

PART 3: WHAT IS LOVEWELL'S POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH AND WHAT NEW  
RELEVANT THEORIES CAN BE DERIVED FROM THIS RESEARCH?  
(SIGNIFICANCE)

Chapter 13: Limitations, Recommendations, and Conclusions

*Limitations and Recommendations Overview*

Mere intuition took me down the creative path as far as it could but intuition is intrinsically personal and often difficult to share. Many artists and creative types take this path and rely on others to interpret what they create. But when an artist wishes to contribute to and actively participate in the discourse defining a body of knowledge, it becomes necessary to communicate and articulate those findings that were once so personal. As a result of my journey towards the artist-scholar model of interfacing with the world, I have become convinced that *creative process* itself is a valid form of inquiry and will one day be considered a legitimate research methodology. I endeavor to be a part of the ongoing dialogue and inquiry that will enable *creative-process-based* research to become a reality. Working with some of my highly gifted graduate students in the Interdisciplinary Arts Program (IAP) at Nova Southeastern University has encouraged me to have faith that this will happen sooner rather than later.

Because my holistically oriented mind seems to be programmed for problem solving, it is very difficult for me to discuss a limitation without immediately responding with a recommendation. Therefore, I will not attempt to make separate and distinct sections for each of these areas. Instead, this section will be organized thematically; each "limitation issue" will be accompanied by recommendations that correspond to and emerge out of that particular issue. There is a difference between *limits* and *limitations*. Although the actual limits can help structure the future goals and objectives of Lovewell Institute and the Lovewell Method, the limitations are presented here as conditions that

elicit further deliberation and action in light of the recommendations. Limitations of both Lovewell Institute and the Lovewell Method will be considered, as well as the limitations of this PDE/dissertation.

*Limitations of this PDE/Dissertation*

This PDE/dissertation was not intended to address the general issues or challenges of not-for-profit arts agencies. It was not designed to be a statistical study of the long-term effects of the Lovewell Method or process on the participants or employees. Although it is my hope that this study may help to illuminate some of these issues, it was not intended to be an educational study of the specific academic benefits of the Lovewell process. This inquiry did not endeavor to be a longitudinal study of the sociological advantages or the therapeutic value of the Lovewell process. It was also not intended to be any sort of indictment against the educational system but rather to offer new perspectives and to expand the boundaries of thinking concerning the untapped potential of arts in education.

The data gathered for this study are comprehensive, but are still unavoidably limited by the personal perspective of the researcher. In terms of the history of Lovewell Institute, there is clearly academic value in my being the *primary source* in regard to the historiography (Block, 1971). The significant liberating event in this study occurred when I discovered that there was a valid research methodology that permitted the researcher to effectively become part of the research. Autoethnography (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Ellis, 1999, 2004; Holt, 2003; Janesick, 1994; Shank, 2006) gave me the research construct I needed in order to utilize all the data I had to offer as the researcher. This methodology allowed me to apply my years of observations, experiences, and tacit knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Moustakas, 1990) regarding

Lovewell Institute and the Lovewell Method. Autoethnography focused me academically on the vital importance of accuracy and trustworthiness of my observations and interpretations (McNiff, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln; Dey, 1993; Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Lincoln & Guba). This research process necessitated a new personal perspective.

Being the founder and artistic director of Lovewell Institute gave me access to all of the relevant data, and the selected research methodologies gave me the scholarly approach that I needed to tell an honest story. This research process steered me away from my instinct as a founder to be paternally attached to a cherished vision. It encouraged me to see the realities of Lovewell Institute rather than my hopes for it. If hyperbole and polemics were an unconscious factor in the pioneering process of Lovewell, then candor and academic integrity would be a part of the next level of achievement for me and for a more mature Lovewell Institute. The more I understood about autoethnography (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Ellis, 1999, 2004; Holt, 2003; Janesick, 1994; Shank, 2006), the more I was able to utilize it effectively as a research tool. I believe that as the field of arts-based research evolves, autoethnography will become a vital component of that methodology. I recommend that more research occur in how autoethnography can and does contribute to arts-based research. The fact that I have been intimately involved with Lovewell Institute would be considered a limitation in some research paradigms. That same fact could be considered an asset in more recent research paradigms that include autoethnography.

I would also recommend more research be focused on how historiography can contribute to arts-based research. The true stories of humans and human constructs have great academic value (Bentley, 1999; Gilderhus 2002; White, 1987). The life stories of artists and their creative process sometimes impart knowledge, including best and worst

practices, more effectively than any other instructional tool could (Alexander, 1987; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Ellis, 2004; May 1975).

Art, music, dance, visual design, creative writing, theatre, and storytelling contribute much to society that goes unnoticed and unacknowledged. Until our fractious culture sheds more light on these contributions, the value of the arts will not be comprehended or appreciated. In the balance of American arts and sciences, the arts clearly suffer from a perception of inferiority. I believe that art without science runs the risk of being primitive and limited. I also believe that science without art runs the risk of being soulless and dangerous. Great scientists often use artful approaches in interpreting the data, and great artists often use scientific approaches in creating their art (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Eisner, 1998, 2002; Simon, 2001). According to Eisner (2002), content and data can be delivered scientifically *and* artfully:

How history is written matters, how one speaks to a child matters, what a classroom looks like matters, how one tells a story matters. Getting it right means creating a form whose content is right for some purpose. The architecture of a school can look and feel like a factory or like a home. If we want children to feel like factory workers our schools should look and feel like factories. Form and content matter and in such cases are inseparable. Indeed, the discovery that form and content are inseparable is one of the lessons the arts teach most profoundly....

The form we use to display data shapes its meaning. (p. 8)

More research into the ways that arts and sciences complement and synergize each other would be very helpful in reestablishing a balance between these two vital components of our culture. Imagine taking courses in *the art of math* or *the science of the symphony*. Inquiries into the holistic symbiosis between the arts and the sciences would

be a refreshing departure from the current tendencies towards competition and rivalry. The field of research itself is now engaged in an elaborate dance between traditional scientific approaches and the more current trends in arts-based academic inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Ellis, 1999, 2004; Janesick, 1994; McNiff, 1998; Moustakas, 1990, 1994; Rettig & Rettig, 1999; Shank, 2006).

#### *Limitations and Recommendations for Lovewell Institute*

One limitation of the Lovewell experience is that it cannot be all things to all people. It is not for everyone. If students have no interest in the creative process or feel that it is an area that is not useful or relevant to their lives, careers, or well-being, then Lovewell is probably not the program for them. My recommendation is that the Lovewell curriculum not be required for anyone but that it remains a viable and optional academic alternative for those who are drawn to the culture of creativity, holism, aesthetics, and interdisciplinarity.

This study has afforded me the opportunity to observe some weaknesses and unattended aspects of Lovewell Institute and the Lovewell Method. The following paragraphs address some of these observations and consequent recommendations. Some of these awarenesses have not been easy to integrate because I feel that they may reflect my own weaknesses, inadequacies, and flaws as a founder and director. They do. This, I have found, is the price the researcher pays for consciously entering the research. I accept the findings and, in fact, feel a sense of exoneration as a result of this study. Lovewell has become much larger than me. The following paragraphs reflect the unfulfilled potential I have observed regarding Lovewell Institute--some of the things I wish I could have helped Lovewell accomplish by this time. The following applications, potentialities, and recommendations for Lovewell Institute will require additional human and financial

resources, more specific researched information, and more time in order to be implemented and realized. I hope that my observations energize that process.

### *Professional Applications of the Lovewell Method*

A demand has arisen for programming designed for alumni who wish to continue growing creatively within the Lovewell culture but want to enter into the professional arena. Until the formation of the Lovewell Theatre Project (LTP) in 2002, the only option for those students over the age of 18 who wished to actively continue in the Lovewell process was for them to become interns or staff instructors. In that case, they would no longer be the primary creative force in the project but instead become facilitators for the creative output of others. This is a noble contribution on the part of an artist but fulfilling in a different way than being *the artist*. It was important for Lovewell to develop a program for adult artists on their way to a professional career.

The pilot LTP program began in March of 2002 in cooperation with Chicago's New Tuners Theatre and was comprised of a group of 12 Lovewell staff members and alumni (including the researcher) in a collective collaboration with the goal of developing a new work for the professional arena. In 3 weeks, the artists wrote, developed, and performed a staged reading of a new music theatre piece entitled *The Book of Phil* (Lovewell Institute, 2002c) employing the Lovewell Method. We reconvened for 1 week during the following December on the campus of Kansas Wesleyan University in Salina to revise and perform a staged reading of the new improved version. Then, in March of 2003, the same artists assembled once again in New York City for 3 weeks to rewrite the script and score and perform a staged reading of the revised version of *The Book of Phil* (Lovewell Institute, 2003d) at the Epiphany Theatre in the West Village.

This LTP pilot program, for me personally, was one of the most painful episodes in my association with Lovewell Institute. I had finally run into a limitation for which I had no solution. The Lovewell Method still worked as far as the product was concerned--we carried out the activities, the curriculum, and the procedures. The show was stage worthy, had some high-quality musical theatre moments, and elicited favorable audience response at the staged readings. However, the group dynamic had been radically altered. My fellow artists who once were my students in their midteens had become staff members in their early 20s because they had proven themselves to be the cream of the crop. They now were young artists trained in their own artistic disciplines and just beginning to enter the world of the marketplace: commercial ventures, economic realities, industry trends, and true personal independence. The leadership pattern established by my being the director or artistic director during their formative years was no longer viable. I was now perceived by some of my former students as being the “old school” authority figure to whom they no longer needed to listen. Rebelliousness is part of the developmental process of any individual making the transition into adulthood but I was totally unprepared for this. Learning Meditation 6 had always guided us to “create today in the spirit of cooperation and joy” and there were some authentic moments of that, but just underneath the surface, there was this dance macabre of power struggle, rebellion, and mutiny that confused and disappointed me.

Four of us had directed previous Lovewell workshops and productions of our own. I was from their parents’ generation and we all had grown accustomed to me being the leader. My fellow artists had been living, training, and freelancing in various parts of the United States. They had history and peer issues with each other. From my perspective, the Lovewell Method had trained them well to be creative, unique,

self-confident, original, and supposedly respectful of one another's ideas. But the fact was that I felt challenged at every turn. I no longer knew my role and quickly realized that I would have to rise to a new level of leadership awareness if I was to get through the experience. Like every ship must have a captain, every show must have a director who guides the process and makes the final decisions. I offered to turn over my directorship to any other member of the project who would be approved by the majority of the group to assume that role. The group elected to keep me as the director. The group dynamic did not substantially change. By the time that we realized we needed to re-establish our goals and objectives, the first draft of the show had already been written and performed.

One of the primary conflicts was that the artists had been college trained in different disciplines. Some had gotten their degrees in writing, some in music, some in performing. The Lovewell process had trained them to be interdisciplinary, but now they had specialized knowledge and higher artistic standards and expectations in their own disciplines. The writers wanted the freedom to create roles that were beyond the scope of the LTP members' age-appropriateness and technical abilities. After being exposed to the high standards and critical analysis of the academic and professional worlds, they did not want to be limited by the perceived shortcomings of any project member (i.e., a young actor who cannot convincingly play an old character). This was the first crack in the foundation and I sensed what was happening. I kept urging them to do what we had always done at Lovewell by "trusting the process" and having faith that the "answers lie within the group" (as described in chapter 11). I wanted them to write for each other and themselves using the perceived *limitations* as challenges to devise more creative and imaginative solutions. Instead, we created a theatre piece that we felt could not be successfully performed by the members within our own LTP group.

Had the system failed or simply identified the limitations? Had I failed as a leader or as a follower? The Epiphany Theatre Company immediately recognized the problem but still proceeded to option *The Book of Phil* (Lovewell, 2003d) on the condition that no one from LTP would play the role they had created. The contract has been signed and the show is set to be cast with age-appropriate actors produced by the Epiphany Theatre in the future. These were hard-learned lessons, but LTP will survive and learn from the experience. Even though the members of LTP are well aware that growing pains are a natural part of expanding our process to include adult artists in a professional setting, the product was still high quality and the musical now has a life of its own. The pilot project served its purpose and informed the process.

Recommendations for applying the Lovewell Method to professional career development in the arts involve careful examination of the group dynamics before starting the creative work on a project. The leadership and ground rules must be well defined and agreed upon at the beginning of the process. Two sets of goals and objectives must be defined and clarified before the workshop begins:

1. Goals and objectives of the *product*. Identify who the writers are, who the actors are, and who the interdisciplinary artists are; Determine who the target audience and ticket buyers are; and design the budget, the market plan, the logistics, and the legal structure on collaborative intellectual property rights.

2. Goals and objectives of the *process*. Agree on how and when the director is chosen; agree on who will have the final artistic say (leadership issues), establish a consensus on how the group dynamic will operate, and determine how professional standards and marketplace pressure will affect the traditional Lovewell Method.

I recommend that future LTP productions be created by exploring the strengths

*and* perceived weaknesses of the group. The policies promoting a nurturing and supportive creative environment should be followed with full confidence that the artistic standards will be at a professional level. I would like to see the roles in LTP productions be crafted in a way that allows the piece to be performed by the members of the group who created it.

### *The Lovewell Method as a Healing Modality*

Recently, one of the parents of a Lovewell student sat me down for a serious talk. Cederborg (2000, 2002, 2005) is a leading child psychologist in Sweden and her daughter has attended two of Lovewell Institute's cultural exchange workshops there. She urged me to persuade Lovewell Institute to acknowledge, claim and continue to develop the therapeutic capacities inherent in the Lovewell Method. Cederborg observed beneficial effects of the Lovewell process on children with emotional and learning disabilities. She also suggested that it was an effective method of building self-awareness and self-esteem in children. Dr. Cederborg observed the therapeutic value of the Lovewell Method through her own informed eyes and those of her daughter and colleagues who have witnessed the process in both Sweden and America. When I asked how we might proceed in exploring the healing potential of the process, A. C. Cederborg (personal communication, December 18, 2004) suggested that we find a way to add a staff position for a full-time professional psychologist who can observe, monitor, chronicle, research, and advise on the subject of therapy as it relates to our participants and the Lovewell Method.

During one workshop several years ago, a clinical psychologist (a personal friend of mine) volunteered his time to the program. It was certainly helpful to many of the students (particularly one with suicide on his mind) but ultimately not a sustained or

organized enough effort. It was an experiment that offered great promise. The two psychology classes I took while attending Carnegie-Mellon University gave me enough background in the field to at least recognize the potential psychological value inherent in the Lovewell Method of merging and synthesizing the “subjectivity” of an original emotionally traumatic experience with the objectivity of recreating that experience as art. A common expression heard around Lovewell is, “leave the drama on the stage.” The evidence indicated by numerous case histories warrants a researched and documented assessment of the psychological value of this methodology. In metaphoric terms, the Lovewell Method allows the participants to “rewrite” the story of their lives.

My recommendation is to conduct more research into the relationship of the Lovewell Method to the already established field of creative and expressive arts therapy. I think it would be beneficial for Lovewell Institute to establish relationships and share research initiatives with organizations such as the American Music Therapy Association, the National Association for Drama Therapy, the American Dance Therapy Association, the American Art Therapy Association, the National Association for Poetry Therapy, the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama, the National Expressive Therapy Association, the Society for the Arts in Healthcare, and the Arts and Healing Network.

I would like to illustrate the therapeutic value of the Lovewell Method by relating a brief true story that I observed at close range. Alice (her name has been changed) had come from Miami to the Lovewell Summer Workshop in Kansas. She loved the theatre but because of her obesity was rather shy and insecure. During the script writing process, the Lovewell Method encourages the students to focus on things that they know and on which they can relate. After much agonizing and painful soul-searching, Alice revealed

her amazing story to the script editor. She was being raised by her father who had married a woman with a teenage son who was about Alice's age. One night when she and her stepbrother were home alone watching TV, one thing lead to another and he raped her. No one told anyone until several months later when Alice discovered she was pregnant.

When she finally told her father, he swore her to secrecy and gave her the money for an abortion. He told her that to reveal the truth would shatter his marriage and ultimately destroy the new family and all of their lives. She reluctantly went for the abortion while feeling all along that she wanted to keep the baby. No one ever knew except her father. At this point, Miami was 1,500 miles away and her family would not be seeing the production. With the help of the script editor, the staff, and her fellow writers, she structured her story into a powerful, well-constructed dramatic scene. We underscored her scene with music composed and performed by another student from Miami. After an initial emotional and cathartic meltdown, rehearsals went well and Alice released the pain enough to perform the scene flawlessly with admirable self-control and absolutely no self-pity. This was a triumphant display of strength of character in the play (the audience was astounded) and in her real life. Perhaps a clinical psychologist on staff could have made this an easier process (especially for the staff) but the fact is that Alice seemed to be relieved by revealing and working through this story on paper and onstage. She was visibly more relaxed, confident, and sociable after the experience. Although Lovewell was not prepared to monitor the long-term effects of this therapeutic event, the immediate effects were palpable.

There are many more stories like this in the Lovewell archive, and these case histories of revelation and healing beg for more research and inquiry. I strongly

recommend taking full advantage of the Lovewell Method as a healing modality by conducting more studies and further developing a healing theory based on its observed and researched therapeutic values. It would also be beneficial to research the long-term effects of the Lovewell process on emotionally, physically, and mentally challenged participants. An additional option is to initiate partnerships with professional counseling organizations or academic health services departments that will co-sponsor future workshops employing full-time psychologists or health specialists who can assess, research, articulate, and verify the healing benefits of the Lovewell Method. I would also recommend that more generic research be conducted into the therapeutic potential of interdisciplinary arts therapies in general.

#### *Intergenerational and Adult Programs*

Over the years, Lovewell has had many requests for intergenerational and adult programs. I have conducted several 1-day workshops for adults at conferences wherein the participants brainstorm for themes, characters, and storyline; break off into groups to create a skit or song; and then reconvene to present it to the whole group. This abbreviated version of the Lovewell Method curriculum worked quite well and often created interest in more intensive and comprehensive workshops for adults. Grandparents and parents of Lovewell students have frequently suggested that the Lovewell process would be a good way to bring families together. Creating stories, characters, and songs with their children and grandchildren using the Lovewell Method would afford opportunities to explore family legacies. This creative experience would allow multiple generations to observe, examine, and celebrate unique family traditions and become more familiar with their own heritage and history. Lovewell Institute has been contacted by several social service and theatrical organizations interested in partnering on an

intergenerational program.

I would recommend meeting with these interested groups, identifying grants for programs with therapeutic benefits, and designing partnerships that meet the demand. The Lovewell process is well suited to meet this challenge; the real test may be finding the human and financial resources required to conduct the strategic planning, apply for the grants, and organize the programs.

### *International Cultural and Exchange Programs*

Ironically, it was an employee at the Internal Revenue Service in Austin, Texas, who first alerted me to the potentially positive impact Lovewell could have as a cultural exchange program. In conversations with her in 1988, when I was filling out the voluminous forms for Lovewell Institute's not-for-profit status, the Internal Revenue Service advisor mentioned that she probably should not be telling me this, but, driving home from work, she realized that the Lovewell process as I related it to her would be a very powerful tool if applied to cultural exchange and that it would benefit Lovewell Institute to mention it in the application. I did what she suggested. Lovewell has just concluded a very successful fifth international cultural program in Sweden and is in the planning stage for a summer program in Italy.

Based on evidence from the five successful programs in Sweden, I am now convinced that the Lovewell experience is an extremely potent international exchange vehicle that guides participants swiftly to the core issues encompassing cultural differences. The Lovewell process quickly identifies the *themes* that define diversity and then creates *characters* that play out these themes with humor, pathos, intensity, and honesty. These productions created by the participants often have the capacity to bypass the intellect and speak directly to the heart and soul of the audience and particularly to the

creators who share the reality of the content and the experiential process of creating an original production (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1997; Dewey, 1934; Montessori, 1976; Piaget, 1977; Steiner, 1923).

Unlike athletic programs, there are no losing teams in Lovewell programs-- everyone is on the same team, and everyone wins. The limitations stem from the fact that Lovewell is not yet a widely recognized methodology and many cultures have difficulty recognizing the nature and scope of the philosophy and pedagogy, especially when it involves a radical departure from long traditions of educational structure.

I conducted the first international exchange program in Sweden in 1996 through connections facilitated by Lovewell board members, and it has taken 10 years to establish an ongoing program there. Education is free in Sweden until the graduate school level and families are not accustomed to paying for their children to attend summer workshops, particularly when they are not aware of the benefits. There have been some administrative challenges because of cultural differences in the way budgets are assembled, and because there is virtually no not-for-profit sector in the Swedish economic system, there are no tax advantages for donations or scholarships. Although some changes are being made, the prevailing mindset is that revenue from the high Swedish tax rate takes care of the basic needs of the people and that tax benefits are not the way to deal with incentives for new social or educational programs. Witnessing the success of the health care, social service, and educational systems in Sweden, it is difficult to argue with the existing policies.

Observing the positive ways in which the Lovewell cultural exchange program affects the lives of the students helps put all the logistical challenges and administrative difficulties in perspective. Over the past four summers, I have taken graduate students to

Sweden to observe and participate in the cultural exchange. Teachers and artists enrolled in NSU's IAP have had the opportunity to interface on a daily basis with artists and teachers from Sweden, fellow artists from America, and the artistic staff of a Lovewell Workshop in progress as they follow the creation and development of an original bilingual interdisciplinary musical theatre production as it is written and produced by Swedish and American teenagers and presented publicly to the Swedish community.

The programs I directed in Sweden gave me the opportunity to observe the culture and its relationship to the arts. As a result of working with Swedish teachers, artists, parents, and teenagers, I observed that their culture is poised for experiential, authentic interdisciplinary arts-oriented problem-based learning programs (Boud & Feletti, 1991; Phillips, 2000; Savin-Baden, 2000).

The Lovewell/Sweden community seems to appreciate the holistic learning that is encouraged and facilitated in the Lovewell program wherein global issues, language barriers, philosophical differences, aesthetic considerations, and pedagogic innovations are all examined and explored simultaneously. Numerous limitations emerge as the program expands, but each limitation seems to offer a new opportunity to grow. The motivation to continue the program by both American and Swedish participants gives it the impetus to seek solutions imaginatively and effectively.

My recommendation is to use the Lovewell/Sweden model as a prototype for international cultural exchanges in countries around the globe. There has been interest from various individuals and groups in establishing Lovewell programs over the next few years in Italy, Mexico, and Jamaica. I suggest that the Board of Directors fully recognize and investigate the unique capacity of the Lovewell Method as a tool for global unity and further pursue these opportunities. I would also recommend that more research be

conducted in how and why arts-based cultural exchange programs promote global unity and alter public opinion on diverse and unfamiliar cultures.

*Corporate Applications of the Lovewell Method*

A few years ago I was asked to facilitate a day-long retreat for the staff and employees of the YMCA of Broward County, Florida. They needed to boost morale and conceptualize some new social programs that would revitalize their organization. My job was to facilitate the creation of some innovative ideas that would meet the needs of the community and their constituency. They wanted to expand beyond the swimming and basketball programs usually identified with the YMCA. This was the perfect opportunity for me to experiment with applying the Lovewell Method within a nonarts context.

I adhered very closely to the established Lovewell philosophy, Learning Meditations, activities, and procedures of the methodology with only minor modifications. Following the procedures of the Lovewell Method, their theme was identified--new social programs that addressed the unique needs of Broward County. Instead of creating characters and a plot, the YMCA staff and employees were the characters, and the "plot" was the evolution of a structure, a template, and specific details of new programs that addressed and explored the selected theme. After the guided brainstorming, the participants broke off into groups according to those with like-minded concerns, interests, and ideas. Each group worked for a few hours on a theoretical YMCA program, mapping out ideas visually on flip charts. Presentations were prepared and rehearsed. Finally, the whole group was reassembled and the individual programs were presented followed by a brief discussion of their relevance and feasibility.

The enthusiasm of the employees was palpable, and the "buy-in" was exceptional because the staff had been actively involved in the creation of their own new programs.

Of course, not all of the programs conceived that day were implemented, but the exercise had quite an effect on conversations around the water coolers back at the office for months to come. The staff and employees had been included in the research and development process and now had a personal stake in the future of YMCA programs in their community.

There is an emerging trend towards creative solutions in the corporate sector (Florida, 2002, 2005). The Lovewell Method is poised to make a contribution in the area of training the workforce to apply the collaborative creative process in solving everyday problems. Creativity certainly does not apply only to the arts, and the creative process is open to anyone who wants to gain access, experience, and knowledge. Lovewell has experience in opening a portal to the creative realm and could be applied effectively to corporate training, team building, collaboration, and the current movement to make the business environment more conducive to imagination and innovation.

I would recommend further research into the market demand for creative training methodologies within the corporate sector. Based on my experiment with the YMCA retreat, I believe Lovewell has something significant to contribute in this area. Corporations could also benefit from further research into the value of creative-process-based training programs, particularly in terms of their potential to enhance motivation and productivity.

#### *Lovewell as a Business: Building the Infrastructure*

The business and administrative infrastructure of Lovewell Institute is currently its weakest component. The organization has been artist-driven for many years, and I maintain that is one of the primary reasons why the programs are so effective. Creative process has always been the bottom line and a primary focus of the activities of Lovewell

Institute. One of the limitations in this area is that the Lovewell “employees” have usually been artists who love what they do rather than workers who do what they are told. This is obviously not the corporate model. This phenomenon has made the execution of a business plan a rather daunting and frustrating task for the board of directors, especially for the seasoned and experienced board members.

There is an ideal balance of mission, money, and market that is yet to be discovered. Over the past 2 years, the Lovewell Board of Directors has become aware of this limitation and has consequently started developing a strategy for remedying the situation. A business plan has been formulated, volunteer consultants have been brought aboard, and a proposal is now being finalized that would, if approved, bring Lovewell Institute under the umbrella of a large educational institution that would provide significant resource potential and vastly increased visibility.

Social entrepreneurship is a new field and a concept that holds much promise for Lovewell Institute. It involves organizing, managing, and assuming risks of a business enterprise for the purpose of advancing a social cause (Arts Extension Service, 2002; Cleveland, 1992). In “for-profit” entrepreneurship, profit is obviously the end goal. In not-for-profit entrepreneurship, profit is a means to support a mission, such as social transformation or educational advancement (Bornstein, 2003). Social entrepreneurship occurs when a not-for-profit organization adopts a business strategy that matches its assets, skills, and products with marketplace opportunities. Earned income through the marketplace enables a not-for-profit organization to focus clearly on its own mission rather than being dependent upon funders’ priorities and narrow eligibility parameters for grants. I have already mentioned how Lovewell’s essential high staff to student ratio is often a detriment in funding. Social entrepreneurship could help compensate for this

situation.

As part of this research, I spoke with Jim Thalhuber, President and CEO of the National Center for Social Entrepreneurs, and William Strickland, founder of the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild. They are pioneers in social entrepreneurship, and although Lovewell has not had the financial resources to hire them as consultants, I am certain that the principles we discussed could eventually be applied successfully to Lovewell Institute. For instance, the 46 productions described in chapter 8 comprise a significant body of work created through the Lovewell Method. There are hundreds of songs, vivid characters, and riveting stories that, if properly edited, could make up a catalogue of highly entertaining and relevant musicals that could be performed at high schools, middle schools, and theatres all across the country. Royalties from these performances could provide revenue to develop more programs, opportunities, and products. In addition, Lovewell staff artists teamed up with high-quality performers could certainly utilize the Lovewell process to create quality television programming.

My recommendation is for Lovewell Institute to carefully examine its own resources, including the process *and* the products, and conduct a thorough inventory of marketable activities and materials. Then, align those assets with the corresponding market demands. Many drama and music teachers have told me of their desperate attempts to find new and appropriate material to perform at their schools. I have heard business people speak of the need for corporate training in creative and imaginative approaches to problem solving. Lovewell has the potential to generate revenue by answering those specific market needs. The time seems right for Lovewell Institute to apply the creative process towards the goal of financial stability through social entrepreneurship.

### *Conclusions*

This PDE/dissertation has taken the form of an autoethnographic and historiographic analysis of Lovewell Institute in terms of its background, development, and influences, as well as additional research related to some of the effects it has had on its constituency. This study has focused on the emergence of interdisciplinary arts as a compelling new field of study; the imbalance between the creative arts and the interpretive arts; the “creative process” as an effective methodology for intellectual, psychological, and spiritual inquiry; the synergistic relationship between artistic achievement, educational advancement, and social transformation; and the Lovewell Method as a viable educational methodology for teaching and learning a variety of arts-based and non-arts-based skills.

This last chapter has addressed the third and final research question, “What is Lovewell’s potential for future growth, and what new relevant theories can be derived from this research?” Having concluded from this study that the Lovewell Method is a valid and effective arts-based methodology that builds skills, builds community, and promotes personal and social development, some elements of its future growth depend on the ways in which it can be disseminated and integrated into the public awareness. The Suzuki (1983) method, violin and piano; the Montessori (1976) method, early education and childhood creative development; the Kodaly (n.d.) method, singing; the Orff (n.d.) method, rhythm; the Dalcroze (n.d.) Method, eurythmics; and the Stanislavski (1976) method, acting, are all successful learning systems that have had a profound impact on the world of arts and education and serve as models for future development of the Lovewell Method.

Other groups mentioned in earlier chapters are currently working with and

developing related theories based on the potential power of the arts to educate, build communities, and transform lives (Americans for the Arts, 2003; City at Peace, 2002; Gallery 37, 2003; Royal Conservatory of Music, 2004; Surdna Foundation, 2002). I see these theories progressing along parallel paths as the collective consciousness becomes more aware of the need for experiential learning and the integration into mainstream thinking of multiple-intelligence ideology (Alexander, 1987; Armstrong, 1993, 2001; Eisner, 1998, 2002; Gardner, 1983, 1993, 1999; Lazear, 1991; Marks-Tarlow, 1996; Sizer, 2004).

I believe it is fair to conclude that the Lovewell Method, because of its emphasis on interdisciplinarity and collaboration, creates a fertile learning environment wherein the convergence of a multiplicity of learning styles truly synergizes and enhances the educational experience. The observations and responses in chapter 12 from the research participants interviewed and surveyed led to the conclusion that the Lovewell Method fills a void in the present educational system and may well provide an effective way to address a wide variety of learning styles that are “out of range” of the current system.

Another inference from the data collected in this study is that students react positively to the spiritual concepts embedded in the Lovewell methodology. I discussed the UCLA Higher Education Research Institute’s study entitled *The Spiritual Life of College Students: A National Study of College Students’ Search for Meaning and Purpose* (Astin & Astin, 2004) in chapter 2. I would like to reiterate the importance of the UCLA study as its research relates directly to the mission of Lovewell Institute: “The study revealed that today’s college students have very high levels of spiritual interest and involvement. Many are actively engaged in a spiritual quest and are exploring the meaning and purpose of life.” (p. 3)

The Lovewell Method directly addresses and weaves spiritual issues into the curriculum as outlined in chapters 9 and 10. Issues of the human spirit (not to be confused with religion) are simply not being widely addressed by our current educational institutions. According to Astin and Astin (2004),

The project [*The Spiritual Life of College Students: A National Study of College Students' Search for Meaning and Purpose*] is based in part on the realization that the relative amount of attention that colleges and universities devote to the “exterior” and “interior” aspects of the students’ development has gotten out of balance . . . we have increasingly come to neglect the student’s inner development --the sphere of values and beliefs, emotional maturity, spirituality, and self-understanding. (p. 1)

A related conclusion that I have deduced from this study is that formal education in this country has underestimated the potential of the creative spirit to contribute to the human intellect. By addressing primarily *what to think* rather than *how to think*, conventional education is depriving us of generations of innovative solutions and possible answers to the problems that continue to plague our society (Alexander, 1987; Armstrong, 1993, 2001; Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 1998, 2002; Krishnamurti, 1981; Steiner, 1923; Wilber, 2000). Another unfortunate outcome of the current trend in curriculum design to “kill and drill” and overtest is that it denies teachers the opportunity to be creative and spontaneous as they interact with their students. With so much curricula handed down from above, it leaves little room for teachers to exercise the freedom to express their own passion for the content and respond to their students as they experience the “aha” epiphanies or teachable moments.

I am certainly not suggesting a disorganized classroom or an absence of

curriculum or lesson plans, but I do believe that if teachers were trained to facilitate and inspire rather than to disseminate and teach to the test, their classrooms would offer a more effective learning environment, a place where students would *want* to be rather than *have* to be. By striving to control every activity and every moment of class time, the system is restricting the teacher's ability to respond to various learning styles, diverse learning paces, and the "human factor," which all demand flexibility, ingenuity, imagination, collaboration, and some degree of compassion. These qualities are just as teachable as assessment, management, planning, and supervision.

With recent statistics revealing "nearly one third of high school students failing to graduate" (Urban Institute, 2004, p. 1), Americans should be asking why so many students do not want to be in school, why we keep missing the moment when the natural curiosity of our children is begging to be informed. We know students do not like meaningless data being tossed at them; we know they do not like being constantly tested on material they perceive as useless to them. The Lovewell Method gives information a context. The research discussed in this PDE/dissertation has indicated that effective learning can be enjoyable, perceived by the students as relevant, and that teachers can be empowered and trained to make the classroom a vibrant and inviting place to be, for their students *and* for themselves.

Students can be motivated to learn if they are given an opportunity to participate in the process of their own education. However, this kind of educational reform needs to start at the top in the philosophy and attitudes of the administrators and leaders who set the standards. I have heard alarming stories of administrators who honestly believe that there is no academic value in arts training, and it is common knowledge that when funding is threatened, the first thing to be eliminated is the arts (Arts Education

Partnership, 2002). To perpetuate this practice is disastrous to a culture already in a desperate state of conflict, and it is a disservice to the untold number of students whose learning styles respond so readily to arts-based curricula (Alexander, 1987; Armstrong, 1993, 2001; AEP, 2002; Campbell, 1995; Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 1998, 2002; Gardner, 1983, 1993, 1999; Lazear, 1991; Marks-Tarlow, 1996; McNiff, 1998; Moustakas, 1977, 1990, 1994; Simon, 2001; Sizer, 2004; Steiner, 1923).

There is a vast difference between being trained to get a job and being educated to live a successful life. They need not be mutually exclusive, but our educational system has grown precariously out of balance on the side of job training. My most disturbing conclusion is that until this imbalance is corrected, education in America will continue to spiral downward into a national crisis. Since the terrorists attacks on September 11, 2001, education issues seem to occupy a much lower priority on the minds of most Americans. However, education that focuses on the meaning and purpose of life could be one of the most effective “weapons” in the global war on terror. True education could possibly teach the next generation that war is never a step toward peace, that greed is never a step toward prosperity, and that domination is never a step toward unity.

I believe that there will always be a job for someone who has a purpose in life, a good attitude towards learning new skills, and is willing to work. But a good job without essential life skills will soon become empty and meaningless. Education based on fear--fear of unemployment, fear of terrorism, fear of not passing the test--will only lead to more fear. Education based on life issues--sustainability, problem solving, quality of life, diversity, and self-knowledge--will lead to solutions.

The prevailing theme of this study is how Lovewell Institute utilizes creative process and interdisciplinary art to create a synergetic methodological context in these

three areas:

1. Professional arts, by creating aesthetically sound new works of interdisciplinary art.
2. Arts in education, by developing effective educational curricula, activities, instructional materials, teacher training, and learning delivery systems under the umbrella of arts education.
3. Arts in social and therapeutic applications, by administering programs and procedures that affect personal and social transformation.

This three-part theme (see Appendix G) is based on a need that I have perceived in our culture for a more holistic and inclusive approach to the arts through education, art making, therapeutic practices, and community building. I see profound connections between these areas that deserve to be further explored and examined. From an autoethnographic perspective, through this research, I now realize that I am, at the core, a born interdisciplinary artist. This study has contributed enormously to the meaning of my life. No other occupation could elicit the passion I have for my work. I love composing, writing, researching, directing, and teaching those skills so much that it has blurred the line between work and leisure, between profession and hobby, and sometimes between the realities of art and the realities of life. But this is what interdisciplinary artists do. We create realities that tell the stories we must tell. History has shown us that these stories expressed through art are the artifacts and archives that ultimately define and preserve a civilization. Our life is our ultimate artistic creation.

#### *Final Statement*

Perhaps the most important observation I have made during the course of this study is that an enhanced comprehension of infinity and eternity occurs when we create

something. For me and for the artists I have observed engaged in the Lovewell process, creativity goes far beyond the thrill of art making. Through the creative process, we as individuals become less of a victim and more of a cocreator of our own destiny. We become willing to take responsibility for our part of the creation. We are humbled by the infinite and eternal nature of that mysterious force which is cocreating our experience of life. This awareness is what occurs through the Lovewell process, and it is the motivating factor that has kept me pursuing this vision for so many years.

Every moment we make choices to simplify or complicate, to control or surrender, to create, or destroy. Who, though, is making these choices? How many of these choices are made from conscious decision, and how many are made from habit, fear, or unconscious impulses? These are the questions I have asked myself over the past few years throughout the course of my doctoral studies. During this time, I have encountered the deaths of my brother and my uncle, the start of a new and demanding job, the departure of my eldest daughter for college and a life of her own, definitive productions of two of my musical theatre creations that I have waited over 20 years to see, and the blossoming of Lovewell Institute into a reality beyond what I ever could have envisioned. This has been a time of intensive growth and self-examination, a new beginning in what seems like a lifetime encompassing many lifetimes.

My passion for the arts and for the creative process has not diminished with age, but has actually been amplified by the enthusiasm of like-minded artists and scholars. Lovewell Institute has attracted creative minds and dedicated artists and educators who do not need to be convinced or persuaded regarding the transformative power of the creative arts--the potential to heal; to educate; and to build community, compassion, and awareness. The personal outcome of helping to design the Lovewell culture of creativity

and interdisciplinary art is that I no longer feel as lonely or isolated as I have for much of my life. The struggles of pioneering are being substituted with the fulfillment of stewardship. I hope that this study contributes to the discourse surrounding the value of interdisciplinary arts, creative process, and the human factor.

One of the unfortunate outcomes of the Industrial Age was the systematic dehumanization of society. The Age of Technology, while providing more leisure time, amazing gadgets, scientific advancement, and more sophisticated methods of data collection, has unfortunately also further exacerbated the dehumanization process and introduced the very real threat of global annihilation either through warfare or neglect and ignorance of our environment. Now, the Information Age is overwhelming the human race in a tsunami of meaningless data and manipulated statistics. I would like to suggest that the next era of human development might be called the Age of Meaning. It would embody the intensely human-driven process of giving meaning to the glut of information now available and, in fact, unavoidable. This Age of Meaning would perhaps finally allow humans to perform the only remaining tasks that computers cannot do better, those essential tasks of feeling, caring, and comprehending our divine right to live well, create well, and love well.