

PART 1: WHAT IS LOVEWELL?
(ORIENTATION, FOUNDATIONS, AND CONTENT)

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introductory Statement

This is the story of Lovewell Institute for the Creative Arts (Lovewell Institute). The following pages are an examination of what Lovewell Institute is: its origins, major themes, characters, methodology, procedures, activities, research, evaluation, and its potential to transform lives and communities. This Project Demonstrating Excellence (PDE)/dissertation blends autoethnography, historiography, and other forms of qualitative research as it examines the evolution and development of Lovewell Institute's philosophy, pedagogy, human resources, the creative process, business, social action, spiritual implications, and educational applications of its process and methodology. One portion of the qualitative research was derived from a Likert Scale Questionnaire administered to Lovewell students in 2004. Other relevant qualitative data have been gathered over the years from several additional studies and evaluations focused on the Lovewell Method and Lovewell Institute. This PDE/dissertation is also a chronicle and analysis of Lovewell Institute's events, workshops, productions, organizational development, programmatic innovations, staff training techniques, and logistical adaptations of the Lovewell Method.

Lovewell Institute is a complex concept, although, when broken down into its various components, it is not a complicated idea. Building a "cultural community" is at the core of Lovewell Institute's mission with the understanding that cultural implies multi-cultural, and community implies global community. The theory is that through merging creative process, education, the arts, and social involvement, an effective

methodology has emerged. The Lovewell pedagogy and curricula has developed out of blending key elements from the various domains included in the interdisciplinary arts (music, dance, design, theatre, literature), education and the social sciences. Arts-based research and creative process-based research require a holistic approach to disseminating and interpreting data – more of an unfolding of the workings of a delicate process than calculating a statistical outcome. It is in this spirit that the reader is invited to explore the evolution of Lovewell Institute, and the development of the Lovewell Method as examined qualitatively piece by piece in the following pages.

I hesitate to oversimplify a description of Lovewell Institute and the Lovewell Method in the interest of introductory brevity. However, it might help the reader if I shine the light ahead on a few basic facts. Lovewell Institute sponsors workshops, classes and seminars that offer participants the opportunity to create original interdisciplinary artworks from conception through production while being guided by trained professionals in an atmosphere of mutual respect and acceptance. The Lovewell Method provides the philosophy, pedagogy, curricula and staff training that assure a valuable learning experience, artistic excellence, social relevance and personal development. The interweaving of these domains and disciplines provides a journey that is best taken one step at a time, making connections slowly and naturally rather than rushing to conclusions or anticipating destinations.

This PDE/dissertation honors the essence of traditional dissertation structure (Introduction, Literature Review, Research Methods and Procedures, Results and Findings, Discussion, Conclusions and Implications, and Bibliography). However, because of the organic nature of the subject and the inherent interdisciplinarity of Lovewell Institute and the Lovewell Method, some of the content of those structural

components will be integrated into the overall narrative. In addition to chapters on each component, some of the data are embedded and synthesized into the context of this PDE/dissertation as the “story” of Lovewell Institute unfolds.

Statement of the Problem

One of the most pronounced problems being experienced by America’s public educational system is that the domain of “the arts” is continuously undervalued and underutilized as an instructional tool. We have all heard the familiar cry that when funding cuts occur, music, theatre, dance, and visual arts are the first areas to be eliminated or marginalized. This situation has become a cliché that modern American society seems to tacitly accept. The area of interdisciplinary arts is a relatively new field that is currently evolving in many unique permutations. Because interdisciplinary arts is one of the major topics of this PDE/dissertation, and because it has emerged as a discrete field of its own as opposed to the individualized fields of music, theatre, dance, and visual design, I will refer to it as a singular entity. Reunited under the umbrella of interdisciplinary arts, unique combinations of disciplines take on a new power and synergistic potential in the realms of education, social action, and personal development.

When the foundations of our national educational system were being formed, there were religious, economic, and political mandates that dictated what was taught in the classroom. Eventually, there emerged a great need for trained workers to feed the voracious appetite of the expanding Industrial Revolution. In that era, the educational system was understandably geared toward fulfilling those needs through skill training that directly applied to factory and office jobs. According to Tanner and Lackey (2004),

The Industrial Revolution (1850-1949) occurred as factories proliferated in the U.S. to produce such products as firearms, textiles and sewing machines. The

Common School movement arose between 1840 and 1880 in response to a belief that education provided mainly by family members or through apprenticeships was insufficient to prepare children to work in factories and offices. Educational reformers, including Henry Bernard and Horace Mann, argued that public education was essential to our nation's economic success. (p. 22)

With the dawning of the space age, the educational system was modified to emphasize engineering-related studies. As a boy growing up in the 1960s with high scores in mechanical reasoning on standardized differential aptitude tests, I was encouraged by teachers and administrators to pursue a career in mechanical, electrical, or civil engineering. I had no interest in securing a job in engineering. It took some time for me to make the connection that mechanical skills could also be applied to composing music; structuring plays; telling stories; and moving actors, singers, and scenery around on a stage. One wonders how many creative artists were guided into engineering careers because the evaluation tools being used at that time were measuring aptitude and skills that were subject to limited, narrow, and misleading interpretations.

In the Midwest in those days, a profession in the arts was considered an oxymoron. I knew that people in Kansas reluctantly paid for movie tickets, audio recordings, and books. I also knew even as an isolated Midwestern adolescent that someone somewhere valued artistic endeavors enough to create a substantial market for them. So why was the potential revenue source for artists not reflected in our local Kansas economy, educational system, or community consciousness? The prevailing attitude across much of America was that the arts were supposed to be an avocation and something one did in one's spare time never expecting to be paid. Also, in my region of the Midwest, the arts were intended primarily for girls and sports were for boys.

Evidently, the reasoning was that the men would be the breadwinners and only the women would have enough time and patience to dabble in the arts without being paid. The arts were considered entirely too frivolous and meaningless for Midwestern males to seriously consider as a career choice.

When I was 14, I made the decision to pursue a career in the arts in spite of my misleading test results and the advice of my school counselors. I fought for a life in the arts with the full expectation that by 2006, the educational culture would evolve its philosophy and measurement tools to include creativity and the arts as major components of its curriculum. I am concerned that so little progress has been made in this area over the past 30 years. Eisner (2002), one of America's leading educators, suggests that we are currently returning to the "manufacturing plant" model of education:

What we are now doing is creating an industrial culture in our schools, one whose values are brittle and whose conception of what's important narrow. We flirt with payment by results, we pay practically no attention to the idea that engagement in school can and should provide intrinsic satisfactions, and we exacerbate the importance of extrinsic rewards by creating policies that encourage children to become point collectors. Achievement has triumphed over inquiry. I think our children deserve more. (p. 3)

While in my 20s I had the opportunity to travel and work in Europe. While exploring European cultures, I fully realized that there were other schools of thought and practice on the topics of art, culture, and education. As an undergraduate at Carnegie-Mellon University (CMU), I took an enlightening interdisciplinary course in the history of arts and civilization. It was not, however, until I lived and worked with Europeans that I realized that the role of the artist was considered vital to the culture. Artists were

honored and generally held in high esteem. It seemed to me that art and culture were greatly valued as an essential part of the European community. Through years of trial and error, artistic endeavor had been woven into the fabric of society and consequently enjoyed a prominent position in most European cultures. I also learned that in Europe the local and national governments routinely fund the arts. In contrast to American culture, it appeared that the difference between *celebrity* and *artistry* was clear, and that a well-rounded education included a heavy dose of arts and humanities no matter what career path was indicated. The daily life, the architecture, the popular culture, the educational systems, and the social customs in Europe reflected an aesthetic sense absent from my all-American experience.

As I moved from America's rural Midwest to the urban East in pursuit of my artistic and educational goals, I noticed another disturbing trend--the perception that the arts were essentially an exclusive domain reserved for the wealthy and privileged. My impression was that the highly publicized arts events in most metropolitan areas became a kind of overpriced elitist spectator sport. Escalating ticket costs for the opera, Broadway productions, ballet, and symphonic concerts evidenced the lack of our ability as a society to give the common citizen access to culture and any "connectedness" to creative expression. This goes right to the heart of the disturbing question of whether economic impact is or should be the primary factor in determining the value of the arts to a civilized society. The frequent references in this PDE/dissertation to community arts refer to a fast-growing fellowship of socially conscious artists and arts-conscious social activists devoted to the transformation of our culture through grass-roots arts initiatives. Putting a price tag on art as a commodity rather than a cultural necessity is a volatile issue, but one that must be scrutinized when we look at our society's critical need for

education reform, community building, and fostering global consciousness - all things that the arts do well.

In my early attempts to articulate the need for a new and more comprehensive approach to arts education, I was drawn to *Coming to Our Senses* (American Council for the Arts in Education [ACAE], 1977). The ACAE formed the Arts, Education, and Americans Panel, chaired by David Rockefeller, Jr., designed “to promote the arts as an integral part of school curricula at all levels of education” (p. 245). In the ACAE report, John B. Davis, a panel member, stated,

When we look at the arts, we are looking at much more than the arts, we are looking at what a concerned society should do in improving the basic human condition. I am increasingly convinced that education as it is constructed now is incapable of doing all that we want done. We’re nibbling at a pillar of the structure, while in reality a much more massive attack on a general societal condition is called for. (p. 245)

I believed I had a vague idea of what was “called for” even though I did not yet know how it was going to be accomplished. I saw the “general societal condition” and I wanted to be part of the “massive attack.” Those thoughts of John B. Davis helped me clarify my mission and set the course for the development of Lovewell Institute. His words are more relevant today than ever.

In 1999, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the United States Department of Education (USDE) responded to an Arts Education Partnership (AEP) Task Force recommendation that the government help support recent research in arts education, focusing on cognitive capacities used and developed in learning and practicing the arts and how these related to academic performance and social development. This

initiative resulted in a compendium of arts-related research studies issued from the AEP (2002) funded by the NEA and USDE, entitled *Critical Links; Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development*. The compendium reviews 62 scientific research studies of arts learning in dance, drama, music, visual arts, and multiarts - including an overview essay on the issue of the transfer of learning from the arts to other academic and social outcomes (AEP). The following quotation by the Director of AEP, R. Deasy (as cited in AEP), summarized the dangers of eliminating the arts from public school curriculum (excerpted from his opening remarks at the National Press Club press conference on the day the report was released):

Critical Links shows that cutting back on arts education is counterproductive to our national commitment to providing a quality education to all students. Doing so can be particularly harmful for students from economically disadvantaged circumstances as well as those needing remedial instruction. The report also shows how young children benefit greatly from arts instruction. (p. 1)

Arts educators are repeatedly asked to justify the value of arts education. School boards, educational administrators, curriculum developers, government officials, appropriation officers, and financial directors often demand proof that the arts benefit society and enhance education. Those of us who had struggled for years in the trenches of arts education with insufficient research to verify what we knew to be true from personal experience were overjoyed when *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development* (AEP, 2002) was released. In describing the implications of his compendium, J. Catterall, Professor of Education at the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA), and the lead researcher for *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development*, stated,

First--the accumulated research of skilled scholars carrying out their work in a range of established methods is unambiguous: the arts contribute in many ways to academic achievement, student engagement, motivation, and social skills. Notions that the arts are frivolous add-ons to a serious curriculum couldn't be farther from the truth. (p. 6)

The real problem is the amount of educators and decision makers outside of the arts who will actually read and respond to the new study. Preaching to the choir is easy, but what effect will this study have on education reform? Also, a primary concern to some arts advocates is that too much emphasis on using the arts to transfer knowledge and skills to nonarts areas will ultimately dilute and diffuse the real essence of the arts. Addressing this issue at the same press conference, Catterall (AEP, 2002) responded,

While it is fashionable and valid to focus on the academic and social effects of the arts (and this volume unquestionably bolsters such a fashion), acting on the basis of the findings and conclusions of *Critical Links* could have the effect of reversing an important equation. An expansion of arts programs in the schools could lead to a generation with greater skills and interest in the arts than today's young adults who came through rather arts-starved school systems--i.e., to a society that supports the arts for many reasons, *including the aesthetic*. Any worries that interests in the non-arts benefits of the arts somehow undermine the quote-unquote true place of the arts in our society could prove completely wrong-headed. Expansion of the arts for some of the beneficial reasons supported in *Critical Links* could fold back and press for an America more widely interested in and supportive of the arts. (p. 6)

The arts speak to the creative spirit of humankind. The primary challenge is that

unless public education evolves and finds some way of addressing the human spirit in addition to the mind, body, and economic needs, our culture stands little chance of pulling itself up out of our descent into unprecedented war, terrorism, suspicion and greed. This fundamental challenge was clearly articulated by Krishnamurti (1981):

Though there is a higher and wider significance to life, of what value is it if we never discover it? We may be highly educated, but if we are without deep integration of thought and feeling, our lives are incomplete, contradictory and torn with many fears; and as long as education does not cultivate an integrated outlook on life, it has very little significance. (p. 11)

There are ways of addressing spiritual values and character issues without making the process a religious practice. Integrating the arts into education provides a unique delivery system for character building, healing, and deeper understanding of a balanced quaternity of mind, body, spirit, and emotions (Jung, 1964). This PDE/dissertation focuses on some ways in which Lovewell Institute has been developing an interdisciplinary methodology that addresses these challenges.

A Description of the Research Questions

There are three distinct parts to this PDE/dissertation, each one based on a research question that frames a particular aspect of the Lovewell story. Each of the three questions is addressed through a research methodology that aligns with the specific content of the inquiry. The research methodologies utilized in each section are described in detail in chapter 3. The following paragraphs describe each of the three sections as defined by the research question.

Research Question 1. Part 1, What is Lovewell? (Orientation, Foundations, and Content) explores the essence, mission, and history of Lovewell Institute from a

historiographic and autoethnographic point of view. Part 1 also examines the process that defines Lovewell Institute and drives the Lovewell Method (content). Part 1 is comprised of chapters 1 through 11. Historiography (Bentley, 1999; Block, 1971; Gilderhus, 2002) and autoethnography (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Ellis, 1999, 2004; Holt, 2003; Janesick, 1994; Shank, 2006) were utilized as research methodologies for this section because they were the most efficient ways to encapsulate the origins and examine the etiology of Lovewell Institute and the Lovewell Method. The foundational elements of the Lovewell process are also discussed in this section. As the founder of Lovewell Institute, I have had the distinct privilege of observing the evolution of the institute and the method from their earliest beginnings. This is a unique vantage point. I have been the defacto repository of the archives, artifacts, and heritage of Lovewell Institute.

Historiography emerged as clearly one of the most effective methodologies with which to approach this challenge. Autoethnography, recognized as a relatively new qualitative research methodology, became the obvious choice for exploring the theory and relevance of Lovewell Institute to the fields of education, the fine arts, social action, and personal development. Intuitive and reflective by nature, the Lovewell Method embodies the multiple learning styles that compelled me to process information and focus my innate curiosity on achievable and definable goals (Armstrong, 1993, 2001; Gardner, 1983, 1993, 1999; Lazear, 1991; Marks-Tarlow, 1996).

My perspective on Lovewell Institute is only one of many, but because of my long-standing intimate relationship with the institute, a valid one. Part of the challenge in answering this first research question involved deconstructing my own process of assimilating and sorting through data. Some call this process metacognition. I first heard the term metacognition from my Core Professor, Dr. Penn, as she assisted me through the

challenges of how best to conduct this inquiry. I had spent many years going through the process of conceiving and developing Lovewell Institute without having the time or opportunity to step back and examine the significance of what I was doing or how I was doing it. Dr. Penn helped me realize that it was time to embark upon this metacognitive journey if I were to truly explore the meaning and value of Lovewell Institute and my theory of the Lovewell Method. How was metacognition going to help me do this? Dr. Penn suggested that I begin by examining the process that I had intuitively employed as I created the productions, workshops, and structure that have become the foundations of the institute and method. Livingston (1996) stated,

Metacognition is often simply defined as “thinking about thinking.” In actuality, defining metacognition is not that simple. Although the term has been part of the vocabulary of educational psychologists for the last couple of decades, and the concept for as long as humans have been able to reflect on their cognitive experiences, there is much debate over exactly what metacognition is. One reason for this confusion is the fact that there are several terms currently used to describe the same basic phenomenon. (e.g., self-regulation, executive control), or an aspect of that phenomenon (e.g., meta-memory) and these terms are often used interchangeably in the literature. (p. 1)

As I probed deeper into the subject of metacognition, I discovered the area of autoethnography. In my investigation, metacognition emerged as the way in which I observed the data that I had accumulated, but autoethnography emerged as the research methodology that best suited my first research question. Holt (2003) described autoethnography in the *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*:

Autoethnography is a genre of writing and research that connects the personal to

the cultural, placing the self within a social context (Reed-Danahay, 1997). These texts are usually written in the first person and feature dialogue, emotion, and self-consciousness as relational and institutional stories affected by history, social structure and culture (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Reed-Danahay explained that autoethnographers may vary in their emphasis on *graphy* (i.e., the research process), *ethnos* (i.e., culture), or *auto* (i.e., self). Whatever the specific focus, authors use their own experiences in a culture reflexively to look more deeply at self-other interactions. (p. 2)

Historiography is another approach I have taken to answering the first research question. I consider this method particularly appropriate because it has given me the opportunity to report to the best of my ability personal and professional observations of the Lovewell organization, theory, and method as they have developed from the very start. It was encouraging to learn that there is academic value in being the *primary source* in historical research (Block, 1971). Lovewell Institute does have a unique history filled with highly creative artists, imaginative educators, dedicated social reformers, and inspired souls. As a primary source, I have known and observed most of them.

Research Question 2. Part 2, How Does Lovewell Affect its Constituents? (Form and Evaluation), discusses the characters and groups of people who support and implement Lovewell Institute's mission (form); the outcomes, responses, and analysis (evaluation); and the story of education reform; social transformation; and personal development that Lovewell Institute pioneers and advocates. Part 2, chapter 12, is an examination of the effects that Lovewell Institute has had on its constituency--the students; the staff; the parents; the teachers; the community; the domains of music, theatre, dance, design, and interdisciplinary arts; and the fields of creative process and

producing new works. To answer this second research question, I investigated various forms of qualitative methods and tools including art-based research (McNiff, 1998) and more traditional forms of evaluation and assessment. Part 2 is also an analysis of a substantial amount of assessment data collected over the past 20 years including a recent Likert Survey Questionnaire (see Appendix A), a doctoral dissertation from Kansas State University focused on Lovewell Institute, and student and staff evaluations developed by professional research consultants and administered to students at several Lovewell Institute summer workshops and afterschool programs.

Research Question 3. Part 3, What is Lovewell's Potential for Growth and What New Relevant Theories Can Be Derived from This Research? (Significance) is the final section - framing the conclusions, limitations, and recommendations regarding this inquiry. The nature and scope of Lovewell Institute and the Lovewell Method are difficult to assess with standard measurement techniques and traditional research methodologies. In Part 3, chapter 13, I have endeavored to contextualize and synthesize the findings of this study while honoring the unique nature of the subject. This chapter is my interpretation of the vast amount of data accumulated and analyzed during the course of this inquiry. The third research question is answered by my attempt to discern the real *meaning* of these results and findings. This study has led me to conclusions, revealed limitations, suggested recommendations, and compelled me to make some final statements regarding the potential of Lovewell Institute and the relevance of the Lovewell Method.

A Definition of the Terms Most Used

The Lovewell Method, Lovewell Institute, interdisciplinary arts, creative arts, and interpretive arts are five terms used often in this PDE/dissertation. They are intended to

convey very specific meanings within the framework of this study. The best way to describe these terms is to place them within the historical and situational context out of which they have emerged.

The Lovewell Method. The Lovewell Method is an applied arts education philosophy and theory that I have been actively developing over the past 20 years. I am quite certain that, on some level, I have been preparing all my life for creating this methodology. The Lovewell process really began to coalesce as a clear vision in the mid-1980s while I was working with bright young artists who were recording the songs and stories I previously wrote for the nationally syndicated children's television series, *Romper Room & Friends* (Claster & Claster, 1981).

In 1981, Hasbro Incorporated, an international conglomerate that specialized in children's entertainment and educational products and services, commissioned me to write and produce 35 songs for *Romper Room & Friends* that would blend entertainment and educational values for children ages 3 through 10 (Spangler, 1985a, 1985b, 1985c, 1985d, 1985e, 1985f, 1985g, 1985h, 1986, 1987a, 1987b, 1987c, 1988a, 1988b, 1988c, 1988d). *Romper Room & Friends* was syndicated on over 200 television stations nationwide and included an additional 13 stations, each with its own local host and production team utilizing scripts, songs, and video clips supplied by Hasbro Incorporated, the new owner of *Romper Room & Friends* (Claster & Claster, 1981). While working on this project, I met with the television producers and devised a strategy for creating songs based on certain age-appropriate subjects and age-appropriate language (lyrics and dialogue). In my early 30s and not yet a father, I questioned the way the entertainment industry's educational initiatives underestimated the intelligence of children. Hasbro Incorporated, a leader in early childhood educational programming, hired a child

psychologist as a consultant to help determine the age and content appropriateness of the new songs. As I wrote and rewrote to meet the approval of the producers and psychologist, I realized that ideally we should also be consulting the children themselves. I proposed this to the producers, who told me there was no time or strategic plan on how to involve the children in the creative process, with the implication that it would not be cost-effective (S. Claster & J. Claster, personal communication, March 3, 1981).

In addition, in 1981, the corporate sector exhibited little interest in the involvement of children in their own learning process. As the project progressed from the creative phase into the production phase, I worked directly with children in the recording studio as they sang the songs and acted out the stories. At this stage, it occurred to me that the children were capable of adding a very important dimension to the material, that of their own perspective of the world and of their own linguistic style. I was convinced that they should have been consulted earlier in the process. After speaking with the children, I did change a few lyrics and some of the dialogue in the stories during the recording process. They spoke their own language, and I tried to capture some of the authenticity of their vocabulary as I scrambled to rewrite certain sections between takes. However, the real value of this exercise for me came in the form of my new sense of determination to further explore the idea of empowering the children themselves to create materials to communicate their own ideas, perspectives, and feelings to their peer group through their own voices, in their own language, and with their own metaphors.

The core of the Lovewell Method is the creation of an interdisciplinary work of art (usually referred to by the more accessible but slightly misleading term *musical theatre*). Participants in a collaborative workshop setting establish the theme for the production through a series of guided brainstorming sessions. After the theme is selected,

the staff artists and instructors guide the participants through the creation of the characters who will “play out” that theme and the creation of the dialogue, the music, the lyrics, the visual design, the choreography, and the staging of the scenes. This work is then performed publicly, videotaped, and audio recorded for archival purposes and then reflected upon by the participants. Assessment and evaluation of the experience is enhanced by feedback from the audience. Lovewell policy dictates that participants in the workshops are given maximum ownership over their creations. The Lovewell process is described in detail in chapter 10.

My challenge has been to examine how and if this notion of learner-centered arts-based education could evolve into a valid methodology for learning, communicating, and creating new works of artistic merit and social relevance. I tested my ideas by serving as an artist-in-residence in several programs that I designed for schools in Bridgehampton, New York; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Salina, Kansas. In each of these schools, I worked with the administration, faculty, and students to guide them through the creation of an original full-length, fully produced, interdisciplinary production. Success with the three programs led me to the conclusion that this theory was a potentially powerful and effective new approach to arts education and deserved further development and inquiry. As an artist-in-residence, I began developing the theory empirically by applying principles I acquired in my professional career to an educational setting and then observing the results. My observations inevitably led to a series of modifications and improvements. This process allowed for the evolution of the theory into a methodology. It became known as the Lovewell Method.

Lovewell Institute. Eventually, I applied for a not-for-profit corporate status and organized a board of directors for Lovewell Institute in order to protect and advocate the

mission of arts-centered education and further develop the Lovewell methodology. These steps towards institutionalizing the concept resulted in the creation of an organizational entity that attracted like minds dedicated to education reform, social transformation, and personal development through the arts. In addition, incorporating Lovewell Institute (1989) *Articles of Incorporation* opened the passage to eligibility for foundation and corporate funding. With this 501(c)3 tax-exempt status, Lovewell Institute became a business, in addition to an artistic vision with a social and educational mission. Although I was learning that business savvy, social responsibility, and educational accountability were essential components of Lovewell Institute, the heart of the Lovewell Method remained grounded in the perspective of the artist and the “creative process” that every true creative artist employs intuitively. This is one of the reasons why I, as an artist, took an autoethnographic approach to this study.

One of my goals is to present the “Lovewell Story” in a thorough, balanced, and honest manner. Fundamentally, I envision the Lovewell Method from the viewpoint of an artist. I believe that the artist’s viewpoint must always provide the cornerstone of the Lovewell mission. My adventure with the ongoing process of developing this methodology has been largely intuitive and empirical by nature. I welcome this opportunity to clarify the Lovewell Method and Lovewell Institute to facilitate a deeper understanding of the methodology, the organization, the research, and the cultural community that has formed around the concept.

Over the years, many people have sought a clearer definition of the Lovewell Method and how the Lovewell Institute has evolved. Answers to these and other questions concerning the scope and essence of the methodology will emerge as this story unfolds. Many of the issues addressed here deal with the plight of the artist/scholar in a

contemporary society that somehow has managed to separate and compartmentalize the fields of arts, education, and social action. The Lovewell theory reintroduces the model of the artist/scholar and the blueprint for a holistic approach to arts, education, and social change that addresses the spirit as well as the mind and body. I believe that the idea of preparing the whole child for a successful lifetime of learning is preferable to training another worker to enter the marketplace only to choose a career based purely on economic factors or popular trends.

My initial awareness of some of the challenges facing arts-based education actualized when as a student in middle school, I found myself in the assistant principal's office pleading my case to take classes in orchestra, chorus, *and* journalism rather than the required classes of vocational shop (woodworking, metalworking, and mechanics) and gym. I knew what I wanted and what I needed to learn. Knowing the courses offered, it made no sense to me that while the opportunities were right in front of me, I was denied access to them by intractable policy. This was Kansas in the early 1960s and I lost the battle (although I still have the dustpan I made in shop class rusting in my garage).

The assistant principal's interest lay more in whether my hair and belt were conforming to the dress code than if my classes were contributing to my career plans. I did agree with his "well-rounded" argument, but well-rounded means different things to different people. To me, well-rounded meant being well trained in music (vocal and instrumental), writing, theatre, dance, and fine arts. The accumulation of experiences similar to this made me dedicated to creative learner-centered educational constructs (Fairfield, 2001).

This experience more specifically taught me that I would have to be responsible for my own education whether it occurred within or without the system. The system was

not responding to the needs of the culture. This was the first of many occasions in which I was forced to seek solutions outside of an unresponsive system. Over the next few years, I taxed my single mother's meager budget by taking many private lessons in piano, acting, voice, trombone, guitar, and dance. My mother and I paid for all these lessons because this kind of instruction was not available within the school system. The larger question of how to interface with "the system" is an ongoing challenge for Lovewell Institute and a theme I will explore from various perspectives.

Interdisciplinary arts. I have discovered that interdisciplinary arts is a vague concept even to many of those who are engaged in it. The eight-syllable term basically means the field of the arts that combines all the existing arts disciplines (i.e., music, dance, theatre, visual design, creative writing, etc.) under one umbrella. The fields of fine arts, performing arts, and creative arts are also included in this eight-syllable descriptor of what was once simply referred to as "the arts." I find great value in reconnecting the arts disciplines in the interest of allowing the *content* of the artist's message to dictate which aspects of each art form are best suited to tell the story. As a creative artist, I find that having the tools of all the art forms at my disposal gives me the ability to articulate my message in a way that enriches and clarifies more than if I were limited to just one discipline. Anderson (1995), an arts professor and advocate for interdisciplinary arts, raised these relevant questions in his article in the *Arts Education Policy Review*:

Does disciplinary separation of the arts represent the fracturing of society? Is it a manifestation of the separation of people one from another, to the point of little common understanding and the lack of values and beliefs held in common, leading, in short, to anarchy? Or are the disciplines of art simply a reflection of a healthy, highly advanced society, specialized and hierarchical of necessity

because of the vast wealth of available skills, knowledge, and creative outlets?

When the arts are highly specialized and separate, is it saying something about the separation of art from life, or is it a reflection of a high level of artistic and cultural sophistication? (p. 11)

Experience has taught me that the field of interdisciplinary arts paves the way for experimentation, research, and development in hybrid uses of art forms and techniques and ultimately expands the palette of artists searching for new ways to express the human condition. Artists who are motivated by concepts (conceptual artists) tend to embrace the opportunity to utilize whatever tools most effectively convey their message. Opera, musical theatre, and film all routinely combine music, dramatic dialogue, visual design, and dance to tell their stories. Not only do these art forms blend the individual disciplines into a coherent hybrid, but they necessitate collaboration between the artists of each discipline. This type of collaboration often creates a synergism that results in new and innovative forms of communication. Interdisciplinary art is not a new concept, but the terminology and field of inquiry are fairly recent developments. The Lovewell Method and Institute are steeped in the practice and potential of this field.

Creative arts and interpretive arts. These two terms are best defined by comparing and contrasting. The cornerstone of Lovewell Institute's philosophy and mission is creating *content*. In this context, content is the product of the creative process. I have created an illustration, "Balancing the Arts," to better understand the theory I am proposing (see Appendix B). Contemporary American society naively consolidates the arts together into one unwieldy unexamined package. Our daily lives are constantly informed by professional arts, amateur arts, educational arts, commercial arts, therapeutic arts, community arts, and a host of other discrete domains usually combined by our

leaders and funders into a category considered nice but nonessential. There is a significant difference between the *creative arts* and the *interpretive arts*. Through years of being a professional artist and working with countless artists in all disciplines, I have observed a critical distinction that the arts, educational, social service, and leadership communities have apparently failed to notice or failed to address. The fundamental dynamic force driving the creative arts is somewhat different from the force driving the interpretive arts. This observation is by no means a value judgment. It is employed here only to shed light on the imbalance between creative arts and interpretive arts, and to help clear up the vagueness that surrounds those concepts.

Creative art is “content oriented” and concerns giving birth to new ideas, innovative concepts, and visions of things yet unrealized. Interpretive art is about delivering, interpreting, and conveying content in the most effective and professional ways possible. Creative art is writing the play, composing the opera, or directing the movie. Interpretive art is acting in the play (interpreting the words of the playwright), playing the violin in the orchestra (communicating the notes of the composer), or operating the movie camera (capturing the vision of the director and screenwriter). Of course, these are oversimplifications to make a point, but the point must be made to comprehend the nature of Lovewell Institute and the Lovewell Method. These two aspects of the arts often overlap and can be symbiotic and complementary when they are in balance. However, I suggest that these two components of art making have become dangerously out of balance in our culture and specifically within our educational system.

Overemphasizing the interpretive arts at the expense of the creative arts ultimately robs our society of vital creative energy and resources. For instance, young minds that may not be predisposed to brilliant performance skills on a musical instrument

(interpretive) might still have the potential to become great composers or songwriters (creative). Students who may not have a solid command of grammar because of second language, learning style, or disabilities may still become successful novelists, screen writers, or playwrights (observers of human behavior) due to higher proficiencies in the creative arts rather than the interpretive arts. Most theatrical and musical art in schools is not original. In most cases, students learn lines from published plays and play musical selections by composers they will never meet. Dance programs usually involve choreography designed by a master, tradition, or the teacher. Occasionally, the dance instructor will allow a student to choreograph a number. Visual art is often the best way to express originality in a school setting, although the projects are usually themed or involve techniques dictated by specific materials or physical resources. Seldom are art students told to express any idea they wish with whatever materials best suit the message.

Lovewell's philosophy does not suggest that fundamentals and basic techniques of each discipline be ignored but simply that a healthy balance between creative arts and interpretive arts be restored. Motivation is a primary factor in the learning curve of any student, and the creative arts have consistently demonstrated a vast untapped potential to increase motivation for learning the skill-sets that define the interpretive arts as well as core academic subjects that are nonarts-related. I worked with children labeled hyperactive (attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, dyslexic, etc.) who could simply not sit still long enough to absorb written or verbal instruction. Yet, when given the chance to stand up and improvise an idea to their peers in an artistic context, they became articulate; confident; and, in some cases, eloquent.

Twenty years of experience have taught me that once at-risk students are acknowledged, rewarded, and praised for coming up with valuable, relevant, and creative

ideas, they are much more motivated to buckle down and address interpretive skill-building activities such as word processing, spelling, grammar, practicing scales, etudes, exercises, and hours of drilling and rehearsing. Conversely, I observed many students use their natural proficiency for interpretive skills to motivate and inspire themselves to develop their creative skills. Although the focus here is on the creative process, the Lovewell Method provides techniques and activities that establish a healthy balance between the creative arts and the interpretive arts. I cannot overemphasize the importance of this distinction between the creative arts and the interpretive arts as this discussion continues.

How This PDE/Dissertation is Organized

Chapter 1, Introduction, is organized in five subsections: (a) Introductory Statement, (b) Statement of the Problem, (c) A Description of the Research Questions, (d) A Definition of the Terms Most Used, and (e) How This PDE/Dissertation is Organized. The first chapter describes the conception of Lovewell Institute and the Lovewell Method as a means by which to fill a void that I sensed in American culture. This chapter briefly describes how the convergence of social forces, environmental circumstances, personal motivations, and professional experience led to the birth of the Lovewell Method and the Lovewell Institute. It also discusses the essence of the creative arts as distinguished from the interpretive arts, a fundamental requirement for understanding the philosophy and mission of Lovewell Institute and the Lovewell Method.

Chapter 2, Review of the Literature, is organized around four primary categories: (a) Interdisciplinary Arts, (b) Education, (c) Social Sciences and Psychology, and (d) Creative Process. Literature from each of these categories is discussed from the perspective of how it relates to the research questions and the synergistic interaction of

the domains. Chapter 3, Methodology, is an examination of the primary research methodologies used in this study: historiography, autoethnography and findings based on my qualitative analysis of a Union Institute and University Institutional Review Board (UI&U IRB)-approved Likert Survey Questionnaire. This chapter also includes a description of several existing qualitative studies conducted by other researchers that were focused on Lovewell Institute and the Lovewell Method.

Chapter 4, Early History: The Seeds are Planted, looks at the domains, fields of study, disciplines, and personal development activities that set the course for my intellectual and creative urge to develop the concept for Lovewell Institute. It deals with those formative life-affecting decisions we (or our parents) make before we are consciously aware that we are making them. Chapter 5, Academic Foundations, surveys the college years and considers the academic foundations that would become so important in formulating an interdisciplinary arts education methodology. Chapter 6, Professional Foundations, continues the examination of the evolution of the Lovewell concept as it interfaces with the professional world--the arts and entertainment industry. Chapter 7, Social and Organizational Foundations, describes how the artistic, academic, and social aspects of the concept converge to form the Lovewell Institute and its regular ongoing programs and workshops. In Chapters 1 through 7, I have integrated and blended historiography with autoethnography by using two distinct styles. The historiographical sections appear in the conventional American Psychological Association style in Times New Roman font. The autoethnographical sections appear in Arial font and are indented and single-spaced.

Chapter 8, The Productions, is a chronicle that I compiled that documents the substantial body of work generated by the Lovewell process. The descriptions of the

productions created through the Lovewell Method help analyze the patterns in the collective concerns, insights, fears, interests, passion, artistry, and humor of the participants. Overall, the themes and stories in those productions reveal a remarkable compassion and concern for the human condition not often associated with young people. Self-involvement is a necessary developmental stage, but the Lovewell process appears to be an opportunity for young artists to venture out of their circumscribed areas and comfort zones into the broader realm of social consciousness. Chapter 9 explains the Learning Meditations, how they evolved, how they are administered, and why they are the bedrock of Lovewell's applied philosophy. Chapter 10 describes the formats, curriculum, and sequential phases of the Lovewell process. This chapter also identifies and coalesces the interacting themes, activities, and procedures of this interdisciplinary concept as they *add up* to form a clearer vision of what Lovewell Institute is and how the Lovewell Method functions.

Chapter 11, *Other Perspectives on the Lovewell Method*, is a continuation of the investigative process and examines the "characters" and character types who bring the Lovewell Method from theory into practice--the people and training tools that breathe life into the Lovewell philosophy. It also surveys other "characters" and organizations conducting work similar or complementary to Lovewell Institute. These first 11 chapters are designed to focus and shed light on the first research question, "What is Lovewell?"

Chapter 12 focuses on the second research question "How Does Lovewell Affect Its Constituents?" This chapter, entitled "The Likert Survey and Other Assessments," constitutes a more traditional qualitative research design that examines the effects that Lovewell has had on its constituency: the students; the staff; the parents; the teachers; the community; the domains of music, theatre, dance, design, and interdisciplinary arts; and

the fields of creative process and producing new works. Chapter 12 is an analysis and interpretation of a substantial amount of assessment data collected over the past 20 years including a recent Likert Survey Questionnaire (see Appendix A), a doctoral dissertation from Kansas State University, and student and staff evaluations developed by professional research consultants during several Lovewell summer and afterschool programs.

Chapter 13, Limitations, Recommendations, and Conclusions, is an examination and discussion of the third research question, What is Lovewell's potential for growth and what new relevant theories can be derived from this research? This is where I, as the researcher, offer my best effort to derive *meaning* from the combined content of the research. In this final chapter, I attempt to synthesize the data and fuse it into meaningful conclusions and recommendations.