

PART 2: HOW DOES LOVEWELL AFFECT ITS CONSTITUENTS?
(FORM AND EVALUATION)

Chapter 12: The Likert Survey and Other Assessments

Overview of the Second Research Question

This chapter addresses Research Question 2, “How Does Lovewell Affect its Constituents?” Although statements and examples of how the Lovewell process affects its constituents are integrated throughout this entire document, chapter 12 focuses on more traditional forms of evaluation and documentation. The first part of this chapter examines the results of the Likert Survey, approved by the Union Institute & University IRB on July 10, 2004, and conducted during the 2004 Lovewell summer workshops. The UI&U IRB requirements stated that because all of the participants were age 18 or under, I would need to distribute two written forms to each participant. One of the forms would have to be signed by the parents and returned to the researcher. The first form was a “Your Rights as a participant” (see Appendix D) that let the parents know the nature of the study and what would be expected of their child should they choose to allow the child to participate. The second document was the Informed Consent Form (see Appendix E). It provided more detailed information regarding the research study and secured the signed approval from the parent for their child’s participation in the study. As I handed out the forms to the students, I explained the research study. I assured them that their responses would be anonymous and that they were not required to participate in the study. They were also informed that their parents’ signatures would be required for them to participate.

The second part of chapter 12 analyzes assessment data collected during the past 20 years, including a doctoral dissertation from Kansas State University which focused

on Lovewell Institute. I also examine the results of student and staff evaluations administered by professional research consultants and administered to students at various Lovewell summer workshops and afterschool programs.

Results of the Likert Survey

Twenty nine out of the 40 students enrolled in the 2004 Lovewell Summer Workshops returned the Informed Consent Forms with their parents' signatures. Four other students did not meet the deadline for parental signatures and were not included in this study. Eighteen participants between the ages of 13 and 18 were in the teen program. Eleven participants between the ages of 8 and 12 were in the junior program. Descriptions of the productions they created appear in chapter 8. The teen program produced *Banned Together--A Musical Taking Liberties* (Lovewell Institute, 2004b), and the junior program produced *Art Divided--Art United* (Lovewell Institute, 2004a). The programs ran concurrently; however, they were staffed by separate Lovewell artist-instructors (the administrator and technical director were shared by both programs). This Likert survey was administered during the closure exercises on the day after the final performances in the cafeteria of the University School on the campus of NSU.

At the suggestion of Dr. Lawrence Ryan, my Second Core Professor, I asked a statistical expert to run a procedure on this Likert survey to determine its validity and reliability. Melbourne Stringer, a colleague at Nova Southeastern University, measured the precision (reliability and validity) of the Likert survey by calculating its Alpha Reliability Coefficient (Cronbach Coefficient). "An Alpha Coefficient of .828 was obtained. This indicates your survey demonstrates high reliability and reproducibility." (M. A. Stringer, personal communication, December 3, 2006) A copy of the "Lovewell Study Statistical Analysis" appears in Appendix H of this document.

There were 22 items on the survey (see Appendix A). The first 21 items were designed to measure the subjects' attitudes regarding the Lovewell experience on an affective continuum ranging from *agree strongly* to *disagree strongly*. Item 22 asked the subjects to write and answer their own question regarding their experience at Lovewell. In this chapter, I will examine each item on the survey individually and attempt to determine the meaning and significance indicated by the responses. (See Appendix C for a full view of the Combined Statistical Data of all of the respondents.) The following paragraphs are my interpretation of the results of this survey.

Item 1: My Lovewell experience presented new career possibilities for me. Out of the 29 subjects, 12 (41.38%) agreed strongly, 14 (48.28%) agreed somewhat, and 3 (10.34%) had no opinion. None of the subjects somewhat or strongly disagreed. This indicates to me that although 89.66% of the respondents agreed the Lovewell experience offered some new career possibilities, the majority in the *somewhat agree* category could mean that their careers were possibly not the foremost subject on their minds. There is a revealing comparison to Item 17 wherein 23 subjects (79.31%) strongly agreed and 5 subjects (17.24%) somewhat agreed that "At Lovewell I have gained knowledge and skills in the arts." This could imply that even though a strong majority felt they had gained knowledge and skills in the arts, they were not all necessarily connecting that phenomenon with a career possibility.

Item 2: At Lovewell I was taken seriously, believing that my ideas counted. The response to this item was very illuminating. Only one respondent had no opinion, the others either strongly agreed (79.31%) or somewhat agreed (17.24%) that their ideas counted and that they were taken seriously during their Lovewell experience. The fact that a total of 96.55% of the subjects agreed with this item seems to indicate that one of

the major goals of the Lovewell Method was achieved with this group of students--the goal of giving the students a voice and true ownership over the production created through the collaboration.

Item 3: The counselors were fair and balanced in assigning duties. Twenty subjects agreed strongly, 6 subjects agreed somewhat, and 3 had no opinion on this item. With 89.66% agreeing (68.97% *agree strongly* and 20.69% *agree somewhat*) and none disagreeing, this seems to imply that the staff artists and instructors were not perceived as being unfair or unbalanced as they administered the program. Versions of this item have been included for years in Lovewell Institute's standard end-of-program evaluations, and the vast majority of students have consistently responded that fairness and balance are maintained as high priorities in every workshop.

Item 4: I am more aware of the need for cooperation with my peers as a result of my Lovewell experience. This item dealt with the personal awareness of the need for interpersonal skills. The Lovewell Method claims to teach the art of collaboration, and the response to this item seems to point out that with over 93.10% either strongly (62.07%) or somewhat (31.03%) agreeing, the participants felt that the Lovewell Method increased their awareness of the need to cooperate. The other 6.90% had no opinion.

Item 5: Working within a group has helped me to understand the value of individual contribution. This item embodied a somewhat mature concept of using the group dynamic to better appreciate and understand the value of individual contributions. It continues the "collaboration" theme and the idea of the value of collective effort and common goals. Twenty subjects (68.97%) agreed strongly, 7 subjects (24.14%) agreed somewhat, and 2 subjects had no opinion. This means that 93.11% of the respondents believed that the process had helped them increase their understanding of the value of

individual contribution to the group effort.

Item 6: As a result of my Lovewell Experience, I feel more motivated to participate in other creative endeavors. This item directly addressed the issue of creative process and the motivation to continue pursuing opportunities to engage in that process. As discussed earlier, creativity takes a certain kind of courage, and this item was designed to help determine if the Lovewell process can affect the motivation for creative process. One subject strongly disagreed, 1 had no opinion, and the other 27 subjects either strongly agreed (75.86%) or somewhat agreed (17.24%) that they felt more motivated to continue participating in the creative process. The 1 participant who strongly disagreed might be an indication that intense immersion in the creative process is not something everyone desires or needs. It is interesting to note that according to the other items and their percentages, whatever guided that 1 participant to strongly disagree with the creative process aspect of the experience did not appear to negatively affect his or her feelings about the social or skill-building aspects.

Item 7: I ask questions of the leaders when I don't understand something. This item was intended to help assess the learning environment and the students' willingness to admit they do not understand something and feel comfortable enough to approach the staff for help. Fourteen subjects agreed strongly and 14 agreed somewhat while 1 had no opinion. This suggests that 96.10% of the students felt that they could initiate communication with the staff and request help in understanding the concepts and content being brought forward. This item worked in tandem with the next item, which further examined the learning environment and accessibility-to-new-information issues.

Item 8: I ask my friends in the group to help me when I don't understand something. Adolescent pride and insecurity often prevent students from soliciting help

from their peers. Many young people prefer to appear as if they understand everything instead of risking being labeled stupid or naive. The responses to this item indicate that 55.17% *agree strongly* and 37.93% *agree somewhat* that they were in an atmosphere wherein they felt free to ask each other for help. This study was not designed to discern whether the student was the type of personality to ask for help from peers in any learning environment, and some respondents may be in that category. Still, with 6.9% having no opinion, the 93.10% majority who agree with this item would seem to indicate that there was a pervasive high level of comfort in requesting help from peers in understanding things during the workshops.

Item 9: I am pleased with my creative contribution to Lovewell. Of the respondents, 75.86% of the subjects strongly agreed that they were pleased with their contribution. I believe that this response speaks to the sense of accomplishment derived by a good majority of the students from the Lovewell process. The responses indicated 17.24% somewhat agreed, and 6.9% had no opinion. The majority clearly experienced a feeling of achievement from the process. A total of 93.10% apparently were able to derive some fulfillment from what they had created and shared with each other and with the audience. This response could also be evidence that there was a new level of confidence achieved by many of the students through the process.

Item 10: When called upon to perform, I remember duties and concepts we've studied during the process. There is nothing like a live audience to test whether the student has grasped how to apply what he or she has learned. Of the respondents, 96.56% of the subjects agreed that they did retain their lessons when they were under the pressure of performance. The responses indicated 68.97% strongly agreed, 27.59% somewhat agreed, and 3.45% had no opinion. The conscious application of theory and fundamentals

is a primary objective of any arts education methodology. This highly positive response rate could suggest that the content of the curriculum is being delivered effectively and with a good retention rate. These subjects are, of course, “self-reporting,” so there could be an element of bravado in their responses. I witnessed both performances of the production they created in 2004 and can attest to the fact that they did remember their lines, music, lyrics, blocking, choreography, entrances and exits, costume changes, and props. This would indicate that the results of their self-reporting were essentially accurate at least to the extent that the visible and audible evidence confirmed the statistics on this item. The fact remains that just as in the outcome of Item 9, this response would seem to imply that the subjects experienced a boost in authentic self-confidence and self-trust because they felt they had successfully applied the techniques and new learning they acquired during the workshop.

Item 11: I would like to spend more time on individual questions and concerns of the different artistic ideas that we learned. This item elicited the second largest *no opinion* response gleaned from the entire survey with 37.93% of the subjects indicating they had no opinion. There were a total of 18 subjects who somewhat agreed (24.14%) or strongly agreed (37.93%) that they would like to have spent more time delving into artistic challenges. Because the total number of *no opinion* responses in the entire survey, including every item, was 10.1% of the total number of responses, and on this item the *no opinion* responses totaled 37.93% of the responses, this might suggest that over a third of the subjects felt that this issue was not relevant to them. The *no opinion* responses could also indicate that those students felt they were satisfied with the amount of time they spent on questions and concerns regarding what they learned artistically. Another possibility is that the relatively high level of *no opinion* responses meant that the

participants simply did not understand the question.

Knowing that 62.07% of the subjects felt they would like to “spend more time on individual questions and concerns of the different artistic ideas” that they learned could imply that the length of the workshops should be increased. The staff artist-instructors have a good sense of the units of time required to create each phase of the product and that they must constantly move the process along in order to meet the deadlines. I realized while examining the statistics of the responses to this item that the time spent on artistic issues does not end when the program ends. The video, audio, and script archives provide untold hours of review and discussion regarding artistic decisions and creative choices made during the process. I know that the students engage in these postprogram examinations of the material they created because I have observed (and participated in) many of these review sessions. I have also heard parents and students discuss the phenomenon of actually extracting more meaning out of the productions at a later date. Some people gain a broader perspective of the content, meaning, and significance of a production by evaluating the video, DVD, or CD after the emotions of giving birth to it have calmed down. This survey was not designed to include longitudinal postprogram analysis of the process.

Item 12: I do my best when creating or preparing a role for a Lovewell production. This item had the survey’s highest percentage of respondents who strongly agreed (86.21%). The remaining 13.79% agreed somewhat that they did their best when creating or preparing their roles. The implication of this clear response is that the students were well aware that they had given the task their greatest effort and created the finest role they could in the production. I believe this response speaks of the engagement they experienced with the process. This response also suggests that the apathy of which young

people are often accused was not discernable in regards to this creative activity. The feeling that one is doing one's best does not only boost morale; I have observed that it also increases productivity. Students feeling positive about their psychological learning environment is an objective of the Lovewell Method and part of the mission of Lovewell Institute. If the response to this item accurately reflects "how Lovewell affects its constituents" as it relates to students doing their personal best, it has assisted the Lovewell Institute in identifying a way in which this objective is being successfully met. Achievement and accomplishment are some of the desirable outcomes of maintaining an atmosphere in which students are motivated and feel they are doing their best.

Item 13: I try to incorporate the positive experiences at Lovewell into my life.

From a research perspective, this item asks the question, "Are students consciously applying the Lovewell experience to their lives *outside* of Lovewell?" Are they able to take home the lessons learned and make the connection between the art they are creating and the lives they are creating on a daily basis? Does the empowerment transfer? Almost two thirds of the subjects strongly agreed that they tried to incorporate positive Lovewell experiences into their lives (65.52%), 20.69% agreed somewhat, and 13.79% had no opinion. This suggests that a majority of the students are aware that the Lovewell Method is designed to address more than the artistic and vocational skill-building aspects. The response to this item raises another question: "Are the students participating in the Lovewell programs to further their artistic goals, or to engage in activities that will enrich their social skills and self-awareness." This is a subject worthy of further exploration.

Item 14: My experiences at Lovewell will help me communicate my ideas and opinions more effectively in the future. Did the subjects feel that the Lovewell Method would help them improve their communication skills? Of those surveyed, 96.56% agreed

that the Lovewell experience would help them communicate their ideas and opinions more effectively (68.97% strongly and 27.59% somewhat). One respondent had no opinion. This is an encouraging statistic in that it verifies a degree of success with one of the primary goals of the Lovewell Method, improving communication skills. It also reinforces anecdotal evidence that I have collected over the years from conversations with parents, teachers, and alumni that students were able to communicate significantly better with peers, parents, and teachers after attending a Lovewell program.

Item 15: Lovewell concepts will help me be more aware of how I interact with society and my community. In Learning Meditation 4 (chapter 9), students are guided on a daily basis to be more aware of themselves, their surroundings, and the effect they have on others. In Learning Meditation 6, they are encouraged to “create each day in the spirit of cooperation and joy.” These are some of the “Lovewell concepts” referred to in this item. Of those surveyed, 44.83% of the respondents strongly agreed that Lovewell would help them be more aware of their interactions with society and their community, 41.38% somewhat agreed with the statement, and 13.79% had no opinion. This would seem to indicate that the Lovewell experience had a desirable effect on most of the students’ social awareness. These responses might also illustrate that social awareness is effectively teachable and learnable through this methodology.

Item 16: It is more important to know “how” to think rather than “what” to think. This item addressed the age-old pedagogical conundrum concerning the fundamental purpose of education. In that sense, this item endeavored to identify the type of learner engaged in the Lovewell workshop. Some students would rather just be given the information they desire, while others would rather learn how to get the information for themselves. Paralleling the old proverb, some hungry people would rather be given fish

to eat while others would rather be taught how to fish; the Lovewell Method does a bit of both. The interesting thing about these responses is that a majority of the subjects (86.21%) felt that it is more important to know *how* rather than *what* to think (58.62% agreed strongly and 27.59% agreed somewhat).

Because so many Lovewell students are self-selected, this statistic is really not so surprising. I have often been told by parents and teachers that once a potential Lovewell student learns the nature of the content and process being offered, he or she is convinced that they belong in the program. They intuitively recognize the compatibility of their learning style with the Lovewell process. The creative process seems to attract the kind of learner who prefers not to be told what to learn but rather how to learn (as indicated in the results of this survey item). Self-directed learning is a primary component of the creative process and, therefore, a focus of Lovewell's learner-centered pedagogy. The phenomenon that students do learn many basic technical skills and very discipline-specific information appears to occur because of (not in spite of) the Lovewell Method's emphasis on learning the broader skills of how to think, how to solve problems and how to organize random data into meaningful expressions of art. Of those surveyed, 13.79% had no opinion.

Item 17: At Lovewell I have gained knowledge and skills in the arts. Of those surveyed, 96.55% agreed that they had gained knowledge and skills in the arts (79.31% strongly and 17.24% somewhat). This is a very straightforward response that reveals that most of the students were of the opinion that they did gain knowledge and skills in the arts as a result of their Lovewell experience. Gaining these skills is clearly one of the primary goals of the Lovewell Method, and the response to this item would suggest that these goals are being met. One respondent had no opinion.

Item 18: At Lovewell I have gained knowledge and skills that will transfer to nonarts-related subjects. The response to this item indicated that 86.21% of the subjects agree that skills acquired through the Lovewell Method can and may be transferred to nonarts-related areas. The awareness of the transfer capacity is in itself significant. There is mounting evidence of the symbiosis between arts skills and nonarts achievement (AEP, 2002). This is a new and largely unexamined and unrealized concept in modern education. This item draws attention to the issue of *transfer*. None of the subjects disagreed with the item, and 13.79% had no opinion. Further examination of the phenomenon of transfer by educators, curriculum experts, and administrators would no doubt have an impact on its application and effectiveness within the school system. Infusion of arts-based techniques into the classroom as applied to core curriculum deserves more study and more active pilot programs exploring those potentialities. This item would suggest that the Lovewell Method is making some progress in this area.

“Educaintment” is a new term entering the academic lexicon. It has evolved in response to a new generation of learners who were raised in a technological environment wherein sitting at a desk being lectured to is no longer a preferred delivery method. There is every reason to make education as stimulating and as interesting as possible. The arts can do this. It does not really matter if the subject matter is arts related because drawing a picture, singing a song, or writing and performing a skit to illustrate an intellectual concept is often the most engaging way to make any point or remember any fact. How many of us still quietly recite the “30 days hath September” poem to remember the number of days in each month, sing to ourselves the “ABC song” when alphabetizing, or say the “i before e except after c” rhyme to help us spell? Music, rhythm, rhyme, pictures, and counting on our fingers all help the learner internalize and integrate the content.

From these simple devices to more elaborate constructs such as role-playing and improvising on social or historical themes, knowledge is often transferred more successfully if the learner is engaged emotionally and physically as well as intellectually.

Yoon (2000) spoke to this issue in his dissertation:

The processes of popular theatre have been found to be helpful in the development of useful social values and skills as well as critical and reflective thinking. . . Finally, in terms of the vocational benefits, Yawkey and Aronin (1982) emphasize the function of educational drama/theatre as a career education tool. They argue that educational drama/theatre activities could help young people learn the general nature of work, work attitudes, human aspects of work, dignity of labor, and job characteristics. (p. 18)

So, besides making learning more fun, arts techniques and activities could add significantly to the instructional toolbox of any teacher in most any subject area. Hopefully, the novelty of education and the skepticism regarding its academic legitimacy will evolve into a more measured approach to meeting the needs of a new generation of learners by making their learning experiences more interesting, more engaging, and more effective.

Item 19: I do better when working with others than when working alone. Of the respondents, 55.18% disagreed or had no opinion on this item. This raises an issue that, to my knowledge, Lovewell has never fully confronted. The creative process is, to many people, a very personal and perhaps even private process. Although the Lovewell Method does seem to emphasize the collaborative aspect of the creative process, it is not the only approach used. I resonate personally with this issue because I am one of those people who often prefers to create alone, in complete and secured solitude. Although I do greatly

enjoy collaborating, it has taken me many years to identify and nurture successful collaborations on my own projects. Students at Lovewell occasionally bring in completed songs, scenes, designs, or dance sequences. The response to this item might suggest that the issue of working alone versus working in a group should be further addressed by Lovewell. Of the respondents, 44.83% had no opinion, while 10.35% either strongly or somewhat disagreed that they preferred working in a group.

Because this is the largest *no opinion* response elicited in this study, it is worth trying to interpret why. It could be that the students simply do not care if they work in a group or by themselves. I suspect, though, that coupled with the “disagree” responses, it takes on a more significant meaning. I have a feeling that a considerable number of students who do prefer to create alone are somewhat stymied by the pervasive group dynamic. I know I would be in that group. Perhaps this is just projection but the observation has been made, and this item has brought attention to the fact that a balance should be maintained between the emphasis on collective creativity and individual creativity. The Lovewell Method should have a mechanism in place for those students who are easily intimidated by group process and subject to the discomforts caused by the extreme vulnerability that accompanies the creative process. Some artists seem to prefer to work alone simply because it is the best way to achieve their artistic goals, not because they are intimidated or shy. My experience has taught me that the optimum solution is to be able to create comfortably in either situation--either alone or in a group dynamic.

In my professional collaborations, there is an intuitive dance that occurs--we seem to know when it is preferable to work together and when we simply have to go into isolation to work through a particular issue. The situation arising out of this arrangement is that an artist can become very attached to his or her own creation and not want anyone

to change it, especially before it is fully formed. This is where the real art of collaboration begins. The response to this item will definitely encourage more exploration of the issue within the Lovewell culture.

Item 20: I believe the Lovewell experience provides time and guidance to explore new concepts and ideas. Of the subjects surveyed, 93.10% agreed with this statement (62.07% strongly and 31.03% somewhat), and 6.9% had no opinion. This response seems to imply that a substantial majority of the students were aware that they were in an environment that offered them the time and guidance to explore new concepts and ideas. Because creative process is philosophically constructed through the exploration of new paradigms, this response would signify that Lovewell is making considerable progress in creating a learning landscape conducive to those pursuits. Lovewell's efforts to establish an atmosphere of acceptance and reverence for new ideas described in earlier chapters seem to be successful to some degree. The results of this response would indicate that one way in which the Lovewell Method is affecting its constituents is by offering them opportunities to investigate new avenues, open up to new ways of seeing things, and discover fresh approaches to problem solving (Boud & Feletti, 1991; Savin-Baden, 2000).

Item 21: My experience at Lovewell has helped me in my personal relationships with friends, family, and others. This item has some similarities to Items 14 and 15. Although Item 14 dealt primarily with communication, and Item 15 dealt with awareness, this item asked the subjects to focus more on how the Lovewell experience has affected their personal relationships. Of those surveyed, 86.21% agreed that it had helped them in their personal relationships with family, friends, and others (62.07% strongly agreed and 24.14% somewhat agreed); 6.9% had no opinion; and 6.9% somewhat disagreed that they

had been helped in that way. This is slightly reminiscent of Item 18 in that it inquires into the transfer of certain skills and awarenesses from the Lovewell culture to the students' personal lives. In Item 18, the subject was transfer of academic or vocational knowledge and skills; in this case, it is the transfer of interpersonal skills and abilities. This response indicates that a majority of students clearly felt that the Lovewell experience helped them in their personal relationships.

Item 22: Write your own question regarding your experience at Lovewell and answer it. Use the space provided below. This item allowed the subjects to express their own views on the Lovewell process. I have analyzed the responses and organized them thematically. Twenty seven out of the total 29 subjects responded to this item. They had been assured that they could skip any item to which they did not wish to respond. Several main themes emerged as I analyzed the responses. The four primary themes were (a) acceptance, (b) values of creative process training and transfer, (c) friendship, and (d) confidence building. Below, I will examine these themes by using actual anonymous quotes from the written responses of the participants. For clarification, I will occasionally include the question the participants asked themselves:

1. Acceptance:

(a) "What is Lovewell's greatest influence on your everyday life? Lovewell helped me open up and share more with people."

(b) showed up here and everyone was my friend, not because they had to, but because they liked me for who I was and accepted me. This is my home away from home and this is one of the only places I don't have to act like someone I'm not.

(c) "Have you made friends with people at Lovewell that you normally wouldn't

be friends with? Yes, because you learn here not to judge a person before getting to know them.”

(d) “Most acting camps tell you what you’re doing or who you’re being but Lovewell does not.”

(e) “I have been very inspired by other people in Lovewell.”

2. Values of creative process training and transfer:

(a) How could Lovewell help someone in academic subjects? Lovewell can help a person in the academic aspects of school by helping to improve their writing skills. Lovewell encourages depth in writing, thus making it more mature. When writing a Lovewell musical, participants must look at every aspect that makes up a story, from a character’s motive to the overall theme of the piece. The experience of writing a complex play carries over to school assignments.

(b) “when you take your last curtain call you realize that was why you came. That although you may not have had as much ‘fun’ as everyone else, it was ultimately worth the time and effort.”

(c) “Lovewell challenges your creative power while creating a masterpiece and creating bonds that will last for a lifetime.”

(d) Did you think the affirmations [Learning Meditations] were a necessary part of the Lovewell experience? Yes, definitely because they’re very motivational and they are inspiring. The affirmations help to understand relationships between people and make you want to be and do your best.

(e) “Did I learn something new at Lovewell? Yes I did.”

3. Friendship:

(a) “The students all became friends . . . its more like a family that writes music

and plays together.”

(b) “What will make me come back year after year until I am a councilor? I enjoy learning the process and creating a production with a bigger family.”

(c) “I have never met as good of friends then I have made here.”

(d) “My experience at Lovewell helped me create new friendships.”

(e) “I hope to return to Lovewell again. True, because I had such a blast doing the things I love to do with people I love to be with.”

(f) “I come back to Lovewell every year because I love to create and perform. I love the feeling that I get when we write an entire musical in four weeks and I love the people who attend Lovewell.”

4. Confidence building:

(a) “Lovewell takes me and my ideas seriously, gives me great self-confidence, and helps me create.”

(b) “My experience at Lovewell gave me confidence in myself.”

(c) “Has Lovewell helped you build confidence?” (indicated 5, *strongly agree*; the participant paralleled the Likert scale format).

There were five responses to Item 22 that created and answered a question regarding future Lovewell experiences. One suggested doing “a program during the year (after school) with the same staff and process.” Another response was “I think that there should be more time, either in longer days or weeks.” The three other participants commented that they wished to return to the next Lovewell workshop.

The 22 items on this survey have shed significant light on the second research question, “How does Lovewell affect its constituents?” There have been other sources of data over the years that also help answer the second question. The following paragraphs

will examine some of those sources.

Other Sources of Evaluative Data

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, other studies and evaluations of Lovewell have been conducted in the past, and I have had access to those resources. In 1994, Kline of Florida Atlantic University administered an evaluation of the first Lovewell Program implemented in partnership with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Broward County. Her study was based on interviews with the staff, and pre- and postactivity questionnaires filled out by the student participants. This study was required by the Broward County Cultural Affairs Council as a component of the granting process. Some of the goals of this pilot program were as follows:

1. To enable at-risk youngsters to recognize and develop unrealized talents.
2. To develop cooperative learning and communications skills transferable to other life experiences.

In Kline's evaluation, she commented on this second goal:

An outstanding achievement toward this goal was realized by the theatre program [Lovewell] which brought together youngsters from four different neighborhoods in the county and of a wide age range (8 to 18) not only to propose and agree upon a coherent story that would allow the variously talented to participate but to persevere through the details of creating and rehearsing its developmental scenes and dialogue. (pp. 2-3)

These are two more specific goals that were identified for this pilot program:

1. To create in them the knowledge that they can focus their talents and energies on a valuable educational experience.
2. To suggest ways in which they might use their talents for a life-time career.

Kline (1994) commented on these goals in her evaluation: “Again, the very fact that the program achieved a closure of quality meriting a public presentation testifies to the achievement of sustained *focus*” (p. 3). There was another specific goal of that pilot program that helped us answer some staffing questions: to enhance the skills of participating staff.

Because this pilot program was administered as a new partnership with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Broward County, it required close collaboration between the existing staff of the clubs and a new staff of Lovewell artist-instructors brought in for this specific program. In discussing the response to this goal, Kline (1994) wrote,

Here is where the program seems to have been least successful and most problematical. Careful thought must be given to a situation in which highly trained and focused professionals are brought into a site where they are at least to a degree duplicating a category of instruction already being performed by Club staff. The staff must not be made to feel passed over, undercut, or generally threatened as to their job security and/or their image before the children with whom they work. This is a strong statement but it does reflect what I gathered to be the degree of displacement felt by the staff as their actions were described to me by the artists, who sympathized with them and reported that they themselves felt uneasy about the situation. The problem was probably at its worst in this first encounter between artists and their programs and the regular staff and their programs. It is clear that both sides need reassurance. Toward this end some of the confidence-building exercises used with the theatre [Lovewell] students might well be incorporated into staff and artist meetings. (p. 4)

In this statement, Kline was able to identify and articulate one of the primary challenges

of doing partnerships between Lovewell and social service or academic agencies with their own very specific agendas. The Boys & Girls Clubs constituents are mostly at-risk urban youth, and their staff is trained to enhance these children's lives with a variety of meaningful activities including basketball, weightlifting, ping pong, computers, community service, and tutoring. When an intensive interdisciplinary arts program merges with this kind of existing infrastructure, many difficult adjustments must be made. I was deep in the trenches when this program was being developed, so I know the details of why, in spite of the remarkable talent that many of these at-risk youth displayed during this program, the problems of implementation were sometimes overwhelming.

One example was when a girl who had a leading role in the production would freeze up during rehearsals while I was directing her scenes. She was a good student and had helped write her part, but she was often emotionally inaccessible. When I consulted with the Boys & Girls Club site director, I was informed that the girl's father was raping her in the mornings before she went to school. When I inquired why this had not been reported to the proper authorities, the director told me the girl's mother had pleaded to maintain secrecy because the father was providing the only paycheck in the household and they would surely be homeless if he was put in jail. I do not know what kind of staff training would remedy this situation but, with a situation like that looming over a project, it is extremely difficult to get a social service staff to agree with the artistic staff on how to proceed with the program goals. She did go on to perform the role with great success and was highly praised by both staffs. The Boys & Girls Club handled the domestic situation eventually through the right channels and appropriate policies.

Another example is a very talented boy who occasionally arrived late to rehearsals after having been beaten bloody while waiting for his bus. He would rehearse his songs

and dance steps at the bus stop and the bullies would tease him about being a “fairy” and routinely beat him up. In a conference with his mother and the site director, I found out he had been sexually abused by his uncle and was the target of constant bullying at school. His mother said he was devoted to the Lovewell program but she wanted to take him out of it for fear that it would encourage him to be gay by accepting him. Once again, the staff of the club had quite different solutions to the problem than the staff of artist-instructors. Lovewell staff artist-instructors felt that the boy’s mother should allow him to remain in the program and the acceptance would permit him to discover who he was in a safe environment. The Boys & Girls Club staff felt more inclined to “protect” the boy by keeping the boy home with his mother and avoiding contact with the arts program. After much discussion, the boy was allowed to stay in the program for several years and his growth as an artist and as a young man was astonishing. I learned from a conversation with him that he kept the Learning Meditations next to his bed where he could see them first thing in the morning and last thing at night. He told me that Lovewell had changed his life.

The Lovewell process has demonstrated, in numerous situations, that it has a positive effect on students labeled at risk. I know personally what a tremendous effect it can have on economically disadvantaged youth, emotionally disturbed youth, learning-disabled youth, and physically or mentally challenged youth. Kline’s (1994) aforementioned cautionary assessment of the need to have all staff properly trained and in alignment on the specific goals and objectives of the program was both insightful and portentous. One of the eventual outcomes of this observation was that Lovewell Institute has become very aware of the necessity to maintain autonomy over its ability to deliver and implement its mission. The Lovewell Institute now only enters into partnerships that

agree to let Lovewell Institute determine the content, methodology, activities, staffing, and scheduling. Some related recommendations will be discussed in the next chapter.

In his case history study of Lovewell, Yoon (2000) interviewed 10 former Lovewell students, 6 staff members, and 5 parents. The following statement is from an interview he conducted with the mother of a Lovewell student who traveled from Florida to Kansas for a summer workshop. She is describing her daughter and her daughter's friend 5 years after they attended the first of several Lovewell workshops:

I would say for both of them it totally changed their lives. It determined their career paths. It determined their personalities. It determined their level of dedication and commitment to their craft. It was definitely a turning point, a crossroads for both of these kids. (pp. 111-112)

Yoon went on to comment about how the parents felt about their children's achievements at Lovewell:

In response to the question, "How did you know that your son/daughter had achieved what you expected?" all five parents interviewed expressed favorable comments concerning the program. . . . Other comments made included: increase or improvement of independence, confidence, enthusiasm, and pride. . . . Lastly, two parents praised what Lovewell did for at-risk students. As one of them expressed: "I was very involved with . . . very high risk students. And there were three of them that had learning disabilities, and it [Lovewell] enhanced their focus. It gave them new direction and I saw them go back to school with new enthusiasm and feel that they had achieved and accomplished something of importance." (p. 114)

The statements made by the parents in these interviews echo what I have heard

from many parents over the years, that their children have gained confidence, independence, and a stronger sense of identity from the Lovewell Method. Another parent interviewed by Yoon (2000) had this to say about the academic value of the Lovewell Method:

Mostly, I liked the way that it creates a new model of education. It's education the way education should be because it encourages kids and it helps kids to strive to do the best they can, to be the best they can be. There is never any negativity associated with teaching kids in Lovewell and that's so different from public education in this country. And, to be really truthful, if there's anything negative to be said about Lovewell, it makes it very difficult for kids to go back into a public school environment. (p. 116)

When Lovewell students graduate from high school and get ready to go to college, many of them start reflecting on their Lovewell experience and wonder how they will fit it into their future. I have had access to numerous college applications and freshman class essays on the Lovewell experience. In her essay, Lovewell alumnus Cohen (1999) wrote,

I forgot that I couldn't write music. I forgot that I wasn't an artist, wasn't a poet, or a musician. And in my forgetfulness, I became all of these. . . . The uniqueness of my experience, and, I would guess, that of my fellow participants was due in no small part to a staff who emphasized the group dynamic in equal proportion to individual achievement. The atmosphere encouraged risk, stretching oneself within an environment of support and acceptance. (p. 2)

Thompson (1995), a former Lovewell student from Salina, Kansas, is now a professional stage manager working steadily in New York and Chicago. This is from an

essay written for her freshman theatre class:

The first time I ever experienced “magic” at Lovewell was in 1992, my first year as a student. The show, at this point, was just a bunch of unrelated stories. Sean McLemore, a fellow student, was outlining his character to the cast. He envisioned a rough, tough, cynical trucker named Mac. Sean was unsure how to fit Mac into the rest of the show, but perhaps the cast would allow Sean a scene set in a diner--that’s when the entire cast, unprompted yet simultaneously, jumped to their feet and cheered. They’d found a way to connect all the stories. *The Oracle Diner: A Short Order Musical* was born. Since that moment, I’ve seen “magic” at Lovewell many times. Every time has been just as miraculous as the first. (p. 6)

Riedel (1995) attended Lovewell summer workshops for a number of years before entering college at Kansas State University. Here is a statement from an essay he wrote for a freshman theatre class:

For me Lovewell had a very personal meaning. I found myself at Lovewell. Before I went to Lovewell I had no confidence in my abilities. The first year I went, I found out that I had the ability to develop an in-depth plot. I wrote a large part of the major scenes in the Lovewell shows that I have participated in. The first year I was in Lovewell I became the main plot writer. Any time someone had a question about the plot, they came to me! . . . I also found acceptance among my peers. Just looking back I can see the changes in my personality since I first attended Lovewell. I’m at peace with myself and with my family for the first time. I have more friends now than I have ever had before. It’s a wonderful sensation. I just wish everyone could experience the magic created by the Lovewell

experience. (p. 9)

Three postdoctoral students at NSU (not named in the evaluation report I read) conducted an evaluation of the 1995 Boys & Girls Club/Lovewell Cultural Arts Program attempting a new method of assessing the effects of the Lovewell program on students' self-esteem and self-discipline (NSU, 1995). They used the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (Piers & Harris, 1984), an 80-item standardized self-report survey designed to assess self-concept, and a 15-item rating scale designed to measure a participant's productivity within the program. Pre- and postprogram evaluations were administered and staff-artists were also interviewed. This evaluation helped identify one of the major challenges for afterschool programs involving socially and economically disadvantaged youth--attendance.

Lovewell was one of five arts programs being evaluated in the study, and the only one with steady attendance: "With the exception of one program (Boys & Girls Clubs/[Lovewell]), attendance was sporadic at best with children entering and exiting respective programs for what appear to be arbitrary reasons" (NSU, 1995, p. 3). The 4-month Lovewell afterschool program engaged students, and with the help of the diligent Boys & Girls Club/Lovewell combined staff, conquered numerous logistical and psychological obstacles to become an exception to the relatively low attendance rates of the four other programs being evaluated.

Another grant-induced evaluation was conducted in 2000 by Rokicki Associates and focused on the objectives of the Lovewell/YMCA Creative Arts summer program. Rokicki (as cited in Rokicki & Rokicki, 2000) designed a questionnaire that measured the success rate of projected outcomes. One outcome indicator projected that 70% of the students who entered the program would complete it. Rokicki's report indicated that

100% of the students completed the Lovewell/YMCA program. In the same study, another outcome indicator projected that 75% of the participants would demonstrate increased knowledge of artistic and technical theatre skills. Rokicki's final report indicated that 91% demonstrated an increase in those skills (Rokicki & Rokicki).

Summary

Overall, the data analyzed in this chapter indicate that **Lovewell Institute has demonstrated the ability to deliver consistent high-quality programs that combine the arts, education, and social awareness.** This data have clearly helped answer the second research question, How Does Lovewell Affect its Constituents? The Lovewell programs have proven valuable to constituents in several areas. First, **the pedagogy affects learning capacities and individualized potential in ways that traditional educational methods do not. The holistic nature of the common goal (the production) and merging disciplines establishes a creative and inspiring learning environment. The emphasis that Lovewell places on the psychological, physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of students and staff appears to have a positive effect on building communication and social skills. This effect, in turn, seems to facilitate the achievement of educational goals.**

The second area in which Lovewell appears to benefit its constituents is through the arts. The program builds skills in music, theatre, dance, and design as well as in the technical and business management aspects of the arts. The Lovewell process offers training in interdisciplinary arts while the product of that process becomes a contribution to the canon of relevant contemporary theatre works.

The third area in which the data indicate that **Lovewell positively affects its constituents involves social consciousness, community building, and personal**

development. The Lovewell programs appear to create a cultural community that galvanizes students, artists, teachers, administrators, parents, and arts advocates into a stronger, more harmonized unit. Appreciation and communication seem to flow more freely between students, parents, and teachers as a result of Lovewell programs because students take new social and communication skills home and into their traditional classrooms. According to these data, many participants in Lovewell programs report significant personal growth in such areas as confidence, interpersonal relationships, self-esteem, collaboration, and the willingness to take risks.

The data indicate that the Lovewell process infuses a sense of humanity into the pedagogy that enables learning to take place on numerous levels simultaneously. The unique blends of theory and practice, intellect and emotion, and conceptualization and realization, create a synergistic atmosphere of discovery and invention. There will undoubtedly be better tools of measurement and evaluation developed in the future. The value of arts programs like Lovewell has not yet been widely acknowledged nor adequately assessed; however, these data are hopefully a step in that direction. It seems appropriate to close this chapter with a quote from Krishnamurti (1981), whose book *Education and the Significance of Life* has been a constant source of inspiration to me:

Intelligence is not mere information; it is not derived from books, nor does it consist of clever self-defensive responses and aggressive assertions. One who has not studied may be more intelligent than the learned. We have made examinations and degrees the criterion of intelligence and have developed cunning minds that avoid vital human issues. Intelligence is the capacity to perceive the essential, the *what is*; and to awaken this capacity, in oneself and in others, is education. (p. 14)