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THE CARL AND WINIFRED LEE HONORS COLLEGE
CERTIFICATE OF ORAL DEFENSE OF HONORS THESIS

Jeniece Salness, having been admitted to the Carl and Winifred Lee Honors College in the spring of 2011, successfully completed the Lee Honors College Thesis on April 20, 2012.

The title of the thesis is:

Theatre and Eating Disorders

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Christine Iaderosa', written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Christine Iaderosa, Sindecuse Health Center

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Joyce Ross, SMEDA', written over a horizontal line.

Joyce Ross, SMEDA

Theatre & Eating Disorders:
Using Applied Theatre to Conquer Eating Disorders on College Campuses
Jeni Salness
Western Michigan University

The idea of the utilization of theatre to educate has its basis in ancient times. However, it's only been in recent history, that the practice has been expanded and adapted to touch groups and even individuals. Applied theatre combines the educational wherewithal of professionals to promote a message or to normalize a social stigma. The entertainment social setting of a theatre production creates an ambiance of approachability to subjects that are difficult to discuss, such as eating disorders and also provides solutions and resources to audience members.

Augusto Boal stated that Aristotle believed the purpose of theatre was to educate and to entertain (Boal, 1974). Since Aristotle's time, the art form of theatre has seesawed on the importance of one purpose over the other. Many actors, writers and directors throughout history have adapted Aristotle's philosophies of theatre into the varying forms of theatrical performances seen today. Augusto Boal took the philosophies of Aristotle as well as Machiavelli, Hegel, and Brecht, creating his own form of theatre. Boal stated that "it is not the place of theatre to show the correct path, but only to offer the means by which...possible paths may be examined" (Boal, 1974). Augusto Boal is known for his work using methods of theatre for social change. His most famous work, Theatre of the Oppressed, has been adapted and changed to be applied to a variety of social issues.

Boal began the work that developed into Theatre of the Oppressed while he was director of the Arena Theatre in São Paulo from 1956 to 1971. Boal developed theories from his desire to create theatre with a local experience rather than the foreign influence of American or British theatre. One such theory, the "Joker System," of theatre was created and characterized "by several techniques that

challenged the theatrical conventions of Brazilian realism including the blurring habits, shifting of roles within the play so that all actors played all characters” (Schutzman & Cohen-Cruz, 1994). Boal’s theatre differed from other forms of theatre such as those of European and American influence, which involved straight acting, which means there was only one outcome of the plot. In Boal’s theatre, there are many ways in which the plot could change and the outcome could be different. The Joker asked the audience for input and invites audience members to take a role in the action of the performance. , Boal utilized this form of theatre to promote political agendas and create awareness of social blights.

A military coup in Brazil in 1964 prompted Boal to promote democracy for Brazil through theatre and political activism. The theatre works of Boal during this period portrayed the harsh conditions that existed under Brazil’s dictatorship. Boal’s theatre presented a situation in which the protagonists of the piece would not be able to reach their desired goal. The audience would be invited to take the place of the protagonist whenever they felt as though they had a better path they could take to reach the goal.

In 1971, Boal was arrested at the Arena Theatre for his continued activism opposing the Brazilian military. He was released three years later on the promise that his theatre activism would stop. Boal moved to Argentina and continued to develop his activist theatre techniques. His notoriety had already spread to Argentina where he was still banned from partaking in activist theatre. This ban caused Boal to develop a type of invisible theatre. This theatre was staged in public places where the actors masqueraded as regular people and the audience did not

realize they were watching a production. Boal called this subtle technique “cop-in-the-streets.” This form of educational theatre only continued for a short period of time due to the threat of the severely oppressive military regime. After which Boal moved to Europe following the publication of his three books: Theatre of the Oppressed, Latin American Techniques of Popular Theatre, and Two Hundred Exercises and Games for Actors and Non-actors.

Through hosting Theatre of the Oppressed workshops, Boal became world renown for drawing his audience in with his theatrical techniques. From 1978 through 1979, these workshops evolved into the Parisian Center for Theatre of the Oppressed. This group was comprised of actors, social workers, activists, educators, and therapists. Since 1980, these therapeutic and activist techniques have been adapted and changed as the trend spread throughout Europe, Canada and the United States. While Boal’s work conveyed socially broader message, the evolution of his techniques developed into a form of theatre called applied theatre. Today, applied theatre is “usually associated with the use of theatrical forms in the interests of empowerment, capacity-building and social transformation” (Baldwin, 2009). This theatrical technique has been used across the globe to contribute to social changes that positively affect all walks of life.

In an article by Séguin & Rancourt, it is stated that theatre is more than entertainment; it is an “agent of change” (1996) and this change can be anything from political oppression to stigmatization of mental illnesses. Developing these productions to entertain and educate on a social issue involves discovering the concerns of those in the target population to provide “raw material for the dramatic

text” (Séguin & Rancourt, 1996). The text is then edited and checked for validity by knowledgeable members of that community or experts in that field of study. Within that same target community, a group of actors is selected to portray the concerns and messages the group wants to convey. In some variations of this technique, the actors themselves workshop the script and develop the characters they then portray. Actors then present the social issue in a way that audience can see the issue from an insider’s perspective. From this perspective, the audience can more readily see the steps that need to be taken to create the social change. The presentation of the issues from an insider’s point-of-view is what makes this technique, perhaps the most effective vessel of social change.

In environments in which community awareness and social marketing campaigns have failed to reach the target population, Boal’s techniques have provided a useful tool for those dedicated to educating a target population and reaching that target audience. In a study conducted by Andrea Baldwin, applied theatre techniques were practiced in a Papua New Guinea community in which a prior educational campaign had failed to make a positive behavior change in HIV prevention and high-risk sexual behavior. Baldwin created a pilot workshop to help educate those who work in a health education setting in this community. Baldwin’s technique was to perform a scene in which a high-risk sexual behavior resulted in a negative consequence and then invited an audience member to take the place of an actor in the scene. The audience was composed of twelve Papua New Guinean nationals employed by a non-government organization committed to the sexual education of the Papua New Guinean community. At the conclusion of this study,

audience members reported being more aware of their own body language and believed that playing the role of their target population would help them to “interact more effectively and persuasively with clients, subordinates, and managers” (Baldwin, 2009).

In the world of mental health, applied theatre has been used as a therapeutic and recovery method. Angèle Séguin and Clémence Rancourt helped women in rural Quebec express their feelings about their mental disorders by helping them write and perform their forum theatre piece titled “Not As Mad As All That.” In this piece, the women revealed their hidden thoughts about their world, needs, family, community, medication, and relationships. Those participating in writing the play said “they felt it had freed them from the prejudices of society, and they were proud and satisfied to have contributed in their own way to the demystification of mental illness” (Séguin & Rancourt, 1996). Since its first performance in 1991, the performance was recorded and used to help mental health organizations aid their clients experiencing similar struggles. This performance has “transmit[ted] its message, push[ed] back the barriers that limit the lives of the people with mental disorders” (Séguin & Rancourt, 1996).

Eating disorders are an area in which Boal’s techniques can be used to curb the high prevalence of eating disorders and the social stigmas involved. Eating disorders are an issue that affects many college students across the country. Raquel Pereira and Marle Alvarenga have defined normal eating as “ingestion of healthy foods, the intake of a mixed and balanced diet that contains enough nutrients and calories to meet the body’s needs, and a positive attitude about food” (Pereira &

Alvarenga, 2007). Disordered eating, however, is defined as “troublesome eating behaviors, such as purgative practices, bingeing, food restriction, and other inadequate methods to lose or control weight” (Pereira & Alvarenga, 2007).

Disordered eating is not the same as an eating disorder. An eating disorder is defined as “a psychiatric illness marked by [disordered eating behavior], disordered food intake, disordered eating attitudes, and often inadequate methods of weight control” (Pereira & Alvarenga, 2007).

The three major categories of eating disorders are Anorexia Nervosa (AN), Bulimia Nervosa (BN) and Eating Disorders Not Otherwise Specified(EDNOS). Pereira and Alvarenga define the signs and symptoms associated with eating disorders. Anorexia nervosa is characterized by changes in eating habits, marked weight loss, and “a disturbance in the way in which one’s body weight or shape is experienced” (Pereira & Alvarenga, 2007). Bulimia nervosa is by characterized episodes of binge eating followed by compensatory behaviors. Those who suffer from this disorder may also have negative thoughts regarding their bodies, which are common across all three categories of eating disorders. Eating disorders not otherwise specified includes such disorders as binge eating disorder, night eating disorder and other disorders that are clinically significant but do not quite meet specific criteria for AN or BN. Binge eating disorder is marked by reoccurring binge eating episodes accompanied with feelings of guilt, disgust, and/or depression. Night eating disorder is characterized by 50% of caloric intake occurring after 7:00 pm, trouble sleeping and morning anorexia. The severity and course of these disorders are “highly variable and differ between all individuals” (American

Psychological Association, 2000). Though these disorders vary in the way they manifest themselves, no one disorder is less severe than another and may affect a large amount of people.

According to the study by Prouty, Protinsky & Canady, one to three percent of the Western population of females meets the formal criteria for disordered eating (2002). This number is the highest among adolescent and young women. Also stated in this study, the majority of American college women exhibited at least a few symptoms of disordered eating and in addition to that, 15% of American college women meet the criteria for an eating disorder. A normalization of disordered eating behaviors has been seen under pseudonyms as dieting or eating healthy when in reality such behaviors can be physically and psychologically harmful.

Mirasol, an eating disorder foundation, conducted a study and found that 25 million men and 43 million women are currently dieting to lose weight. In addition, 21 million men and 26 million women are dieting to maintain their current weight. This means that almost 116 million people or 55% of our country's population in the United States of America are dieting at any given point in time! . An unsettling statistic from a study by Dereene and Beresin found that in 1994, 40% of 9-year-olds have been on a diet. This number is suspected to have risen in the past fifteen years. As a part of the campaign for beauty conducted by Dove, 1,200 girls between the ages of ten and seventeen were surveyed. This survey found that 72% felt great pressure to be beautiful with only 11% feeling comfortable using the word "beautiful" to describe themselves (2011).

A study conducted by Marita P. McCabe and Lina A. Ricciardelli analyzed the influences of parents, peers, and media how one regards on body size among adolescent boys and girls. This survey was conducted with 622 males and 644 females between the ages of 12 and 16 to determine the sociocultural influences on body image and body changes (2001). The study discovered that adolescents experienced the highest pressures to lose weight and increase muscle tone from their mothers (McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2001). Media greatly influence body image in females but not as influential in males. In addition, peer influences are felt more strongly in females than in males. However, the type of pressure that comes from peers varies between male and female peers. Males encourage their peers to increase weight and muscle tone, whereas, females encourage their peers to lose weight and increase muscle tone. In order to counterbalance these peer pressures regarding weight and body image peer education programs on college campuses are educating and reaching out to prevent disordered eating and eating disorders and deter unhealthy eating habits.

Pereira and Alvarenga suggest that for programs of prevention describing direct information regarding eating disorders is fairly ineffective because it introduces the beliefs and behaviors involved with eating disorders, normalizing these behaviors. The target population then falls under the belief that these behaviors are common and normal and not a cause for concern or change. The presentation of points of recognition and the negative effects of these behaviors on have been theorized to be more effective. Prouty et. al.'s study suggests that universities across the country would benefit best from a group of peer educators to

promote healthy eating habits on campus (2002). The data from this study suggests that all young women should be the targets of this type of educational health campaign. Prouty states that peer educators “might have a unique ability to infiltrate... being careful not to unintentionally glamorize disordered eating or educate their peers on how to do disordered eating ‘better’” (Prouty, Protinsky & Canady, 2002).

In 2010, Dr. Christine Iaderosa, Coordinator of Theatre of Community Health at Sindecuse Health Center at Western Michigan University, was contacted by Southwest Michigan Eating Disorder Association (SMEDA), to write a theatrical piece as an answer to the lack of performance education available in regards to eating disorders. In response to this request, Iaderosa, wrote a musical titled “Food Prisons” about beauty, body image and eating disorders. Iaderosa chose to focus this piece on the core target audience, the college student population, specifically college students. Iaderosa researched for months by devouring numerous tomes featuring such subjects as body image, eating disorders, the history and origins of eating disorders, and therapies involving art and theatre. Ironically, Iaderosa’s biggest influence, her own experiences with dieting, began when a seven-year-old Christine witnessed her “mother bringing home the first edition of the Atkins books” (personal correspondence, 2012). Over the years, Iaderosa observed the growth of the diet industry and the war on obesity. Iaderosa embarked on a mission to help people “recognize that the obsession with food that many people have is not normal or healthy” (personal correspondence, 2012) as well as help the audience “recognize themselves in the characters on stage and realize that life could be

different” (personal correspondence, 2012). To accomplish this, Iaderosa applied Boal’s theatrical philosophies to “Food Prisons.”

In this show, the literary technique, the nonlinear form of development, packed a powerful punch of displaying the different situations and emotions of the actors. All of the story development takes place either in retrospective scenes or on the plane of the stage. The characters are positioned on a theoretical plane in which they converse with each other and the audience without acknowledgement of the fourth wall of theatre. This technique combines those of Boal and Brecht for more presentational theatre, rather than purely entertainment or escapist theatre. The characters present the issues involved with disordered eating by presenting their own stories as other characters react and even step in as the people in the narration. The reactions of the other characters mimic the reactions and social stigmas of society. In theatricizing the social stigmas, the audience recognizes the prejudices in others and the prejudices in themselves. The characters confronting these prejudices, provided the audience with the tools to confront the same prejudices and challenge social stigmas in their life.

In addition, the nonlinear form presented the effects of these prejudices on the lives of the characters. Clearly displayed in “Food Prisons,” the social, familial, and media pressures placed on the characters influenced their thoughts regarding their own beauty and body image. These pressures contributed highly to the type and severity of each character’s body image issue. In turn, societal judgments and pressures created a cycle in which a person, who experienced prejudices pressed those prejudices and criticisms onto another person. Portrayed vividly, in the scene

between Macy and Melissa at Macy's birthday dinner, by Melissa's comment of "I didn't think you needed it" (Iaderosa, 2012) reflecting the absent whipped cream on Macy's cake that reinforced Macy's negative body image and perpetuated it. In addition, to the reinforcement of Macy's negative body image, her prejudice towards thinner females having attitude of superiority and cruelty was generated and reinforced. This scene showed that past social experiences create general biases and that these biases perpetuate and exacerbate new harmful thinking. While Iaderosa displayed societal pressure contributions to feelings of inadequacy for not maintaining a low body weight, she also exhibited how a family greatly impacted personal perceptions of body images.

In the McCabe and Ricciardelli study previously mentioned, family pressures and beliefs can have a grave impact on a person's body image and eating habits. In "Food Prisons," five of the seven characters specifically cited their family as an influence to their disordered eating. In Melissa's first monologue, she stated that her mom, a single working mother whom "always worried about her weight" (Iaderosa, 2012), insisted that Melissa also remain on a diet to "catch a man" (Iaderosa, 2012). This pressure from her mother lead Melissa to develop unhealthy tendencies with food that fit the criteria for Anorexia Nervosa: restricting type (American Psychological Association, 2000). An influential incident in Melissa's struggle with her eating was discovering her mother gorging on Melissa's hidden candy stash and, upon catching her mother in the act, getting slapped in her face. This event created the false thinking in which Melissa stated that she feels "responsible for what [she] eats and for what other people eat" (Iaderosa, 2012).

Melissa even specifically stated that the pressure to remain thin come from her “mom’s voice, constantly in [her] head” (Iaderosa, 2012), which caused her to severely restrict her diet. As depicted from age 5 until age 18, her mother does not acknowledge any of Melissa’s accomplishments until she gains a noteworthy date for prom. When Melissa tells her mother about her date, her mother’s apparent excitement leads into her insistence that they must both “go on a strict diet right away” (Iaderosa, 2012). At her graduation, Melissa finally gained the approval of her mother not for her academic accomplishments, but rather her thinness. This constant battle for approval pushed Melissa to continue to obsessively diet in hopes to become perfect, but the feelings of being “in a prison” (Iaderosa, 2012) overwhelmed and controlled her.

Cynthia, another character in the play, shared Melissa’s trials of the inability to fulfill an unattainable goal set forth by a family member. In Cynthia situation, her grandmother expected her to be a model of perfection. For example, Cynthia would attend church dressed “like a doll” (Iaderosa, 2012) at the wish of her grandmother, because “she used to be a model and she really cared about looks” (Iaderosa, 2012). Even then, Cynthia could never gain her approval, as she would wiggle, because her church dress was uncomfortable; embarrassing her grandmother in the process. At the age of 16, Cynthia’s grandmother developed breast cancer and became fatally ill. During the time of illness, her grandmother insisted that Cynthia should be a model. Just before her passing, Cynthia’s grandmother orders, “Don’t ever get fat” (Iaderosa, 2012). This dying wish resonated in Cynthia’s mind through her life and motivated her to continuously diet to become a model. Her failure to achieve model

measurements caused severe discomfort and the feeling of being trapped “in a prison of [her] own making and the bars are made of food” (Iaderosa, 2012). This collective theme of being trapped in a prison, was the central feeling experienced by all, the characters in the play. The characters’ inability to reach their goals followed directly in conjunction with Boal’s activist theatre techniques. The presentation of unattained goals allowed the audience to recognize the routes the characters could have taken and the possible paths they could take in regards to the problem at hand. Throughout this production, Iaderosa stays away from normalizing or glamorizing these unhealthy behaviors. In this production the words “anorexia,” “bulimia,” “obesity,” or any variations on those words were not spoken. As stated earlier, Prouty et. al. warned against prevention campaigns that give direct information due to the unique phenomenon of normalization of these behaviors (2002). By not stating the words that have commonly labeled eating disorders and disordered behavior fights against the normalization and labeling of these behaviors and conditions

Iaderosa chose to focus more on the thoughts and behaviors that manifest themselves as a result of disordered eating and negative body image by the usage of very powerful and colorful syntax that captures the character without using stigmatized words. . The consistent use of phrases such as “pressure,” “vomit,” “binge,” “satisfaction,” “purged,” “beauty,” “thin,” and “calories” (Iaderosa, 2012) depicted the obsession on reaching the unattainable goal of fitting the societal and personal view of thinness and beauty. The word usage turned the focus on the

thinking and behaviors, so that the audience recognized and experienced the characters' thoughts about food, beauty and weight.

"Food", a powerful word that brought longing and fear to the characters. As portrayed before the song "Someday," food in which they hated and loved, craved and vomited consumed their time, energy and thoughts (Iaderosa, 2012). The exclamation of the word "food," all characters reached an euphoric state with the feeling of completely letting go with food. Though the issue of disordered eating centralizes on control, the production showed that many of the thoughts involved in disordered eating were regarding food. The build-up of the franticness involved in the consumption of food almost overtook the characters until the mention of success completely killed their high. This signified the inability for one who has disordered eating tendencies to enjoy food for fear of losing success. Each character quantified their success in a number of various ways.

Highly-weighted words in the world of beauty and body image revolve around not descriptive words, but numbers. These numbers that the characters mention signified their own self-worth. Numbers denoted their jean size, their BMIs, their measurements, how much they can bench press, their weight and even their breast size. Each character had a number that is specifically daunting, yet they have allowed themselves to be personally defined and controlled by that number. For David, the athlete obsessed with becoming more marketable for a team, the number that defined him was the amount of weight he could bench press. Yet, no matter how much this number increased, he still felt inadequate for not reaching his insurmountable goal and "can't do anything until [he] does" (Iaderosa, 2012).

Cynthia defined by her measurements, the key to reaching her dream of becoming a model and until those numbers meet the criteria of a model, she could never be happy. “Why are some numbers ok and others not?” (Iaderosa, 2012) A question posed in the play to which the reply from Jayne was that each person defined themselves by that self-perceived number. Whether the character established their pride in a higher or lower number, this unacceptable thinking should not define a successful life or the worth of a person.

In order to further stimulate the audience’s sense and project the characters’ emotions, the staging of this production consisted of all black and white costumes and larger than life props. The color scheme, or lack of color scheme symbolized the black and white thoughts people have regarding body image. For example, David’s all or nothing attitude classified his days and events as successes and failures. If he completed his workout schedule, then he classified the day as a success. Without completing his workout regimen, he labeled his day a failure and he “feels like the biggest loser” (Iaderosa, 2012). Jayne also shared the same thought regarding successes and failures. During her monologue, Jayne stated that her self-esteem was directly proportional to how she felt about her weight. Jane declared that if she “feels good about [herself], she looks good,” (Iaderosa, 2012) but when she felt “shitty, [she] feels fat no matter what the scale says” (Iaderosa, 2012). The black and white thinking of the play’s characters propagated their feelings and behaviors. The larger than life props symbolized the power that these items had on the character’s lives. The over-sized cake that triggered Melissa’s comment on Macy’s weight symbolized how that moment became a defining moment in Macy’s life. Iaderosa’s

usage of these larger than life props corresponded with Boal's theatrical techniques. The usage of word polarizations, such as fat and thin, ugliness and beauty, and ultimately, life and death further illustrated the black and white thinking of the characters.

In an educational scene depicting the history and beauty of eating disorders, Jayne made a connection between "fat and looking old" (Iaderosa, 2012) and how those adjectives do not fall into the category of modern day beauty. Macy continued this thought to conclude, "thin equals youth equal sexy" (Iaderosa, 2012). These two very important parallels depicted societal views on acceptable body types and how aspects get categorized with fatness and thinness so that the words appear to be interchangeable. "Food Prisons" explained that, historically, being thin constituted spirituality and virginal aspects of a person. The absence of fat also meant escaping the throngs of motherhood. Amy stated that giving birth and motherhood meant "wide hips, big belly" (Iaderosa, 2012). Therefore, slender hips and stomach equated to pre-motherhood and being a virgin. As time progressed have a pre-motherhood figure meant youth and, ultimately, beauty. In opposition, fat and old became exactly the opposite of those spiritual and virginal qualities a woman should aspire to possess. These comparisons explicitly stated in the show, shrouded a subtler, covert parallel.

As Cynthia conveyed her story and trials with her grandmother, Iaderosa equated Cynthia's view of beauty with death. When Cynthia described her grandmother immediately before her death, she saw her grandmother as beautiful. However, the description that Cynthia depicted of her grandmother's face was

“skeletal” (Iaderosa, 2012). Cynthia goes on to say that she thought, “Even at her age, lying back so that the wrinkles sorta fell away, and you could see her cheekbones through the skin, that she was sort of beautiful. Just like the models in the magazines” (Iaderosa, 2012). This description juxtapositions Cynthia’s view of the beauty she saw in models to the way her grandmother looked at death. Without realizing it, Cynthia compared death to her unobtainable view of beauty.

In comparison to Cynthia’s views on beauty, Patricia came to a revelation towards the conclusion of the production that her beauty equaled life. Patricia began by saying to say that she enjoys gardening and watching beautiful plants “grow out of nothing” (Iaderosa, 2012). She stated a description of a plant called the corpse plant that “smells like a rotting corpse” (Iaderosa, 2010) but it still one of the most beautiful plants. As she continued this monologue, Patricia epiphanized on the comparison between people and flowers, all different shapes, sizes, and colors but all of them are “one of Nature’s Wonders” (Iaderosa, 2012). When Patricia concluded that she is “has her own beauty” (Iaderosa, 2012) and that she claimed “beauty for herself” (Iaderosa, 2012). By realizing that she was like a beautiful flower, Patricia chose life, growth and health that came with accepting personal beauty over the death and decay that accompanied dieting and restriction. The very strong parallels between life and death with the views of beauty transcended above the untrue thought patterns into lasting effects on both the actors and the audience.

After portraying the part of Patricia in the 2012 production of “Food Prisons,” Katie DiBiase admitted that she was changed by participating in the production. Following acting in the show, DiBiase stated that she realized she will

never “be happy with my weight until I love the person attached to that stupid number on the scale” (personal correspondence, 2012) and started to allow herself to feel good. DiBiase changed the way other people described and labeled what was beautiful and the usages of words such as ugly or fat. She stated that she was “surrounded by media telling [her she’s] not thin or pretty enough; [she refused] to allow my close peers to say that about someone else” (personal correspondence, 2012). Participating in “Food Prisons” positively affected cast members that did not feel as though they drastically battled with their own body image. Kelly Tauschek who played the part of Amy in the show said that she felt “more grounded in [her] knowledge and ability to share it with others” (personal correspondence, 2012). The effects of the production on Tauschek and DiBiase were exactly the types of effects Iaderosa wanted to occur in the audience as well.

The overwhelmingly positive responses from the audience consisted of sixty-three surveys that were turned in from the two nights of the performance. Sixty-five percent of the surveys stated that they did learn something new about eating disorders and disordered eating from the show. From the surveys collected at the end of the production, only one person stated that they felt the show was “corny” (“Food Prison Survey,” 2012). Forty percent of those who answered that they did not learn anything from the presentation explicitly stated that they already knew many of the facts presented in the production. However, these people were pleased that the facts were reiterated and positively reinforced. A 20-year old female stated that she “realized [she is] not alone and that it’s okay that [she doesn’t] fit in, in fact it’s more than okay” (“Food Prisons Survey,” 2012). A 42-year old male stated that

he learned that eating disorders “can affect those that aren’t medically underweight” (“Food Prisons Survey,” 2012). Many of the comments regarding what they learned involved a realization that these issues affect everyone and “it’s beyond pure vanity” (“Food Prisons Survey,” 2012). Ninety-eight percent of those surveyed said that after this production they are more likely to recognize disordered eating or an eating disorder in himself or herself or a friend. Eighty-six percent indicated that they would be more likely to seek help for an eating disorder following this production. However, only one survey stated that they are not more likely to seek treatment and gave no further reasoning, two did not have answers and one stated that they already had a treatment team. A prevailing comment left in this section of the survey said, “I am starting to [seek treatment] Monday...finally” (“Food Prisons Survey,” 2012). It is amazing and wonderful to think that one hour long production could move someone to seek the treatment that they’ve felt they’ve needed for a while but have not been able to get the nerve to seek it. To have one person pursue treatment for their disordered eating or eating disorder was worth the months of preparation for this production. In addition to that, 92 percent said that they are more understanding of people with different body types. Overall, the show was highly effective for the majority of the audience who turned in surveys. These surveys showed that the goals of the production were successfully reached.

Theatre once perceived as fluff entertainment has been changed into a powerful tool to empower those suffering from disordered eating or an eating disorder. Christine Iaderos’s script and production of “Food Prisons, set a prime example of the usage of theatre to bring forth awareness of the powerful usage of

applied theatre to reached a wide audience in a short timeframe. She applied Boal's theories and not only entertained, but broadened awareness and created a positive effect in her audiences. By shining a light on media, social and family biases, Iaderosa created awareness in the audiences who recognized those untrue thoughts and unsavory behaviors that were being perpetuated by themselves and those around them.

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