fear that they would be unable to relate to a play about a character obsessed with snail mail, but Morghan's concluding comment anticipated the play they would go on to write about therapeutic intervention. This degree of internalization rarely occurs in a conventional literature course; by internalizing their reading and giving expression to their personal experience, the participants made learning more memorable.

Although the participants may not have been aware of it, from the great works perspective, discussing plays merged seamlessly with writing the class play. Most empowering in preparing to write their play was reading the two student-written plays, *After Orpheus* and *Higher Ground*. Participants read these plays in weeks 6 and 9 of the 15-week semester without trying to anticipate possible differences between canonical and student plays. Since

by that time, the class had read a number of classics from the modern canon, they held the student plays to high standards.

The participants connected with the love theme in *After Orpheus* but found the play's structure confusing. They identified with Eurydice because, according to MaraJean's February 19 forum post, "in all new relationships there is that uncertainty but there has to be a point where if it is the right person you have to get past that and let yourself be happy and in love with that person." Catie, too, related most to Eurydice in the play because "I'm not sure of what I want, whether in love or life." The characters tell their stories of love and death, and then drink from a chalice that wipes their memory. Students understood death in the play to be symbolic of second chances, rebirth, a clean slate, and an awakening because it takes Eurydice dying to decide that she does love Orpheus. However, while they identified with the content, MaraJean found that "this play exaggerated time, or the idea of time, very confusingly. I was never sure which time period characters where in, but it was stressed that they all came from different times and experienced different love." According to the students, the transitional material binding the scenes together needed to keep the narrative moving forward more easily. By studying the student-written play, the participants recognized that mastering theme is very different from mastering technique.

The participants were even more critical of the musical drama, *Higher Ground*, created from stories collected locally. Set in nearby Harlan County, students connected with the depiction of prescription drug abuse, its "rugged" tone, how all backstage aspects were shown onstage, and the raw intensity making the story more believable and effective, like a dramatic folktale. However, they found the play cluttered and disjointed because the format kept changing and the tone was overly serious. According to field notes from March 19, a participant experienced the *Higher Ground* tone to be one in which the writers "were making these big important statements and the reader should be changed and affected by reading these profound words." Most students expressed that the play would probably make more sense on stage than on paper. As MaraJean had posted on the March 18 forum, "The style makes it interesting, but not very enjoyable to read. You go from one story to a song, to a different story and a song, back to the first story. It wasn't confusing, it was just cluttered." As with *After Orpheus*, while students related to the characters, issues, and dialogue of *Higher Ground*, the lack of transitions between scenes lost the narrative's forward motion. The play's unique combination of genres—musical and ethnodrama—needed to be experienced rather than read for the songs to carry the audience through the narrative.

Nevertheless, the two plays allowed the class to see that—even outside the context of a playwriting course—writing a play was achievable. Despite the fact that they would have far less time to write their one-act than the playwrights at their sister schools, the participants exhibited a growing confidence that together they could easily accomplish the task. They

stated that they would avoid the cohesion and flow problems of the other student plays (field notes of February 21). For example, in *Hashtag Therapy*, Brittany's mother is introduced through a phone call she makes early in the play—allowing the audience to see the problem in the mother-daughter relationship—and reappears to pick Brittany up at the end of the play to show how the relationship has grown. The writers not only observed the three unities—action, place, and time—but also made a conscious effort to avoid disjointedness and achieve a clear narrative movement.

Workshopping

Thursdays were designed to transition into the creative component of the course and eventually became a writers' workshop. While Tuesday discussions were about appreciating the basics of plot and character, for Thursday class students developed comments they had posted on the course blog, presented a dramatic reading of a memorized poem, acted out scenes from the play of the week, compared plays, and related the plays to their lives. So that participants could further explore their interpretation of a character, the scene work was videotaped. Performing, viewing, and discussing the recorded scenes helped the participants internalize the dynamics of modern drama. Performing also gave the participants a visceral appreciation for dialogue and the physicality of theatre.

Figure 2. MaraJean, Cody, and Roger in the Dwight Crackle scene from Mamet, *November*

Students relished the authentic language in the linguistic satire in Mamet's play (Figure 2). At no one's prompting, Morgan requested to be the principal dialogue editor for *Hashtag*

Therapy (field notes of April 18). She wanted to capture the quick and uninhibited exchanges—the "musical reality that conveys some sense of a larger world" (Rebeck, 2009, p. 18)—of the characters in *Hashtag Therapy*. She wanted to avoid the dogmatic quality of Nora's closing discourses in *A Doll's House* or Hamm's near monologues in *Endgame*. Aside from deepening their understanding of the dynamics between characters, acting scenes from the plays made students comfortable with each other. Sharing their directors' notes for scene work further served to establish the actor-director relationship that became important later during rehearsals of their play.

Along with doing scene work, participants were required to attend and review the two campus theatre productions, *Man of La Mancha* and *Vanities*, a student-directed all-female show about how friendships change as people age. The in-class play discussion preceding the performances led to specific, well-defined expectations for the campus productions. While the participants loved the musical, they identified ways that the student-directed play was overacted and poorly directed. Discussing their reactions to the performances made them raise the bar for *Hashtag Therapy* (field notes of April 9). In fact, everything the participants had done—reviewing campus plays, doing scene work, critically and creatively analyzing classic and student plays—fed into their playwriting and performing project. By the time that participants wrote their play, they had internalized the requirements: cast size, dramatic conflict, authentic dialogue, movement, physicality, and closure. At no point did the course involve lecturing, sitting for exams, or writing academic papers to assess learning.

Playwriting

With the groundwork laid, in the final month of the semester of this core academic course, the participants were ready to trespass onto the creative arts. This was the crucial yet most precarious period in the course. Would this group of students accept crossing over into their first playwriting experience? Careful preparation helped ensure the participants' enthusiastic response.

Blogging. Without reference to the culminating course project, students began early in the semester to identify possible play material. In week 1 of 15, they posted to questions on the course blog: "What's happening in your life? What issues, people, and decisions are you struggling with now?"

MaraJean	Right now, my biggest struggle is deciding what I want to major in/what I want to be when I grow up. I like a lot of different things, but I don't know if those translate into a future.
Catie	Paying for school is always tough and I'm starting to get sick so that's no fun.

Jennifer	Two friends are divorcing.
Morghan	Things are really starting to sink in that I have entered the real world.
Roger	I guess welcoming home my new grandson is the most significant thing right now. My family is growing, but in doing so, we are moving away from my parents and siblings. Not sure this is a good thing.
Alexis	I am trying to maintain harmony between my best friend/roommate and my boyfriend and deal with their spitefulness towards each other.
Melanie	Focusing on school.
Cody	Well, I just started dating a girl, and I'm trying not to mess it up.

Many of the personal issues students identified in week one became potential material for their play in week 8. Students looked for material in each other's lives that they could turn into dramatic conflict. In the end, under the narrative arc of self-discovery, their play included almost all of the participants' initial concerns.

Brainstorming for Themes. To begin, the participants strove to arrive at a unified vision or theme for their play. After a few weeks of discussing and acting scenes from modern classics, the participants began to brainstorm for their own play ideas. The issues they posted in the first week reappeared and anticipated the themes brainstormed six weeks later: "what to be when I grow up; two friends divorcing; mood stabilizers; real world versus school; wanting harmony between best friend, roommate, and boyfriend (stuck in the middle); new relationships (don't want to screw up)" (field notes of February 21). Gradually, in the course of weekly reading, analyzing, acting, and viewing of other plays, the participants shaped their deepest concerns into their own one-act. A factor that minimized problems of cohesion and flow in *Hashtag Therapy* is that the nine participants collaborated as a single entity. With a shorter one-act, *Hashtag Therapy*'s writers were able to avoid many issues of cohesion and structural flow. More significantly, all participants working as one unit empowered them to identify a single overarching theme. Their unified vision eased them beyond any initial self-doubts about playwriting.

Collaborating on Characters. Judging by the speed with which Roger, the recorder, had to write in order to document his classmates' ideas on an oversized easel, working together accelerated the process of identifying characters for the play. Acting as a unit rather than as solo writers appeared liberating for these playwrights. Students allowed their imaginations to run loose in their search for characters. As expected, they identified characters based on their real or imagined selves. One character, later abandoned, the neurotic and impulsive "Sarge," for example, combined qualities of two participants—the 55-year-old Korean War veteran and the 19-year-old member of the Kentucky National Guard. Meanwhile, the angst-ridden teenager who thought of herself as "different" represented the self-image many women participants had of their former high school selves. The class abandoned the most

stereotypical characters, such as the agoraphobic but well-intentioned cat person, the obsessive and controlling best friend, and the character who solved problems by drinking and fighting. From their initial list, only those most familiar to the writers remained in the nuanced final cast:

> DR CLARKSON—A therapist who hopes the free sessions will help his practice
> BRYCE—An angry musician and songwriter too cool for school
> MARYANNE—A pretty girl who peaked in her small town high school
> BRITTANY—A bratty teenager
> MOM—Brittany's mother

Having studied character dynamics in the canonical plays, the class understood that three central characters would suit their one-act's theme, format, and concept. The therapist would mediate their interactions, and the mother would appear at the end to allow the audience to see how the daughter has modified her behavior.

Identifying the Setting. When the participants realized that each of their characters was struggling with a relationship issue, they searched for a setting in which the characters could interact. Again, their comfort-level at giving their imagination free rein is suggested by the range of proposed settings: Rome, Starbucks, space, a therapist's office, a living room, a dorm room, campus, a hairdresser's salon, jail, a zombie universe, an elevator, and hell (field notes from April 9). Having been able to voice the possibilities appeared to speed up the selection of a setting. Initially, they placed the characters in the lounge of a therapist's office and had the three clients solving each other's problems. Once they realized that conversation rarely flows in a waiting room, they moved the action into the office. They developed the character of the young therapist, perhaps as a projection of their future working selves but structurally as mediator for the clients. To develop the parent and child relationship, they had Brittany's mother make an appearance at the end of the session. They created dramatic tension both in the characters' inner struggle as well as in their interactions.

Creating a Narrative. With theme, characters, and setting in place, the next challenge was to invent a narrative. Students began to consolidate plot ideas for their play online. In week 5 of 15, they blogged about play character behavior patterns in relation to their own: In *A Doll's House*, a character hides secrets from her spouse. In *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, a character invites guests to an after-party. In *Endgame*, a character gets his caretaker to perform for him. In *Nine O'Clock Mail,* a character makes sure he gets mail every day. Participants identified a behavior or activity they had observed in themselves or in others.

> **Roger** If I don't check my email after our class, I am convinced I have missed something important. I never do, but . . .

Melanie	Playing the ingénue to avoid actually having to apply yourself.
Alexis	Making excuses to not give up a bad habit.
Jennifer	Letting anger take control.
Morghan:	Investing so much of myself into friendships that I can't function when a friend is upset.
Cody	I notice that I have a hard time letting others help me with my problems.
MaraJean	I agree with Cody. I am the first person to try and help someone, but I CANNOT have anyone help me.
Catie	I agree with Morghan, when a friend of mine is upset or hurting my whole day is ruined even if it's not my fault and I can't do anything to help.

Independently, the participants chose to identify relationship behaviors. The next day's discussion yielded the idea of personal problems for the plot line (Figure 3).

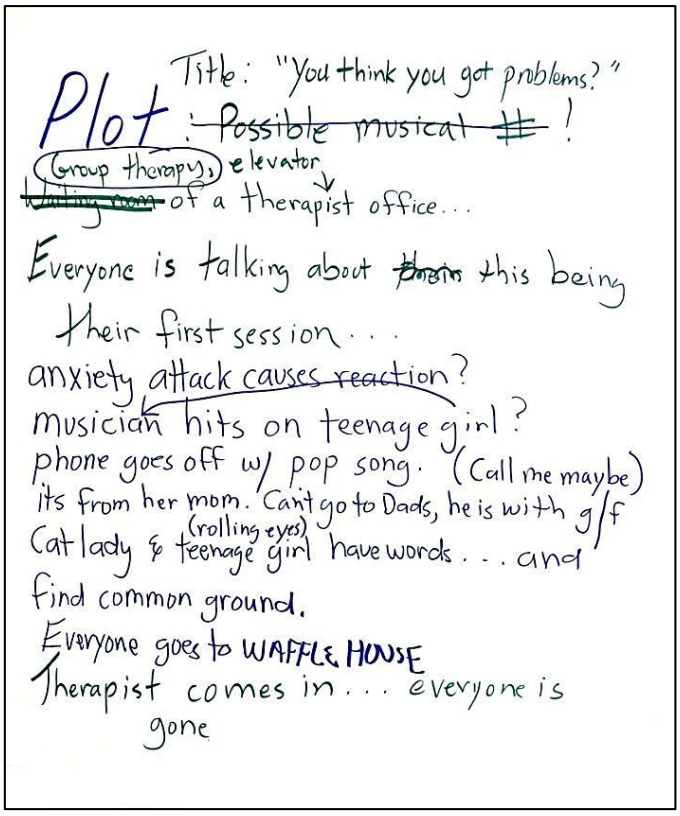

Figure 3. Poster of the class's ideas for the plot, as recorded by Roger

Together, students simplified the storyline and came up with a working title, "So You Think You've Got Problems?" They were then ready to diagram the plot arc and sharpen the dramatic conflict.

In the course of turning their personal issues into play material, they discovered that several participants shared a discomfort with their fierce independence. Cody and MaraJean both saw their independence as an obstacle that they have created for themselves. They wished they were able to reach out and let others help them with their problems. This recognition allowed them to develop the narrative of three characters reaching out to each other and the therapist in order to arrive at greater self-awareness. The final script followed a clearly defined plot:

- Three troubled clients arrive for an advertised free therapy session.
- Dr. Clarkson and the three clients introduce themselves.
- The trust building exercise leads to tension and confrontation.
- Brittany, MaryAnne, and Bryce develop self-awareness.
- The session ends and they tell Dr. Clarkson they will return next week.

Their plot arc follows Aristotle's model in the *Poetics* (exposition, complication(s), climax, and denouement/resolution), a pattern the participants had internalized from their reading. Unlike *Higher Ground* and *After Orpheus*, *Hashtag Therapy* observes "Aristotle's three unities—of time, place, and action—with the play's events unfolding continuously in one temporal and physical setting" (Johnston & Percy, 2007, p. 211). Writing a play in one act, the participants did not have to grapple with cohesion to the extent of student playwrights at the other schools. Each group of college collaborators handled the cohesion challenge in its own way. The nine *Hashtag Therapy* writers seemed to be speaking effortlessly from one voice. The collaborators recognized "an unforced cohesion in the lines being performed" that transcended the boundaries of their individual creations. What most contributed to the participants' success in creating a cohesive narrative is their joyful collaboration.

Writing Dialogue. The participants attempted to work on the script separately, but they immediately recognized that by working together in class the script emerged more quickly. Once the playwriting got under way in April, participants began to generate dialogue on the course blog and, beginning in week 13 of 15, exclusively in class. As actors, the participants had already experienced the interactive quality of performance, so collaborative writing seemed an extension of the familiar, especially when it came to writing dialogue. Each character's dialogue needed to project a distinct attitude. Having discussed tone in the plays they had read, everyone seemed focused on choosing authentic language to make the characters credible. To make the language believable, students edited dialogue well into rehearsals. On completion, the class submitted the script, available at http://www.people.eku.edu/bedettig/Hashtag_Therapy.pdf, to the school's student publication.

Rehearsing. With only two classes remaining in the semester to rehearse before the scheduled performance, meetings moved from the classroom to the stage of the Pearl Buchanan Theatre. According to field notes from April 23, the two theatre students, who also happened to be enrolled in a directing course, took the initiative once we moved to their home territory. Being familiar with the theatre, Melanie, the play director, instructed Roger on lights. Using furniture available backstage, she designed the set. Her knowledge of blocking and directing encouraged the actors. After each run-through, Natalie, the assistant director, wrote notes during the rehearsals and read them to the actors from her seat in the audience. When Morghan, the script editor, sensed some inauthentic dialogue, she offered an on-the-spot rewrite. The actors themselves made minor changes in dialogue. To help the actors further, a video of their penultimate rehearsal was posted to the course Blackboard site. Originally, to avoid the need to learn lines, the plan outlined on the course syllabus had been to produce a radio play. Concern about memorizing lines evaporated when the participants, driven by their shared creativity, insisted on a full play production.

Performing. The participants staged *Hashtag Therapy* with a professional videographer taping the show which was posted on YouTube. Each actor was responsible for his or her own hair and costume. Before Roger raised the curtain on the performance, Natalie introduced the play with a prologue she had written on her own.

> As a class, we students of ENG 335 wrote this play. Together we developed an idea for a plot, characters and then wrote dialogue. It began with coming up with certain settings, characters and conflicts. We had several brainstorming periods to come up with each. After several ideas for setting, deciding on a therapist's office helped us hone the rest of our ideas for the show.
>
> We went through several different characters before we concretely developed the five we decided on. We took character stereotypes and drew from our own experience with real people who we have dealt with in our lives to come up with their eccentricities. Each of us has brought our own ideas to the table to create the comedic banter of these characters. I think we're pretty funny; therefore I think the script is pretty funny. We tried to keep it lighthearted while still addressing issues in the characters' lives that can be somewhat discussed and resolved.
>
> We'd all like you to keep in mind that we wrote, blocked, and performed this show in about two weeks. We are only students, and don't aim to be professional playwrights. Do not judge too harshly. With that being said, we did give our best effort, and the finished product is at least a little funny, we hope!

This is our show. Enjoy.

Despite the humble tone towards the end of Natalie's prologue to the show, a sense of pride in the final product emerges from the words and is confirmed on the performance video. Also apparent is a happiness in the successful collaboration that enabled the class to produce their first play. Experiencing the flow of creativity, the participants owned their play and their performance. *Hashtag Therapy* is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WrrzqW03gJk.

Findings in the Development of Creative Thinkers

Introducing a creative project into a survey course in literature held some risk for the researcher as well as for the students. While the participants expected to do some acting to fulfill the arts component of the core elective, *writing* and *performing* a play appeared beyond the scope of a literature course. Against traditionalist expectation, all nine participants ultimately embraced the experience. Collaborative playwriting and performance yielded a number of results for the participants, including a powerful means of expression, the demonstration of a conceptual understanding, and the ability to synthesize or make new links between ideas. The features that characterized the experience were collaboration, deep learning, and ownership. Evidence of each element is described, along with the implications for the creative process. Following the presentation of findings, the results are related to the findings of other studies integrating the arts.

Collaboration

Much of the joy of creating *Hashtag Therapy* was a function of students interacting with their peers and experiencing the camaraderie of a productive creative community. The class met thirty times during the semester. In a typical class where other plays were discussed, students did about 80% of the talking. In class meetings where their own play was discussed, student dialogue filled about 90% of the discussion. The researcher modeled ways for the participants to relate their ideas to each other. As a result, the class discussions grew organically. The student discussion leader had framed the pre-class forum questions. Often she chose simply to offer an observation about her experience of reading the play. Her classmates would respond, and they would be off to the races. The researcher, who eagerly anticipated each class meeting, contributed to the discussion no more than any other participant. Although the discussion agenda had been established by the student-leader, the discussion evolved spontaneously out of the students' internalized experiences of the play. This included laughter, sarcasm, confession, as well as discovering commonalities and acknowledging differences. Student collaboration resulted from the comfort level, small class size, and individual personalities.

Collaboration not only helped shape the process but also the outcome of their play. To begin, the participants resisted the instructor's suggestion that they work on the play script independently, preferring to develop the play as a group in class. Students wanted to work on the script "together" because they recognized that the results came faster and were better when they revised and edited each other's ideas on the spot. No one was the ultimate decision maker; each line of the script was a matter of consensus. As to the final production, they elected to present their play as a stage performance rather than the planned radio reading. The choice involved the memorization of lines and could have discouraged some participants. The curtain call photo for *Hashtag Therapy* conveys the participants' joy in their achievement (Figure 4). In fact, they requested that the videographer photograph them after their April 25 performance.

Figure 4. Curtain call with directors (front row) and actors (back row)

Like Natalie's Prologue to the show, the curtain call photo suggests the camaraderie they enjoyed during the collaborative process.

Deep Learning

In the current study, the process of creating a play was characterized by deep (as opposed to surface) learning. Deep learning is the ability to create rather than just to hold information. Creation requires an internalization and synthesis rather than simply a mastering of content. Creativity researchers have defined synthesis as the "bringing together of elements into some

kind of newly constructed knowledge or novel creative work" (Henrkisen, Mishra, DeSchryver, & the Deep-Play Research Group, 2015, p. 6). The study participants engaged enthusiastically in drama rather than doing just enough to meet their obligation. Ordinarily, the course would consist entirely of reading, discussing, and writing about modern drama. Instead, out of a combination of elements, the participants produced something new—in a genre that none of them had ever created before. As the participants' individual talents came together to create the play, the boundary between the creative and the theoretical dissolved. The synthesis of form, meaning, and theatrical event allowed for deep learning, which is often not possible in a typical literature survey course. Participants did not focus on the playwriting assessment task until the last weeks of the course, after having approached modern drama from other perspectives. Over the 15-week semester (two 75-minute classes per week), class time was divided into the following activities:

- read, posted, discussed, and performed scenes from modern classics—17 hours
- read, posted, and discussed student-written plays—5 hours
- attended, discussed, and reviewed two play performances—5 hours
- generated ideas for the class play—4 hours
- conceived and wrote the script—4 hours
- rehearsed, directed, and performed the play—2.5 hours

As the participants developed a knowledge base in modern drama, they also established the groundwork for creative synthesis—creating, developing, designing, and performing the class play. The only outside involvement occurred when a theatre faculty member directing one of the campus plays came to join the discussion. Students added to their drama knowledge base and integrated that into their playwriting and performance, growing in self-knowledge and deepening in understanding. As one student explained in the anonymous course evaluation, "writing our own play was a stretching experience." This is to say the student had deepened her understanding of drama to full extent. They had strengthened learning in the core subject by demonstrating their mastery in multiple ways: critical discussion, informed play attending and play reviewing, playwriting, play performance. One participant had his review accepted for publication in the school newspaper. The assessment task was a higher order objective that required students to solve the problem of giving dramatic expression to their life issues. The task tested to see whether they could *apply* dramatic principles—not just write about them.

To monitor the participants' deep learning, an anonymous weekly survey asked students to rate on a scale of 1 to 10 how they were feeling about that week's course work. The energy level of the class rose significantly when we shifted from reading plays to writing and performing their play. The graph (Figure 5) suggests that, after spending the first three months of the course discussing modern drama, the final weeks of collaborating on writing and performance created a spike in enthusiasm for course content.

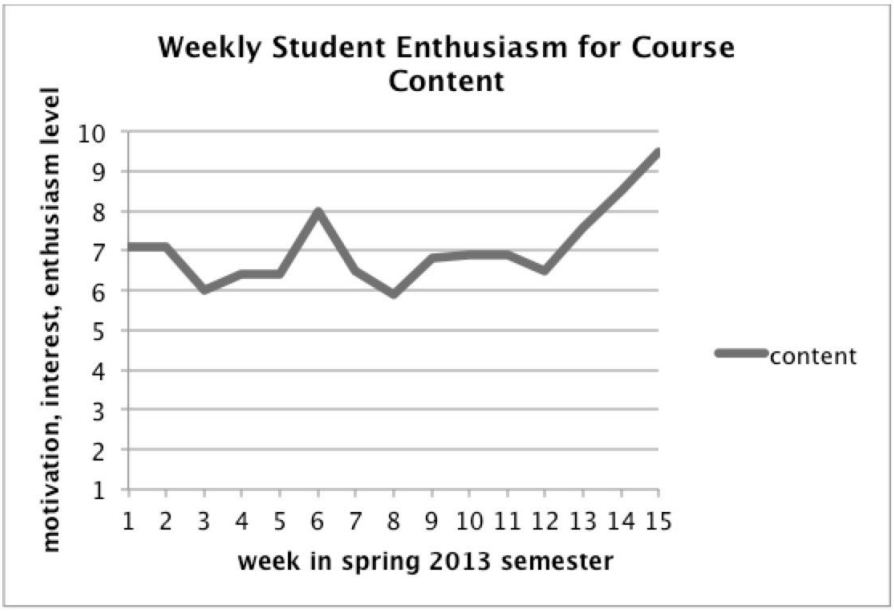

Figure 5. ENG 335 Student enthusiasm survey for weekly course content[1]

In fact, the highest peak in enthusiasm in the build-up came in week 6 when the class read and identified the script writing issues in the *Higher Ground* by students at Southeast Community and Technical College. The next upswing came in week 9 when the class read *After Orpheus* by students at Centre College and discussed how their play would avoid its flaws. The spikes in enthusiasm suggest students were energized when they applied their learning in a practical way—not when they were simply reading and discussing the modern canon. The spikes occurred precisely when reading plays and writing and performing a play came together, eliminating the historical rift between an English class and a theatre class. More significantly, the spikes in enthusiasm occurred at the crossroads of synthesis, the moment the students were bringing together all the elements that they had internalized into a creative work.

Ownership

The participants experienced a sense of ownership in the course. Traditional dramatic literature courses focus on the analysis of plays in the context of dramatic history. Because of the decentering of authority, the students engaged with each stage of the process. By serving as facilitator, time manager, and liaison to the world outside the classroom, the researcher allowed the participants to own their real-world project. Seizing ownership, the participants

[1] See also: Bedetti, G. (2013) "Avoiding the mid-semester wall: using a real world course project." *The National Teaching and Learning Forum*, *22*(5), 6-7.

discovered new talents and reinforced old ones. Morghan, who described herself in the January 16 course blog as a shy person, became a natural discussion leader. Roger, a high school substitute teacher at the time, developed the ethos of a field reporter on issues portrayed in the play. Melanie's self-appointed leadership as a director and set designer surprised everyone. Her fellow participants complimented her on her direction (field notes of April 23). Her confidence in the success of the performance was contagious. During the run-throughs, participants appreciated Alexis's portrayal of the girl who peaked in high school, in part because of her acting skills, but also because her character was voicing their own unspoken fears. They had conceived the character. They *owned* the character.

As undergraduates, students are often searching for career direction. Morghan, for example, an English education major with a keen ear for dialogue, renewed her interest in creative writing. Playwriting enabled the students to find a voice not heard before. College students need the safe place that playwriting and performance provide to discover and transform themselves. At American universities, students tend to fulfill their general education requirements in the first two years, an ideal time for an undergraduate to experience ownership and exert agency in an academic context. Their collaborative inventiveness enabled them to generate ideas, develop a process, and produce a valuable product. In addition, the videographer posted their professionally produced performance video on YouTube. Following the completion of the course, the researcher received requests for the video link from participants. For example, a participant in the most recent iteration of playwriting and performance whose relative could not attend wrote, "My grandmother was unable to attend our performance and would like to see the video, but I am having trouble finding it online. Do you have a link to it?" (M. Palmer, personal communication, June 30, 2015). Another student wrote, "I was wondering if our Shiloh play recording was going to become available for us at some point. My family would really like to watch it" (B. Bare, personal communication, June 18, 2015). Most importantly, however, producing a play together extended each student's identity and strengths as reader, dialogue writer, actor, or director—identities that would not have been able to surface during class discussion alone.

Discussion of Findings in Relation to Other Studies

The key findings from the current study of arts integration map onto what the literature has identified as important learning outcomes. Educators have developed successful course and curricular efforts that have been documented at every level—elementary (McCammon & Betts, 1999), high school (Sawyer, 1996), and college (DeGiacomo et al., 2005). Whether aimed at college teachers (Baines & Dial, 1995), high school teachers (Jester & Stoneman, 2012; Mazor, 2002) or elementary school teachers (Brock, 2011; Creative Educational Systems, 1993), these fellow trespassers onto the dramatic arts have identified collaboration,

deep learning, and ownership in the learning process. In varied ways, each study shows that harnessing passion and breaking down the disciplinary walls unleashes creativity.

The Joy of Collaboration

The factor most frequently cited in studies of dramatic arts integration is the camaraderie of a productive creative community. Gardner (2005), for example, applauds the recent emphasis on collaboration and production work in American colleges and universities. Other studies confirm that students working together to write and produce a play gives a sense of pride to the participants (Gervais, 2006; Rouhiainen & Hämäläinen, 2013), a pride rooted in the success of their collaboration. As Rouhiainen and Hämäläinen noted in their study, the participants' enthusiasm helped them commit to their shared project. With a time constraint similar to that of the participants in the current study, Gallagher-Ross (2008) observed that the wiki-enabled collaboration of his students could not afford to be competitive. Writing on large posters was a time-saving strategy used by the participants in the current study as well as the Centre College playwrights who soon "had the walls covered with posters of common motifs and plot ideas" (Droughn, 2013). Given a performance date and some timesaving strategies, students found joy in contributing their skills, talents, and creative ideas to the collaborative project.

The breadth and diversity of perspectives is what makes the collaboration creative. Davidson (2010) sums up the underlying concept shared by the projects integrating the arts: "Polyvocality is a necessity in this new world of collaboration" (p. 3). Studies integrating the dramatic arts establish a community that values diversity and divergent thinking. Kaufman and Seidel (2012) explained why valuing difference is especially important in this context: "The theatre is a place where we can lower our defenses and look at ourselves from a different perspective" (p. 143). For Weiler (2011), the course project provided "what it takes to build a collective narrative" (p. 92). Any temporary disagreement or tension, according to Rouhiainen & Hämäläinen (2013), "in fact was productive. It demanded [participants] to re-negotiate [their] expectations in the midst of the artistic process" (p. 8, para. 3). The participants in the current study depended on the varied sensibilities of the collective. The occasional absence of any participant slowed down the creative process that they had established. Everyone brought different strengths to the project. As the process moved into blocking and staging the play, they appreciated the lead of the two theatre students in the group. Diverse perspectives contributed to the successful collaborative performance. As the students performed *The Grandparents Project*, DeGiacomo et al. (2005) observed a spontaneous cohesion in the lines of dialogue. Davidson (2010) aptly captured the emotional high that came from the breadth and diversity of perspective when he noted, "The many levels and aspects of collaboration . . . made me giddy" (p. 4). These findings suggest that the diverse kinds of thinking involved led to the emotional high. A course that requires a large amount of creative as well as critical thought calls on divergent thinking.

Moving back and forth between reading plays and developing a play required constant shifting between creation and critical analysis. Since "highly creative people are very good at marshaling their brains into bilateral mode" (Bronson & Merryman, 2010), the researchers integrating playwriting were able to cultivate a normal part of the brain function. Integrating drama developed the students' ability to move easily between differing modes of thought. The experience confirmed the complementary nature of literary criticism and creative writing (Blythe & Sweet, 2001). It was necessary for the participants to inhabit the literary world, to become spectators of plays, and to reflect on their own lives before they could trespass onto the creative world. In the studies mentioned, diversity of perspective and of information fueled the creative collaboration. Today's global economy values difference. By modeling creative collaboration, universities help cultivate future leaders who can harness the "collective genius" (Hill, 2014) of their organizations because they understand that the concept of authorship has shifted in the twenty-first century.

The Synthesis of Deep Learning

Many studies of drama integration give evidence for how its economy of creativity fosters deep learning. According to Warburton (2003), deep learning involves "paying attention to underlying meaning. It is associated with the use of analytic skills, cross-referencing, imaginative reconstruction, and independent thinking" (p. 45). Cope distinguishes between surface learning, whose intention is "to recall isolated pieces of knowledge or procedure in assessment situations" and deep learning, whose intention is "to develop a personal understanding" (2003, p. 418). In Freeman's study, "Drama at a Time of Crisis," "deep approach learning is almost always a significant feature in the development of creative thinkers" (2012, p. 16). Freeman's four characteristics of deep approach learning—motivation, activity, interaction through doing, and a well-structured knowledge base—are evidenced in other researchers' findings. In the current study, the weekly survey shows that motivation, the first characteristic Freeman names, was high from the start of the course (7 on a scale of 10). The fact that the student and community members participating in *Higher Ground* were new to theatre suggests that they were highly motivated to audition. Next, drama abounds in activity, the second characteristic of deep approach learning: scene work, blocking, and rehearsing involve moving in space and time. The etymology of the word *drama* is "action." Further, as an interaction with the audience, the performance demonstrates the third characteristic of deep learning, interaction through doing. As Chun (2012) notes, "a culminating performance task should require students to call on all the learning acquired in the course" (p. 27). The fourth characteristic of deep learning—a well-structured knowledge base—is what the participants established by reading modern classics, contemporary one-acts, and three collaborative student plays. Freeman's four characteristics of the deep learning approach aptly capture elements of the current study's method.

A psychologist of creativity describes the affect connected with deep learning. The research done by Csikszentmihalyi (1996) articulates the heightened enthusiasm, psychic energy or sense of flow—even a tension—experienced by the deep approach learners. According to Csikszentmihalyi, "Creative thoughts evolve in this gap filled with tension—holding on to what is known and accepted while tending toward a still ill-defined truth. . . . Even when thoughts incubate below the threshold of consciousness, this tension is present" (p. 103). In the current study, the survey suggests that the participants were "too involved to be concerned with failure" (p. 112). By all accounts, the participants experienced what Csikszentmihalyi calls flow, an optimal experience, a deep sense of enjoyment, an effortless involvement. The snowballing enthusiasm of those involved with *Higher Ground* provides quantitative evidence. More than 5,000 people have participated in the *Higher Ground* project, and more than 6,000 have seen at least one performance in a county of fewer than 30,000 (Chaney, 2015). According to a *New York Times* article, "Tackling the Problems of Appalachia, Theatrically," Gipe, the professor who first staged the plays, "was interested in addressing issues rather than endlessly naming them" (as cited in Tavernise, 2011). What began as integrated drama in a community college has flourished because the participants "wanted to take advantage of the untapped creativity in the community" (as cited in Barrett, 2014). The longevity of the *Higher Ground* series of plays gives witness to the power of deep learning on the part of spectators as well as performers.

Deep learning through drama integration is a feature evidenced in many studies of curricular as well as course innovation. Sahlberg and Oldroyd (2010) report of a teacher in Sweden who used the arts as a central organizing principle throughout the small private school's curriculum, structured the staff into cross-disciplinary teams, and devoted the entire year to the creation of an original musical theatre production by the students. As a result, "The motivation and self-efficacy of students were enhanced by this particular approach to creative project-based learning" (p. 295). On a course rather than curricular level, history teachers have used drama for a deep approach learning and historical debate (McDaniel, 2000). Dramatic role-playing enabled McDaniel's students to gain a deep understanding of complex historical debates. Choosing a difficult text and having the students design the roles themselves maximized their involvement. Prosecutors, defense, and judges each had to develop their own perspective on the situation. In the history course's role-play as in the literature course playwriting, the instructor's role was to facilitate a student-driven discussion (McDaniel, 2000). Similarly, Howlett (2007) set aside four weeks for his eleventh grade American history students to focus on his students' creative skills by teaching an understanding of case law and its effects on our society. After each group of students researched their chosen case and wrote a legal brief explaining why they thought the case they selected was significant, the last two weeks were spent writing and performing the classroom dramas based on their case.

Of all the characteristics of deep approach learning identified in studies of theatre integration, the student outcome most frequently cited is developing empathy. At the Academy of Holy Angels, the volunteer experiences of the students at a homeless shelter become the story line of their original play *There's No Place Like Home*: "In the end, it was not about statistics. It was about the kinds of people they had met and empathized with" (Sawyer, 1996, p. 39). The current study's participants were not experiencing a crisis; instead of empathizing with homelessness, the *Hashtag Therapy* writers deepened their understanding of each other's personal problems. For the past two spring semesters, the researcher's classes have been producing plays about the bloodiest Civil War battle at Shiloh in relation to the experience of veterans coming home after fighting in the Middle East. Often a teachable moment sets the stage for empathic deep learning. As Eisner (2002) notes, teachers must exploit teachable moments, even when it means altering the course syllabus. The teachers who contributed to "We Go On: A Dozen Essays by Artists and Educators on Why Theatre Matters in a Time of National Crisis" (Slaight et al., 2011) show how they improvised their instruction after the 9/11 attacks. By seizing a situational context, students learn that theatre is a safe place to grapple with the real world. The parent of a high school playwright was moved to tears at a scene her son had written after the 9/11 attacks. She valued theatre's power to heal personally and collectively through her son's story about a homeless man who parted with his most prized possession to shield a boy as they walked back into the destruction to find his parents (Slaight et al., 2011). She recognized that "theatre allows teenagers to step into the mind and soul of a character with understanding and compassion" (p. 4). About *The Grandparents Project* DeGiacomo et al. (2005) write, "Ultimately, these students are growing in self-knowledge and deepening in human understanding, surely among the goals of any undergraduate liberal arts program" (p. 141). They cite an email from one participant who, because of the project, was able to mend the relationship with her grandmother before she died.

Deep understanding has been expressed in the writer/performers' response to their work at all levels and in many settings. In Tanzania, after a workshop performance by students of Global Empowerment Theatre, "cheering, the students and teachers in the audience leap to their feet" (Holmes, n.d.). Like the experience of the kindergarten children in Howell and Corbey-Scullen's (1997) class, these writer/performers knew that their voice had been heard and their experiences had lived vicariously in their audiences. As Holmes indicated, to be heard as you have never been heard before is a revolutionary act. The joyful scene backstage following the curtain call is a universal marker of empathy and deep learning.

The Empowerment of Ownership

In relation to deep learning and collaboration, studies of integrated theatre testify to the power of ownership for the students. Students used the arts-based form of drama to give life to their thinking (Diamond & Mullen, 2000). Playwriting allowed the participants to find their own

voice. As Cox (1988) points out,

> what is most important in the end is not that a play or film or videotape is produced. It is that students . . . find and use their own voices through scriptwriting and performing as they brainstorm, share, write, revise, and finally act on their own ideas in the fertile and relatively safe environment of a small group of other students who are also seeking to find and use their own voices. (p. 164)

In the current study, editing dialogue for authenticity became the special provenance of a self-appointed script editor. While the study does not offer the lengthier testimonies of the Centre College blogger or the news stories written on the *Higher Ground* series of plays, the current study's participants shared the sentiments of their counterparts at Centre College who said, "To us, [*After Orpheus*] is more than just a play, it is a journey. Our journey. Nothing can replace it, or even come close" (Droughn, 2013). The Southeast Kentucky Community College students echoed the Centre students in attesting to the "power of the art form to initiate social change" (Saldaña, 2010). According to the collaborators, producing *Higher Ground* expanded their ability to apply what they learned in the creative arena to other aspects of community life. According to the *Higher Ground* Facebook page, "Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of us have changed what we think of as possible. Continuing to tell new stories is important, particularly in a place where so many feel the story is at its end. In continuing to create, we believe, we embody hope. We become the future" (as cited in Barrett, 2014). These examples of collaborative playwriting and performance show how students thrive on creating original work. From a class in Kentucky to global empowerment theatre in Tanzania, "students have taken ownership of the play because it is so much theirs" (Holmes, 2012). As Kaufman and Seidel (2012) also observed, the experience of being the creator of a work shifts "the image of the student in his or her own mind to one of an active contributor, highly engaged in the real work of a particular field" (pp. 156-57). A Transylvania student playwright explained, "That feeling of accomplishment is what determines how good the experience was for us" (as cited in Bowden, 2013, p. 15). Aitken, Fraser, and Price (2007) observed that students' increased agency led to real engagement and real learning.

It should be noted, however, in terms of ownership and self-efficacy (Nicholas & Ng, 2008), the more the researcher is able to step back, the more ownership the students are able to experience. The benefits for college students, like those for young children, resulted from a process that was mostly student-centered, where students experienced a freedom to direct most of the process (C. Wright, Bacigalupa, Black, & Burton, 2008). In a study of elementary school students, researchers found that playing a game they had constructed was a better way to enhance student motivation and deep learning than playing an existing game (Vos, van der Meijden, & Denessen, 2011). Similar to the dress-up play center of the three-year old, the college students in the current study drew on their imaginations, but they also drew from each

other, "from both the inside out and the outside in" (Eisner, 2002, p. 93). Student ownership and empowerment requires the researcher to resist the temptation to second-guess the participants or take over. Like Lublin (2003), the researcher in the current study was more in the position of observer and facilitator than of participant. By "quieting [one's] deepest fears of losing control" (Horn, 1993, p. 10), the researcher allowed the participants to develop their own creative thinking. For the teacher to serve more as a catalyst than a director, the learning through drama process "probably works better with students if the teacher has no formal drama experience" (Duke, 1982, p. 6).

Performance is the final step in ownership. Students will not have "trespassed" onto the dramatic arts until they have risked presenting their creation to the public. As Cox (1988) noted about her middle school students, "The real payoff in cooperative learning is in the class's communication of their original ideas to an audience" (p. 159). According to a participant in *Today Is History*, "We did something, we came together and made this play, and now it's over, but we put a message out there" (as cited in Bowden, 2013). To realize their creation, participants need to experience the effects of their creation on an audience: "Like the proverbial tree in the woods, art is not complete until it is enjoyed by an audience" (Medavoy & Greer, 2012, p. 172).

Audience response is an important part of the exploration, experiment, and journey. For that reason, *After Orpheus* was performed at multiple venues. Its Fringe Festival performance was reviewed. As a result of the positive feedback to performances of *Higher Ground*, the script for the fifth *Higher Ground* drama has been funded. Like the Tanzanian students in Holmes' class who performed their play at other schools, the Rotary Club, and an International Film Festival, students from the researcher's recent classes have performed their play and presented at the National Collegiate Honors Conference (Adams, Baisden, & Davis, 2014; Nieman, Palmer & Sutphin, 2015). To promote the arts it is important to remove the fourth wall separating the audience from performers. For that reason, the students at Southeast Community and Technical College began by recording oral histories with community members before articulating themes for *Higher Ground*. Diamond and Mullen (2000) enlisted the audience's participation during a performance by casting their audience as patrons in their restaurant play scene. The cast of *Today Is History* obtained written reflections from the audience after the performance. Because of the participants' ownership, the effects of these collaborative projects are extending beyond the classroom.

Other Methods

While the key findings from the current study of arts integration--collaboration, deep learning, and ownership--map onto what the literature has identified as important learning outcomes, other methods have been used, including playwriting books, improvisation, and writing

pedagogies. For example, according to a survey of members of the Playwrights Program of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education, 90% of the survey respondents indicated that they used existing plays as models for their students (M. Wright, 2004). Even though almost all studies used existing plays, few used playwriting books for anything more than reference. In the current study, the researcher provided no formal instructions on playwriting. Other researchers have used playwriting books about the principles of dramatic construction, such as Niggli's *New Pointers on Playwriting* (Howlett, 2007). In a more recent course taught by this researcher, Dixon's *Breaking from Realism: A Map/Quest for the Next Generation* (2015) served as a guide. To illustrate the wealth of innovative play forms, the researcher posted video trailers of the plays discussed in the book on the course web site. The links to brief videos added to the class's knowledge base about innovative theatre. In each case of integrated playmaking, the specific academic content, student learning objectives, and campus setting shaped the amount of scaffolding needed to integrate the play into the core course.

A number of studies found that improvisation was also an excellent tool to bring together a diversity of perspectives. Eisner (2002) points out that when well taught, the arts "help youngsters learn how to yield to the emerging leads . . . how to relinquish control in order to find new options in the work" (p. 236). As Miller (2013) observes, improvisation-based exercises can also develop an emotional connection and trust among the participants. The researcher may need to coach students on the principles of improvisation, such as "accept-add," defined as being "open to accept the stage partner's materials (such as ideas, feelings, images, actions), [and] creative to add his/her own materials and develop them for an improvised dialogue" (Shem-Tov, 2011, p. 106). In addition to helping access students' emotion and vulnerability for playwriting, improvisational skill can become useful in a workplace setting or business environment (Murphy & Hajnal, 2009). The student not only creates a real-world product but also cultivates emotional intelligence for the workplace.

While some studies used improvisation at the idea-generation stage, others used creative writing pedagogies to elicit material for the play. For example, once the topic or theme of the class play was determined, Melville (2013) and DeGiacomo et al. (2005) teased out nuanced portrayals by giving the participants writing prompts before drafting the script. Students collaboratively highlighted words or phrases that stood out in their anonymous writings. They then wrote and performed mash-up poems that informed play revisions. Mazor (2002) provided sample prompts for a high school playwriting course. In fact, one researcher concluded from more than forty years of college teaching that exploratory writing is "the single most valuable teaching strategy for promoting critical thinking" (Bean, 2011, p. 121). Class discussion need not preclude individual writing. So, instead of starting the search for play ideas with a formal essay prompt, writing an exhaustive list or an honest catalogue of complaints ("I hate when . . ." or "I must . . .") provided a concrete strategy for accessing the class's concerns (Ponsot & Deen, 1982, p. 85). In addition to the joy of collaboration, students

also had opportunities to explore their individual thinking and experience outside of the group. For example, in week five of 15, students commented on the following blog post referencing characters on the reading list but asking the participants to identify a potential play character: "Nora, a childlike wife; Martha, a frustrated alcoholic; Hamm, a blind disabled tyrant; Ted, an attention whore—describe a real person you know something about." The important thing is to offer a rich diversity of perspectives and information. As Robinson (2011) points out, creative insights often occur by making unusual connections in environments that cross boundaries and move between different frames of reference.

Limitation and Direction for Future Studies

A limitation of the current study is the lack of objective quantitative evidence that shows the power of integrating the dramatic arts into the curriculum. The weekly student survey provides subjective evidence of involvement with the activities in the course. An objective outside measure might make arts integration more persuasive, especially when applying for funding. For example, Bonwell and Eisen (1991) compare the effectiveness of a play's presentation of course material with a lecture that covered the same material. On an immediate post-test, students exposed to the play retained more information. Unlike the general education course participants in the current study, Bonwell and Eisen's study does not involve writing the play but uses drama as a tool for active learning in teacher education. Howlett (2007) found that creative lessons that encourage participatory involvement can result in greater historical understanding as well as improved reading and writing skills as measured by "an item analysis of the multiple choice questions and comparing essay responses from the New York State Regents Exam" (pp. 330-331). A dramatic performance presents a qualitative assessment for deep integrated understanding; the test results add quantitative evidence of the deep approach learner's enhanced knowledge base.

The present study, though a part of a larger local phenomenon and a larger practice, is a "single-shot study." Given Eisner's call for individual studies to be part of a research program, this qualitative study attempted to build on previous integrative efforts, such as the Kentucky playwriting phenomenon. However, as Eisner (2002) notes, stand-alone studies do not have the far-reaching power of the larger quantitative studies outlined at the end of *The Arts and the Creation of Mind*. Given the scarcity of current studies at the post-secondary level, it would be useful to apply Eisner's agenda for research in arts education, specifically to integrating the dramatic arts into core courses. Why has a collaborative college playwriting and performance phenomenon struck Kentucky? Why have such diverse institutions as Berea College, Transylvania University, Centre College, Southeast Community and Technical College, and the participants' university all produce student-written plays? The shared Appalachian storytelling tradition may be part of the answer.

Another explanation worth exploring may relate to funding. The inner city initiative for playmaking projects such as Horn's (1993) *The Streets Don't Lie* was funded by the National Arts Education Research Center. The initiative in the poorer states to incorporate the arts was funded by such private organizations as the Rockefeller Foundation, and federal-state partnerships such as the Appalachian Regional Commission. Both of these groups funded the *Higher Ground* plays. Is the student writing and performing a testament to the effectiveness of these programs? The Harlan County Project is thriving in its efforts to use theater and arts education "to instill the habit of creative thinking throughout our community and help Harlan County create a sustainable economy" (Appalachian Teaching Project, n.d.). Finding answers to such questions would provide access to a larger research program that demonstrates "transfer from the arts to other subjects" (Eisner, 2002, pp. 220-224). Including five or more colleges in Kentucky in such a study would help build a case for filling the gap in arts education at the post-secondary level.

Concluding Thoughts

The grassroots experience described in this article challenges the idea that American students are condemned to experience the "creativity crisis" that has intensified since 1990 (Kim, 2011). Federal and state funding cutbacks for the arts make it even more important for educators to integrate them into their academic courses. The argument for integrating the dramatic arts into the curriculum is twofold—economic and moral.

The economic argument stems from the fact that today's students are tomorrow's workers. Students are gravitating toward majors like business, economics, and psychology. Students in every discipline need projects that necessitate tapping into the creative centers of the brain. On the one hand, we are living at a time when there is a "demand for creative thinkers" (Freeman, 2012, p. 11). On the other hand, the percentage even of elementary schools making theater instruction available has fallen dramatically, from 20% a decade ago to 4% in the 2009-10 school year (Parsad et al., 2012). According to Bridgstock's 2010 study of creative industries graduates, "It is now accepted that Western nations are shifting to economies where creativity is a key determinant of growth, to the extent that these areas are growing at more than twice the national averages" (as cited in Freeman, 2012, p. 12). In a larger study, IBM's survey of more than 1,500 Chief Executive Officers from 60 countries and 33 industries worldwide, "chief executives believe that—more than rigor, management discipline, integrity or even vision—successfully navigating an increasing complex world will require creativity" (IBM, 2010, para. 1). In the United Kingdom, Jester and Stoneman (2012) have already developed a guide for introducing playwriting into the secondary English curriculum. In the United States, individual college as well as high school teachers are spearheading such curricular reform by rethinking their syllabi to tap into students' creative intelligence.

College teachers are not simply preparing tomorrow's workforce; they are educating tomorrow's decision-makers and problem solvers. The moral argument for integrating the dramatic arts concerns the moral development of the future leaders. Gervais's understanding (2006) of the significance of the collective experience of writing and performing drama is based on concern for young adolescents' moral development. College students are still in the process of developing values and choosing a life style. The dramatic arts are a way to place meaning and values into the syllabus. Playwriting and performing are not only humanizing for the students (Chappell, Craft, Rolfe, & Jobbins, 2012) but transformative for the community that participates, as it was for the townspeople participating in and attending *Higher Ground* and the actors recruited from outside the class in *Today Is History*. In this way, teachers create change in education as national educational reform initiates social change. If the Common Core State Standards for K-12 education are intended to position students "to compete successfully in the global economy" (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012, "Mission Statement," para. 1), then a moral education requires developing skill in the creative and purposeful expression of language. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2011) recommended that curricular redesign honor the fusion of the 3Rs (core academic content mastery) and 4Cs (critical thinking and problem solving, collaboration, communication and creativity and innovation). Strengthening creativity, therefore, continues at the post-secondary level—not only for its sake but also as an avenue for strengthening the core subject, articulating values, and preparing for a global economy.

The argument for an integrated curriculum (Miller, 2013; Russell-Bowie, 2009) or for "a place for the arts in the mainstream curriculum, as core subjects in schools" (Kaufman & Seidel, 2012, p. 159) may seem like a noble dream. Nearly half of secondary schools do not require coursework in arts for graduation (Brenchley, 2012). Yet individual educators are making a start. Collaborative international playwriting programs have been piloted between students in Chicago, United States, and Birmingham, England (Jester and Stoneman, 2012). In the United States, Salvante (1993), an administrator of playwriting residency programs for public schools, imagined how collaborative playwriting could become a catalyst for educational reform. To go beyond the limited usefulness of stand-alone research, Eisner (2002, pp. 209-229) has outlined a rigorous agenda for research in arts education that can promote and realize the dreams for integrating the arts. In the face of the NEA and NEH budget slashes to arts and humanities departments in higher education, Eisner's ambitious agenda of objective studies will take time to execute.

In the meantime, however, given that marginalization of the arts in today's school curriculum is unlikely to change soon, the margins are providing "a time-honored space for creating both safe and subversive territory in which to work both with integrity and in innovative ways" (Kaufman & Seidel, 2012, p. 159). An immediate tactic is for all educators to become "creative trespassers" embedding the dramatic arts in their core courses. By bringing the

magic of theatre into the classroom, they will not only prepare the student for the new economy but also educate the whole person. A century ago in his chapter on "Educational Values," Dewey (1916) said that every step from savagery to civilization "is dependent upon the invention of media which enlarge the range of purely immediate experience and give it deepened as well as wider meaning by connecting it with things which can only be signified or symbolized" (para. 2). Students need to give expression to their experience, and teachers need to hear what students have to say. The process of finding metaphors to express and create meaning continues for students in higher education. Since college students have become increasingly focused on their professional goals, college educators need to find imaginative ways to integrate the arts in general education. In the process of interdisciplinary integration, students will discover that they embody both artist and scholar in one person. Some will become the country's future playwrights; others will populate theatre audiences. All will become creative problem-solvers. If drama is to retake its place in American culture, educators need to integrate the dramatic arts into their courses.

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About the Author

Gabriella Bedetti is Associate Professor of English and Theatre at Eastern Kentucky University. She received her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of Iowa, where she co-founded the *Museum of Art Bulletin*. Her translations of, interview with, and essay on the French theoretician Henri Meschonnic appear in *Critical Inquiry*, *Diacritics*, and *New Literary History*. Her publications on rhythm appear in *Language and Style: An International Journal, World Literature Today,* and *The Wallace Stevens Journal*. A publication on creative learning appears in *The National Teaching and Learning Forum.* Interested in cultural change, she is investigating the metadiscourse of digital natives.

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