The relationship of social, personal, and academic growth between theatre and non-theatre arts students: a comparative study

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“To Play or not to Play, 
That is the Question!”

The Relationship of Social, Personal, and 
Academic Growth between Theatre and 
Non-Theatre Arts Students: A Comparative Study

By: Kristy Burchard
California State University, Monterey Bay
May, 2014
The Relationship of Social, Personal, and Academic Growth between Theatre and Non-Theatre Arts Students: A Comparative Study

Research Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts in Education

California State University at Monterey Bay
May 2014

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The Relationship of Social, Personal, and Academic Growth between Theatre and Non-Theatre Arts Students: A Comparative Study

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements For the Degree of
Master of Arts in Education
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Spring 2014
Kristy K. Burchard

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The Relationship of Social, Personal, and Academic Growth Between Theatre and Non-Theatre Arts Students: A Comparative Study

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California State University at Monterey Bay
2014

Abstract

This paper discusses the results of a systematic research design to determine academic, personal and social developmental differences between two adolescent groups, one group that had taken part in at least four theatre arts workshops and a demographically comparable group that had not attended these workshops. I utilized Ex Post Facto research, which is a retrospective research study that allowed me to seek a possible and plausible relationship between these two groups. Both groups answered a 30-question survey. The measured outcome fell into one of three categories: Academic development, personal and social development. The questions posed were related to making friends, peer pressure, leadership characteristics, academic future and attitude towards their commitment to education, friends and extra-curricular activities. Conclusions were drawn from these research findings indicating that extra-curricular theatre arts activities do have an important effect on adolescents in this age range. The main difference between the two groups was that the theatre arts group displayed more confidence in all three categories by their responses to the majority of the questions (79%). This indicates that these students are decisive, positive, and engaged in what they are doing in school and in their extra-curricular programs.
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“Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel.” - Socrates
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CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY

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All students should have equal access to education. They should all have access to rich and equally diverse opportunities to broaden their knowledge and experience. Extracurricular programs should be viewed as a development support for all socioeconomic groups. Low-income children today are too much on their own, both physically and psychologically. They would benefit from safe places to play, adult attention and greater opportunities to participate in the arts (Halpern, 1999). James Catterall (2002) conducted an 11-year study of 17,000 10th graders and found that students involved in after-school theatre arts, particularly in low-income communities, have higher average educational aspirations as well as improved academic achievement and social and cognitive development. These statistics point to a demographic that may be the most important to consider when it comes to emphasizing involvement in extracurricular theatre arts because they may stand to benefit the most.

Though volumes of documentation regarding the value of the arts in education line the shelves of professional libraries and support for the arts as part of a comprehensive educational program is the subject of articles, speeches, and symposia, when push comes to shove, when resources are precious, and when test results are published in newspapers, arts are the first to go (Tambucci, 2006).

Ironically, the arts--disciplines that theorists, as well as teachers in the trenches, claim to improve higher-order thinking skills--are the very programs that typically are eliminated from the school district’s budget when money is limited (Berube, 1999).
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Arts are responsible for helping to create stronger thinking in students, then why are school leaders hesitant to fund programs featuring the arts?

Arts involvement encourages creativity and imagination from concept to process to completion (Sternberg, 2006). Arts stereotypically were considered frills and only offered to gifted and talented students. Sometimes parents may not have wanted dramatic and visual arts included because they weren’t instructed in the arts and therefore, don’t consider them important. School districts may actually consider the arts a leisure activity and entertainment (Hamblen 1997).

Along those lines, dramatic arts lends itself well to multicultural equity and social justice through experiencing and learning. The state of California is diverse in culture, ethnicity, and socioeconomic differences. Drama transcends ethnic differences with skills that are easily learned such as movement, pantomime, self-expression, and working together to create. In theatre, many scripts, plays, folktales, fairytales, and the like originate from many different cultures and can be a comfort to students beginning the study of theatre arts, regardless of ethnic background.

For the past 15 years I have observed after-school drama programs having a positive influence on adolescents’ character and social development. I have seen, time and again, an adolescent who has been encouraged to become active in after-school drama programs and has then shown considerable growth in self-esteem and self-confidence. Students can experience positive feelings towards themselves and their accomplishments as a result of belonging to a group. These positive feelings are also evident to their parents, classmates, and teachers. I believe there is a correlation between drama activities and positive social and character
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development. For example, “Arts participation and SAT scores co-vary—that is, they tend to increase linearly: the more arts classes, the higher the scores. Multiple independent studies have shown increased years of enrollment in arts courses are positively correlated with higher SAT verbal and math scores. High school students who take arts classes have higher math and verbal SAT scores than students who take no arts classes”. (Vaughn & Winner, 2000, p. 9) Harvard’s Project Zero and the Association for the Advancement of Arts have both analyzed hundreds of studies that claim to improve both academic and pro-social development in adolescence. Some of the indicators of pro-social development measured in these studies are those I am most interested in measuring in my own research, such as increased self-esteem, better relations with adults, increased motivation, more positive peer associations, and more resistance to peer pressure.

Findings from this study will contribute to the body of knowledge regarding “best practices” for teaching drama to a broader diversity of students, which is important in an increasingly diverse nation. If more adolescents are able to participate in dramatic arts as Hamblen (1993) maintains that “theory, research, and programs indicate there are linkages between arts learning and learning other subject areas, and that art study can promote creative behaviors, critical thinking skills, and academic achievement” (p. 196). Podlozny (2000) also assets that “drama is an effective tool for increasing achievement in story understanding, reading readiness, and writing” (p. 268).

Problem Statement

According to research, secondary education in the U.S. is putting too much focus on math and science education, brought on by the perception that the U.S. is falling behind in these areas worldwide. Educational administrations are being forced to seek curricular interventions that will
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yield the greatest improvement in students' academic performance in math and science in the least amount of time (Gullatt, 2007). Consequently, students are not getting as much exposure to learning opportunities through the arts that engender creativity, vocabulary, reasoning skills, peer interaction, and life skills; skills that can help them succeed. The correlation between exposure to the arts and student achievement within academic disciplines such as mathematics and science has been a subject of much debate (Gullatt, 2007); none the less, prominent theorists and practitioners such as Catterall (1998) and Gardner (1999) argue that arts are integral to the education of the whole child. Still, when budget cuts occur in many school districts, the art programs are often the first to go. As an arts educator, I find this extremely difficult to understand when there has been so much research conducted confirming the benefits of arts education, whether it be theatre, music, dance, or visual art.

There has been a cut in funding towards theatre arts with the emphasis on reading and math in accordance with No Child Left Behind Laws (NCLB, 2000) and Race to the Top. As is well documented, arts learning experiences contribute to the development of certain thinking, social and motivational skills that are considered basic for success in school, work and life. These benefits can also be obtained through extracurricular drama programs according to Podlozny (2000). Kardash and Wright (1986) found that there is a “strong positive relationship between drama and a variety of cognitive outcomes including reading, oral and written communication, person-perception, and drama skills” (p. 246) There continues to be a need to include theater arts education in the core program of study to improve creativity, comprehension and higher order thinking which in turn increases in achievement in core content areas such as math, English and science will be evident.
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Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether theatre arts workshops will enhance pro-social, personal and academic growth in adolescents. I will be conducting Ex Post Facto research. This retrospective research will allow me to study adolescents who have already attended at least four theatre arts workshops and compare them to a comparable group of adolescents who have not attended these theatre arts workshops, to seek a possible and plausible relation. I will create and implement a 25-question survey that students of both the theatre workshop group and the comparison group will answer. There will be a minimum of 15 and a maximum of 30 adolescents in each group.

Overall, an Ex Post Facto design is used to explore possible causal relationships among variables that cannot be controlled by the researcher. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the investigator designs the study to compare two or more samples that are comparable except for a specified factor that occurred in the past. I will utilize two groups of adolescents: one group that has attended at least four or more drama workshops and one group that has not attended drama workshops. The specific questionnaire I will use is described in the Methodology section.

Research questions

The following research questions will be addressed through the course of my research.

- Will students who have participated in four or more workshops on theatre art have a more positive perceptions than students with no theatre art experience with respect to their:
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- academic development, including creative writing, memorization, and class presentations;
- social development, including making new friends and belonging to a group;
- personal development, including increased self-confidence and leadership skills.

Theoretical model

A prominent theoretical framework that my research fits within is Maslow’s theory of The Hierarchy of Needs. His theory states that people are driven to fulfill their potential. He points out that there are physiological needs (food, water, oxygen, etc.) and safety needs (safety, free from fear of danger, etc.), which must first be met so people can continue to move through the steps toward self-actualization. The middle steps of Maslow’s hierarchy are belonging (love, friendship a sense of community) and esteem (being respected by others having status and recognition). The third step or top tier of the pyramid, which according to Maslow’s theory, few achieve, self-actualization. Those middle steps in Maslow’s pyramid are core benefits that I identify as the important contributions that afterschool drama activities can supply to young teens in their early years of high school (9th and 10th grades).

Much of my research is centered on education of the whole child (Catterall, 1998; Gardner, 1999), which runs parallel to what Maslow’s theory states, that you must take care of basic human needs in order for a student/child move toward self-actualization. As I look at the approach to education, I think about what the goal of education should be and the approach that may be most beneficial to students. Holistic education aims at helping students to be the most that they can be (as in Maslow’s theory of self-actualization) with the development of every
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person’s intellectual, emotional, social, physical, artistic, creative and spiritual potentials. It seeks to engage students in the teaching/learning process and a collaboration between the student and the teacher that gives each of them ownership in the learning process. This educational theory is a very good fit with art education’s entire fiber, as James Catterall states in much of his research. (1999) There are many important educational theorists that support the holistic approach to the education of a child, including: Johann Pestalozzi, a Swiss humanitarian, Francis Parker and John Dewey, founders of “progressive education,” and pioneers in education such as Maria Montessori and Rudolf Steiner. These important education theorists all insisted that education should be understood as the art of cultivating the moral, emotional, physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of the developing child. Educating the whole child while develop sagacious characteristics that will be assets for life, such as; good-judgment (self-governance), meta learning (each student learns in their “own way”), social ability (more than just learning social skills), refining values (development of character) and self- knowledge (emotional development) will help form the student into a well-balanced adult. The arts in general and performing arts specifically, cultivate these valuable attributes within students while educating them in the holistic manner often referred to as the “Whole Child Method” of learning.

Theater arts programs foster characteristics that can relate to student motivation. The personal and social benefits that are generally attributed to the arts can easily be viewed through the Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Self Determination Theory is a theory of motivation. It is concerned with supporting our natural or intrinsic tendencies to behave in effective and healthy ways. The theory was initially developed by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan at the University of Rochester. As I read this theory, I certainly see a viable fit with the characteristics
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that the arts in general encourage in students. People are often moved by external factors such as reward systems, grades, evaluations, or the opinions they fear others might have of them. Yet, just as frequently, people are motivated from within, by interests, curiosity, care or abiding values. These intrinsic motivations are not necessarily externally rewarded or supported, but nonetheless they can drive the student to sustain passion, creativity, and effort. The interplay between the extrinsic forces acting on persons and the intrinsic motives and needs inherent in human nature is the territory of Self-Determination Theory. I think that studying the needs, interests, motivation, social, personal and academic growth among my subjects will be a very interesting and fruitful study. With the guidance these three theories supply I have been able to formulate meaningful questions for my students, parent subjects, and to create meaningful focus group study questions. I have been able to get deeper than the superficial interest in extra-curricular performing arts programs of “fun”. And with that said, I do not want to discount the importance of “fun” when evaluating extra-curricular programs, performing arts or teen activities.

Researcher Background

Having participated in theatrical productions since I was in junior high school, a large portion of my life has been spent either being an actor, drama coach, drama teacher, producer, or director for schools and community theatre groups. I am a credentialed teacher and have been involved as a classroom multi-subject teacher as well as a drama teacher for all levels kindergarten through 12th grade. I am the founder and director of a youth summer musical theater camp that is entering its twelfth summer, and dramatic (non-musical) youth workshop entering its tenth summer. I have seen theater arts educational programs help participants
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develop social skills, self-confidence, improved communication skills, self-expression, and increased tolerance of others, to mention a few of the key benefits. There are, of course, a large number of ancillary benefits such as leadership, compassion, creativity, listening skills, fun, and wholesome comradery.

As a person who has been a theater arts educator for over 15 years, I know from experience that there is a correlation between an adolescent’s involvement in after-school drama programs and positive character and social development. I have seen, time and again, an adolescent who has been encouraged to become active in after-school drama programs and as a result has shown considerable growth in self-esteem and self-confidence. The experience of belonging to a group, positive feelings towards themselves and their accomplishments, are also evident to them, their parents, classmates, and teachers. I personally know there is a correlation between drama activities and positive social and character development, and I am anxious to conduct my research and see if there is measurable evidence to answer my research questions.

Definition of terms

Arts Education - Art education refers to learning, instruction and programming based upon the visual and tangible arts. Art education includes performing arts like dance, music, theater, and visual arts like drawing, painting, sculpture, and design works.

Holistic education - believes that each person should strive to be all that they can be in life. There are no deficits in learners, just differences and it aims to call forth from people an intrinsic reverence for life and a passionate love of learning.
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Extra-curricular - educational activities not falling within the scope of the regular curriculum. Activities of educating or instructing; activities that impart knowledge or skill; such as participation in theatrical productions as an extracurricular activity either through the school system or community programs offered to the high school age student.

Motivation – Internal and external factors that stimulate desire and energy in people to be continually interested and committed to a job, role or subject or to make an effort to attain a goal.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) – this stands for the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, a federal law passed under the George W. Bush administration. NCLB represents legislation that attempts to accomplish standards-based education reform. The law and its subsequent implementation have grown to be a very controversial issue in Education.

Performing Arts – skills or craft that are primarily performed before an audience, as acting, singing, or dancing.

Progressive education – is a pedagogical movement that began in the late nineteenth century and has persisted in various forms to the present. This distinguished an education style different from the traditional curriculum, which was rooted in classical preparation for the university and strongly differentiated by socioeconomic level. By contrast progressive education finds its roots in present experience, most having these qualities in common: strong emphasis on problem solving and critical thinking, group work and development of social skills, understanding and action as goals of learning as opposed to rote knowledge and collaborative and cooperative learning projects.

Theater Arts - is the branch of the performing arts concerned with acting out stories in front of an audience using combinations of speech, gesture, music, dance, sound and spectacle—indeed
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any one or more elements of the other performing arts. In addition to the standard narrative dialogue style of plays, theatre takes such forms as plays, musicals, opera, and others.

Self-actualization - A belief put forth by Abraham Maslow, that each person should strive to be all that they can be in life. There are no deficits in learners, just differences. An example may be a person developing to the ultimate extent a human could reach and, thus, moving towards the highest aspirations of the human spirit.

Self-determination theory - (SDT) is a theory of motivation. It is concerned with supporting our natural or intrinsic tendencies to behave in effective and healthy ways. The theory was initially developed by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan at the University of Rochester, and has been elaborated and refined by scholars from many countries.

Thespian – relating to theatre or stage, drama, a member of a theatre club or organization with interest in drama. An actor.

Visual arts – are art forms that create works that are primarily visual in nature, such as ceramics, drawing, painting, sculpture, printmaking, design, drafts, photography, video, filmmaking and architecture. They can also be referred to as fine arts which would also include applied arts such as industrial design, graphic design, fashion design, interior design and decorative arts and crafts.

“Whole Child Method” of learning – A holistic approach to modern education that identifies five kinds of learning that supporters like to see each child exposed to, every day if possible. They are: 1. Cognitive-intellectual activity, associated with the left brain, 2. Creative-intuitive activity (the arts), associated with the right brain, 3. Structured physical movement and unstructured, self-directed play, 4. Handwork, making things that can be useful, and 5. Engagement with nature and community.
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Chapter 2
Review of Literature

Introduction

I will be examining the effects of extracurricular theater arts activities on adolescent academic, personal, and social growth in school. The purpose of this research is to determine if there is any improvement in student performance as it relates to academics, self-confidence, attitude, and personal and social interaction based on their involvement in one specific form of the arts: drama.

Recap of goal, purpose, and research questions

The goal of my research is to determine if extra-curricular theatre arts workshops will foster student performance as it relates to social development and personal and academic growth. I chose this goal because it is important to understand the value and benefits of this performance art so that we can foster a greater appreciation for it, and so we can continue to promote drama programs for our students, as the arts are believed by many to enhance student development in multiple ways.

The research hypothesis derived from this question is:

- Students who have participated in four or more workshops on theatre art will have more positive perceptions than students with no theatre art experience with respect to their:
  - academic development, including creative writing, memorization, and class presentations;
  - social development, including making new friends and belonging to a group;
  - personal development, including increased self-confidence and leadership skills.
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This section provides an overview of the literature that relate to these hypothesis and variables. First, I will take a brief historical look at the arts in education and students’ academic achievement and well-being. Second, I will look at the role of extra-curricular arts programs and how they fill a need that cannot be supplied for students in the day to day curriculum. Third, I will examine arts involvement and the benefit outcomes as well as the indicators that research has documented measured improvement in student development.

A Historical View of Arts Education in the US

To appreciate the role of arts in education today we must look back at the initial role the arts had in the history of education. Darby and Catterall (1994) cite two chronological events that led to modern thinking about the arts in education. In the 1800’s Horace Mann demanded that visual arts and music must be taught in common schools in Massachusetts as an aid to curriculum and an enhancement to learning. This theory and his further research gained the arts the first major entrance into curriculum offerings in any state. Other famous educational experts have further supported this correlation between the arts and education. Educational reformer and philosopher, John Dewey, put forth the idea that there is a correlation between instruction in the arts and improved cognition, which had a profound effect on curriculum decisions of the time in many locations. He further held that education was composed of four main objectives: The development of a child’s intellect, moral sense, social awareness, and aesthetic sense (Dewey, 1934).

As noted by Gullatt, Vygotsky insisted that “student’s constructed cognitive knowledge through the active process of learning, and that the arts were integral to that process” (p.13). The previously noted educational experts considered the arts to serve a positive role in assisting with the teaching and
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learning process (2008). As the aforementioned theorists have written, there is a strong basis for the consideration of arts education in public education. Further they insist that constructed cognitive knowledge must be present through the active process of learning, which you will find to be supported by modern educational theorists quoted in the next section of this paper.

In 1999, Berube published an empirical article that took a historical approach and outlined Educational Theorists and Arts Education

the political climate and federal governmental contributions to public education and the cuts that drastically shaped arts in education over the past 40 years. In schools, the role of arts in the curriculum has had a problematic history. (Berube, 1999) Berube goes on to state that Dewey held that education was composed of four main objectives: The development of a child’s intellect, moral sense, social awareness, and aesthetic sense (Dewey, 1934). Certainly Dewey’s objectives—specifically aesthetic sense—can be supported within a child’s learning through theatre arts.

The theoretical framework that Maslow established states that people are driven to fulfill their potential. First, the physiological needs and safety needs must be met. Then the middle steps of Maslow’s hierarchy are belonging and esteem, which can be fulfilled through education, specifically arts education. With this theoretical framework in mind, educators should consideration the education of the “whole child” as Catterall addresses in a study called The Imagination Project, there might be a better understanding about the benefits of theatre arts education. According to research by Catterall and his colleagues in which they studied 25,000 students over a period of 10 years, ages 8th grade to 12th grade, all in the same low SES
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(socioeconomic status), they were able to document three main sets of observations, which certainly support positive effects of arts education.

1) Involvement in the Arts and Academic success shows positive developments for children engage in the arts at each step in the research—between 8th and 10th grade as well as between 10th and 12th. The comparative gains for arts-involved youngsters generally become more pronounced over time.

2) Music and mathematics achievement reported consistent high levels of involvement in instrumental music over the middle and high school years show significantly higher levels of mathematics proficiency by grade 12.

3) Theatre arts and human development showed sustained student involvement in theatre arts (acting in plays and musicals, participating in drama clubs, and taking acting lessons) associates with a variety of development for youth: gains in reading proficiency, gains in self-concept and motivation, and higher levels of empathy and tolerance for others (p. 2)

In addition to the positive effects reported in this study it also identified two indicators related to “tolerance and empathy”. Students with high drama involvement showed high levels of empathy and tolerance for others (Catterall, 1999), both of these attributes fit well within personal and social growth of the “whole child” (Eisner, 1998; Gardner 1999). My research corroborates Catterall’s findings further supporting the needs for finding alternatives for students to enhance their learning process by augmenting their learning with theatre arts, music, and visual arts education.
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The next section of my paper will provide a look at the program that will allow an extracurricular theatre arts program to offer students the needed cognitive and social growth that has been shown to be the benefit of such programs. I also believe the characteristics of the theory of motivation will become apparent. This theory is concerned with supporting our natural or intrinsic tendencies to behave in effective and healthy ways. The role of extracurricular programs has filled a need that often cannot be supplied for students in the day to day curriculum of high school.

The Role of Extracurricular Arts Program

Due to current financial constraints on California schools and core subject class requirements that schools mandate for students, there is little time for students and money for schools to work a drama curriculum class into students schedules. If a student is on a college prep track there is little time for electives in their schedule each semester throughout high school. Even though there are government mandates and regulations that emphasize the importance of drama, it is considered an elective. Research shows that extra-curricular activities provide a positive influence on adolescent (age 13-18) academic performance, improved attendance, and social development characterized as a sense of belonging (Sternberg, 2006). Performing and visual arts challenge students to use reasoning skills—both concrete and abstract—to draw conclusions and formulate ideas. Arts encourage creativity and imagination from concept to process to completion (Sternberg, 2006).

Due to budget constraints and a nationwide emphasis on the math and reading performance of students, the result of No Child Left Behind laws (No Child Left Behind
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[NCLB], 2001), schools experienced an unfortunate erosion of theater arts. A study by Winner and Cooper (1999) helps put into perspective how the arts are generally viewed in a school setting. They frame two important aspects of arts education today. First they note that “basic academic skills are valued while the arts are considered a frill” (Winner and Cooper, p. 11) and second that when “budgets are tight, the arts are almost always the first program to be cut” (p. 11). Berube’s explanation for the elimination of the arts is straightforward; there is no sense of global competition in the arts, education is all focused on math, science and technology because these are the areas where a direct return on investment can be shown (1999). As schools are faced with difficult decisions on curriculum that they believe will keep their school and their students competitive on standardized tests, the current “score card” for education success, the arts are cut from the curriculum or seriously underfunded. Consequently, families are making decisions to allow their children to pursue drama activities through local community theater troupes.

As I delve into the subject of the importance of theater arts education involvement as an extra-curricular activity at school or within the community, I will also touch on the importance parents may have on influencing their students to participate in theater activities. If a parent has participated in the arts, their children are much more likely to participate in the arts. This is either due to shared interest or that parents understand the benefits of arts programs and encouragingly direct their child to participate or both.
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National Organization Funding Can Make a Difference.

There has been a recent movement by large national organizations such as the National Arts Endowment, by state and local agencies such as community theater groups, city recreation departments, and by nonprofit organizations supporting youth art programs to help counter these cuts by supporting public schools with additional resources targeted at arts education. These resources include grants that will pay for “Artist in Schools” programs, which may include poetry writing, visual art and performing arts such as drama and vocal, as well as field trip opportunities to hear a local symphony or see Broadway theater or even to begin an after-school theater arts program for production of a school play. These resources have been used to help increase awareness, and provide resources such as staff development and grants to help schools to support arts education. Grants and funds have been made available through state and local governments. Communities are beginning to support schools with workshops to help teachers and students to understand what kinds of programs are available as an extra-curricular support (www.cac.ca.gov/programs/ais/php).

How the Arts Benefit Student Achievement

Opposing points of view surface regarding whether the arts can supply enormous amounts of value in student achievement and well-being. Currently no research results show that arts education is detrimental to the student (Eisner, 1998) In fact, most found a strong correlation between drama and pro-social benefits, such as increases in self-esteem, motivation, peer relationships, personal discipline, and pro-academic developments, such as improvements in math, reading comprehension, language skills, creative writing, and higher order thinking skills
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in students. (Silbert & Welch, 2001, Burton, Horowitz, and Abeles, 2000, Winner and Cooper, 2002)

A Correlation Between Drama and Social and Academic Benefits

Project Zero (PZ) was founded at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in 1967 by Goodman (1906-1998), a distinguished philosopher with a strong interest in aesthetics and the arts. Project Zero was founded with a mandate to work in the area of arts education. Benefits of arts education have been documented in hundreds of studies that have been analyzed by PZ. The measured outcomes generally fall into one of two categories: pro-social development and academic achievement. Some of the indicators of pro-social development include:

- Better discipline
- Increased self-esteem
- Reduced truancy
- Better relations with adults
- More hope for the future
- Increased motivation
- More positive peer associations
- Less interest in drugs
- More resistant to peer pressure
- Reduced criminal activity

Measures of academic achievement include:

- Improved math ability
- Improved reading comprehension
- Improved language skills
- Increased interest in social studies
- Improved spatial-temporal reasoning
- Higher high school graduation rate

Silbert & Welch (2001) show some very strong pro-social and academic achievements. They go on to say that for many years, anecdotal accounts have fueled the intuition that the arts
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can have a positive effect on youth. Arts advocates see these reports as evidence supporting their claims while policy analysts were frustrated by the lack of scientific evaluations (Silbert & Welch, 2001, p. 5)

Statistical Inferences

Eisner noted a study that had some statistical importance called *Eloquent Evidence: Arts at the Core of Learning* (Murfee, 1995). This article shows proof that students of the arts continue to outperform their non-art peers on the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), according to the College Entrance Examination Board (Eisner, 1998). In 1995, SAT scores for “students who studied the arts more than four years were 59 points higher on the verbal and 44 points higher on the math portion than students with no course work or experience in the arts” (Murfee, 1995, p.3) Eisner goes on to say, “one cannot help but wonder if students who elect to study the arts for four or more years have the same academic background as those who never took an arts course.” (Eisner, 1998, p. 144)

Clearly one factor that differentiates the two groups is that one group made such a choice to enroll in arts education. Is it the arts courses or other personal features of those electing the arts that accounts for the differences in SAT scores? (Eisner 1998) Eisner identifies three levels, or tiers, to which arts education might be expected to make a contribution: (1) Arts-based Outcomes of Art Education, (2) Arts-related Outcomes of Arts Education, and (3) Ancillary Outcomes of Art Education.

Eisner looks at the contributions arts education makes to both the arts and to life beyond them. He identifies four outcomes: (1) Students should acquire a feel for what it means to transform their ideas, images, and feelings into an art form, (2) Arts education should refine the students’ awareness
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of the aesthetic qualities in art and life, (3) Arts education should enable students to understand that there is a connection between content and form that the arts display and the culture and time in which the work was created. (4) Dispositions that appear to be cultivated through programs that engage students in the process of artistic creation. Dispositions are difficult to identify, but are an important set of outcomes for arts education.

Some dispositional outcomes may include:

- A willingness to image possibilities that are not now, but which might become.
- A desire to explore ambiguity, to be willing to forestall premature closure in pursuing resolutions.
- The ability to recognize and accept the multiple perspectives and resolutions that work in the arts celebrate. (Eisner, 1996, p. 148)

The message Eisner conveys is an important message to this study. As educators we need to help parents understand what the arts can mean as a part of their children’s education and we “must cease trying to become whatever people want us to be” (Eisner, 1998). “We do no service to the arts trying to prove ancillary educational contributions to math, literature and other subjects. We need to let the arts stand strong on their own. They have unique contributions to the education of young people.” (Eisner, p. 149)

The student segment focused on in The National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NEL: 88) is the exact group of students that I will be focusing my study methodology towards. This study is a nationally representative sample of 8th grade students who were surveyed several times between 1988 and 2000. This study was sponsored by Arts Education Partnership, President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities, GE Fund and the MacArthur Foundation and
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was authored by Fiske, the former Education Editor of the New York Times. Fiske is an internationally known education correspondent, editor, and lecturer who is widely regarded as one of the nation’s leading education writers and observers of school reform. In 1991, he published Smart Schools, Smart Kids (Simon & Schuster), which former U.S. Secretary of Education, Bell called “the most important work on education to be published since A Nation at Risk.” It is comforting to see that important scholars see this as a statistically important student population. This group of students is making a big step by moving from Junior High School into High School.

Summary

Research shows that extra-curricular theatre arts education show positive benefits to adolescents beyond what is provided by the standard core curriculum being mandated in schools today. Based on the historical background and foundational research of extra-curricular theatre arts programs causal relationships between arts and higher academic performance have been shown. Further, theatre arts education can foster personal and social growth in adolescents.
Chapter 3
Methodology

Introduction

This study investigates the hypothesis that involvement in after-school theatre arts programs can be associated with adolescents' social and academic growth. I utilized quantitative research design which emphasizes objectivity in measuring and describing this phenomena. The measured outcome generally fell into one of two categories of a student's perception: academic achievement and pro-social development. Some of the indicators for pro-social achievements include: increased self-esteem and motivation, better discipline, comfortable interactions with adults, more positive peer associations, and more resistance to peer pressure. Measures of academic achievement include: improved reading comprehension, improved language skills and creative writing, improved ability to work in groups, improved confidence when giving oral presentations, improved memorization, and a vision and determination toward their academic future. My goal was to gather and analyze data to answer the research question I proposed as follows:

- How do students who have participated in four or more workshops on theatre art perceive the impact of the workshops on them with respect to their:
  - academic development, including creative writing, memorization, and class presentations;
  - social development, including making new friends and belonging to a group;
  - personal development, including increased self-confidence and leadership skills.
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I believe my research design was well suited to allow me to explore the relationship that may exist between afterschool theatre arts involvement and a student’s perceived academic and social developments.

Overall research design

I utilized quantitative design for my study. Quantitative research designs emphasize objectivity in measuring and describing phenomena. As a result, the research designs maximize objectivity by using numbers, statistics, structure, and control. (McMillan & Schumacher, p. 21). This quantitative research is of the non-experimental research design as I did not have an active or direct intervention. This design is best for my research because I described phenomena and examined relationships between different phenomena without any direct manipulation of conditions that are experienced. (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010)

Specific research plan

I used ex post facto design, or after-the-fact research, which according to the Encyclopedia of Research Design (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010) is a category in which the investigation starts after the treatment / event has occurred without interference from the researcher. The majority of social research, in contexts in which it is not possible or acceptable to manipulate the characteristics of human participants, is based on ex post facto research designs. It is also often applied as a substitute for true experimental research to test hypotheses about cause-and-effect relationships. (Silva, 2010)

The ex post facto design allowed me to compare two groups of adolescents of similar age, gender, and ethnicity. The only difference between the two groups will be that one group
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will have experienced four or more theater arts workshops and the other group had not. According to McMillan and Schumacher, this research design was ideal for exploring possible causal relationship among variables that one cannot control (McMillan & Schumacher, p. 21).

I focused my study on what happened differently for two comparable groups of subjects.

Procedures in detail

The setting for my study is small town in central California, in a county that was established by ranchers and farmers in 1872. The city has a population of 65,000 (2010 census), and is located about 100 miles southeast of San Francisco and 40 miles east of Monterey. It has a blend of older and newer homes, tree lined streets, good schools, and numerous parks. The city maintains its heritage of agriculture and cattle ranching ambiance while encouraging a new business to locate into the area by creating a business-friendly environment. This rural city is located in California's Central Coast region, between the Gavilan and Diablo Ranges of the Santa Cruz Mountains and is blessed with a temperate climate. Cool ocean air regulates the city’s temperature resulting in warm summers and mild winters. This climate is perfect for agriculture. There are many vineyards and wineries located in the county. This area is nicknamed the “salad bowl” because of the large amount of lettuce and other vegetables grown here. There is a large group of farm workers that live here, as well as a significant number of migrant workers that live in the area at least six months of the year. The 2010 census notes that 79% of the working population commutes to other locations for employment. The city has a large Hispanic population that supports the agriculture and ranching businesses in the county.

Participants

The participants for my study were students (boys and girls) ranging from 12 – 15 years old. One of the groups consisted of students that had attended theatre workshops. These
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workshops were offered either through the local Community Theatre Group that I am a member of and where I volunteer to work with youth for musical theatre participation, or they have taken part in theatre workshops through summer musical theatre camp or dramatic acting camps offered in our community. The subjects for the “theater arts group” had taken part in a minimum of four workshops at one of the entities listed above. These organizations focus their efforts on extra-curricular theater arts activities to give youth an opportunity to participate and learn theatre arts skills.

I contacted these previous theatre arts students that fell within the specific age and experience level, and invited them to take part in my study. I contacted them by mail or phone and I organized a meeting with the students and their parent(s) to explain my study and request their voluntary involvement. Those that had completed a consent form were asked to complete the 30-question survey, as well as a cover page that asked the subjects some demographic information that helped me identify the subjects to maintain their anonymity. This demographic information assisted me in getting a group that matched the demographics when I choose my comparative group. My goal was to have between 25–30 participants in each group.

To make my initial contact for the “non-theater arts workshop participants” I asked a couple of my teaching colleagues to assist me with contacting non-theatre arts students that matched my theatre arts group demographically. My colleagues helped me arrange an opportunity to present to their class, request volunteers and send home consent forms with students. When the consent forms were returned, my colleges invited me to class and I administered the 30-question survey and the cover sheet to the students that return the consent forms, making sure they were a good match to the “theatre arts group”. I used pseudonyms and descriptors to list the demographics on each survey for recording purposes. All subject’s names
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and identifying demographics were secured in a locked file cabinet in the MAE department
secretaries’ office at California State University Monterey Bay.

Data collection procedures

The instrument I utilized for both the theater arts group (TAG) and the non-theatre arts
group (NTAG) was a 30-question questionnaire that had positively worded statements relating to
the social confidence and academic preparedness of the students. I formulated a cover page that
asked some demographic questions, as well as some questions about any extra-curricular
involvement with other than theatre arts involvement. I believe this instrument offered a range in
which to answer, not just a clear yes or no, which was necessary for my purpose of quantitative
research and arriving at a total score when added together for each subject.

The data I gathered was all relating to the students’ social and academic status (SAS)
utilizing a 1 – 5 point Likert-scale, with five (5) representing ‘Strongly Agree and one (1)
representing strongly disagree. My goal was to gather as many students as possible for the
Theatre Arts (TAG) group with a minimum of 30 students. I accepted all students that
responded to my request in both the theatre arts group (TAG) and the non theatre arts group
(NTAG). I received approximately 30% more subjects and questionnaires from the NTAG so
that I had a strong pool from which to find the closest demographic match possible to the TAG.
Having the larger pool of NTAG allowed me the opportunity to assemble more easily the
comparable group, as I then had a large population to gather from.

Data collection and data sources

Data collection for my theatre arts group consisted of one meeting in which to explain my
study and ask for their involvement. Because each subject was requested to bring a parent with
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them for this meeting, I had them fill out the questionnaire at that meeting once I had secured their consent form. I asked for an assistant from the local theatre company board to help as my staff. They provided non-biased secretarial support, to accept the consent forms and label them TAG (representing Theatre Arts Group) and NTAG (representing Non-Theatre Arts Group) and a number B1 (for boy #1) or G1 (for girl#1), etc. on both the demographic form and questionnaire, in case they should get separated at some point during the process of analyzing the data. The “master” subjects list, with the subject’s name and identification code, was sealed in an envelope and stored in the MAE department. The same protocol was followed with the NTAG, with the classroom teacher serving as my non-biased secretarial assistant during the consent form and questionnaire gathering time for the comparable group.

The types of information I collected were easily answered by the subjects. Here is a sample of the positively worded questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I make friends easily.</th>
<th>I help my peers in school.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I always stand up for myself.</td>
<td>I push myself to succeed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I set academic goals for myself.</td>
<td>I am good at memorizing things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t give into peer pressure.</td>
<td>I enjoy creative writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I give a class presentation I am not stressed out.</td>
<td>I deal with my disappointments with an intellectual rather than an emotional response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I consider myself a leader.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Data Analysis

I tested for significant differences between two samples; a group that has had extra-curricular theatre arts workshops and a comparable group that has not had this treatment. I worked with ordinal data: dependent variable not assumed to be “normally” distributed: non-parametric. The ordinal data for my research being my Likert scale that I used for ranking on my survey. This data could be ranked from highest to lowest. Each value can thus be related to others as being equal to, greater than, or less than. This showing an order to the categories. Examples of ordinal measurement include ranking class members by means of grade-point average, ranking ideas from most important to least important and using percentile ranks in achievement tests. The dependent variable used in my research was my 30-question survey which would be affected by the treatment, four or more theatre arts workshops, compared to students without treatment, no theatre arts workshops.

I was comparing differences between two sets of scores, from two completely unrelated groups. The scores consisted of a total for each subject from each questionnaire based on a Likert scale ranging from 1 relating to “strongly disagree” to 5 relating to “strongly agree”. This data is considered nonparametric because each subject’s interpretation of the scale may have a different meaning but may still land within the same range. I used this data to test hypotheses about relationships between categorical variables, shapes of distributions, and normality of distribution, using the Mann Whitney U Test (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The Mann-Whitney U test is used to compare differences between two independent groups when the dependent variable is either ordinal or continuous, but not normally distributed, which is what my data was; I had ordinal data from my Likert scale questionnaires for two independent groups.
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I tabulated each subject’s total score and I listed the groups independently as Theatre Arts Group (TAG) or Non-Theatre Arts Group (NTAG). I entered the scores in the “raw data” area of the Mann Whitney U test at the Vassar Stats web site to help me tabulate for level of significance. For my study the observed value of $U_A$ is significant at or beyond the designated level if it is equal to or smaller than the indicated lower limit for that level or equal to or greater than the upper limit. The difference is non-significant if it is larger than the lower limit and smaller than the upper limit. (www.vassarstats.org) To check for the correct testing procedures, I made sure all observations from both groups are independent of each other. I know that the responses are ordinal (i.e. one can at least say, of any two observations, which is the greater), so under the alternative hypothesis, the probability of an observation from one population (TAG) exceeding an observation from the second population (NTAG) (after exclusion of ties) is not equal to 0.5.

Limitations / Threats to Internal Validity

The instrument that I used for my study is standard for both groups of subjects. Its validity has been tested, as it has been used in a similar type of study by Hallie Greenberg in New York several years ago, and she has given me permission to utilize her questionnaire.

The selection of participants could be the most likely threat to internal validity. For my study, I needed to have at least 30 participants in each of my two groups. The groups were homogenous. I recruited 30% more non-theatre arts students in order to match the comparable group to the TAG demographically. With the increased number of subject in the NTAG, I made sure the groups were alike in the major characteristics such as age, grade level, gender, ethnicity, and extra-curricular activity involvement.
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My questionnaires and demographic cover pages are identified only with a number, I was able to look through the NTAG and filter them for anything that looks suspect, i.e. someone just went through and marked all 5’s or all 1’s. I did not consider this survey as legitimate and moved it to my unused file.

I avoided concerns for contamination of the comparison group by having a meeting with the Non-Theatre Arts Group as soon after the Theatre Arts Group so that the students do not have time to discuss the questionnaire. I also took precautions when selecting the non-theatre arts students from different schools so subjects would not have an opportunity to discuss the questionnaires. I was not too concerned about the possibility of word of mouth discussions. I did not think that this questionnaire is the type of thing that 12 to 15 years olds will discuss outside of a school setting.

There is one other section of the demographic information cover page that needed a degree of filtration before choosing the subject as a member of my comparable group, and that is the types of extra-curricular activities they have been involved in for the past two or more years. If a student listed participation in band or dance as extra-curricular activities, I identified them as a possible non-candidate, as band and dance are both considered fine arts activities and may be too closely related to theatre arts to make them a good subject for the comparison group. I carefully scanned all the forms that I had chosen for the comparison group to ensure they were a valid comparison to the Theatre Arts Group and to ensure there was no cross-over that skewed the results.

The quantitative research method will allow my results to be objective using numbers and statistics. I also carefully chose my two groups to be well matched demographically so that the
research is valid. I believe the research results will show that it has a “highly significant”
difference between my two populations.
Chapter 4

Results

This chapter discusses the results of a systematic research design to determine differences between two adolescent groups, a theatre arts group and a non-theatre arts group. An ex post facto research design allowed for a comparison of these two groups of similar age, gender, and ethnicity. One of the groups of adolescents had participated in four or more theatre arts workshops and the other group had not. I gathered and analyzed data to answer these research questions:

- How do students who have participated in four or more theatre arts workshops on theatre art perceive the impact of the workshops on them with respect to their:
  - academic development, including creative writing, memorization, and class presentations;
  - social development, including making new friends and belonging to a group;
  - personal development, including increased self-confidence and leadership skills.

Research findings and how they relate to my research questions.

The survey questions were positively worded, which meant that the number of “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree” responses for this Lickert scale survey were less frequent for both groups. I also looked at the exact breakdown of each question to compare the responses between these two groups: TAG, Theatre Arts Group, and NTAG, Non-Theatre Arts Group.
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In accordance with the research design, I needed to find comparable matched pairs of subjects, which meant I needed to identify the TAG participants first and then match those participants’ age, gender, and ethnicity to those of the NTAG participants. As I analyzed the data, I assembled it in to several different aggregates. First, I totaled each student’s Likert scale survey with a maximum total of 150 points (equal to 30 questions multiplied by 5, which is the equivalent of “Strongly Agree” for all questions to reach the 150 score). I was able to input these totals into the Mann-Whitney U test by way of a website (www.vassarstats.org) for statistical computation (Lowry, 2010).

In the case of my samples and the Mann-Whitney U test, I formulated both a research hypothesis and a null hypothesis. The null hypothesis: there is no difference between the two populations (2-tailed); and the research hypothesis: there is a difference between the two populations (2-tailed). My independent variable was the treatment of participating in four or more theatre workshops and the dependent variable was a students’ perceptions of their own academic achievements and their personal and social development. I have a large sample size so the distribution upon which the nonparametric test such as the Mann-Whitney tests calculates the U value which in my study U = 502.5. It is tested for significance using the alpha level of p≤0.01, the critical z-value would be 1.96. The z-values are based on a normal curve. The z-value for my research was 2.86 exceeding the critical z-value of 2.58 for the 2-tailed test for significance. My critical values lie at the extreme ends (2-tail) of the curve which means I can reject the null hypothesis of “no difference” and accept the research hypothesis of a difference between my two groups.
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The test results show that the groups, Theatre Arts Group (TAG) and Non-Theatre Arts Group (NTAG) are in fact “significantly” different at the \( p \leq 0.01 \) level, which means there is less than a 1% probability that the differences found between the groups is purely a result of sampling error. In the simplest of terms I can be 95% sure that my findings are not simply a result of chance. (Appendix D - Critical Values of the Mann-Whitney Test (U))

For the next analysis I totaled all 80 Likert scale surveys. I had 40 students in each group; theatre arts group (TAG) and non-theatre arts group (NTAG), as well as the Likert scale categories (see Table 1) to compare the aggregate numbers corresponding to each of 30-questions and addressing the three main categories I had set forth in my research questions on page one. The survey was designed to get students to answer questions that would primarily be aligned with one of three categories: academic, personal or social attributes.

**Table 1 - Theatre Arts Group for three key categories, Academic, Personal and Social**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TAG Surveys</th>
<th>Total Likert Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong Disagree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>4754</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Agree</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>107</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Aggregate for Theatre Arts Group**

- Series 1 - TAG - Academic
- Series 2 - TAG - Personal
- Series 3 - TAG - Social
Table 2 – Non-Theatre Arts Group for three key categories, Academic, Personal and Social

The aggregate for the “strongly agree” answers, within the category of academics, shows that TAG compared to the NTAG has a difference of 51 points. This is 33% higher within the “strongly agree” Likert scale category of the TAG over the NTAG student surveys. This percentage of difference transfers to the Personal and Social category questions as well, with 27% and 23% higher for the TAG students respectively, using the NTAG student totals as the baseline. Analyzing the comparison for TAG and NTAG students for the “agree” answers shows a similar difference as in the academic category for the TAG students of 31% over the NTAG students. However, the difference within the personal category was still evident, it was only half as much, at a 15% difference for the TAG student responses versus the NTAG students’ “agree” responses. Looking at the social category, the difference was the greatest at 37% higher for the TAG students versus the NTAG student responses.

The “Unsure” category of the Likert scale survey shows the inverse of what the “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” categories show. Within the academic category we see the NTAG students answered “Unsure” 50% more frequently than the TAG students. The shift is evident in the
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personal and social categories as well with TAG answering “Unsure” 42% and 37% less often than the NTAG students, respectively. These differences will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Both groups of students posted “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree” responses for this Lickert scale survey less frequently than “Unsure”/“Agree”/“Strongly Agree”. However, the NTAG posted a higher percentage in the “Disagree” answer column in all three categories; 25% higher in academic questions and 5% higher in both personal and social questions.

As I analyzed the “Strongly Disagree” responses, 3% of the TAG students responded strongly disagree to the questions in all three categories, academic, personal and social on the survey whereas 13% of the NTAG students registered a “Strongly Disagree” response with regard to these questions. (Reference tables 1 and 2 on previous pages.)

Completing the analysis of the aggregates for the personal and social categories, I found similar patterns between the two groups. The NTAG students also showed a significant increase in strong disagreement within these two categories of 56% more for personal category questions and 86% more for social category questions. It is interesting to note that within the TAG group, only 60 out of a possible 480 registered a “disagree” or 12% overall and in the NTAG group 124 out of a possible 480 registered a “disagree” or 25%. The significance of these percentages will be discussed in the next chapter.

The final analysis I used was to chart a comparison of each of the 30-questions for both the TAG and the NTAG subjects. This allowed me the opportunity to see some of the specific questions that may have shown significant differences between the two groups.

Some specific questions that have shown some significant differences were:

1. “When I give a class presentation I am not stressed out.” 36 of the TAG subjects, responded “Agreed or Strongly Agreed” for this question. However, only 14 of the
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NTAG subjects, 35%, chose the “Agreed or Strongly Agreed” response. See table 3 below.

2. “I feel comfortable speaking in front of my class.” The responses of the two groups were similar to the previous table regarding the students’ stress level speaking in front of the class. For the comfort level of speaking in front of the class, 34 out 40, or 85% of the TAG students answered either “Agreed or Strongly Agreed”, whereas exactly half of the NTAG students (20 of 40 students) choose “Agreed or Strongly Agreed”. See table 4 below.
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3. “I am good at memorizing things.” The responses for this question show a significant difference between the TAG students of 35 of 40 (88%) while 17 out of 40 (42%) NTAG students feel they are good a memorizing things. See table 5 below.

4. “When I am asked to write a story, ideas come to me easily.” This question shows a significant difference in responses, with 33 (75%) of the TAG students and the NTAG group responding with 14 out of 40 or 35%. See table 6 below.

5. “I am a creative thinker.” Even though this question is categorized in the “personal” group of attributes, it is very similar to the academic questions and the results of the
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NTAG students are quite similar with those of the TAG students scoring all 40 or 100% think they are creative thinkers whereas, the NTAG only 70% agree. See Table 7 below.

![Bar chart showing responses to the statement 'I am a creative thinker.']

The above tables show some of the key differences as I compared the two groups.

Summary

These findings provide persuasive evidence that extra-curricular theatre arts activities do have an important effect on a certain population of students. The z-value for my research was 2.86 which definitely beats the critical z-value of 2.58 for the 2-tailed test for significance. My critical values lie at the extreme ends (2-tail) of the curve which means I can reject the null hypothesis of “no difference” and accept the research hypothesis of a difference between my two groups. The test results indicate that the groups, Theatre Arts Group (TAG) and Non-Theatre Arts Group (NTAG) are “significantly” different at the p≤0.01 level, meaning there is less than a 1% probability that the differences found between the groups is purely a result of sampling error. One can be 95% sure that my findings are not simply a result of chance. (Appendix D- Critical Values of the Mann-Whitney Test U)
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and Non-Theatre Arts Students: A Comparative Study

Also by analyzing specific sets of questions, as I have shown in Table 1 and Table 2 the TAG students certainly perceive a benefit from their exposure to theatre arts workshops.
The Relationship of Social, Personal, and Academic Growth Between Theatre and Non-Theatre Arts Students: A Comparative Study

Chapter 5
Discussion

My research was set forth to examine two groups of adolescents of similar age, gender, and ethnicity with the only difference between these two groups being that one group had participated in four or more theatre arts workshops and the other group had not. I gathered and analyzed data to answer these research questions:

- How do students who have participated in four or more theatre arts workshops on theatre art perceive the impact of the workshops on them with respect to their:
  - academic development, including creative writing, memorization, and class presentations;
  - social development, including making new friends and belonging to a group;
  - personal development, including increased self-confidence and leadership skills.

The findings from my research study indicate that students do perceive theatre arts involvement impactful as it relates to academic, personal and social skills. By following the prescribed criteria for the Mann-Whitney U test I was able to ascertain that my Theatre Arts Group (TAG) and Non-theatre Arts Group (NTAG) were matched demographically which meant that I met the Mann-Whitney criteria by establishing two completely independent groups whose only difference is the specified treatment of exposure to four or more theatre arts workshops.

The demographics of the TAG students, represent the demographics of our community theatre groups, youth theatre groups and the local high school theatre group, about two-thirds or 65%, white female which is exactly the make-up of my TAG group.
Implications

It is interesting to note that many students in the NTAG group answered similarly to the TAG group in a few of the questions. Most notably, questions that I feel are very important, the academic category. Some of the most interesting questions include:

- “I plan to go to college.” The two groups nearly matched with 97.5% of the TAG students and 95% of the NTAG answering in agreement (Agree or Strongly Agree).
- “I push myself to succeed.” This question also recorded high with the TAG students agreeing 85% and the NTAG recording 77% in agreement.
- “Missing school affects my academic achievements.” This question is the only one that the NTAG students recorded a higher percentage of agreement, with 73%, compared to the TAG students recording 68% agreement.
- “I set academic goals for myself.” 80% of the TAG students agree or strongly agree that they set academic goals compared with 70% of the NTAG.

The similarities that the two groups showed in response to these academic category questions revealed that both groups understood the importance of academics and looked ahead to continued education past high school. In regards to the question, “Missing school affects my academic performance.” an explanation for this may be that most students that take part in extra-curricular activities such as theatre arts, sports, clubs, etc. understand that they have to stay up with their school work to remain eligible for extra-curricular activities. This area may need further investigation.
The Relationship of Social, Personal, and Academic Growth Between Theatre and Non-Theatre Arts Students: A Comparative Study

As I looked at the questions in the personal and social categories there was only one question that both groups responded in the “agree” and “strongly agree”: “I make friends of other races or ethnicities easily.” TAG students agreed at 98% and the NTAG students agreed at 88%. This may simply be a product of our community, which has a high Hispanic population and the youth have been accustomed to mixed demographics and easily make friends of any ethnicity.

Significant results

By analyzing the data from the Likert scale surveys, the TAG students were significantly more decisive in their responses. NTAG students were 50% more likely than TAG students to record “unsure” as their answer in all three categories: academic, personal, and social.

The NTAG subject’s response within the academic questions were more distributed across the Likert scale answers with almost 25% of these students recording “disagree” or “strongly disagree” with the positively worded questions on the questionnaire. This seems to point out that the students either were not sure how they felt at the time of the survey or simply were unable to agree with the positively stated questions.

It also should be noted that for the personal and social questions the NTAG students were more evenly distributed across the 5 Likert scale levels, from “strongly disagree” up to “strongly agree” whereas the TAG groups responded “agree” or “strongly agree” for the majority of these questions. Meaning there were fewer disagree and unsure responses. Again, the TAG students are more decisive with these survey questions.

The most significant results that can be supported in my research study is the statistical significance from the Mann-Whitney U test, which in the simplest of terms states the I can be
The Relationship of Social, Personal, and Academic Growth Between Theatre and Non-Theatre Arts Students: A Comparative Study

95% sure that my findings are not simply a result of chance. My groups were in fact significantly different. This means that the Likert scale survey results can indeed be compared with findings that are legitimate. My TAG students do perceive theatre arts workshops a benefit to their academics, personal, and social development.

Limitations

Perhaps one of the greatest limitations to this body of work, or any research involving the arts, is the reality of the education system as a whole. Fiscal constraints dictate what schools can and cannot offer within the school curriculum. This forces students (and parents) to look for extra-curricular activities that support students academically, personally and socially. Many well-published educational experts and theorists have studied the positive effects of theatre arts on the development of students of the same academic age as my subjects, with similar results. In an extensive study of 25,000 students, Catterall found that sustained student involvement in the arts can be associated with a variety of development for youth, such as gains in self-concept and motivation and higher levels of empathy and tolerance for others (Catterall, 1999; Eisner 1998; Gardner, 1999). My research corroborates these findings, further supporting the need to find alternatives for students to enhance their learning process. Many students are turning to local community theatre groups as well as camps and workshops for what has been shown as positive support to the child’s education as a whole.

Eisner (1998) reported impressive statistics that showed that students of the arts outperformed their non-arts peers on the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), according to the Entrance Examination Board. Research was able to show that SAT scores for “students who studied the arts more than four
The Relationship of Social, Personal, and Academic Growth Between Theatre and Non-Theatre Arts Students: A Comparative Study

years were 59 points higher on the verbal and 44 points higher on the math portion that the students with no course work or experience in the arts” (Murfee, 1995, p. 3).

The confidence displayed by the agree/strongly agree responses of the Theatre Arts Group in my study indicate that these student are decisive, positive and engaged in what they are doing in school and in their extra-curricular programs.

In my study and in previous studies one factor that differentiates the two groups, is that one group made a choice to enroll in theatre arts workshops. It would be interesting to find out what caused students to join extra-curricular theatre arts to; have fun, feel they fit in, to explore their creativity, for friendship, parent’s encouragement, etc.

Conclusion

This study highlighted some compelling information about theatre arts and an adolescent’s involvement. The TAG students surveyed clearly had a significantly more positive view on questions related to academics, personal and social development. The NTAG students, while showing some agreement when it came to college and continued education, did not agree as strongly with the larger overall set of questions in the three categories of investigation; academic, personal, and social.

For the past 15 years I have taught youth theatre arts in my community. I have seen many youth that have gone through the program demonstrating the positive personal and social attributes that I have posed in my survey. In my professional experience, my hypothesis for my thesis research study was that 12-15 year old students would find theatre arts to benefit them in
The Relationship of Social, Personal, and Academic Growth Between Theatre and Non-Theatre Arts Students: A Comparative Study

academic performance, and personal and social development, which I was able to corroborate via the results emanating from my study.
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Literature Cited


The Relationship of Social, Personal, and Academic Growth Between Theatre and Non-Theatre Arts Students: A Comparative Study


The Relationship of Social, Personal, and Academic Growth Between Theatre and Non-Theatre Arts Students: A Comparative Study


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The Relationship of Social, Personal, and Academic Growth Between Theatre and Non-Theatre Arts Students: A Comparative Study

APPENDIX A – Likert Scale Student Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) I make friends easily.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2) I make friends of the opposite sex easily.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3) I make friends of other races or ethnicities easily.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4) I always stand up for myself.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) I always stand up for others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6) I consider myself a leader.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7) I feel comfortable speaking in front of my class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8) I feel comfortable speaking in front of my teachers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9) I don't give in to peer pressure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10) I plan to go to college.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11) I have an organized plan for my academic future.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12) I set academic goals for myself.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13) I never feel bullied.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14) I push myself to succeed.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>15) I deal with my disappointments with an intellectual rather than an emotional response.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>16) I approach a new friend rather than waiting for them to approach me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17) I support friends who try new activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18) When I join a group I feel committed to having it succeed.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Relationship of Social, Personal, and Academic Growth Between Theatre and Non-Theatre Arts Students: A Comparative Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19) I am cooperative when I work in a group.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>20) I am good at memorizing things.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>21) I manage my stress well.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>22) I help my peers in school.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>23) When I am asked to arrive at a certain time, I arrive on time.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>24) Missing school affects my academic achievements.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>25) When I am asked to commit to an activity, I attend.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>26) I enjoy creative writing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>27) When I give a class presentation I am not stressed out.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>28) I am a creative thinker.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>29) When I am asked to write a story, ideas come to me easily.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>30) I prefer small group class projects rather than independent work.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B – Demographic information cover page for Lickert Scale Survey

Anonymity is important. No names on this or the survey page please. Please fill-in the appropriate box to describe your demographics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Please check</th>
<th>DO NOT WRITE HERE STUDY ADMINISTRATOR ONLY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>ID#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td>Date collected:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 12</td>
<td></td>
<td>Checked in by:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 13</td>
<td></td>
<td>All pages:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 14</td>
<td></td>
<td>Coded date:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline to answer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extra-curricular activities:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Please check any activity you participated in for 4 or more years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clubs: (list any)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art Classes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drill Team:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheer:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choir:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of yrs. attending Kids rule Theatre Camp?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of SBSC productions or workshops?</th>
<th>Have you taken Theater arts or drama class in school?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YES or NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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APPENDIX C – Graphs that compare the 30-questions from the student surveys.

I feel comfortable speaking in front of my class.

I feel comfortable speaking in front of my teachers.

I plan to go to college.
The Relationship of Social, Personal, and Academic Growth Between Theatre and Non-Theatre Arts Students: A Comparative Study

I have an organized plan for my academic future.

- **Strong Disagree**
  - TAG: 1
  - NTAG: 0
- **Disagree**
  - TAG: 7
  - NTAG: 5
- **Unsure**
  - TAG: 13
  - NTAG: 14
- **Agree**
  - TAG: 18
  - NTAG: 17
- **Strong agree**

Missing school affects my academic achievements.

- **Strong Disagree**
  - TAG: 0
  - NTAG: 0
- **Disagree**
  - TAG: 5
  - NTAG: 7
- **Unsure**
  - TAG: 6
  - NTAG: 5
- **Agree**
  - TAG: 14
  - NTAG: 14
- **Strong agree**
  - TAG: 15
  - NTAG: 14

I set academic goals for myself.

- **Strong Disagree**
  - TAG: 0
  - NTAG: 0
- **Disagree**
  - TAG: 3
  - NTAG: 5
- **Unsure**
  - TAG: 7
  - NTAG: 5
- **Agree**
  - TAG: 14
  - NTAG: 16
- **Strong agree**
  - TAG: 18
  - NTAG: 12
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I enjoy creative writing.

I push myself to succeed.

When I give a class presentation I am not stressed out.
The Relationship of Social, Personal, and Academic Growth Between Theatre and Non-Theatre Arts Students: A Comparative Study

I am good at memorizing things.

When I am asked to write a story, ideas come to me easily.

I prefer small group class projects rather than independent.
The Relationship of Social, Personal, and Academic Growth Between Theatre and Non-Theatre Arts Students: A Comparative Study

I consider myself a leader.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strong agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I make friends of other races or ethnicities easily.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strong agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I always stand up for myself.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strong agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

40 students each, 30 questions.
The Relationship of Social, Personal, and Academic Growth Between Theatre and Non-Theatre Arts Students: A Comparative Study

I never feel bullied.

I deal with my disappointments with an intellectual rather than an emotional response.

I am cooperative when I work in a group.
The Relationship of Social, Personal, and Academic Growth Between Theatre and Non-Theatre Arts Students: A Comparative Study

When I join a group I feel committed to have it succeed.

When I am asked to arrive at a certain time, I arrive on time.

When I join a group I feel committed to have it succeed.
The Relationship of Social, Personal, and Academic Growth Between Theatre and Non-Theatre Arts Students: A Comparative Study

I manage my stress well.

![Chart showing responses to stress management.]

When I am asked to commit to an activity, I attend.

![Chart showing responses to activity commitment.]

I am a creative thinker.

![Chart showing responses to creativity.]

40 students each, 30 questions.
The Relationship of Social, Personal, and Academic Growth Between Theatre and Non-Theatre Arts Students: A Comparative Study

I always stand up for others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strong agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TAG - Social</td>
<td>NTAG - Social</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I approach a new friend rather than waiting for them to approach me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strong agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TAG - Social</td>
<td>NTAG - Social</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I make friends easily.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strong agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TAG - Social</td>
<td>NTAG - Social</td>
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<tr>
<td>0</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The Relationship of Social, Personal, and Academic Growth Between Theatre and Non-Theatre Arts Students: A Comparative Study

I make friends of the opposite sex easily.

I help my peers in school.
The Relationship of Social, Personal, and Academic Growth Between Theatre and Non-Theatre Arts Students: A Comparative Study

![Bar chart showing the responses to the statement: I support friends who try new activities.](chart)

- **I support friends who try new activities.**
  - **Strong Disagree:**
    - TAG - Social: 0
    - NTAG - Social: 0
  - **Disagree:**
    - TAG - Social: 1
    - NTAG - Social: 1
  - **Unsure:**
    - TAG - Social: 3
    - NTAG - Social: 7
  - **Agree:**
    - TAG - Social: 19
    - NTAG - Social: 20
  - **Strong agree:**
    - TAG - Social: 18
    - NTAG - Social: 11

40 students each, 30 questions.
The Relationship of Social, Personal, and Academic Growth Between Theatre and Non-Theatre Arts Students: A Comparative Study

APPENDIX D –

Critical Values of the Mann-Whitney U (Two-Tailed Testing)

<table>
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