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Application of Leadership Principles in Theatrical Direction

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Application of Leadership Principles in Theatrical Direction

Leadership Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For

A Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership

By

Rebecca L. Rizzio

December 13, 2010

Dedication

*Dr. Pamela M. Jolicoeur
President, Concordia College
2004-2010*

*Brilliant visionary. Exemplary leader. Cherished mentor.
Your impact on my life is everlasting.*

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Abstract

This research explores the relationship between leadership principles widely believed to be effective and the behaviors demonstrated in art of theatrical direction by directors believed to be effective. The Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach was used to survey actors, designers, and stage managers. Directors from the Twin Cities theater community that the respondents deemed to be most effective were then interviewed. Parallels were drawn between the qualities cited in the surveys and the leadership behaviors theorists believe to be most effective. Findings will be shared with the theater community.

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Chapter 1 Introduction: Purpose of the Proposed Research

It begins simply as words on a page. Nothing more. By the end, it will inspire. It will impact. It will affect. It will transcend. It is the true magic of live theater... bringing to life what is flat and shaping how we see the world. For something so powerful to occur, an effective leader is required to mold the process, to set the tone, to create the pathway. As we seek to understand enduring and effective leadership, one way to learn is to peer through the lens of the theatrical director.

Books have been written for years on the art of directing. Advice has been given on how to properly read a script, how to analyze it, how to envision it. Directors share wisdom on how to effectively and appropriately cast a show, which actor to put in which part. Much of the work of a director, many will admit, is done once the show is cast. If you don't have the right team, you won't get the show right. As you read through these directives, you can draw parallels to leadership. In their book *The Leadership Challenge*, James Kouzes and Barry Posner share the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership that, through their research, rose to the surface: Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart (2002). The concept of Kouzes and Posner's *inspire a shared vision* is at the heart of what every director must do—get the story on the page to the production on the stage, and get each designer and actor to share that story (Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

The stage is intended for drama; the rehearsal space is not. It is intended for creativity, collaboration, and complete comfort with one another. I am not convinced that all directors are good leaders, but I am convinced that they should be.

The purpose of my study was to find key elements, techniques, and practices in leadership that translate to the art of theatrical direction with the intent to share those discoveries with the theater community. I wanted to understand how to apply the leadership principles studied throughout the MAOL program to the work of a director. Furthermore, I want to hone those principles so that I can become a more effective leader while directing a show.

This past winter, I directed a production for Theatre Unbound, a Twin Cities-based theater company. I led a team of six technicians and eight actors. As we came into tech week, I encountered the inevitable scrapes. Tech week is the final week of rehearsal leading up to opening night, the first performance in front of an audience. During tech week, all of the lights, sound, and costumes are added to the play. Cues are set for the stage manager who will essentially run the show for each performance. As I encountered the scrapes, I began to draw parallels from *The Leadership Challenge* (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). I began to wonder how to master the ability to apply my learnings to my directing.

The director leads the whole creative process of a production, but most importantly, the director leads people. Part of what I set out to learn is how directors deemed masters of their craft see their roles as leaders. How are the designers motivated to do their best, most quality work? How do the actors become inspired to perform? And, what role does the director play in leading the design team and actors through the act of creation to the final production?

Chapter 2 Analysis of the Conceptual Context

Definition of Key Terms

“Human beings have been performing at least since our cave-dwelling ancestors reenacted the hunt for the rest of the tribe” (Hauser & Reich, 2003, p. xvii). But, when did theatrical performance begin to take shape as we know it today? *Ye Bare and Ye Cubb* was the first play ever produced in the North American colonies. It was performed at a pub on the eastern shore of Virginia in 1665 (Bogart, 2001). Someone in the crowd felt the show was blasphemous and took the production to court. The judge could not rule on the show since he hadn’t seen it, so the second performance took place in court. The judge ruled that *Ye Bare and Ye Cubb* was not blasphemous but entertaining (Bogart, 2001)—thus, the inception of American theater.

“Inside every good play lives a question,” (Bogart, 2001, p. 21). Theater transforms. Theater shows us the world in which we live. Theater, as our 1665 judge determined, entertains. But, it should also enlighten. As Daniel Pink (2005) tells us in *A Whole New Mind*, stories enable people to make sense of the world around them. Nowhere will you find a more real story than one right in front of you in a live theatrical setting. Theater audiences experience stories in much different ways than television or movie audiences. Characters come alive on stage. The audience hears real laughs, sees real tears, and shares true emotions that are palpable. For instance, in the Broadway production of *Next to Normal*, Alice Ripley plays Diana Goodman, a woman suffering from bipolar disorder following the death of her infant son. The show is powerful, compelling, extraordinary. Being in the audience, you see firsthand the pain and agony of such a devastating situation. Some may argue that life is troubling enough without

needing to see more sadness in a Broadway show. Perhaps that is true. However, theater shows us life in a way in which we can be observers and learners in the most intimate way possible. It is the thrill of imagination coming alive. It is full colorful pictures of stage design and lights. It is the energy of live music. It is the tingle up your spine. Television simply cannot do that in the way that theater can and does. The audience shares sadness with a character and takes something away from that shared feeling. It is this juxtaposition that is truly unique to theater: You experience the true, live, environment; but at the same time, it is not real. It is theater, so you can serve a more objective role and truly learn and think. Since you are not in the throes of real life, you can pause and reflect. You can shape new thoughts, ideas, and perspectives. No two people in an audience share the same identical experience. Robust dialogue can ensue after a relevant, rich production. Regarding *Next to Normal*, it may be a dialogue on mental illness, family dynamics, or grief and loss.

Now, let's consider emotionally lighter shows such as the Broadway production *Mamma Mia*. This production is just pure fun. It has a much fluffier storyline—one girl, three possible fathers, and an eccentric, hippy mother—but it is a storyline packed with sparkling visuals, toe-tapping hit ABBA music, and tremendous dancing. So, where is the life-altering impact in a show such as this? A show like *Mamma Mia* provides an escape from the grind of daily life. You can shut off your mind and be taken away to a Greek island where the characters' problems are the only problems that exist. There is still a powerful and magnetic energy that comes through the audience from the stage. Similar to a live concert, a fun live theater production brings about energy and excitement

that we all need from time to time. Even in these more light-hearted productions, stories are still at the forefront, and there is something to take away in that.

Every story or play has a plot which may include several subplots. Knopf defines plot as “the playwright’s selection and ordering of events that occur on stage” (2006, p.156). Essentially, this is what happens--the story that is being told. Simply put, a director is a production’s primary storyteller (Bloom, 2001). Webster’s online dictionary defines a director as “a person who supervises the production of a show (as for stage or screen) usually with the responsibility for action, lighting, music, and rehearsals” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/director>). The director decides how to tell the story. It may seem almost counterintuitive since there is a script to follow. However, so much of the production is subject to interpretation, and the director is the one who decides how to interpret the script.

Using *Next to Normal* as an example, director Michael Greif chose to cast Alice Ripley in the role of Diana Goodman, the mother who suffers from bipolar disorder. That one choice affects the entire production. The choice of one actor as a mother influences the choice of a second actor as a husband and father. For instance, age must make sense, and the director must consider how the couple looks together. If he wants to create the look of a young, affluent, healthy couple, a director may choose two very different actors than if he was trying to create an unhealthy, detached couple. The choice of Ripley as the mother also has an effect on the choice of which actor will portray the character that is the delusion of her son. All of these casting choices cascade and ultimately can make or break a production. Director Harold Clurman always shared with his acting students, “Cast good actors, and you’ll all be good directors” (1972, p. 64).

There is quite a bit of truth in this statement. Without the right people to execute a vision, the vision will suffer, and this means that the production will suffer.

Not only does the director as the primary storyteller need to cast the show impeccably, she must also decide how the design team will complement her vision with their creative capabilities. The director touches every aspect of a production, and every moment of the show fits into the larger picture of the director's vision. It is the producer that usually assembles the design team, but it is the director who explains what is needed of each team member. The design team typically consists of a stage manager, a set designer, a lighting designer, a costume designer, a sound designer, and a props designer.

Producer: *a person who supervises or finances a work (as a staged or recorded performance) for exhibition or dissemination to the public (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/producer>)*

Stage Manager: *one who supervises the physical aspects of a stage production, assists the director during rehearsals, and is in charge of the stage during a performance (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/stage%20manager>)*

Set Designer: *one who has responsibility for the design of all the scenery on stage*

Lighting Designer: *one who has responsibility for all the lighting aspects of the production*

Costume Designer: *one who has responsibility for all of the costumes in the production*

Sound Designer: *one who has responsibility for all of the sounds and music heard in the production*

Props Designer: *one who has responsibility for all of the properties used in the production*

Each of these designers plays a vital role in each major element of a production. Each element of the production serves to express the overall vision of the director. The most visual part of the production is the set. The set gives the production a place, a location, and creates a mood. In some cases, the set is elaborate and realistic. In other cases, it is more suggestive and abstract. Most of the time, it will give the audience the

where and when of a production. In *Mamma Mia*, the story takes place in Greece, so the set reflects scenery from that part of the world. In a traditional production of *Our Town*, the story is staged as a rehearsal, so the set often appears unfinished. Some productions, such as the classic *The Sound of Music* take the audiences to places such as the majestic home of Captain Von Trapp, an Abbey, and an Austrian hillside. Other productions, such as *Hedda Gabler* take place in just one location. Whatever the case, the set brings time and place to a production.

Like set design, costume design aids in establishing the time period in which a production takes place, but it also helps to tell the audience a great deal about character. Set design does this as well when the location is a certain character's home, but costumes really show the audience who the character is in terms of class, occupation, and personality. For instance, in *Mamma Mia* the main character, Donna, runs a hotel, is a single mom, and came of age during the 70's. The actor shows the audience this strong-willed, independent woman, and the costumes aid in reflecting that image.

Lighting and sound design serve as the icing on the cake. The set and the costume design provide the foundation, the strongest visuals in the production. The lighting and sound design take something as small as a light bulb or the simplest sound and magically turn the night into morning, a park into a palace, or a joyful moment into dreadfulness. For instance, in *Next to Normal*, one moment has a family sharing a nice meal together at home, and the next moment, grief tears through them. This dramatic shift in mood is accomplished by solid acting and brilliant lighting and sound design—all clearly articulated through the eyes of the director. So, to sum it up, the director reads and analyzes the script; determines which actor will play which role; and decides how all

the technical design will help to facilitate the story. The director establishes the vision and sets the course for the entire production. The director is the leader.

Directors began as authoritarian figures (Knopf, 2006). According to our modern-day definition of the term *director*, Georg II, the duke of Saxe-Meiningen, is widely believed to have become the very first director in the middle of the nineteenth century. He directed his servants in large scenes with unlimited rehearsal time (Knopf, 2006). Some scholars regard Georg II's stage manager, Ludwig Chronegk, as the first director because the duke later named him as the stage director for the Meiningen Players (Knopf, 2006). Whether it was the duke or Chronegk, because of the nobility of the duke's position, the director wielded tremendous power (Knopf, 2006). For all intents and purposes, the director still does wield power. All artistic and creative decisions affecting the production are ultimately made by the director. In her book, *Women Stage Directors Speak*, Rebecca Daniels tells us that Russian theater director Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko deemed the director as an all-powerful organizer who is the "real dominator of the production" (1996, p. 45). Knopf tells us that "for a variety of reasons, most directors still use authoritarian models of directing" (2006, p. 3). So, an important question ensues. If the director is the leader—given what I have learned about leadership—is this authoritarian model of directing the most effective?

To begin to answer this question, let us first examine the relationship between power and leadership. Of course, the director must have some level of power or authority over the production. Without someone in charge, a production risks lack of a vision. And, as discussed at length, a vision for a production is critical. However, how much power is appropriate for a director to have? The term *power* can have a negative

connotation. In fact, the definition of power is “possession of control, authority, or influence over others,” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/power>). *Possession of control* strikes a harsh chord. *Influence over others* is more indicative of what we are talking about in regards to leadership. In his book *True North*, retired CEO of Medtronic Bill George says, “Traditionally, power has meant dominance over others...Many of the most effective leaders gain influence by using power more subtly” (2007, p. 193). This description of power resonates well with what I have come to appreciate through my study of leadership. George goes on to say, “As leaders mature through multiple experiences, they develop an authentic primary leadership style that works well for them and makes effective use of their power” (2007, p. 196).

The Study of Leadership

The Leadership Challenge made a huge impact on me. For me, this phrase sums it up well: “Know what you value, be willing to take a risk, and lead from the heart—lead from what you believe in” (Kouzes and Posner, 2002, p. 12). Their five leadership practices cited earlier brilliantly define and bring together all the qualities I have observed in leaders I believe to be effective. (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). Everything relevant is there, and everything there is relevant.

“Leadership is a relationship between those who aspire to lead and those who choose to follow” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 20). When I think about leaders I deem effective, I am inspired to follow them. I, along with others, make the conscious choice to follow these leaders. So, what stands out to me in this quote is the emphasis placed on

the choice to follow. When we are influenced to follow a particular leader, it is worth noting why we feel compelled to do so.

“People first follow the person, then the plan” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 15).

A plan is one-dimensional. It is typically a strategy set forth in order to enable employees to achieve a goal. If the plan put out comes from a shallow and ineffective leader, there is little impetus to follow the plan. With all of the energy invoked by a competent, enthusiastic, and capable leader, employees feel called to follow the plan and strategy laid out by that leader.

“Leadership is a dialogue, not a monologue” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 15).

This statement speaks strongly to the idea of collaboration as opposed to dictatorship. Followers need to feel heard. They need to know that their leader cares about how they are feeling, and the communication channels need to be open. When a dialogue takes place, trust develops, and followers grow loyal to their leader.

“Leaders cannot command commitment, only inspire it” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 15). Commitment and engagement of followers or employees comes from dedication to a mission of an organization. The leader articulates how the organization will deliver that mission. Through this articulation, followers can be either motivated or soured. If followers feel motivated and inspired by the leader, they are generally committed to deliver the mission to achieve the results. Each of these phrases provides a way to understand effective leadership.

Kouzes and Posner provide five specific practices that they learned to be consistent and prevalent among the most exemplary leaders. First of all, they tell us that effective leaders *model the way* (2002). They do not ask people to do what they would

not do themselves. They set the standard in terms of honesty, integrity, and values. They act as they wish for others to act. They lead by example. Kouzes and Posner explain that the first step in knowing how to *model the way* is to find your voice as a leader. “To become a credible leader, first you have to comprehend fully the values, beliefs, and assumptions that drive you” (2002, p. 44). In order to *model the way* effectively, you need to know yourself and the values that guide you.

The second practice that Kouzes and Posner introduce is to *inspire a shared vision* (2002). As stated earlier, the leader develops the direction, the vision. Effective leaders compel others to follow that vision and adopt it as their own. “One of the most important practices of leadership is giving life and work a sense of meaning and purpose by offering an exciting vision” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 112). Followers become more engaged and more committed when they also see the future in a bright and poignant way. The best leaders paint that picture vividly.

Thirdly, Kouzes and Posner found that effective leaders *challenge the process*. In other words, they take risks. They don’t always just accept the status quo. They see what needs to change, and they work to change it. This is not to say that all effective leaders are naysayers or go against everything that has come before them. It is simply to say that leaders are innovative and work to generate new ideas and ways of thinking and doing things. “Leadership is inextricably connected with the process of innovation, of bringing new ideas, methods, or solutions into use” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 187).

The fourth practice of exemplary leadership that Kouzes and Posner denote is the ability to *enable others to act*. They remove obstacles. They develop talent. They clearly communicate to their followers what is expected of them. They collaborate.

Collaboration allows each voice to be heard and the best ideas to be moved forward. As in theatrical direction, leaders can only achieve what those working with them achieve. Followers deliver the results, the vision. Effective leaders provide tools to followers that enable them to deliver that vision competently and correctly.

Lastly, Kouzes and Posner share that effective leaders *encourage the heart* (2002). They motivate genuinely and reward generously. They coach, praise, and care. They provide safe environments and establish trust. “Leadership is a relationship, and people are much more likely to enlist in initiatives led by those with whom they feel a personal affiliation” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 368). This personal connection is invaluable. Leaders that allow themselves to be guided by their values and conduct themselves with honesty and integrity; paint the picture of the future clearly and vividly; take necessary risks and pursue innovation; develop and enhance talent; and connect personally with their followers, lead most effectively.

Several years back, I read John C. Maxwell’s book entitled *Developing the Leaders Around You*. In it, taking a lead from motivational speaker Zig Ziglar, he defines a leader’s success as “the maximum utilization of the abilities of those under him” (Maxwell, 1995). The leader must understand that success is not dependent on him but on those he serves, those he leads. The question becomes, how do you ensure the successful performance of those you lead? That is when you turn to the study of leadership and Kouzes and Posner, John C. Maxwell, Bill George and all the thought-leaders to whom we owe our discipline. Predominantly, the shared theme centers on the idea of fostering a feeling of purpose among followers. Bill George defines an *authentic leader* as one “who brings people together around a shared purpose and empowers them

to step up” (2007, p. xxxi). This concept brings together two of Kouzes and Posner’s leadership practices: *inspire a shared vision* and *enable others to act*. Maxwell explains that “as a leader, you must make the development of others a lifestyle” (1995, p. 201). In other words, as a leader, the focus must not be on you but on your followers. The more effort you put into developing their strengths, the more exponential your success as a leader will be.

Finally, Bernard Bass and Ronald Riggio collaborated on their book *Transformational Leadership* (2006). Transformational Leadership theory centers on the concept of empowering others. “Transformational leaders...stimulate and inspire followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes, and in the process, develop their own leadership capacity” (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 3). This leadership theory lives on the polar opposite end of the spectrum from the authoritarian model of leadership demonstrated by some theatrical directors.

Theatrical Direction and Leadership

“While the degree of emphasis differs, most theorists, educators, and practitioners consider leadership to be an integral part of the directing process, and the most often acknowledged quality of a good director is leadership ability” (Daniels, 1995, p. 45). It is the director’s role to ensure that the production effectively gets from the page to the stage. While the director may have several months to spend analyzing a script, the rehearsal process itself rarely lasts longer than six weeks. The production must come together effectively and efficiently. So, the question becomes, which form of leadership will produce the best outcomes in the theater? Rebecca Daniels shares a quote by

director and professor Francis Hodge, “The dictator-director is the director who is very unsure of his ground, which actors will quickly detect, and though as people they may try to be cooperative, they will find his leadership hard to accept” (1995, p. 47). Hence, the follower must be inspired by the leader. John C. Maxwell says, “There is something much more important and scarce than ability: It is the ability to recognize ability” (1995, p. 37). There is perhaps no better statement to sum up the work of the theatrical director. In a simple 60-second audition, a director must spot ability, talent. The director must make the right decision in terms of casting a show using very little time to decide how to best do it. Most importantly, the director must compel each actor and designer to create the vision as the director sees it. Every word must be carefully chosen, and every idea must be appropriately conveyed. Michael Bloom brings this concept of recognizing ability to directing by saying that the director is “a creator of communities—someone who can recognize talent and inspire the very best from other artists, lead them but welcome their contributions, and make everyone feel they are important partners (2001, p. 4). Each artist must have a voice, but the director makes the final call in the path that the production will ultimately pave.

Much literature exists on the art of theatrical direction, how to analyze the script, how to cast the show, and how to run rehearsals. Tips from various renowned directors are helpful to other directors. Many of these directors cite leadership as a major component of successful directing. In his book, *The Director as Collaborator*, Robert Knopf says that the director’s leadership creates an environment for collaboration (2006). He lists the following abilities in such a director: to make choices, to define and reach goals, to keep order, to redirect focus, to mediate conflict, and to inspire and encourage

confidence (Knopf, 2006). Director Harold Clurman also emphasizes the importance of a collaborative director. “The director has an independent function but, like everyone in the theater, he must depend on his collaborators” (Clurman, 1972, p. 5). Rebecca Daniels shares that through her research on women directors, almost all of the women believed very strongly that collaboration leads to shared success (1996). Direction entails collaboration and also creativity. Piers Ibbotson highlights the theater director as a creator in his book, *The Illusion of Leadership: Directing Creativity in Business and the Arts*. Ibbotson explains that “creative leadership thinks as it works” (2008, p. 18). He goes on to say that novelty is less likely to emerge through the hierarchical style of leadership (Ibbotson, 2008).

Barry Posner and Laura Dunham along with R. Edward Freeman have written articles on the study of leadership using theater as an arena. Since the task of the director is inarguably an exceptional demonstration of leadership from concept to execution, theater as an arena makes sense. Posner shadowed director Timothy “Timi” Near, and he expressed the importance of the following leadership principles:

1. Establishing a vision;
2. Realizing that it’s not just the leader’s vision;
3. Enabling people to find their voice(s);
4. Empowering through coaching;
5. Fostering experimentation and learning from experience;
6. Facilitating mutual respect; and
7. Providing feedback and encouraging the heart. (2008).

Similarly, Dunham and Freeman studied the leadership of “best-in-class” theater directors. They discovered that these “directors are noted for their ability to articulate a unifying vision that serves the play as a whole and to pull together a group of disparate talents (from performers to designers to technicians) to achieve this vision. At the same time, the best directors allow each individual the autonomy to bring his or her unique and idiosyncratic talents to bear on the role” (2000, p. 111). This is perhaps the most critical point to emphasize: directors must understand how to deliver the vision and do so completely through the work of others.

Good directors are already good leaders. They are doing the work of bringing productions to the stage. So much is written about the art of directing, and those books almost always mention some aspect of leadership as it relates to the role of director. Similarly, much literature is written on effective leadership. It seemed to me that the marriage of the studies of effective leadership and successful direction was imminent.

Chapter 3 Methodology

My research attempted to answer the question, “Which key elements, techniques, and practices in leadership translate to the art of theatrical direction?” To answer this question, I performed an extensive literature review of existing information on the relationship between theatrical direction and leadership. Many books have been written by directors sharing their knowledge of both the technical and artistic processes of producing a play or musical. I reviewed these works for information related to leadership styles and behaviors discussed by Kouzes and Posner in *The Leadership Challenge* and Bass and Riggio in *Transformational Leadership*. This enabled me to garner a perspective on the parallels that are being drawn between the studies of leadership and directing.

In addition, I reviewed scholarly journals for similar concepts. Studies have been performed and articles published on the skills demonstrated by theatrical directors and how those skills relate to the principles of leadership. The insight I have developed through my research is how those principles of leadership, when applied, enhance the effectiveness of a director.

The next element of research that I conducted was related to the group of actors and technicians. The group of technicians included both designers and stage managers. Since actors and technicians are the followers of a director, their ideas and perceptions on leadership are critical. I uncovered what they believe to be effective leadership in order to draw any parallels that might exist between the methods of these directors and what leadership theory deems to be effective. Another group of people I studied are directors themselves. Once my research allowed me to learn which directors the actors and

technicians stated were the most effective leaders, then I attempted to understand whether or not there is a relationship between the techniques of these directors and the theories of *The Leadership Challenge* and *Transformational Leadership*.

With actors and technicians, I set out to answer the following three sub-questions:

1. How do actors and designers define effective leadership when working with a director?
2. From their points of view, what behaviors do directors emulate that encourage them to perform and design to their best abilities?
3. Which directors in the Twin Cities theater community demonstrate the cited effective behaviors?

To aid in answering these questions, I designed a survey using online Survey Monkey. The survey was sent to 460 actors, 78 designers, and 40 stage managers that are on the distribution list of the Twin Cities professional theater company Theatre Unbound. The artistic director, Stacey Poirier, agreed to send out the survey via email with a link to the survey tool. In the survey, I explained the basis for my research. Also, the tool was designed to weed out any actors, designers, or stage managers who did not meet my criteria. I received the aggregate data, and all results will remain anonymous. At the beginning of the survey, I stated that by completing the survey, respondents are granting permission for use of the results.

The basis of the survey was Appreciative Inquiry (AI). The rationale for this is that AI is a method of inquiry that focuses people on what behaviors bring out the best in them. “AI is based on the...claim that an organization...which tries to appreciate what is best in itself will find/discover more and more of what is good”

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appreciative_inquiry). I attempted to uncover from the actors and technicians which behaviors exemplified by directors bring out the best in them and allow them to thrive in their crafts. I also attempted to understand, as I stated earlier, how they each define leadership.

My criteria for determining appropriate subjects for these surveys was that each actor had to have performed in at least ten Twin Cities productions and each technician had to have worked on at least ten Twin Cities productions. They also needed to have worked with at least five different directors. I found a slight glitch in my survey at this point. I was able to pull out all the respondents who met criteria with the exception that they had not only performed in or worked on shows in the Twin Cities. Only 14.8% of my eligible respondents had their primary theater experience *solely in the Twin Cities*. The other 85.2% stated that their primary theater experience took place in *the Twin Cities and elsewhere*. While this is a beneficial outcome due to the breadth of experience the respondents had, it did not completely achieve my original intent.

In the survey, my first goal was to understand how actors and designers define effective directing. In other words, which key behaviors do directors demonstrate that lead the actors and designers to perform and design to their highest levels of satisfaction and accomplishment? A second goal was to determine which directors emerge as those who actors and designers say are the most effective leaders. When analyzing my survey results, I determined which local directors came out on top. It is important to note that there were significantly more actors surveyed than technicians. That could have impacted the results if certain directors are viewed more favorably by actors than by technicians. However, the goal was to measure the overall effectiveness of directors as

leaders, so, while this was an element to keep in mind, I do not believe that it skewed my findings.

Once I determined which directors the actors and designers deem the most effective leaders, I interviewed the three directors named most frequently in the survey responses. Through these interviews, I attempted to answer the following two sub-questions:

1. Are directors identified by the survey respondents as effective consciously employing these techniques?
2. If they are consciously employing these techniques, how are they putting them into practice?

Interviews were conducted in person. I designed a series of questions that allowed me to draw parallels to the principles of leadership theory discussed in the abovementioned leadership books. I asked them to explain their various approaches to the art of direction. For instance, do they approach direction in a more traditional, authoritative way or in a more contemporary, collaborative way? Questions were developed to tease out specific examples and stories that illustrate the styles of each director. Each director was asked to cite specific examples that relate to work with both the actors and the designers.

Once the interviews were complete, I began my analysis. My task was to determine which principles of leadership theory, if any, stand out among the three directors. How do each director's stories relate to the five practices of exemplary leadership discussed in *The Leadership Challenge* by Kouzes and Posner (2002) and to the theory of transformational leadership developed by Bass and Riggio (2006)? My

ultimate goal was to determine if there is a relationship between effective directing styles and these accepted theories of effective leadership. If there is a relationship, what is it? Are these directors aware of their application of these leadership principles? If they are aware, how can we bring that awareness to the broader theater community? If they are not aware, how can I help to create the awareness? Simply put, which principles are most commonly applied in theatrical direction, and how does each director implement those principles in his/her own unique way?

Validity

As a theatrical director and student of leadership, I no doubt possess biases. I have never been a believer that authoritarian styles of leadership are most effective. However, I could have learned through my interviews that some directors do. Also, I could have mistakenly assumed that Kouzes and Posner's *inspire a shared vision* is at work in the minds of each of the directors I interviewed (2002). That may not have been the case. So, I needed to step away from my biases in order to effectively and objectively perform this research. I did so by using the following methods of validation presented by Joseph Maxwell in *Qualitative Research Design* (2005, pp 110-111):

1. **Intensive, Long-Term Involvement:** I have been performing in plays and musicals for over twenty years. From acting to producing to directing, I have logged hours of experience on the stage and behind the scenes. This experience provides me with an extensive knowledge base from which to draw and a thorough understanding of the work of my survey candidates and interviewees.

2. **“Rich” Data:** A thorough literature review combined with survey data from 578 actors and technicians and interviews with three directors allow for a rich collection of data. The interviews especially helped me to garner an insight that is keenly specific.
3. **Respondent Validation:** I made certain that I appropriately understood and reported my findings discovered through my interviews. I periodically asked my respondents for feedback to ensure that I did not misinterpret their meanings and my findings.
4. **Triangulation:** Triangulation helps to eliminate the risk of coming to inaccurate conclusions. I have used my literature review, the survey data, and my interview findings to reduce the risk of bias and to ensure that my conclusions are solid.

My hope was to use this qualitative research methodology to uncover the correlations between what we know to be commonly accepted leadership principles and what actors and designers deem to be effective directing behaviors and to determine whether or not the awareness exists. Now that I have completed my analysis, I will share my findings with the theater community. This may happen through the submission of a paper to an industry magazine or the development of a workshop dedicated to sharing my learnings with fellow directors.

Chapter 4 Presentation of Results and Discussion

My intent was to have Stacey Poirier, artistic director for Theatre Unbound, send my survey out to 460 actors, 78 designers, and 40 stage managers. She sent the survey link to the people in her database. It is difficult to know how many total people received the email, but I did have 119 total respondents, and they all completed the survey. Of the 119 respondents, 108 met my criteria. So, in using the original number, I had a 20.5% response rate. In looking at eligible respondents, I had an 18.6% response rate. From this point on, I will reference eligible respondents only. Ninety (83.3%) of the respondents cited *actor* as his/her primary role in the theater. Thirteen (12.0%) cited *designer* as his/her primary role. And, five (4.6%) respondents cited *stage manager* as his/her primary role. So, as was expected, the bulk of the respondents were actors.

My criteria required that each actor, designer, and stage manager have experience working on at least ten different productions and with at least five different directors. Seven (6.5%) stated that they had been involved with *10-14* productions, and 101 (93.5%) stated that they have been involved with *15+* productions. They were asked to respond by using the primary roles they cited for themselves that are stated above. They were also asked to cite where their theater experience has primarily taken place: *Solely the Twin Cities, the Twin Cities and elsewhere, or solely elsewhere*. Ninety-two respondents (85.2%) said their theater experience has taken place in *the Twin Cities and elsewhere*. The remaining sixteen (14.8%) respondents said their theater experience has taken place *solely in the Twin Cities*.

What I sought to learn through conducting this survey was what actors, designers, and stage managers believe to be effective theatrical direction. I wanted to gain an

understanding of their preferences and how they best work with directors and which directors bring out the best in them. I wanted to see if what leadership theorists, such as Barry Posner, noted about theatrical direction serving as a solid example of effective leadership aligned with theories of effective leadership such as the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2002) and Transformational Leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006). So, in the development of my survey questions, I deliberately asked questions that would enable me to confirm or rebuke these claims. In order to know if what previous researchers have said about theater serving as a quality arena in which to study leadership, it is critical to develop an understanding of what the followers of directors believe to be true. So, that is where I started.

First, it was important to understand what actors, designers, and stage managers use as their personal measures of a successful production: *large audiences, positive reviews, or personal growth as an artist*. Seventy-six (71.0%) said they believe *personal growth as an artist* to be the most important measure of success. Nineteen (17.8%) respondents said they believe *positive reviews* to be the most important indicator of a successful production. And, 13 (12.3%) said they believe that *large audiences* are the most important measure of a successful production. It was important to understand how actors, designers, and stage managers define success in order to better understand their responses to the rest of the survey. For instance, in knowing that they want to grow as artists first and foremost, that enabled me to have a more clear understanding on their perspectives of leadership and what they want from their directors.

Secondly, I wanted to understand how much control actors, designers, and stage managers believe the director ought to have over the production. Now, let me clarify a

couple of things. The director is in charge of the overall production. So, all decisions must be made by him/her. That is pretty much non-negotiable. However, what I wanted to understand was how much actors, designers, and stage managers want to feel a part of the production and how strong their desire is to be heard. As I stated earlier, directing began as an authoritarian model and has evolved to a more collaborative approach. What we know to be true about effective leadership is that leaders empower their followers. So, while the director is in charge, how much control does an actor, designer, or stage manager believe is necessary? The next series of questions I designed aimed to answer just that question.

First, I asked the actors, designers, and stage manager which of the following terms best describes the role of the director: *Coach (low level of control)*, *Facilitator (moderate level of control)*, or *Manager (high level of control)*. No one responded that the role of director is as a *coach* with a low level of control. Seventy-eight (72.2%) respondents believe that a director should act as a *facilitator*. Thirty (27.8%) respondents believe the director should possess a high level of control. Taking that a step further, I asked the question of whether respondents prefer to work with a director with a *clearly articulated vision* or with a director who is *willing to explore his/her vision*. In a sense, this is another way to ask the question of how much control actors, designers, and stage managers believe directors ought to have throughout the rehearsal process. The responses to this question were fairly evenly matched with 57 (52.8%) saying they prefer a director who is *willing to explore his/her vision*. In asking whether respondents prefer to work with directors who are more *open-ended* or *prescriptive*, 83 (76.9%) said they prefer more *open-ended* directors.

My survey was intended to essentially boil down whether actors, designers, and stage managers prefer directors who are more authoritative or collaborative. In asking that question directly, 95 (88.0%) said that they believe a *collaborator* leads the most successful production as opposed to an *authority-figure*. When asked which type of director brings out the best in them as artists, an overwhelming 99 (91.7%) said that a *collaborator* as opposed once again to an *authority-figure* brings out the best in them. To ensure that my findings were clear and accurate, I asked the question yet another way: With which statement do you most agree?

1. *A good director has complete control over a production.*
2. *A good director facilitates the collaborative process of a production.*

Ninety-eight (90.7%) respondents chose statement 2 as the statement with which they most agreed.

In order to get to the core of what the respondents truly believe is the most important quality for a director to possess, I asked them to rank the following traits in order of importance: *assertive, decision-maker, efficient, empowering, encouraging, engaging, good listener, intuitive, organized, thought-provoking*. The results were as follows with number one being the most important:

1. Decision-maker. Rating average: 4.33
2. Organized. Rating average: 4.95
3. Efficient. Rating average: 5.13
4. Empowering. Rating average: 5.34
5. Engaging. Rating average: 5.61
6. Thought-provoking. Rating average: 5.69

- 7. Intuitive. Rating average: 5.70
- 8. Good listener. Rating average: 5.79
- 9. Encouraging. Rating average: 5.83
- 10. Assertive. Rating average: 6.62

The table below highlights these results. The number of respondents that ranked each trait is listed accordingly. In bold type, you will see where each trait earned the most responses. Respondents were asked to rank traits on a scale of one to ten with one being the most important. Please see Table 4.1 for results.

Table 4.1

Traits	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Rating Average
Decision-maker	23	13	8	13	13	8	9	11	4	3	4.33
Organized	12	18	12	10	13	5	10	4	11	10	4.95
Efficient	5	11	13	15	13	16	15	5	8	3	5.13
Empowering	17	6	14	10	10	7	9	9	7	16	5.34
Engaging	10	11	9	11	11	8	11	11	16	8	5.61
Thought-provoking	15	13	11	2	8	8	7	10	12	19	5.69
Intuitive	9	8	11	11	9	12	12	13	9	11	5.70
Good listener	4	11	12	10	11	12	6	19	11	8	5.79
Encouraging	3	5	9	17	11	17	15	11	12	4	5.83
Assertive	8	8	5	6	6	12	11	11	15	23	6.62

Clearly, the respondents prefer directors who are able to make decisions, organized, and efficient. These qualities are more under the umbrella of the authoritarian model of leadership. The qualities of *empowerment*, *encouragement*, and *intuition* fell more towards the bottom. However, *assertive* came out very much at the bottom, with almost a full point less than *encouraging*. It is important to note that while *empowering* had a rating average that was more towards the bottom, 15 respondents still ranked it as the most important trait of a director. This was second to *decision-making*. So, what does all of this mean?

In order to be able to effectively draw parallels between leadership and direction, I needed to get to the directors. This survey was my path. I asked each respondent to name one director who he/she has worked with that he/she believes is most effective. Out of the 108 eligible respondents, 95 answered the question. Some respondents answered with more than one name. Whether respondents wrote in one, two, or three names of directors, I included all responses in my final tally. Some respondents chose not to name a director.

Actors, designers, and stage managers prefer collaboration. From what we know about effective leadership, this comes as no surprise. However, when it came time for them to rank characteristics of an effective director, the one they felt most important was *decision-maker*. Secondly, they felt *organized* was also critically important. These characteristics ranked higher than the characteristics of *empowering* and *intuitive*. So, what does this all mean when we bring the directorial perspective to the forefront?

The directors that came out with the most votes were Craig Johnson, Peter Moore, and Matt Sciple. I contacted each of the three directors first by email. I let them know

the purpose of my request to interview them was because they were deemed effective directors by actors, designers and stage managers in the Twin Cities. I requested one hour with each director and conducted each interview in person. I met the directors at their times of convenience and did manage to keep our discussions to roughly an hour. I used interview questions that I had developed previously and found that it was not necessary to ask all the questions in order to get to the heart of the information I needed. The directors were articulate and vocal about their craft.

Craig Johnson has directed roughly 40 productions. Those productions range from standard shows to classics to period pieces. He has directed one musical and will direct a second next year, and his experience has taken him from the Commonweal Theatre in Lanesboro, MN to the Paul Bunyan Playhouse in Bemidji, MN to Park Square and Torch Theatres in the Twin Cities (Craig Johnson, personal communication, September 20, 2010). He began as an actor and came to be a director when he wanted to expand what he was doing in the theater. As part of his work as a director, he has created a workshop entitled “What is a Director?” It is a 3-hour seminar that he has conducted at places such as Theatre in the Round, a Twin Cities-based community theater and Starting Gate Theatre, a small professional Twin Cities theater company that has since closed up shop. An exercise that he leads as part of the workshop is asking people to define what a director is. He gets answers that range from teacher to parent to coach to guru to mad man. Elements of right-brain and left-brain separation are clear. “A director has to have a balance of both of these things,” Johnson said (personal communication, September 20, 2010).

Directors need to be planful and goal-oriented as well as creative (Craig Johnson, personal communication, September 20, 2010). Good directors are able to be both. He described the role of the director as a project manager and went on to say that no one in his workshops actually puts that down as what a director is. Johnson said that knowing who you are as a director and how you like to work helps you to decide how to collaborate (personal communication, September 20, 2010). He also explained that expectations must be clear between the producer or hiring theater company and the director (personal communication, September 20, 2010). A production can crash and burn if there is a disconnect or unclear expectations. Similarly, the director must present the organization correctly to the cast and designers. He/she must “articulate the goal in an inspiring way” (Craig Johnson, personal communication, September 20, 2010). And, there must be clear terms on both sides.

In dealing with the team of designers, Johnson discussed his desire to approach the process collaboratively (personal communication, September 20, 2010). However, the director is ultimately responsible for the production, so all decisions lie with the director. On one occasion when Johnson was a fairly young director, he had a situation in which he was not as assertive as a director sometimes needs to be. He was directing a production of *Blythe Spirit* at Theatre in the Round in Minneapolis. The set designer was talented and had a significant amount of experience, especially relative to the fresh, green director. The designer had an idea to use crown molding as part of the set design that created a sightline problem for people sitting farther back in the audience. Johnson and the designer went back and forth with the discussion, but the designer did not want to give up the design element. “I should have been more assertive,” Johnson admitted

(personal communication, September 20, 2010). He didn't confront the designer but did manage to get his point across by bringing him to the back of the theater and showing him the visual problem that was created as a result of the design flaw. The designer eventually cut the crown molding, but Johnson said that today this would not be an issue. He would have more confidence in himself to make that call with a designer. He went on to say that it is the director's responsibility to the theater and to the audience to avoid visual obstructions. "There are already poles in the theater," he said with a slight laugh (personal communication, September 20, 2010).

In terms of authority, Johnson said directors can be as autocratic as they need to be. His approach, however, is to let his designers know that he doesn't come from that background. He prefers instead to give sketchy details. He'll say, "I want the lights to be snappier or zingier, as opposed to bring up the warm two points" (personal communication, September 20, 2010). Out of respect for the roles of the designers, he prefers to be less direct unless they have less experience. "With new people, I might start more open and then start moving in more deliberately" (Craig Johnson, personal communication, September 20, 2010). This way, he allows the creativity of those around him. With designers, he is able to use metaphors. For example, he'll tell the costume designer that the characters should be "bright and pop." With actors, he uses metaphors differently. He'll say that the production is like a rollercoaster—both fun and scary. There are sections of the play when you are going up, moments at the top when the character has a new revelation, and so on. Kouzes and Posner explain that powerful language is a tool of effective leaders to give life to a vision. "Successful leaders use metaphors and other figures of speech" (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, 155).

When asked what he believes to be the most important characteristic of a director, Johnson says, “To inspire” (personal communication, September 20, 2010). As Bass and Riggio talk about in *Transformational Leadership*, “Leaders use inspirational motivation to build emotional commitment to a mission or goal” (2006, p. 36). As Johnson talked about, directors must articulate a goal in an inspiring way. He does much work to create his vision prior to the start of rehearsals. While his vision is solid, he understands the need for actors and designers to express themselves creatively. So, he prefers to collaborate with them. He is only authoritative if people are unsure of what they are doing. “I’ll tell them, ‘Say the line like this; and you’ll get a laugh,’” he said (personal communication, September 20, 2010).

When asked how he effectively balances authority and collaboration, he simply added, “Teamwork, discipline, and trust are so high because the house of cards is so fragile....Your deadline is your deadline” (personal communication, September 20, 2010). This is certainly true. Opening night is opening night. There is no margin on that statement. The production must be ready. Johnson (personal communication, September 20, 2010) went on to say that he wants to be swept away by a performance on a gut level and on an emotional level. When the lights go up, he wants to hear the audience talking. He wants them to have been moved by what they saw. So, it is important to create the place for that to happen.

Johnson believes that the director’s role is not only to inspire but also to serve—to serve the theater who hires him, to serve the creative team, to serve the playwright, to serve the audience. “It’s important for directors to realize that they are always serving,” he said (personal communication, September 20, 2010). Kouzes and Posner discuss this

idea in their book. “Sensitivity to others is no trivial skill; rather, it is a truly precious human ability” (2002, p. 150). They go on to say that it is not difficult but relatively easy as it requires “only a receptiveness to other people and a willingness to listen” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 150). So what Johnson holds as his philosophy on direction illustrates a purposeful trait in effective leadership.

The second director that survey respondents deemed most effective is Peter Moore. Moore is a professional actor and director in the Twin Cities who has directed somewhere between 50 and 100 productions. His career has comprised mostly of productions he has directed at Park Square Theatre in St. Paul, Minnesota. His repertoire of shows includes new plays, Shakespeare, comedies, and musicals. He believes the role of the director is to be the audience’s advocate. “I think to myself, ‘If I was in the audience, would I enjoy this?’” he said (personal communication, September 21, 2010). He wants to put on stage something with which audiences can connect. In order to accomplish this Moore says, “I have to work collaboratively” (personal communication, September 21, 2010). Ultimately, he has the final say, but he encourages input from everyone. “When you work with good people, you’re foolish to just come in and impose your will. You miss out on creative opportunities” (Peter Moore, personal communication, September 21, 2010).

Like Johnson, Moore does say that when designers and actors have less experience, directors may need to be more controlling. Overall, however, Moore prefers collaboration. He explained that the French word for director is *realisateur*, which in English means *realizer*. The director needs to make the show come to life in a cohesive and entertaining form (Peter Moore, personal communication, September 21, 2010).

And, Moore typically works with people who trust his judgment. “If they don’t (trust you), they don’t work with you” (Peter Moore, personal communication, September 21, 2010). A parallel exists between what Moore is saying here and what Bass and Riggio describe as the role of trust. “Transformational leaders gain follower trust by maintaining their integrity and dedication, by being fair in their treatment of followers, and by demonstrating their faith in followers by empowering them” (2006, p. 43). Another way that Moore gains trust from his actors is by giving them feedback that only he can give. “Actors can’t see what they’re doing. My job is to watch it” (Peter Moore, personal communication, September 21, 2010). Being onstage is an extremely vulnerable place. Actors put forth their deepest feelings and emotions. They have to trust that their directors will always make them look their best and will not allow them to ever appear awkward.

Going back to an earlier point made about leaders using inspirational motivation to build commitment, Moore made a strong case for this concept. He said that people need to feel like they have a stake in the production. “If you feel like you have ownership, the production is going to be better,” he said (personal communication, September 21, 2010). So, his vision is flexible. He has an idea, but he allows those ideas to grow and be shaped by those around him.

A second point that Moore made is that a play thrives on confidence. “I can’t work by saying, ‘No, no, no, this is the way it has to be.’ I don’t have all the answers” (Peter Moore, personal communication, September 21, 2010). But, you have to have the belief that what you’re doing is right, he added (personal communication, September 21, 2010). One of the reasons that Moore became a director after starting out as an actor was

a desire to have some control. His desire for control, however, was the belief that he could make the productions better. He didn't always like how the directors he worked with approached things. "Sense of control is an illusion. If an actor can't or won't do it, it's out of your hands" (Peter Moore, personal communication, September 21, 2010). Moore stated that as a director you have to let go of things (personal communication, September 21, 2010). This all leads to the concept of empowerment and giving the actors and designers a stake in the production. The ownership they feel will lead to a more successful and collaborative production.

Moore believes that the most important characteristic of a director is flexibility. "Things happen when working with talented people; you want to be open" (Peter Moore, personal communication, September 21, 2010). However, he also believes adamantly in the importance of being kind and encouraging. People don't thrive when other people are berating them (Peter Moore, personal communication, September 21, 2010). While he does believe in treating people well, he cares more that the actors and designers like the work than that they like him. "Actors know I won't lie to them. I won't let them look foolish," he said (personal communication, September 21, 2010). He wants his actors to trust him and to feel safe. He also wants them to feel worthwhile, valuable, and appreciated. "Everyone likes being told, 'you're doing wonderfully'" (Peter Moore, personal communication, September 21, 2010).

So, how does Moore effectively balance authority and collaboration? He finds that it's useful to say 'no.' Since he does encourage discussion and input from the actors and designers, if he doesn't agree with a suggestion, he is not afraid to say that he is certain of his choice. This goes back to the idea of fostering confidence. As long as

actors respect and believe in their directors, this does not cause any issues. It is not desirable to dither or appear hesitant (Peter Moore, personal communication, September 21, 2010). He sums this up by saying that it is an understood rule that the director is in charge. “I don’t think you have to assert much authority if you know what you’re doing. And, I do” (Peter Moore, personal communication, September 21, 2010).

Is it more important to Moore that he provides structure for his actors and designers or that he empowers them? It’s more important to be empowering, he said. “Structure takes care of itself” (Peter Moore, personal communication, September 21, 2010). “I’ve really done my job if people don’t notice me. The focus should be on the actors and the play—not on me” (Peter Moore, personal communication, September 21, 2010). Kouzes and Posner talk about this concept—the concept of giving power away. “Leaders accept and act on the paradox of power: we become most powerful when we give our power away” (2002, p. 284). Essentially, that is what Moore is doing when he places the focus on the actors and design team. He is taking his power as the leader of the production and giving it to the people whose hands the show is in.

Moore’s philosophy on direction is to tell the truth, the core of truth. In terms of leadership, he needs his actors and designers to trust his judgment first and foremost. “I want the actors to believe that they are in capable hands” (Peter Moore, personal communication, September 21, 2010). He explained that, for directors, there is a difference between uncertainty and not knowing. As he said earlier, it is acceptable for the director to not have all the answers and to enlist the creative team on his journey to mold the production. However, as the leader, you have to make a choice. You have to have a point of view. “Steer me. Guide me. Take care of me. Look out for me,” he said

of what he believes his actors are thinking (Peter Moore, personal communication, September 21, 2010). “You can’t let the actors and designers do all the work for you” (Peter Moore, personal communication, September 21, 2010). The director must listen to and trust his instincts. Then, get the show on its feet.

Matt Sciple also started out as an actor. Many directors in the Twin Cities, according to Sciple, got their start as designers (personal communication, September 28, 2010). However, all three of the directors selected by survey respondents got their start in acting. Sciple received his BFA in acting from Southern Methodist University and moved to the Twin Cities in 1990. He started his own theater company in order to get his plays produced as he is also a playwright. Since the early 90’s, he has directed about 70 plays around the Twin Cities metro area. He has worked in professional and nonprofessional theaters, and he directs everything from musicals to Shakespeare to dark comedies.

Sciple believes that the role of the director depends on the show. What remains constant is that the director creates the environment. He must set up rehearsals and work with designers to create the look and feel of the show. “Bringing the audience up on stage is my primary role” (Matt Sciple, personal communication, September 28, 2010). He believes in the importance of engaging the audience in a conversation. He does everything he can to take the baggage out of stories in plays such as Shakespeare’s in order to delight and reward the audience (Matt Sciple, personal communication, September 28, 2010).

Sciple, like Johnson and Moore, sees himself as a collaborative director. “I see my job as finding the best ideas and making them work no matter who[m] has them”

(Matt Sciple, personal communication, September 28, 2010). For example, in working with the set designer, Sciple will ask what the designer saw when he read the play. He will say, “I know how it works spatially; I need you to tell me how it works visually” (Matt Sciple, personal communication, September 28, 2010). This allows the designer to excel and to do what he was hired to do.

Like Peter Moore, Sciple believes that the most important quality a director can possess is flexibility. “If perfection is your goal, you’re never going to be happy” (Matt Sciple, personal communication, September 28, 2010). Sciple’s goal is to tell the story in a way that has life. When a cast and design team is assembled to produce a show, it is the one and only time the story will be told in that way. Sciple believes that his gift as a director is that he is a really good audience member who likes to watch good theater (personal communication, September 28, 2010). What he does best is find the surprises within a script. If the show is a comedy, he’ll find the place that makes you cry. If it’s a drama, he’ll find the place that makes you laugh (Matt Sciple, personal communication, September 28, 2010).

When asked about the flexibility of his vision, Sciple responded, “The core of what I felt when I read the play is not going to change” (personal communication, September 28, 2010). While his vision remains clear, he does not consider himself to be a structured person. He wants a baseline structure in order to respect the time of the actors when it comes to rehearsals. “It’s more important for me to be empowering, but it is absolutely necessary to have structure. Empowerment without structure is deadly” (Matt Sciple, personal communication, September 28, 2010). He believes strongly in the

important of setting clear expectations and goals. “I am assertive, but I try not to be an authoritarian” (Matt Sciple, personal communication, September 28, 2010).

Sciple stated that real leadership is not about having all the answers. “It’s knowing what answers you have and what answers you don’t have” (Matt Sciple, personal communication, September 28, 2010). Then, you assemble a team to fill in the gaps. The idea, he said, is not to make an actor something he’s not but to find the character within that actor. “Work with the strengths you have” (Matt Sciple, personal communication, September 28, 2010). “Remind yourself to approach it with humbleness.”

Sciple has a larger vision for theater. “Theater cannot change the world” (Matt Sciple, personal communication, September 28, 2010). “It reminds people what empathy feels like.” It is this concept of creating empathy where Sciple believes theater has the greatest impact. “To find those moments where hope does exist and the light shines through” (Matt Sciple, personal communication, September 28, 2010). His goal is to make the audience try on all the shoes of the characters on stage—to understand each perspective. “If you can make them try on all the shoes, they leave the theater bigger” (Matt Sciple, personal communication, September 28, 2010). “Then, you’ve done something.”

Thematically, there are several similarities among the feelings, beliefs, and philosophies of the three directors. First of all, they each approach their productions with clear goals and expectations. Secondly, they collaborate with their teams of actors and designers. Thirdly, they foster empowerment and confidence. And finally, they rely strongly on the principle of trust. Each of these themes demonstrates the relationship

between effective leadership and theatrical direction. However, the most intangible thread that is woven throughout is the most important, and that is the commitment each director has to his vision. It is this commitment to vision that is arguably the key to their success.

Vision is “the act or power of imagination” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/director>). This idea of imagination—what is possible—is purposeful and explicative of what directors do. They must imagine what a play—simply just the words on a page—can become when it is on stage. They must visualize and imagine it and then make it real. As discussed earlier, Michael Bloom tells us that the director is the storyteller (2001). The director is the storyteller of the production, and the director must imagine ways and then determine which way to tell that story. Matt Sciple discussed this idea during his interview. He explained that each time a show is produced it is the only time the story will ever be told that way (personal communication, September 28, 2010). This is true of all theatrical productions. It is why so many plays and musicals are produced time and time again—each time with a different flavor or allure. Different directors have different visions and different ways to tell the story. Sometimes directors may set the story in a different time period from that which it is set in the script. Or, they may choose a different slant on casting. Or, they may adopt different arrangements for scores of musicals. Each time, the director is sharing a new vision. It is this dedication to vision that seems to be setting directors apart as leaders. Going back to an earlier example that Craig Johnson provided, he used a rollercoaster as a metaphor to explain his vision for a production of Caryl Churchill’s *Cloud 9*. He wanted the play to feel like a rollercoaster ride, with moments being fun and scary and

unexpected. He was able to get the cast to understand that metaphor and to share in the vision that he was creating, so much so that they began using the metaphor themselves. He would hear them during rehearsals talking amongst themselves using this metaphor.

However, when I talk about vision as the key to success for these directors, I am not merely talking about the visual production itself but the deeper purpose they find in theater overall. “One of *the* most important practices of leadership is giving life and work a sense of meaning and purpose by offering an exciting vision” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 112). It is this statement that provides the crux for my whole study. Leadership is about vision. Effective directors have vision, and they articulate that vision in a way that gives purpose to the work. In each case of these three directors, their vision extends beyond the stage to a higher purpose. Sciple talks about teaching empathy and his desire for the audience to get into the shoes of each character. He provides this very meaning to the work of his cast and designers. Moore talks about his philosophy on direction as “telling the truth,” which further exemplifies the deep and profound meaning he gives to the work of the followers (personal communication, September 21, 2010). And, Johnson talks about the director as the servant and his goal to reach the audience on an emotional level (personal communication, September 20, 2010).

“Clearly, shared vision is key—and to enlist others, leaders need to bring that vision to life” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 155). Kouzes and Posner consistently found that *inspiring a shared vision* is the least frequently applied of the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership (2002). “People also tell us that *inspiring a shared vision* is the leadership practice with which they feel the most uncomfortable” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 144). And, simply put, theater cannot exist without the director’s vision.

Perhaps this is the reason that leadership theorists clamor to learn about theatrical direction. What is most likely found in each case is the extreme and relative ease for these directors to create and to share their vision.

“All enterprises or projects, big or small, begin in the mind’s eye; they begin with imagination and with the belief that what’s merely an image can one day be made real” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 111). Johnson, Moore, and Sciple make their images real. Of course, they cannot do this alone. In order to be effective, the directors must enlist others. Plays do not get produced solely through the work of the director. And, these goals cannot be achieved without the commitment and support of the actors and design teams. Even a weak play with no purpose cannot be staged without the support of these people. So, when the director seeks to accomplish greatness, teamwork is essential.

In their book, Bass and Riggio describe one component of transformational leadership as inspirational motivation (2006). “Transformational leaders behave in ways that motivate and inspire those around them by providing meaning and challenge to their followers’ work” (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 6). Each of these three directors possesses humility and a clear belief in and reliance on their collaborators. Kouzes and Posner tell us that leaders know that they cannot do it alone (2002). Craig Johnson did not come from a design background, and he does articulate that fact to his team of designers. He gives them the sketchy details of what he wants and then allows them to pick up from there out of respect for their roles (Craig Johnson, personal communication, September 20, 2010). During a production of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, he decided to move the timeline of the show from just after the turn of the century to a few years later. He did so because he knew the hats could be bigger that way (personal communication,

September 20, 2010). So, that was his role in the design of the costumes. And, that's how he leverages followers' strengths and collaboration. All three directors spoke about the idea of bringing everyone together and allowing the actors and designers to utilize their various strengths. Peter Moore said explicitly that the director's job is not to impose his/her own will (personal communication, September 21, 2010). This is exactly what Kouzes and Posner say. "Leadership isn't about imposing the leader's solo dream; it's about developing a shared sense of destiny" (2002, p. 143).

This answers a question with which I started: Are effective directors more authoritative or collaborative? Effective directors are more collaborative. While each director admitted to being more authoritative when dealing with actors and designers with less experience, their preference is to collaborate. As was discussed earlier, Peter Moore wants his actors and designers to have a stake in the production. This ensures stronger commitment. And, Kouzes and Posner tell us that "collaboration is *the* critical competency for achieving and sustaining high performance" (2002, p. 242). So, the dedication that these three directors have to the act of collaboration parallels directly with what leadership theorists tell us effective leaders do. "Intellectually stimulating leaders take advantage of diverse backgrounds and experiences of their team members, using this understanding to promote greater creativity" (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 139).

We also know from our survey respondents that they prefer to work with directors who collaborate. Remember that 90% of respondents said that they believed a good director *facilitates the collaborative process of a production*. This was opposed to the 10% who most agreed with the statement that a good director has *complete control over a production*. Furthermore, 91% of respondents said that a *collaborator* as opposed to an

authority-figure brings out the best in them as artists. And, finally, 88% of respondents said that they believe a *collaborator* as opposed to an *authority-figure* leads the most successful production. Of course, it is important to mention again that 71% of respondents view *personal growth as an artist* as their personal measures of successful productions. It makes sense then that these actors and designers desire a voice in the process. While *empowering* as a directorial trait ranked closer to the bottom, 17 respondents still believe that this is the most important trait of a director.

Similarly, creation of an empowering environment is important to these directors. “You have to continue to push people in a way that is nurturing and effective and individual” Sciple said (personal communication, September 28, 2010). Sciple discussed his way of sharing with designers that he does not come from a design background and that he will allow them their space for creativity. “A very important component in making empowerment work is for the leader to delegate effectively” (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 204). This could be the most telling reason for theatrical direction serving as an exceptional case study on leadership: Directors must delegate. And, not only must the delegate, but they must do so effectively. It is not possible for a director to attend every rehearsal and sew every costume, focus every light, pound every nail, and print every program. They must rely on others. They must have a vision. They must delegate. The effective directors have figured out how to do all of this and be empowering at the same time.

An element of empowerment is the establishment of trust. “People simply won’t share ideas unless they feel there’s a safe, open place for them to do so” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 227). In the survey, respondents were asked if they believe it is more

important for them to trust their directors or for their directors to trust them. The answers were pretty evenly split with 61 (56.5%) respondents saying it is more important for their directors to trust them. Ultimately, the director has no direct role in the production. He will deliver no lines. He will dim no lights. He will make no sound. Everything is done through the work of others. Trust is imperative on both sides, and this survey question and the results illustrate that point.

Kouzes and Posner offer advice on how to create and build trust. “Be the first to trust” (2002, p. 298). Johnson, Moore, and Sciple demonstrate their willingness to do just this by empowering their followers and allowing the designers to do what they came to the production to do and by allowing the actors a voice. Establishment of trust is imminent when effective leaders are at the helm. They listen to their followers. They show a willingness to share information (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). And, it is contagious once the example is set (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). Effective leaders build trust by acknowledging the contribution of others, asking for feedback, and showing that they are willing to change their minds (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). While they are often clear and solid in their vision, they are open to ideas and conversation. They talk with their designers and listen to what they have to say. As Moore said, he wants his actors to know that he is there to make them look good on stage. They won’t look foolish, and that is his commitment to them and a way that he earns their trust as their leader (personal communication, September 21, 2010).

So, these directors set a clear vision, collaborate, and establish trust. A final commonality that I noted was their ability to act with confidence. This was not something that the directors discussed specifically. It was something that I drew upon

from my conversations with each of them. We know from our survey respondents of actors, designers, and stage managers that they recognize *decision-making* as the most important trait of a director. The ability to make decisions stems from a trust of self. I did not observe these directors during the rehearsal process. So, it is difficult to determine their level of skill in making decisions. What I could determine, however, was the confidence with which they spoke about their craft. Moore said that directors who act authoritative and exert power do so because of their uncertainty in themselves (personal communication, September 21, 2010). He went on to say that he does not have the need to behave that way himself because he knows what he's doing (personal communication, September 21, 2010). Confidence is very different from aggression and assertion.

“Constituents look for leaders who demonstrate an enthusiastic and genuine belief in the capacity of others, who strengthen people’s will, who supply the means to achieve, and who express optimism for the future” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 398). Confidence is a critical component to effective leadership, and it is one that needed to be noted in drawing parallels between those theories and the practices of these directors.

Chapter 5: Summary, Recommendations, and Conclusions

I began with the question: Which key elements, techniques, and practices in leadership translate to the art of theatrical direction? More specifically, what do actors, designers, and stage managers believe to be characteristics of effective directors, and which directors do they believe possess those qualities?

Much literature exists on the art of directing and on directors as leaders. Looking back on the advice of legendary director Harold Clurman, directors must depend on their collaborators (1972). Clurman said this in 1972. Michael Bloom in his book, *Thinking Like a Director*, describes directors as “creators of communities” (2001, p. 4). He explains that the director must lead the artists but also make them feel like an important part of the process (Bloom, 2001). Literature also exists to support the notion that theatrical direction has evolved greatly from the days of the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen and his authoritative approach to a much more collaborative approach. Leadership theorists such as Barry Posner and Laura Dunham and R. Edward Freeman have used theater as an arena in which to study leadership, and they have written specifically on the work of the director as leader. Posner discovered seven practices that director Timothy Near implemented in her rehearsals:

1. Establishing a vision;
2. Realizing that it's not just the leader's vision;
3. Enabling people to find their voice(s);
4. Empowering through coaching;
5. Fostering experimentation and learning from experience;
6. Facilitating mutual respect; and

7. Providing feedback and encouraging the heart. (2008).

Much of this, of course, relates to his work with James Kouzes and what they found to be the Five Exemplary Practices of Leadership that they discuss in *The Leadership Challenge* (2002). My research supports what Posner discusses in his article; however, I do disagree slightly with statement number two: “realizing that it’s not just the leader’s vision” (2008). It really is just the leader’s vision when you consider a theatrical production. No one but the director has the vision. Peter Moore said his vision is pretty flexible, but he does admit that he needs to get the results he needs (personal communication, September 21, 2010). He wants his actors and designers to have a stake in the production, but he does know what he is out to accomplish (personal communication, September 21, 2010). Perhaps this is a question for further study: How much does collaboration affect a director’s original vision for a production?

Dunham and Freeman tell us that best-in-class directors bring everyone to a unifying vision while allowing the idiosyncratic talents of actors and designers to shine (2000). Dunham’s experience as a director is perhaps what makes the difference in these two articles. Posner admittedly has no theater experience (2008). Dunham understands that clearly there is one unifying vision, but it is necessary and advantageous to leverage the wide array of talent that ignites each production (2000). Collaboration does not mean that each person imposes his/her vision. By inspiring a unified vision, directors set the goal, and collaboration means listening to various ideas in which to achieve that goal.

What I sought out to contribute to the existing literature was the voice of the follower: What do actors and designers want in a director? What behaviors and traits are most important to them? Which directors best demonstrate these behaviors? When

Kouzes and Posner set out to write *The Leadership Challenge*, they went to the followers to determine what effective leaders were doing that was working (2002). So, in understanding what effective directors do, it is important to go to the actors, designers, and stage managers with whom they work for the answer. Simply stated, the actors, designers, and stage managers surveyed said that they prefer a director who collaborates to one who is authoritative. However, they also said that the most desirable trait in a director is the ability to make decisions. The second most important trait was the ability to be organized. The three directors echoed these words. They prefer to collaborate with their actors and designers, but they understand the need to stay focused and to make decisions. Effective directors as effective leaders must be able to articulate to their followers—actors, designers, and stage managers—a compelling vision while challenging them to foster and exchange creative concepts and ideas. They must do this while maintaining structure and holding true to the story they intend to tell. Simply put, effective directors are both collaborative and authoritative.

This much is clear: Effective leadership is universal. What Kouzes and Posner and Bass and Riggio write about effective leadership stands strongly aligned with the results of this study. What is missing is the leadership training for directors. In many cases, directors are working with small community theaters and are not necessarily getting any real training in the art of direction itself. Many directors with professional theaters have no structured training either. However, in various MFA programs on directing, it would be wise for them to include such training on effective leadership along with their training in directing techniques. After all, the director is the de facto leader. Moreover, leadership training could never be done in vain. Anything that any of us can

learn and know about leadership can only be advantageous. So, how about if all students in a graduate-level directing program read *The Leadership Challenge*? That could only be a good thing.

In considering opportunities for further research, I would encourage someone to look at the MFA programs in directing throughout the country. Do any of them include any type of leadership training or coursework? Whether they do or not, there is an interesting topic developing one way or another. Do the programs that include leadership training produce more effective directors than the ones that do not? If none of the programs contain any curriculum on leadership, take *The Leadership Challenge* to one group of students and note the differences before and after the learning. There can be many ways to structure this study. Much can be gained always by providing proper and extensive training on the Five Exemplary Practices of Effective Leadership and the critical component that is vision.

A second opportunity for further research is to examine the relationship between theatrical direction and two different theories of leadership. The two theories that I would suggest would be Servant Leadership and Situational Leadership. Sciple's call to serve the script, the playwright, the audience, and the theater company lends parallels Robert Greenleaf's theory of servant leadership. In his essay, *The Servant as Leader*, Greenleaf describes the servant leader as "as one who wants to serve *first*" (<http://www.greenleaf.org/whatissl/>). The servant leader aspires to serve first and lead second (<http://www.greenleaf.org/whatissl/>). So, there would be compelling and relevant comparisons to make between directing and servant leadership, especially based on my interview with Matt Sciple.

The Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory provides a fascinating lens through which to apply theatrical direction. This theory, created by Dr. Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard, “states that instead of using just one style, successful leaders should change their leadership styles based on the maturity of the people they’re leading and the details of the task” (http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_44.htm). All three directors stated that how they direct their actors depends on the level of experience of each actor. They also said that their directing styles are influenced very much by the situations in which they find themselves. Significant relationships could be drawn between the Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory and theatrical direction.

A third opportunity for research lies in the design of the study itself. I chose to survey the followers of directors—actors, designers, and stage managers. However, very rich and worthwhile data could be gained by surveying the theater managers and producers. For instance, what are their personal measures of a successful production? I am merely speculating, of course, but it is highly likely that ticket sales and critical reviews would play major roles in their definitions. So, a whole area of research is open there.

Finally, the logical next question to ask following my research is, “What are the behaviors of an effective director?” We know that actors and designers want collaborative directors who are able to make decisions. But, what does that look like in practice? How do directors in vivo bring collaboration and authority together? These questions can only satisfactorily be answered through observation. Interviews worked for the purposes of my research, but if I were going to pick up where I left off, I would go

into rehearsals with each of these directors and observe their behaviors. That would be a remarkable and practical next step.

“No matter what term is used—whether purpose, mission, legacy, dream, goal, calling, or personal agenda—the intent is the same: leaders want to do something significant, to accomplish something that no one else has yet achieved” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 112). For Johnson, it is about service—the director’s service to the audience, the playwright, the theater company, and the actors and designers. For Moore, it is about the core of truth. For Sciple, it is about teaching empathy. For each director, it is about the power and the magic that is theater. They know it. They live it. And, they are able to inspire it.

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Appendix A**Institutional Review Board (IRB)****Materials Related****To the Use of Human Participants****In Research**

**SCU Request Form
Confidentiality Check List
Sample Consent Form**

**SCU REQUEST FOR THE APPROVAL
FOR THE USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH
2009-2010 APPLICATION FORM**

APPLICATION DATA

Date of application: June 29, 2010

Indicate type of review: Exempt Expedited Full

For all exempt reviews, indicate which of the following categories apply:

- 1. Normal Educational Practices
- 2. Educational Tests
- 3. Survey/Interview Procedures
- 4. Observation
- 5. Secondary Use of Data
- 6. Evaluation of Federal Research/Programs
- 7. Taste Tests

APPLICANT DATA

Investigator name: Rebecca Rizzio

Project Title: Application of Leadership Principles in Theatrical Direction

Advisor: Martha Hardesty, Ph.D.

Program: Master's of Arts in Organizational Leadership

Dates of Project: June 30, 2010 – June 30, 2011

Has this research been reviewed by another IRB? Yes

No

(If yes, please provide a copy of the letter of approval, or indicate the status of your application)

Will this research be reviewed by another IRB? Yes No

(If yes, please indicate your plans for review)

ABSTRACT

In a paragraph or two, carefully describe your research project. Include your research question and, step by step, detail the procedures you will follow. Also, if it applies to your project, you must attach a copy of your thesis proposal, your protocol, your questionnaire, etc.

My research will attempt to answer the question, “Which key elements, techniques, and practices in leadership translate to the art of theatrical direction?” To answer this question, I will continue with an extensive literature review of existing information on the relationship between theatrical direction and leadership which I have already begun. Many books have been written by directors sharing their knowledge of both the technical and artistic processes of producing a play or musical. I will review these works for information related to leadership styles and behaviors discussed by Kouzes and Posner in *The Leadership Challenge* and Bass and Riggio in *Transformational Leadership*. This will enable me to garner a perspective on the parallels that are being drawn between the studies of leadership and directing.

In addition, I will continue my review of scholarly journals for similar concepts. Studies have been performed and articles published on the skills demonstrated by theatrical directors and how those skills relate to the principles of leadership. The insight I will continue to develop through my research is how those principles of leadership, when applied, enhance the effectiveness of a director.

The next element of research that I need to conduct is related to the group of actors and technicians. The group of technicians will include both designers and stage managers. Since actors and technicians are the followers of a director, their ideas and perceptions on leadership are critical. I need to uncover what they believe to be effective leadership in order to draw any parallels that might exist between the methods of these

directors and what leadership theory deems to be effective. Another group of people I will need to study are directors themselves. Once my research allows me to learn which directors actors and technicians state are the most effective leaders, then I will attempt to understand whether or not there is a relationship between the techniques of these directors and the theories of *The Leadership Challenge* and *Transformational Leadership*.

With actors and technicians, I will attempt to answer the following three sub-questions:

1. How do actors and designers define effective leadership when working with a director?
2. From their points of view, what behaviors do directors emulate that encourage them to perform and design to their best abilities?
3. Which directors in the Twin Cities theater community demonstrate the cited effective behaviors?

To aid in answering these questions, I will design a survey using online Survey Monkey. The survey will be sent to 460 actors, 78 designers, and 40 stage managers that are on the distribution list of the Twin Cities professional theater company Theatre Unbound. The artistic director, Stacey Poirier, has agreed to send out the survey via email with a link to the survey tool. In the survey, I will explain the basis for my research. Also, the tool will be designed to weed out any actors, designers, or stage managers who do not meet my criteria. I will receive the aggregate data, and all results will be anonymous. At the beginning of the survey, I will state that by completing the survey, respondents are granting permission for use of the results.

The basis of the survey will be Appreciative Inquiry (AI). The rationale for this is that AI is a method of inquiry that focuses people on what behaviors bring out the best in them. “AI is based on the...claim that an organization...which tries to appreciate what is best in itself will find/discover more and more of what is good”

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appreciative_inquiry). I will attempt to uncover from the actors and technicians which behaviors exemplified by directors bring out the best in them and allow them to thrive in their crafts. I will also attempt to understand, as I stated earlier, how they each define leadership.

My criteria for determining appropriate subjects for these surveys will be that each actor has performed in at least ten Twin Cities productions and each technician has worked on at least ten Twin Cities productions. They also will need to have worked with at least five different directors.

In the survey, my first goal will be to understand how actors and designers define effective directing. In other words, which key behaviors do directors demonstrate that lead the actors and designers to perform and design to their highest levels of satisfaction and accomplishment. A second goal will be to determine which directors emerge as those who actors and designers say are the most effective leaders. When analyzing my survey results, I will determine which local directors rise to the top. It is important to note that there will be significantly more actors surveyed than technicians. That could impact the results if certain directors are viewed more favorably by actors than technicians. However, the goal is to measure the overall effectiveness of directors as leaders, so, while this is an element to keep in mind, it should not skew my findings.

Once I determine which directors the actors and designers deem the most effective leaders, I will interview the three directors named most frequently. Through these interviews, I will attempt to have answered the following two sub-questions:

1. Are directors identified by the survey respondents as effective consciously employing these techniques?
2. If they are consciously employing these techniques, how are they putting them into practice?

Interviews will be conducted by phone or in person. I will design a series of questions that allow me to draw parallels to the principles of leadership theory discussed in the abovementioned leadership books. I will ask them to explain their various approaches to the art of direction. For instance, do they approach direction in a more traditional, authoritative way or in a more contemporary, collaborative way? Questions will be developed to tease out specific examples and stories that illustrate the styles of each director. Each director will be asked to cite specific examples that relate to work with both the actors and the designers.

Once the interviews are complete, I will begin my analysis. My task will be to determine which principles of leadership theory, if any, stand out among the three directors. How do each director's stories relate to the five practices of exemplary leadership discussed in *The Leadership Challenge* by Kouzes and Posner (2002) and to the theory of transformational leadership developed by Bass and Riggio (2006)? My ultimate goal is to determine if there is a relationship between effective directing styles and these accepted theories of effective leadership. If there is a relationship, what is it? Are these directors aware of their application of these leadership principles? If they are

aware, how can we bring that awareness to the broader theater community? If they are not aware, how can I help to create the awareness? Simply put, which principles are most commonly applied in theatrical direction, and how does each director implement those principles in his/her own unique way?

SUBJECTS AND RECRUITMENT

Age Range of Subjects: __18-99

Number: _____ **Male** _____ **Female** **_581_** **Total**

Describe how you will recruit your subjects: be specific.

I will work with Stacey Poirier, artistic director for Theatre Unbound, to identify 578 actors, designers, and stage managers. Stacey will forward my survey to the subjects using her online database of email addresses. The criteria I will use to determine the appropriate subjects are:

1. The actors and technicians have performed in or designed or stage managed for at least ten Twin Cities productions.
2. The actors and technicians have worked with at least five different directors.

Once it is determined through survey data which three Twin Cities directors exemplify what the respondents deem as effective leadership skills, I will attempt to interview those directors via phone or in person.

Will the subjects be offered inducements for participation? If yes, explain. No

Please clearly identify any special populations or classes of subjects that you will include and provide a rationale for using them. Not applicable.

RISKS AND BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION

Check all that apply. Does the research involve:

- ___ Use of private records (medical or educational records)
- ___ Possible invasion of privacy of the subjects and/or their family
- ___ Manipulation of psychological or social variables
- ___ Probing for personal or sensitive information in surveys or interviews
- ___ Use of deception
- ___ Presentation of materials which subjects might consider offensive, threatening or degrading
- ___ Risk of physical injury to subjects
- ___ Other risks

If any of these are checked, describe the precautions taken to minimize the risks.

List any anticipated direct benefits to your subjects. If none, state that here and in the consent form. There are no direct benefits to my subjects for participation in this research.

Justify the statement that the potential benefits of this research study outweigh any probable risks. Not applicable.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF DATA

How will you maintain confidentiality of the information obtained from your subjects? No names will be used in reference to the survey respondents. I will discuss with my interview subjects their desire for confidentiality. If they wish that their names not be used, I will offer to use a pseudonym.

Where will the data be kept, how long will it be kept, and who will have access to it? Data will be kept for up to one year following the completion of my thesis. It will be kept in the privacy of my home filed away where no one will see it. Only my adviser and I will have access to my data.

Will data identifying subjects be made available to anyone other than you or your advisor? Who? No.

Will the data become a part of the medical or school record? If yes, explain. No.

INFORMED CONSENT

How will you gain consent? I will send my survey through Stacey Poirier, artistic director for Theatre Unbound. She will send an email to the 460 actors, 78 designers, and 40 stage managers in her database. The email will include a link to the survey and will be stated as follows:

“Your theater expertise is requested through the completion of the survey attached to the link below. The survey should take no more than 10 minutes to complete. Results will be used for the purposes of study being conducted by Rebecca Rizzio, a student in the Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership program at St. Catherine University. This research is being conducted to determine the relationship between effective theatrical direction and leadership theory. By completing this survey, you are granting permission for the use of these results. The results used will be in aggregate form and will be anonymous. Thank you for your time and assistance.

I will gain initial consent from my interview subjects by sending an email. When I interview them, I will obtain written consent using the form attached.

The initial email will read as follows:

“My name is Rebecca Rizzio, and I am currently completing a Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership at St. Catherine University in St. Paul. Work on my thesis is targeted towards understanding the relationship between leadership theory and theatrical direction. Survey results have led me to you as a director. I surveyed several Twin Cities actors, designers, and stage managers asking them which directors they feel demonstrate exceptional leadership skills. You are one of the top three directors that were mentioned.

I am writing to request an interview with you for the purposes of furthering my study. I will take no more than 60 minutes, and I will make it as convenient for you as possible.

When will you obtain consent? I will obtain formal consent using the attached consent form the day of the interview.

How will you assess that the subject understands what he/she has been asked to do? I will ask the subjects if they have any questions and will provide contact information so that they can contact me at anytime should questions arise.

ASSURANCES AND SIGNATURES

The signatures below certify that:

- The information furnished concerning the procedures to be taken for the protection of human subjects is correct.
- The investigator, to the best of his/her knowledge, is complying with Federal regulations governing human subjects in research.
- The investigator will seek and obtain prior written approval from the Committee for any substantive modification in the proposal, including, but not limited to changes in cooperating investigators, procedures and subject population.
- The investigator will promptly report in writing to the Committee any unexpected or otherwise significant adverse events that occur in the course of the study.
- The investigator will promptly report in writing to the Committee and to the subjects any significant findings which develop during the course of the study which may affect the risks and benefits to the subjects who participate in the study.
- The research will not be initiated until the Committee provides written approval.
- The term of approval will be for one year. To extend the study beyond that term, a new application must be submitted.
- The research, once approved, is subject to continuing review and approval by the Committee.
- The researcher will comply with all requests from the IRB to report on the status of the study and will maintain records of the research according to IRB guidelines.

- If these conditions are not met, approval of this research may be suspended.

Note: Approval of your final proposal indicates that your advisor and instructor have signed off on the IRB at the departmental level. Therefore you do not need the following signatures on this form unless you need to send it on to the university review board.

As primary investigator, I understand and will follow the above conditions.

Signature of Investigator

Date

As Advisor or Sponsor, I assume responsibility for ensuring that the investigator complies with University and federal regulations regarding the use of Human Subjects in research.

Signature of Advisor or Sponsor

Date

(Student investigators must have an advisor. Staff and non-SCU applicants must have a departmental sponsor)

As Program Director, I acknowledge that this research is in keeping with the standards set by our program and assure that the investigator has met all program requirements for review and approval of this research.

Signature of Program Director

Date

IRB Consent Form Checklist

Excerpted from Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects as published in the Federal Register Tuesday, June 18, 1991 and including 45 CFR 46.116:

No investigator may involve a human being as a subject in research covered by these criteria unless the investigator has obtained the legally effective informed consent of the subject or the subject's legally authorized representative. An investigator shall seek such consent only under circumstances that provide the prospective subject or the representative sufficient opportunity to consider whether or not to participate and that minimize the possibility of coercion or undue influence. The information that the researcher prepares in a consent form must use language that is understandable to the subject or the representative. No informed consent may include any language which indicates that the subject has waived or implies waiver of any legal rights, releases or appears to release the investigator, the sponsor or the institution or its agents from liability for negligence.

Follow the format in the sample consent form and use the following checklist to ensure that all elements of informed consent are included:

- A statement that the study involves research.
- For student research, a statement that the study is being undertaken by students under the supervision of a faculty member. The name of the department should be indicated as well as the name of the faculty member.
- An explanation of the purposes of the research.
- The duration of the subject's participation.
- The number of subjects involved in the research.
- A step by step description of the procedures to be used.
- A description of the expected or foreseeable risks or discomforts to the subject.
- A description of any benefits to the subject or to others which may reasonably be expected from the research.
- A disclosure of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to the subject.
- A description of the measures that the researcher will follow to assure confidentiality of records that identify each subject by name and/or identification number.
- An explanation of how to contact the researcher and the sponsor for questions about the study.
- If physical contact is involved, an explanation of whom to contact regarding the research, the subject's rights, and research-related injury.
- A statement that the subject is free to choose to participate in the study, and that by refusing to participate, the subject will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which the subject may otherwise be entitled.

___ A statement that clearly indicates that the subject may discontinue participation at any time, even after the consent form is signed, without any loss of benefits.

___ A statement indicating that the subject will be offered a copy of the form to keep.

___ A line for the signature of the subject followed by the date (do not make an "x" to show where to sign)

___ A line for the signature of the investigator followed by the date of the signing

Application of Leadership Principles in Theatrical Direction

Introduction:

You are invited to participate in a research study investigating the relationship between leadership theory and theatrical direction. This study is being conducted by Rebecca Rizzio, a graduate student at St. Catherine University under the supervision of Martha Hardesty, Ph.D., a faculty member in the Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership Program. You were identified as a possible participant in this research because you were selected through an online survey as a director who respondents deemed an exceptional leader. Please read this form and ask questions before you agree to be in the study.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between effective leadership and theatrical direction. Approximately 200 people are expected to participate in this research.

Procedures:

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in an interview. This interview will take approximately 60 minutes over one session.

Risks and Benefits of being in the study:

The study has minimal risks.

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research. You will, however, have the indirect benefit of participating in research designed to enhance the leadership skills of fellow theatrical directors.

Compensation:

If you participate, you will not receive any compensation.

Confidentiality:

Any information obtained in connection with this research study that can be identified with you will be disclosed only with your permission; your results will be kept confidential. In any written reports or publications, no one will be identified or identifiable and only group data will be presented.

I will keep the research results in the privacy of my home, and only I and my advisor will have access to the records while I work on this project. I will finish analyzing the data by December 31, 2010. I will then destroy all original reports and identifying information that can be linked back to you.

Voluntary nature of the study:

Participation in this research study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with St. Catherine University in any way. If you decide to participate, you are free to stop at any time without affecting these relationships.

Contacts and questions:

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, Rebecca Rizzio, at 651.263.0540. You may ask questions now, or if you have any additional questions later, the faculty advisor, (Martha Hardesty, 651.690.6189), will be happy to answer them. If you have other questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you may also contact the faculty advisor.

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

Statement of Consent:

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read this information and your questions have been answered. Even after signing this form, please know that you may withdraw from the study at any time.

I consent to participate in the study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Appendix B: Survey Questions for Actors, Designers, and Stage Managers

1. Which of the following best describes your primary role in the theater?
 - a. Actor
 - b. Designer
 - c. Stage Manager

2. In the primary role cited above, with how many productions have you been involved?
 - a. 0-4
 - b. 5-9
 - c. 10-14
 - d. 15+

3. Where has your theater experience taken place?
 - a. Solely the Twin Cities
 - b. Twin Cities and elsewhere
 - c. Solely elsewhere

4. With how many directors have you worked?
 - a. 0-4
 - b. 5-9
 - c. 10+

5. What is your personal measure of a successful production?
 - a. Large audiences
 - b. Positive reviews
 - c. Personal growth as an artist

6. Which of the following do you believe best describes the role of the director?
 - a. Coach (Low level of control)
 - b. Facilitator (Moderate level of control)
 - c. Manager (High level of control)

7. Would you rather work with a director who:
 - a. Sets clear expectations
 - b. Willing to take risks

8. Would you rather work with a director who is:
 - a. Intellectually-stimulating
 - b. Practical

9. Would you rather work with a director who is:
 - a. Focused
 - b. Inspiring

10. Would you rather work with a director who is:
 - a. Structured
 - b. Intuitive

11. What kind of a director makes you better at your craft?
 - a. One who challenges you
 - b. One who encourages you

12. How much authority should a director have in a production?
 - a. Complete authority
 - b. Some authority
 - c. Little authority

13. Would you rather work with a director who is:
 - a. Assertive
 - b. Collaborative

14. How important is it to you to have a voice in the rehearsal process?
 - a. Not at all
 - b. Somewhat important
 - c. Important
 - d. Very important

15. Please rank in order of important the following traits of theatrical director. 1-10 with 1 being the **most** desirable.
 - a. Assertive
 - b. Decision-Maker
 - c. Efficient
 - d. Empowering
 - e. Encouraging
 - f. Engaging
 - g. Good listener
 - h. Intuitive
 - i. Organized
 - j. Thought-provoking

16. With which statement do you most agree?
 - a. A good director has complete control over a production.
 - b. A good director facilitates the collaborative process of a production.

17. Is it more important for you to trust your director or to respect your director?
 - a. Trust
 - b. Respect

18. Which kind of director brings the best out in you as an artist?
 - a. Collaborator
 - b. Influencer

19. Which kind of director do you believe leads the most successful production?
 - a. Collaborator
 - b. Influencer

20. Is it more important for you to trust the director or for the director to trust you?
 - a. You trust the director.
 - b. The director trusts you.

21. Which director in the Twin Cities do you believe is the most effective director? Please write in a specific name. All answers are kept confidential.

Appendix C: Survey Results—Aggregate Data

1.

Which of the following best describes your primary role in the theater?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Actor	83.3%	90
Designer	12.0%	13
Stage Manager	4.6%	5
<i>answered question</i>		108
<i>skipped question</i>		0

2.

In the primary role cited above, with how many productions have you been involved?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
0-4	0.0%	0
5-9	0.0%	0
10-14	6.5%	7
15+	93.5%	101
<i>answered question</i>		108
<i>skipped question</i>		0

3.

In the primary role cited above, with how many different directors have you worked?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
0-4	0.0%	0
5-9	10.2%	11
10+	89.8%	97
<i>answered question</i>		108
<i>skipped question</i>		0

4.

Where has your theater experience taken place?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Solely the Twin Cities	14.8%	16
Twin Cities and elsewhere	85.2%	92
Solely elsewhere	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		108
<i>skipped question</i>		0

5.

Please rank in order of importance your personal measure of a successful production. (Use 1 as the most important and 3 as the least important.)

Answer Options	1	2	3	Rating Average	Response Count
Large audiences	13	54	39	2.25	106
Positive reviews	19	39	49	2.28	107
Personal growth as an artist	76	12	19	1.47	107
<i>answered question</i>					108
<i>skipped question</i>					0

6.

Which of the following do you believe best describes the role of the director?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Coach (Low level of control)	0.0%	0
Facilitator (Moderate level of control)	72.2%	78
Manager (High level of control)	27.8%	30
<i>answered question</i>		108
<i>skipped question</i>		0

7.

Would you prefer to work with a director with a clearly-articulated vision or one who is willing to explore his/her vision?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Clearly-articulated vision	47.2%	51
Willing to explore vision	52.8%	57
<i>answered question</i>		108
<i>skipped question</i>		0

8.

Would you prefer to work with a director who is more open-ended or prescriptive?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Open-ended	76.9%	83
Prescriptive	23.1%	25
<i>answered question</i>		108
<i>skipped question</i>		0

9.

Would you prefer to work with a director who is focused or inspiring?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Focused	44.4%	48
Inspiring	55.6%	60
<i>answered question</i>		108
<i>skipped question</i>		0

10.

Would you prefer to work with a director who is structured or intuitive?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Structured	50.9%	55
Intuitive	49.1%	53
<i>answered question</i>		108
<i>skipped question</i>		0

11.

Which kind of director makes you better at your craft?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
One who challenges you	69.4%	75
One who encourages you	30.6%	33
<i>answered question</i>		108
<i>skipped question</i>		0

12.

How much authority should a director have over a production?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Complete authority	49.1%	53
Some authority	50.9%	55
Little authority	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		108
<i>skipped question</i>		0

13.

Would you prefer to work with a director who is more authoritative or collaborative?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Authoritative	6.5%	7
Collaborative	93.5%	101
<i>answered question</i>		108
<i>skipped question</i>		0

14.

How important is it to you to have a voice in the rehearsal process?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Not at all important	4.7%	5
Somewhat important	34.6%	37
Important	31.8%	34
Very important	29.0%	31
<i>answered question</i>		107
<i>skipped question</i>		1

15.

With which statement do you most agree?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
A good director has complete control over a production.	9.3%	10
A good director facilitates the collaborative process of a production.	90.7%	98
<i>answered question</i>		108
<i>skipped question</i>		0

16.

Is it more important for you to trust your director or to respect your director?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Trust	75.9%	82
Respect	24.1%	26
<i>answered question</i>		108
<i>skipped question</i>		0

17.

Which kind of director brings out the best in you as an artist?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Collaborator	91.7%	99
Authority-figure	8.3%	9
<i>answered question</i>		108
<i>skipped question</i>		0

18.

Which kind of director do you believe leads the most successful production?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Collaborator	88.0%	95
Authority-figure	12.0%	13
<i>answered question</i>		108
<i>skipped question</i>		0

19.

Is it more important for you to trust the director or for the director to trust you?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
You trust the director.	43.5%	47
The director trusts you.	56.5%	61
<i>answered question</i>		108
<i>skipped question</i>		0

20. See Table 4.1

21. Top three directors: Craig Johnson, Peter Moore, Matt Sciple

Appendix D: Director Interview Questions

1. How many productions have you directed?
2. With which theater company do you primarily direct?
3. What types of shows do you primarily direct (ie plays or musicals)?
4. How do you define your role as a director?
5. Tell me about a time when you encountered difficulty during the rehearsal process?
How did you overcome that difficulty?
6. How much power do you exert over the cast and design team?
7. What do you believe is the single most important characteristic of a director?
8. As a director, which of your traits is most beneficial to the overall success of your productions?
9. What advice do you have for beginning directors?
10. As a director, are you more collaborative or authoritative? Why?
11. How do you effectively balance authority and collaboration?
12. Is it more important for you to be empowering or for you to be structured?
13. How do you function as a decision-maker, organized, and efficient without being assertive?
14. What is your philosophy on direction?
15. What relationship do you believe exists between leadership and theatrical direction?