

ABSTRACT

YOU'RE A RE-LABELED BLOCKHEAD, CHARLIE BROWN: AN EXPLORATION OF
ERVING GOFFMAN'S LABELING THEORY APPLIED TO *DOG SEES GOD:*
CONFESSIONS OF A TEENAGE BLOCKHEAD BY BERT V. ROYAL

by Keith Arcuragi

Utilizing *Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead* by Bert V. Royal the author studies Erving Goffman's labeling theory. The theory applies on several levels: within the text itself via bullying written in the script, and within the author's casting choices. The author did not cast certain roles to type; thus, the actors had to change their physical and emotional presentations to fit the roles of the characters. The author directed the play to three audiences at Miami University, and asked audience members to reply to the labels they saw on stage, and how it impacted their view of labeling theory. None of the audience surveys indicated that observers would have preferred typecast actors. The success of the play, as ascertained by audience surveys, indicates that typecasting is not necessary to a good production.

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CONFESSIONS OF A TEENAGE BLOCKHEAD BY BERT V. ROYAL

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DEDICATION

To Anyone who has ever needed this; I hope I have helped you.

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INTRODUCTION

Bullying is, and has long been, an issue for seemingly all people and can occur because of one's ethnicity, size, shape, color, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender, behavior, or disability. To label someone is to assert power over them. As Alexander Liazos says in *The Poverty of the Sociology of Deviance: Nuts, Sluts, and Perverts*, contained in Pontell and Rosoff's *Social Deviance*, "Most of the authors [in the school of labeling theory]... mention the importance of *power* in labeling people "deviant." They state that those who label (the victimizers) are more powerful than those they label (the victim). Writers of the labeling school make this point explicitly" (Pontell and Rosoff 121) (emphasis his).

One issue I take with bullying is the ability of the bully to label the bullied, "Oh, so you're a _____," or "Ah. Just like a _____." While by no means are labels always "bad," some labels are harmful and pejorative in nature. My curiosity with labels was compounded by my work in theatre, when I learned that actors are often "typed out" of getting roles. One of my friends told me that his girlfriend had traveled to New York for an audition, walked onto the stage, and before speaking a word, was told "Thank you, you are free to go." It amazed me that the character was so demanding that a versatile actor who didn't instantly appear to be the character was dismissed. Given how the physical appearances of actors are able to be manipulated into believable alternative iterations of people, and many actors are trained to be versatile, the fact that she was labeled as unfit for the role, instantly, was an enigma to me. Should not the quality of an actor matter more than their physical appearance?

I was also told, by a friend long ago, that many orchestras have performers audition behind a screen. They do not want to know the race, color, gender, sexual orientation, or anything personal about the performer; they merely want to hear how well the performer plays their instrument. Shouldn't all businesses and performances strive for this level of equality?

It seems, however, that the history of skin, voice, hair, race, gender, sexuality, and every other modifier on the human condition affects theatrical performance. From the very first moment of an audition until the final bow on closing night, all of these characteristics play a part in the performance of the character and the performance of the actor. It was my goal to see how these characteristics function when called out on stage and if audiences are aware of how they react to these characteristics. Does a gay character need to be portrayed by a gay man? Given

the history of minstrelsy, many believe that black characters can only be portrayed by black people, but can a white actor capture the history of skin in their performance, without relying on offensive stereotype? Can a white person play a light-skinned person whose character passes for black? Can a light-skinned black person play a white person? What about, as I've done with an actor in this show, casting a mixed-race actor as a white character? Are theatres that cast against gender and race doing a disservice to the communities by which the characters are meant to be portrayed? This thesis project, both the production and the monograph, are an attempt to explore some of these questions in order to draw conclusions about how stereotyping and typing function in the theatre. Not all of these questions will be answered in this thesis project, as such questions are far too vast for one person to tackle in two years' time, but hopefully this work will inspire others to continue to ask such important questions.

Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead, by Bert V. Royal interests me because it takes a previously established known, the *PEANUTS*, and re-frames it by changing the personas of the characters, in effect giving them new sociological labels. Further, the characters openly bully one another based on stereotypical ideas about these personas, making the play ripe for a study on how labels can harm people. This thesis will also examine how audiences react to the ideas of labeling, by asking an audience to respond to the ideas presented in the play.

To answer the question "How do theatrical audiences engage with labeling?" I will examine audience surveys surrounding the play *Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead*. This play was produced by Miami University's Omega Rho chapter of Alpha Psi Omega on March 7, 8, and 9 of 2014 in the Studio 88 theatre. After every performance, audience respondents were given a survey of eleven questions and were asked to fill out the surveys. Before analyzing the surveys, which I will do in Chapter 3 of this thesis, I will briefly introduce my reader to the drama *Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead* and its author, Bert V. Royal, as well as the comic strip *PEANUTS*. I will also engage in some analysis of these texts from a theoretical perspective, to elucidate my argument. Chapter 2 of this thesis will revolve around what I will refer to as "labeling theory" and how I set up the audience to answer specific questions about the production. Chapter 3 of this thesis details some of the problems encountered during the run of this production, both technical and theoretical, and explains the results of the data of this thesis, proving that typecasting is not necessary to a theatrical production.

CHAPTER 1 - Dramaturgy

The Play

Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead by Bert V. Royal is a play revolving around the lives of the characters from the classic comic strip *PEANUTS*. To avoid copyright infringement, the play re-names or re-spells the names of the characters utilized in the drama, and advertises itself as a parody under the first amendment. In this play, the characters are transported into high school, where they explore drug use, sexuality, bullying, and other teenage issues.

While I encourage everyone who reads this monograph to also read *Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead*, it is necessary for me to provide a brief summary and analysis of the play, especially since I am using a non-published revision of the published version of the drama. I will do so scene by scene, so that when specific scenes are referenced later, my reader may know the chronology of the event relative to the play.

Given that Bert V. Royal altered the names of the *PEANUTS* characters to protect his work as a parody under the first amendment, I will use his characters' names when referencing the play, *Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead*, and the names of the *PEANUTS* characters when referencing their original incarnations in the *PEANUTS* strip. For the sake of ease of the reader, CB is the drama's equivalent of Charlie Brown, CB's Sister is the drama's equivalent of Sally Brown, Van is the drama's equivalent of Linus van Winkle, Van's Sister is the drama's equivalent of Lucy van Winkle, Matt is the drama's equivalent of Pigpen, Beethoven is the drama's equivalent of Schroeder, Marcy is the drama's equivalent of Marcie, and Tricia is the drama's equivalent of Peppermint Patty.

"Dear Penpal" is the first scene in *Dog Sees God*. In this scene, CB is shown alone on stage, writing a letter to his penpal. This scene indicates that the events of the play are about to be told in flashback, except for when CB writes to his penpal.

"Canis Exequiae" is the second scene, taking place in CB's backyard, with CB and CB's Sister. Her outfit is described as a black wedding dress, and she smokes. When CB asks that they pray for his dog, CB's Sister mentions praying to Hecate; CB says that he finds CB's sister's constantly changing identity to be off-putting, and encourages her to "FIND. AN. IDENTITY" (Royal 3).

"Nirvana" introduces Van, who is sitting on the remnants of a brick wall, smoking a joint.

“Where Swine Live” takes place in the hallway of a school. It introduces Matt, who is described as “extremely attractive and obnoxious” (Royal 9). Beethoven walks by, and Matt shouts obscenities to him regarding his sexual orientation.

“The Pianist & The Platypus” is also in the hallway, just away from the earlier scene’s location. It shows CB’s Sister trying to support Beethoven after the incident in the immediately prior scene, while flirting with him and inviting him to the drama club, of which she is the only member. She explains that she is working on her one-woman show, “Cocooning into Platypus” (Royal 14).

“Spork” takes place in the school cafeteria. It introduces Tricia and Marcy, who speak poorly of a peer named Frieda. Tricia flirtatiously asks Matt if he and CB are coming to a party at Marcy’s house.

“A Segue I Suppose” takes place in an indelible location, where CB continues writing his letter. He describes hearing music of Frederic Chopin in the music room, and how Chopin might have written the song because his own dog had died.

“The Viper’s Nest” takes place in the school music room, where Beethoven is revealed to be playing the Chopin music from the prior scene. Beethoven is furious that CB is in the room, due to the homophobic actions CB had taken toward Beethoven in the past. Beethoven pushes CB, and the two laugh because Beethoven has a reputation of being weak while CB is considered strong, then reconcile their differences. Beethoven admits that he doesn’t know if he is gay or not. CB kisses Beethoven on the lips, then departs.

“Drama” is the performance of CB’s Sisters play, “Cocooning into Platypus.”

“High as a Kite” occurs at the run-down brick wall. CB asks Van why everyone stopped being friends with Beethoven, and Beethoven replies that they haven’t. CB’s sister walks past, and CB encourages her to invite Beethoven to Marcy’s party.

“You’re Invited” takes place at Marcy’s house. Marcy, Tricia, CB, Van, CB’s Sister, and Matt all drink alcohol, and various members flirt with one another. Beethoven enters, and Matt threatens him and speaks homophobically, demanding that Beethoven leave. CB demands that Beethoven stay at the party. After attacking Matt, CB kisses Beethoven on the lips, causing the entire group to gasp in shock. CB and Beethoven run away from the party.

“Nocturne” follows CB and Beethoven to a baseball diamond, where they begin to realize the full impact of CB’s kiss. Beethoven begins to panic and asks what he should do. CB suggests that Beethoven kiss him, and “Without missing a beat,” Beethoven does so (Royal 44).

“The Hangover” occurs the day after the party, in a bedroom in Marcy’s house. Tricia, Matt, and Marcy had engaged in a threesome the night before. Matt cries in anger at the relationship between CB and Beethoven, and leaves to vomit while thinking about it.

“Fire is Bad” introduces Van’s Sister, and takes place in a non-descript mental hospital.¹ Van’s Sister flirts with CB, and CB reveals that he kissed Beethoven. Van’s Sister reveals that she doesn’t believe CB is “cool enough” to be gay (Royal 53). CB admits that he and Beethoven had sex on the baseball field after “Nocturne,” and argues that just because he had sex with a man and enjoyed it does not make him gay, much like smoking pot and enjoying it does not make one a pothead. CB reveals that he doesn’t know whether or not he has feelings for Beethoven. Van’s Sister then says that it is clear CB loves Beethoven, and that he needs to tell Beethoven.

“Our Sister of Mercy” occurs at the brick wall² with Van consoling CB’s Sister. She is upset that CB is in a relationship with Beethoven, while CB knows that she has a crush on Beethoven.

“Salisbury Steak” occurs again at the cafeteria, with Matt, Van, Tricia, and Marcy at the table. Tricia brings up the subject of CB. When Matt becomes enraged at what he believes is Beethoven’s manipulation of CB. Matt leaves, and Tricia reveals that Matt has a crush on CB. She explains that Matt is showing signs of repressed homosexual anger by using the word “faggot” so much, and that he is obsessed with CB and jealous of Beethoven. Van realizes that Tricia and Marcy both show these signs in regards to a girl named Frieda. Tricia and Marcy argue that they are not individually lesbians, but Marcy implies that she thinks Tricia is. Tricia storms off, and Marcy becomes troubled with the idea that they may not be the cool table.

“Warsaw War Song” shows CB continuing to write his letter, about how he and Beethoven would be revolutionaries, and that everyone could be themselves without needing to apologize for it.

“Mal Di Luna” is the next scene, and takes place in the music room we saw Beethoven in earlier. CB reveals that he had only been called queer three times thus far in the day. Beethoven claims that that is due to the fear that CB will beat up people who call him queer. CB leaves the

¹ Though the text does not describe a specific location, this is where I decided it would take place for the thesis production.

² Again, the text does not specify a location, so this was a production choice.

room, and Matt enters, causing Beethoven to immediately fear what Matt will do to him. Eventually, Matt then slams the piano lid down on Beethoven's fingers.

"Taphephobia," which is a fear of being buried alive (Merriam-Webster), is the title of the next scene. It shows CB continuing his letter, addressing Chopin's final requests upon his death. CB reveals that Beethoven didn't leave a note, so he doesn't know if Beethoven had any final requests.³

"Peer Counseling" takes place in the cafeteria. CB's Sister implies that Beethoven died of a drug overdose from pain medication he needed for his broken hands, and thus, Matt facilitated Beethoven's suicide.

"Changing Evolution" takes place in a non-descript location with CB's Sister and CB. CB's Sister continues her play. CB continues his letter, and sends it to his penpal.

"Brothers and Sisters" takes place in front of their doghouse. CB's Sister consoles CB, despite his resistance. He asks her if she thinks he's gay. She jokes "Maybe. Maybe not. (Smiling) You know, I can't keep up with you. (Mocking him) Find. An. Identity" (Royal 84). She then gives him a letter that came in the mail for him.

"Dear CB..." ends the play, with all of the characters returning to the stage, each reading part of the letter. It begins to rain, but just on CB. His penpal encourages him to be strong. He tells him that a boy came to live down the street from him, and plays the piano like CB's friend. When the boy and CB's penpal talk, they talk of a boy from where the piano-player used to live, who means more than anything to him. CB's penpal says that the boy reminds him of CB. CB reads the last portion of the letter, in which his penpal writes that he wishes he had the opportunity to meet CB, and that he may never be able to write CB again. He tells him to "Maintain in your heart all that makes you who you are. You are a good man. Your penpal. CS" (Royal 87).

Analysis

Dog Sees God was first written in December 2003 (Royal 22 Nov 2013)⁴. It premiered at the Soho Playhouse as part of FringeNYC on Saturday August 14, 2004 (*The Eighth Annual New*

³ In my production, CB and Beethoven were together on stage, despite that the script only shows CB as a character in the scene.

⁴ My telephone interview with Mr. Royal took place on November 26, 2013. In the interview he stated "In fact, in one month, it will have been ten years since when I wrote it". Therefore, I am inferring that it was written in December 2003.

York International Fringe Festival Festival Guide 16), and ran past the fringe season,⁵ until September 19, then becoming an “off-Broadway” show due to Actor’s Equity stipulations (Hernandez). It moved to the Century Center for the Performing Arts on December 15, 2005, again becoming an “off-Broadway” show, where it played twelve previews and eighty-six shows before closing on February 26, 2006 (Broadway.com).

The play is about a young man, CB, who falls in love with another man, Beethoven. Beethoven doesn’t necessarily love CB back, but becomes fond of the idea. Ultimately, the possibility of their love is cut short due to the homophobic actions of their peer, Matt, who is troubled with his own sexual identity. It speaks to the fear many face with the notions of the gay struggle, and speaks to the power of the closet. Beethoven, who doesn’t know whether or not he is gay, is forced out of a closet he may or may not be in, due to his peers’ assumption of his identity. Likewise, it speaks to the nature of queer relationships and homophobia. None of the characters admits that they are gay throughout the play, but several of them question it and fear it. It means that, due to the homophobic and heteronormative nature in society, how labels appear, and how one identifies and is critical to one’s livelihood.

The play also speaks to the repression of individual identity and peer pressure in American youth culture. Matt’s desire to have sex with men, specifically CB, is repressed throughout the play until Tricia reveals it in “Salisbury Steak.” Beethoven, despite not knowing his sexual orientation, but because of the abuse he receives from his peers in regards to his orientation, feels a need to repress himself socially such that he doesn’t eat lunch in the cafeteria (Royal 28). Van identifies Tricia and Marcy’s possible repression of their potential lesbian interests in “Salisbury Steak,” based on logic presented by Tricia.

The play is also about the search for identity. These situations are best represented through CB and CB’s Sister, for the purposes that they tell one another to “FIND. AN. IDENTITY” (Royal 3, 84). According to CB in “Canis Exequiae,” CB’s Sister changes her outfit and religion constantly. CB’s Sister’s performance piece in “Drama” and “Changing Evolution” shows that she perpetually morphs her identity, and will do so until she finds one that she likes, which she identifies as a Platypus (Royal, 33). While she doesn’t want to physically transform into a platypus, she reveals in “Changing Evolution” that the metaphor allows her to

⁵ FringeNYC ended on August 29, 2004. The final show of *Dog Sees God* at FringeNYC was August 28, 2004.

avoid the pressures of emotion that come with being human (Royal 81). Meanwhile, CB's evolution and identity search comes from exploring his sexual orientation. Even after kissing Beethoven in "The Viper's Nest," he engages in sexually arousing activities with women in "You're Invited!!" such as allowing Marcy to attempt to give him a "hard-on" and clapping hands with Matt over Tricia and Marcy when she tries (Royal 37). Whether he seeks to enjoy these or not is left up to the director, because in the script, CB's actions could be interpreted as placating the heteronormative culture. I chose to direct the play as though CB drunkenly enjoys the heterosexual attention he receives in "You're Invited." After having sex with Beethoven after "Nocturne," he presumes the two to be in a relationship in "Mal Di Luna" (Royal 69). Then after Beethoven's death, in "Brothers and Sisters," he asks his sister whether she thinks he is gay (Royal 84). It is clear that, despite searching for his identity and orientation throughout the script, CB doesn't know whether or not he is gay or how that impacts his identity.

Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead was not originally supposed to be a story about homosocial love. The playwright, Bert V. Royal, actually wanted to write about the characters from the classic *PEANUTS* strip in high school, struggling with accepting the death of CB's dog. While the playwright explains that his desire was originally to just write a fun "high school romp" about the *PEANUTS* characters in high school (Royal 22 Nov 2013), he says that his play is ultimately considered in the context of queer issues, a message that the playwright said was added after he began writing. He admits that there was bullying and gay bashing going on around the time of his play, and that he didn't know how to cope with it (Royal 22 Nov 2013). While the playwright says that there was no specific gay-bashing catalyst for adding these aspects to the script, it is important to note that the play was written against a contextual backdrop of homophobia and hate. One of the most infamous gay-bashings, the death of Matthew Shepard, occurred on October 12, 1998, just five years prior to the playwright working on the script (Glionna)⁶. In 2003, when the playwright was working, FBI statistics show that there were 1,239 incidents of hate crimes due to sexual orientation⁷ (United States 9). Also of note in the timeframe in which the playwright is writing, in June of 2003, anti-sodomy laws were struck down by the Supreme Court in *Lawrence v. Texas*; and in May of 2004, Massachusetts

⁶ Mr. Royal did not specifically mention this event. I provide it here solely as a reference point relevant to the "gay-bashings" brought up by Royal in the interview.

⁷ This data includes 14 anti-heterosexual incidents.

became the first state to legalize gay marriage (PBS).⁸ In his interview with me, Royal stated that when a group of teenagers got onto his subway, he would switch subway cars:

I was on the subway, and I think I was writing one of the early scenes... and some kids got on, and when I was living in New York, when teenagers would get on the subway, I would move cars, because I was always afraid of them. And I think that that's sort of what triggered it. You know... [teenagers] can be very, very cruel. So... I think that's probably what it was.... Listening to some teenagers talk... and... the harshness of it kind of permeated and found itself in this play. Like I said, it was originally supposed to be fun (Royal 22 Nov 2013).⁹

Given that the play is based upon *PEANUTS*, it finds an audience with the members of the community who have experienced *PEANUTS* in its print and television runs over the last sixty-five years. Given that the context of the play revolves around contemporary high school, it resonates within the high school and college age ranges as well. The play is a very important work to be produced, because it speaks to the culture in which many youths find themselves, and shows the consequences of actions taken by many youth throughout America.

The playwright explained to me that the drama has undergone several revisions, even since it was published by Dramatists Play Services, Inc. While the playwright has various reasons for changing the drama, one of the reasons for changing the drama was to ease the concerns of those who accused the playwright of being homophobic:

When the reviews came out when we did it in New York, there was this one gay publication that called me a homophobe... they really hated that, they *thought* that I was implying that Beethoven was gay because he'd been molested, which was never my intention, of course. ...That was something that really sort of stuck with me and bothered me, that anybody would even think that, so I took that aspect of it out, and now there's not that... looming over" (Royal 22 Nov 2013) (Emphasis added in text to reflect emphasis spoken by author).

⁸ Again, these events are not mentioned as motivation by the playwright. They are included so that the readers of my paper may understand the context of the American audience at the time of watching this play.

⁹ The ellipses here should be considered omissions from the playwright's larger quotation, not pauses in the playwright's speech to indicate emotion.

The playwright graciously offered me one of his newest revisions, crafted for a 2008 Los Angeles production, which I chose to direct, instead of directing the published version by Dramatists Play Service (which is an earlier edit containing the aforementioned molestation). Additionally, in the 2008 production script that I used, Royal has made edits to the script in giving Marcy and Tricia more back-and-forth dialogue and changed the way CB reacts to Beethoven's death.

The *PEANUTS*

While the playwright advises me to not replicate the *PEANUTS* characters in directing *Dog Sees God*, the *PEANUTS* characters are the basis upon which the characters in *Dog Sees God* have been created. Therefore, another context worth noting when considering this play is the *PEANUTS* comic strip by Charles M. "Sparky" Schulz. The comic strip, *PEANUTS*, began on October 2, 1950 (Schulz 15), and ended its original run on Sunday, February 13, 2000 (Friedman). At its peak, was included in 2,600 newspapers, reaching an audience of more than 355 million people in 75 countries (Podger). In all, 17,897 *PEANUTS* strips were published (Charles M. Schulz Museum).

PEANUTS achieved fame far beyond that of a simple comic strip. *PEANUTS* is so well known, its licensing deals continue to raise millions of dollars annually. In 2013, MetLife likely paid \$12 million to use the *PEANUTS* characters in their insurance ads (Brown)¹⁰, while Hallmark and the ABC broadcasting network each pay \$5 million to license the *PEANUTS* in stationary, merchandise, and television specials (Brown). A new feature film revolving around the *PEANUTS* characters is set to be released in 2015, the last one, *Bon Voyage, Charlie Brown*, having been released in 1980 (Brown). Overall, there were over seventy-five "Charlie Brown specials" on television (Michaelis 385), many of which continue to air on a yearly basis. This speaks to the saturation of *PEANUTS* in the market, which shows how easily the characters in *Dog Sees God* can be identified in popular culture.

As with every commercial work, a message can be drawn or lifted from the text. Schulz attempted to create specific messages and representations for his characters. In Schulz's own work, *PEANUTS: A Golden Celebration*, written to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the comic strip, Schulz himself describes how Charlie Brown's face was intended to be a "round, ordinary face," because he was to represent "Everyman" (Schulz 14). Schulz describes how his

¹⁰ Brown notes that the exact amount is disputed by the companies, who will not reveal the exact amount of the licensing deal.

own appearance was common and ordinary, and that many people didn't recognize him, both of these being traits he wanted Charlie Brown to embody. He describes the process for the rest of the characters thusly:

I have always believed that you not only cast a strip to enable the characters to do things you want them to, but that the characters themselves, by their very nature and personality, should provide you with ideas. These are the characters who remain in the feature and are seen most often. The more distinct the personalities are, the better the feature will be. Readers can then respond to the characters as though they were real (Schulz 14).

The structure Schulz used in regards to the *PEANUTS* characters was quite rigid and particular. This is evidenced through the character Schroeder. Schroeder was known for playing Beethoven's music throughout the strip. To represent the playing of music, Schulz would draw the score of the song being played above Schroeder's toy piano. In April Dembosky's, "Listening to Schroeder: 'Peanuts' Scholars Find Messages in Cartoon's Scores," she points out that Schulz was very thoughtful in his renderings of the music played by Schroeder. When he was penning the music that would hover above Schroeder or his piano as he played, he was careful to be accurate to a piece of music from the classical era. Scholars have since been able to analyze the works drawn in the comic strips and have noticed that the pieces Schulz would reprint were often indicative of the mood of that particular day's comic strip (Dembosky). Also of note was Schulz's personal preference for Brahms, but his use of Beethoven in the comic strip was because it looked and sounded "funnier" (Dembosky). The article also notes how this accuracy was a trademark of Schulz, who would study various things before drawing them in his strips, such as his study of figure skating to make sure that he was drawing authentic skating maneuvers, so that his strips were educational as well as entertaining (Dembosky).

With Schulz describing his *PEANUTS* characters as "Distinct" (Schulz 14), and *Dog Sees God* characters being based upon Schulz's *PEANUTS*, this thesis will now attempt to explore the labeling of such characters by individuals and society, in attempt to further understand how labels affect the broad picture of theatre.

CHAPTER 2 - Theory

I have been told that realism in theatre functions like a mirror. In many ways, theatre can reflect society at large, or it can reflect on current events. However, I posit that the mirror is a double-sided mirror; not only does theatre reflect society, but society can reflect theatre as well as other performances. Any theatre that is said to have an “impact” on the audience can impress upon that audience the desire for change, and if the audience follows that change, that audience then reflects the theatre.

The social cognitive theory (previously known by the theorist as the social learning theory), as posited by Albert Bandura (who built upon the work of many scholars before him, most notably Robert Sears), claims that social learning occurs when people imitate actions they observe in others (Grusec 781). As Joan E Grusec, professor at University of Toronto, states:

Bandura’s theory is mainly concerned with how children and adults operate cognitively on their social experiences and with how these cognitive operations then come to influence their behavior and development. Individuals are believed to abstract and integrate information that is encountered in a variety of social experiences, such as exposure to models, verbal discussions, and discipline encounters. Through this abstraction and integration, they mentally represent their environments and themselves in terms of certain crucial classes of cognitions that include response-outcome expectancies, perceptions of self-efficacy, and standards for evaluative self-reactions. These cognitions are believed to affect not only how they respond to environmental stimuli but also the sorts of environments they seek out for themselves (Grusec 781).

Grusec notes that the theory requires four components of modeling: First, the observer pays attention to events. Second, the attended material must be retained, with either imaginal or verbal representation. Third, symbolic representation must be converted into similar actions to the modeled behavior. Fourth, there must be incentive sufficient enough to motivate the performance of the modeled actions (Grusec 781-782).

Bandura explains that modeling occurs in three ways: behavioral, verbal, or symbolic(10). Whereas behavioral modeling is portraying the model physically, verbal modeling is describing the desired behavior or action (Bandura 10). Symbolic modeling is referenced as “pictorial displays” (Bandura 10), such as television and films. Bandura states,

“There is a large body of research evidence showing that both children and adults can acquire attitudes, emotional responses, and new patterns of behavior as a result of observing filmed or televised models [Bandura 1969a, Flanders 1968, Lumsdaine 1961]” (Bandura 10) (citations in brackets his, not mine). Therefore, it is safe to say that scripts on film that utilize stereotypes would influence the populace. However, though theatre is a mass media it is unlike film. Thus my production has very different aims than film or other productions of the same play, and thus produces different results. That said, it is safe to say that my production did indeed model behavior, and that my audience was willing to be studied in terms of how it reflected that behavior.

In *Stigma*, Erving Goffman writes:

Society establishes the means of categorizing persons and the complement of attributes felt to be ordinary and natural for members of each of these categories... When a stranger first comes into our presence, then, first appearances are likely to enable us to anticipate his category and attributes, his ‘social identity’... We lean on these anticipations that we have, transforming them into normative expectations, into righteously presented demands... Thus, the demands we make might better be called demands made ‘in effect,’ and the character we impute to the individual might better be seen as... a *virtual social identity*. The category and attributes he could in fact be proved to possess will be called his *actual social identity*.” (Pontell and Rosoff 94-95).

Essentially, Goffman says that when Person A first sees Person B, A will look at the attributes of B and form certain expectations or demands at first glance called the *Virtual Social Identity*. Once A becomes more well acquainted with B, A will now have a better idea of what to expect of B, and as such, will change their demands and expectations; this is called the *Actual Social Identity*. I intend to present *Dog Sees God* as the actual social identity of the *PEANUTS* characters; The *PEANUTS* characters will be the virtual social identity. By setting up the research this way, I will be able to temporarily suspend disbelief that *Dog Sees God* is out of Schulz’s canon for my audience, thus allowing them to see the play as the future iterations of the *PEANUTS* characters. This should allow many of the audience members to see the characters of *Dog Sees God* relative to their *PEANUTS* counterparts, thus allowing them to be re-labeled.

This is ripe material to examine labeling theory, as preconceived notions (the *PEANUTS*) are thrown out in favor of more mature notions of identity (*Dog Sees God*). The characters have

grown up enough that they would not necessarily have all of the same mannerisms, excessiveness, and eccentricity we saw in the *PEANUTS* strip, but, as I have discovered while directing the piece, they do retain some of these behaviors. For example, in *Dog Sees God*, Van (the contemporary Linus) does not have a blanket, something that was so critical and eccentric about his character in *PEANUTS*, though his blanket is mentioned in *Dog Sees God* several times. Van's Sister (the contemporary Lucy) is no longer excessively crabby, but retains her eccentric lists of complaints and her psychiatric help sign.¹¹ The dancing in "You're Invited" is written: "A strange melody plays over the beat, prompting the gang to begin dancing bizarrely (as they did when they were younger). The song explodes and so do they. They launch into a rousing dance..." (Royal 36). This directly asks to retain the eccentricities of the script, but again, the focus of the script is not on mocking the original *PEANUTS* strip, but using it as a literary jumping point.

To be successful at altering the preconceived notions regarding the labels of the characters, I posit that the audience must be able to agree that these characters inhabit the same "bodies" of the *PEANUTS* characters. I use the term "bodies" to show that while a person inhabits the same body in their younger and older versions, people change and adapt with age, and thus, to say that said person is the same person in the younger and older versions would be incorrect. For the application of these labels to be successful as an adaptation, we must suspend disbelief that the play is out of the canon of *PEANUTS*, despite the fact that it is out of the canon of *PEANUTS*, accepting that the characters have had the pasts of the *PEANUTS*, and that the play simply begins after the events in the *PEANUTS* strip.

When asked about writing a play based upon the *PEANUTS* characters, the playwright responded:

I don't want to tarnish anybody's view of the *PEANUTS*, at all. What I wanted to do was create a piece where you saw these teenagers and they are kind of all fumbled... but I wanted you to have some sort of history. And using the *PEANUTS*... you have that history, you knew that they were kind of cool when they were younger, so that you could see the play thinking 'Oh, you know, they're

¹¹ In the script, it is written as a "what looks like a booth.... Behind it sits VAN'S SISTER. There's a sign at the corner of the booth that says: THE DOCTOR IS IN" (Royal 49) but in my realized production, we chose to go solely with a sign stating "The Doctor is IN", to make the transitions smoother.

going to turn out okay' ... So, I wanted to find some characters that we knew the history of so that you could say 'oh, you know what, they're going to be okay'" (Royal 22 Nov 2013).

The choice by the playwright was a deliberate one, not to mock, but to give the audience a quick grasp on the history of the characters in question. The characters in the play have a tendency to mention and reference "past" events (things that occurred in the strip), bridging the gap to activate nostalgia for the audience. Despite the fact that the play is non-canonical, in that it does not have the same author as the *PEANUTS* strip, activating nostalgia combined with a strong resemblance to the characters *should* suffice to suspend disbelief that the characters represented in *Dog Sees God* are different than those in *PEANUTS*.

There is evidence of a lack of mimicry of *PEANUTS* in *Dog Sees God*'s performance at the off-Broadway theatre, Century Center. Robin Reed's review for NYTheatre.com seems to have the most information about the design of the show, and as such, I turn to it. While the review is written in a very brief and promotional manner, one is able to ascertain that the costume of C.B. in *Dog Sees God* is very reminiscent of the costume of Charlie Brown in *PEANUTS*. It can be inferred, however, that the other characters in the play do not wear costumes that resemble their *PEANUTS* predecessors, as Reed states "Chuck's [CB's] shirt is about the only resemblance here to the original Peanuts gang," while implying that the remaining cast of characters identify themselves based upon language in the text as opposed to their physical manifestation.¹²

Therefore, in conclusion, to suspend disbelief for the audience, it is necessary for the play to activate nostalgia through appropriate linguistic and design representations, as represented through some eccentric choices by the playwright. While the characters in *Dog Sees God* need not wear the same costumes as the *PEANUTS*, (and in my realized production, did not) they should physically resemble a high-school-aged representation of the *PEANUTS* characters.

Definitions

As per the Oxford English Dictionary, "Type," for our purposes, shall be construed by their definition 7a: "A person or thing that exhibits the characteristic qualities of a class; a representative specimen; a typical example or instance." The Oxford English Dictionary's

¹² It is worth noting that the production at the Century Center is working from a different script than my production.

definition for “Stereotype” includes the following figurative definition under 3b: “A preconceived and oversimplified idea of the characteristics which typify a person, situation, etc.; an attitude based on such a preconception. Also, a person who appears to conform closely to the idea of a type.” The text *The Communicated Stereotype* by Anastacia Kurylo overviews the history of the term “stereotype,” as well as the scholastic debate on the definition of stereotypes. According to her, “Considering how extensively the topic of stereotypes seems to be studied, you might assume scholars share considerable agreement about exactly what stereotypes are. However, this is not the case” (Kurylo 3). She goes on to state that the definition used by a particular scholar is informed by, and informs their theoretical perspective and methodological approach. She states that there are four commonalities amongst definitions of stereotypes, that they are a) cognitive structures and b) representations that c) are rigid, yet d) functional (Kurylo 4). She describes the vast history with which stereotypes have been studied to exist in the mind as “schema for categorization” (Kurylo 4). They also function as representations of groups, stating that stereotypes “simplify a group’s complexity (Katz and Braly 1933) while, nonetheless, generalizing that simplification to all members of that group (Allport 1954/1979; Katz and Braly 1933; McCauley 1995). As such, representations provide one-dimensional and incomplete descriptions of groups (Lippmann 1922/1965; Ottati and Lee 1996).” (Kurylo 4) (Citations hers). She argues that stereotypes are rigid, and are resistant to change, citing their continual use in communication; however, she argues that communication can change stereotypes and create new ones, but that traits of stereotypes are similar from one generation to the next (Kurylo 5). Her final tenant is that stereotypes are functional. She cites scholars (Ottati and Lee (1996)) who explain that stereotypes “serve a basic and necessary function: economization of cognitive resources’ (p.31)” (Kurylo 5).

When searching the Oxford English Dictionary for “Typecast” I find the following definition: “To cast (an actor) in a role or roles for which he appears to be physically or temperamentally suited or of a kind in which he has been successful; to allocate continually to the same type of part. Also transf. and fig., and in extended use, to represent or regard as a stereotype.” The dictionary itself makes the connection that by typecasting, one can be represented or regarded as a stereotype.

Labeling Theory and Stereotypes

The concepts of labeling and stereo/typecasting complement one another. Goffman’s labeling is a mental device based on social constructions and perceptions of others.

Stereotyping, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, involves the simplification of a group's complexity based on mental constructions. To stereotype an individual, one must label an individual based upon a group. Both stereotyping and Goffman's labeling theory utilize "impression formation"

theories. In *The Impact of Stereotypes on Person Judgment*, Susann Huber cites Ostrom, Lingle, Pryor & Geva (1980 p. 56) and explain that "Each separate item that is discriminable from the others is termed a cognitive element. An impression, then, is made up of the cognitive elements that pertain to the person at the time impression-derived responses are being made" (Huber 4).

Huber explains first impressions in the following terms:

- a) a coherent cognitive representation of a person, which will be influenced by our innate tendency to strive towards consistency.
- b) New incoming (sic) information will not be processed into a vacuum, but rather be related to other information concerning not only the perceived person, but also what at this stage will be termed global understanding of other people and the environment.
- c) the perceiver relates each new item to other, already acquired items of information during the person perception process. It seems inherent in the impression formation process that the perceiver develops an interlocking network of associative relationships among the various items of information on the person concerned a process which is affected by our personal views and opinions, and thus leads to a subjective understanding and/or interpretation of the environment. Two potential arguments follow: First, if the process were not subjective, this could imply that people would always reach the same inferences, which generally speaking is not true. This has been demonstrated to apply to public opinions which could be termed stereotypes or prejudices. Secondly, on a similar line of reasoning it could also be argued that due to subjective experience, subjective judgements (sic) are reached. (Huber 4-5).

I continued her description past the bulleted points because her information on impressions being subjective is critical to our understanding of stereotypes and labels. Further, the study of stereotypes relies on phenomenology because stereotypes can only exist if the beliefs are widely held (Schneider 321). The labels in the "Virtual Social Identity" and the reactions in impression formation are dependent on the past experiences of an individual. If

person A, for example, were to have been physically harmed by person B, and person C looks very similar to person B, then person A might label and garner an impression of person C that is based upon their experiences with person B. Stereotyping can be informed by one's personal experiences, but exists culturally as well. This is exemplified in *Dog Sees God*, with Marcy's line: "Hey, don't you guys hate the obligatory scene in teen movies where someone describes all of the inhabitants of each table? You know, like, how they say 'The stoners sit there. The cool kids sit there. The geeks sit there. The jocks sit there. Blah blah blah.' It's in every movie! Don't you guys hate that?" (Royal 63). Where Goffman's labeling theory, the notion of stereotyping, and impression formation differ is the length of time for which they function. Impression formation, by the above definition, exists at first impressions.

However, culture can allow a stereotype to become widespread. Schneider cites the work of Karlins, Coffman, and Walters, who performed an experiment done to see which traits were assigned to particular groups. Subjects were asked to list what, in their opinions, were the five most characteristic traits of various groups, such as Americans, English, Germans, Irish, and Negroes. Their report shows that "...although there are some reports of what percentages of people are willing to assign particular traits to a particular group, in most cases these percentages do not rise above 50%" (Schneider 324). Given that the respondents were limited to only five characteristics, very few of these characteristics were able to achieve the 50% threshold need by the study to be considered endorsed by a majority (Schneider 324). Consensus on traits of stereotypes would likely have been higher had the participants been allowed to give additional characteristics (Schneider 324). In summation, labels are applied based on subjective, personal experiences, as well as widespread notions associated within a particular culture. However, stereotypes that are accepted because of culture can be invalidated, in the mind of an individual, based upon personal experience. As Schneider argues, "The first time I have the privilege of meeting a Greenaldner, I am confident that whatever stereotypes I have will soon be overridden by my experiences. Or so I hope" (329).

Some scholars associate stereotypes with negativity and political correctness, and other scholars debate the context of stereotyping as neither good nor bad (Kurylo 3). To say that my research is neutral would be, I feel, inaccurate, as my research consisted of portraying some simulations of negative effects of stereotypes. However, the questions I asked my audience included asking for both the benefits and consequences of stereotypes, thus allowing my research participants to offer feedback about whether or not the negative stereotypes shown were

representative of their understanding of stereotypes, or if they took a contrary opinion that stereotypes are neutral. I believe that many stereotypes are harmful, such as the ones that are used pejoratively and are on display in *Dog Sees God*; however, if we accept the good/bad binary, I do not think all labels applied are implicitly “bad.” For example, I would not chide a person for running from a masked person carrying a gun, as stereotyping that person as a “killer” might be critical to their own safety. Even yet, stereotyping someone, based on physical appearance at first instinct as “gay” does not necessarily harm the other person, it is the actions taken under the assumption of homosexuality that can harm the person, such as calling them a “faggot.” However, the misbelief that all people of a certain type present themselves the same way does not do justice to the people of that type (ex. All gay people wear a certain type of clothes or look a certain way).

When I began this research, I was not aware of how much research had been done on stereotyping. My intent was to cross stereotyping with typecasting, on which there has been very little research. To combine the two, I look at my portrayal of CB and Beethoven by Grant Lemasters and Adam Joesten, respectively. If I were to “typecast” the two of them, they would be able to, as actors without doing much work, physically and visually represent their characters. However, when considering the relationship between the two characters, CB is supposedly higher status and more physically brawny than Beethoven, who is constantly the subject of bullying. Lemasters, at the time of casting, was 5’-9” tall and 120 pounds, while Joesten was 6’-2” and 175 pounds. If I were to typecast, the two could have been swapped, with Lemasters playing the subject of bullying (shorter and thinner) while Joesten would play the tall bully. However, given the acting prowess of the two as seen in call backs and auditions, plus Joesten’s piano-playing ability, I made the decision to cast Lemasters as CB and Joesten as Beethoven. If the actors work well enough at their jobs to defeat their own physical habits and appearance, the audience will accept the story. As I was coached by my directorial advisor, Prof. Bekka Eaton Reardon, “If they believe it, the audience will too.” In doing this, I sought to prove that typecasting is not necessary for a successful theatrical show. In other words, I presented information through the performance that would undermine the natural tendency to label or stereotype.

Sexual orientation is not always explicitly visible. This is why some people are successful about hiding their orientation for an extended period; the performance of a straight identity is successful, despite not personally identifying with that identity. However, some

people who don't necessarily conform to the performance of heteronormativity, like Beethoven, will succumb to being thrust into the queer performance arena. Joesten, who played Beethoven, therefore had to work with multiple layers of sexual orientation: his own sexual orientation based upon his own experiences; his performance of his professed sexual orientation, whether it matches his actual orientation or not; the confused nature of Beethoven's internal sexual orientation and his own personal struggle of finding an identity; and the public performance of Beethoven's sexual orientation. Lemasters, who portrayed CB, had to deal with more than that, given the switching nature of his character's public and internal sexual orientation from straight to queer-questioning.

I must take a moment, for my readers, to clarify what sexual orientations the actors were given by me for their characters.¹³ CB begins the play as straight in internal and external identity, switching to queer questioning in each as the play goes on. Beethoven begins and ends the play internally and externally playing queer questioning identities, and despite the fact that in the play I directed him to show passion for CB, privately, I don't know that Beethoven was comfortable with his internal feelings. I believe that Beethoven, after CB brings him the lunch knows that he is in love with CB, but that he does not yet internally identify as gay. CB's Sister was portrayed to be straight both internally and externally, which goes to show the multiple layers of identity with which one can be stereotyped: She was chided for constantly changing her "identity," which, while she changed costumes throughout the play to explore identity, never questioned her own sexual orientation, unlike other characters in the play. Van shows himself to be internally and externally straight. Matt internally fears that he is gay, and Tricia identifies him as such (Royal 65, 66) against the beliefs of other characters¹⁴, but publicly tries to perform himself as straight, going so far as to speak against gays publicly every chance he can get, as a choice in the performance of his publicly straight identity. Van's Sister portrays herself as straight throughout

¹³ This may differ from what my actors chose to play; however, this is what I directed them to do, and what I saw in their performances.

¹⁴ Tricia: I find it's best not to interfere with feuding lovers.
Van: Are Beethoven and CB feuding?
Tricia: I mean Matt and CB, ding dong.
Marcy: Wait. What?
Tricia: Oh my God. You guys are so blind! Matt's in love with CB. That's what this is all about. It doesn't take Nancy Drew to solve that case. I figured it out and I'm the stupid one.
Van: I don't buy it.

the scene in which she finds herself. The question of Marcie and Tricia's relationship is long rooted in culture outside the play, and I must digress momentarily to explain the portrayal of their identities. The two engage in a threesome with Matt, and are later accused by Van of being lesbians, despite Marcie's focus on Matt's participation in the sexual encounter. However, as one of my audience members pointed out, the notion of Peppermint Patty and Marcy being lesbians has become a widespread theory and is displayed in popular media.¹⁵ A Google search of "Peppermint Patty Marcie Lesbians" will produce a plethora of examples. Many times, when telling friends that my thesis play advances Peanuts characters into High School, one of their first questions is "are Peppermint Patty and Marcie lesbians?" In this production, given that their relationship never truly comes forward and reveals itself, I wanted to leave it ambiguous, but I believe that, given the direction, play script, and performances by the actors, both publicly identify as straight, while Marcie internally identifies as straight with bisexual interests, and Tricia internally identifies as bisexual.

It is difficult to discuss the phenomenon of typecasting without having a list of "types" in which one might fall. However, obtaining such a list from an academic resource has proven to be quite difficult, as there is very little written from an academic perspective about type and typecasting. These characters are designed to be flat, and "breathe only one kind of air" (Bevis 36). However, the idea of type characters or stock characters has been around for centuries, as far back as Ancient Greece, when Theophrastus identified stock characters in his work *The Characters* (Bevis 36). The notion of stock characters continued (and still continues) through other forms of theatres. The San Francisco Mime Troupe is one of the forefront theatres in the United States when it comes to the production of Commedia dell'arte. In the summer of 2014, I partook in a workshop with the Mime Troupe related to Commedia dell'arte and the American Melodrama (which also heavily involves types), and received a handout which lists the types: Zanni (a lower servant), Arlecchino or Harlequin (also a servant), Brighella (manipulator/seducer), soubrette (servant girl), Pantalone (merchant), Dottore, Capitano (braggart), lovers (Mime Troupe 2014). These types of characters all have a very specific physicality that is required for their performance, which is important for the visual aspect of

¹⁵ Four separate survey results from my audience surveys explained that they had always thought of Marcie and/or Peppermint Patty as closeted or lesbian, and several referenced the television show *Family Guy* as affirming their thoughts.

typecasting and stereotyping. However, this is not a complete list of all character types in performance, it is one branch of the world of performance as a whole.

The characters in the *PEANUTS* are very much stereotypes of personality traits, but the terms used to describe their “type” changes based upon the subjectivity of the observer. They have a well-known characteristic, for example, Schroeder’s piano, Peppermint Patty’s attitude, Marcy’s intelligence, Linus’s blanket, and Pigpen’s dirtiness, but that does not necessarily give them a unified word to describe their type, like the examples in Commedia dell’arte listed above. I did not publish a character “breakdown” for interested actors, summarizing the character in a few sentences (effectively describing a “type”), because I always wanted to see the characters as individuals with their own unique stories and quirks; The characters are not stereotypes or ghosts of their past selves, while simultaneously, their pasts in the comic strip have to be considered canonical with this play. In not listing a type or a description for the actors, I have averted boiling a character down into a “type.”

When focusing on portraying “deviance”¹⁶ on stage, such as the queerness of CB, Matt, Beethoven, and possibly Marcie and Tricia, it is important for me, as a student of labeling theory, to normalize them and not portray them as outsiders. Alexander Liazos, in “The Poverty of the Sociology of Deviance: Nuts, Sluts, and Perverts” (Pontell and Rosoff 117), warns that by humanizing and normalizing the “deviant,” the opposite effect may happen, causing the deviants to still seem different.

...The clearest example is the repeated use of the word “tolerate.” Students would write that we must not persecute homosexuals, prostitutes, mental patients, and others, that we must be “tolerant” of them. *But one tolerates only those one considers less than equal, morally inferior, and weak; those equal to oneself, one accepts and respects; one does not merely allow them to exist, one does not “tolerate” them...* (Pontell and Rosoff 117; emphasis mine)

I believe, however, that this play does not fall into that trap. The play doesn’t preach tolerance, it shows the effects of the stigma, but the author still treats the characters with the respect of not needing to be “tolerated.” CB uses his power to threaten the bullies who refuse to accept a homonormative culture (Royal 69),¹⁷ but then plays the victim when asking his sister “Do you

¹⁶ I use this term in quoting Liazos.

¹⁷ CB: Hey, we made it halfway through the day and I only got called a queer three times. Beethoven: That’s because people are scared you’ll beat them up.

think I'm gay?" (Royal 84). It shows the fear of being labeled deviant, without begging for tolerance, giving him power over the situation. Ultimately, since this play is a flashback, the play occurs in the world of CB, where CB has the power, until he receives a letter from CS, wherein CS has the power. However, in the flashback scenes, CB asserts his power over the situations because he knows that by being deviant, he has lost his power. In the cafeteria scene after Beethoven's death, he exposes a little bit of the "deviant" nature of the other players in the play (Royal, 80); while their "deviances" are not necessarily as ostracizing, it drives home the message that, as Liazos says, "(a) all of us are deviant in some way, (b) all of us label some others deviant, and (c) "society" labels" (Pontell and Rosoff 123). Ultimately, as Liazos would have us believe:

Indeed, we should banish the concept of deviance and speak of oppression, conflict, persecution, and suffering. By focusing on the dramatic forms, as we do now, we perpetuate most people's beliefs and impressions that such "deviance" is the basic cause of many of our troubles, that these people... are the real "troublemakers" and, necessarily, we neglect conditions of inequality, powerlessness, institutional violence, and so on, which lie at the bases of our tortured society... Even when we do study the popular forms of "deviance," we do not avoid blaming the victim for his fate; the continued use of the term "deviant" is one clue to this blame. Nor have we succeeded in normalizing him; the focus on the "deviant" himself, on his identity and subculture, has tended to confirm the popular prejudice that he is different" (Pontell and Rosoff 123).

In one of the final scenes of the play, CB's sister tells CB, "Find. An. Identity." (Royal 84), mimicking what CB had told her previously in the play (Royal 3). The message I wish to leave with my readers is this: the playwright said identity, not label. The two are not the same, and the depth of human emotion, struggle, power, and relationships exist far beyond that which is covered in a mere label.

CB: Don't worry. I've already started spreading the word that if they mess with my *boyfriend*, I'll be kicking some serious ass.

CHAPTER 3 - Practice

I did not want to do this play as my first choice play, but I do not regret changing my mind. Originally, I wanted to study these questions through the play *Dark Play or Stories for Boys* by Carlos Murillo, a play that involves the use of computers to allow one person to generate identities that he then portrays. However, after discussions with my advisers and professors, we came to the conclusion that *Dark Play or Stories for Boys* was more about identity than stereotypes and labeling. Despite how the main character portrays stereotyped ideas, ultimately, this play would not be acceptable for my research.

So, my adviser recommended a play with which I was already familiar, but hadn't considered for this research: *Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead*, by Bert V. Royal. Given the widespread popularity of *PEANUTS*, which, at its peak, was included in 2,600 newspapers, reaching an audience of more than 355 million people in 75 countries (Podger), it would be likely that many audience members would be familiar with the *PEANUTS* characters, therefore allowing me to study their memories and how the presentations in *Dog Sees God* impact their memories and labels attributed to the *PEANUTS* characters. It also contains a wide variety of in-script stereotypes, in which one character refers to another character as a stereotype or through a stereotype, whether true-to-the-character or pejorative, thus allowing me to gauge audience reaction to the presentation of those stereotypes.

Technical Elements

My production did not qualify to be produced by the department of theatre at Miami University, leaving me to self-produce or find another group who would be able to produce the show. As I began collecting my own design team, I was approached by Professor Gion DeFrancesco, who mentioned that a student theatre honors' society, Alpha Psi Omega, might be interested in producing the show. I was informed that Alpha Psi Omega could receive funding to produce a show from the Associated Student Government, and that the membership of Alpha Psi Omega could function as a run crew and designers.

Every major design role for this production changed hands at least once. When I was self-producing, I had selected a costume and lighting designer, both of whom were removed from the production, as powers-that-be in the department determined that they had too many conflicts to be able to effectively participate as designers in my show, so they were informed that they were not allowed to design for my show. The membership of Alpha Psi Omega sent forth two interested designers, one who was interested in designing set and costumes, and another who

was interested in designing sound but was also willing to design lighting. The set and costume designer withdrew shortly thereafter due to scheduling concerns, leaving both spots open. They were filled by the final designers, Matthew Ebersbach (set designer) and Caroline LeMasters (costume designer), neither of whom had ever designed a show. My lighting and sound designer then, also, backed out of the production for reasons beyond our control, leaving me without a lighting or sound designer. Having sound design experience, I took it upon myself to sound design the show (using remnants of the previous designer's work, for which, he received a co-design credit in my playbill). I was left without a lighting designer until one week before the production opened, when Robert C. Stimmel, a non-Alpha Psi Omega member, volunteered to design lighting.¹⁸

My overall production concept was to recycle as many objects as possible, for financial, practical, and theoretical reasons. One example I gave the designers was the use of a table: the table could function as a table, as the brick wall if it were to be painted. The dirt mound under which CB's dog would be buried could be made of fabric, and used as a table cloth to cover the table. However, due to several space constraints and for more practical reasons, many of these ideas were thrown out. My theoretical reason for suggesting this: I wanted to show the depths of objects, and how many objects are more complex than we allow them to be. I felt this was reflective of stereotypes and how humans are deeper than their stereotypes and are much more complex than stereotypes will ever be able to portray.

The scenic design, by Matthew Ebersbach, was subject to many changes throughout the production, especially toward the end of the production when we began tech. Originally, all of the scenic pieces were going to be brought in and struck for every scene change. However, upon realizing the restraints of the space and learning that the piano would not be able to move (it was large and was not in the best of shape, having had a leg broken in a previous production of *Dog Sees God* at Sinclair Community College), I decided that as many stage elements as could stay on the stage should stay on the stage for the duration of the show. A wall was kept up stage right, composed of acting blocks, and was covered with painted posters of bricks, painted by stage manager, Jennifer Studnicki. This wall was used for many purposes, such as character

¹⁸ Oddly enough, Stimmel was the person I originally asked to design the lights for this production, who was told that he was not allowed to, but then did so anyway. I am grateful to him for his objection to these rules, as his knowledge of lighting design far surpassed mine, and helped the show to run unbelievably more smoothly than it otherwise would have.

conversations and a lunch line. The piano was kept up stage left, and was used as a piano for when Beethoven needed it, but also as a table for the party scene. A bench was used throughout the production, and was generally kept up stage center. It served as a table for CB to begin with his letter writing, as a bench for the baseball scene, and at times, was used as the piano bench for the piano which was up stage left.¹⁹ Matthew was very willing to make changes to his scenic design throughout the production, based on the needs of the show.

The costume design was constructed by Caroline LeMasters. With her design, Caroline and I discussed how to change the physicality of the actors, for example, making the skinny Grant Lemasters (who played CB) look bigger and the very well-built Adam Joesten (who played Beethoven) look smaller and weaker. One of Caroline's desires, which I feel was very well-executed, was to keep the costumes similar to *PEANUTS*, without directly being from *PEANUTS*. Caroline achieved this through color: CB wore a yellow shirt, but not with a zig-zag, Marcie wore an orange-ish sweater accompanied by a dress, Beethoven had a purple sweater reminiscent of Schroeder's striped shirt, Tricia had a green top. The main difference was in CB's Sister character, who was generally costumed in all black, due to her new gothic nature. However, due to CB's Sister constantly changing her identity, CB's Sister would change styles of costume throughout, going from a puffy dress and a wedding veil in her first appearance, to a tighter, torn look in her next appearance in the school.²⁰

The lighting design was crafted by Robert C. Stimmel, who has a deep background in lighting design. Robert, who was concurrently designing Miami's production of *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*, also served as an actor in my production. Robert was unable to design the show until *Crumbs* opened, leaving him with very little time to craft a design, and little time for us to discuss a design; however, I feel the design was masterfully done. His lighting choices well reflected interior lighting, and especially sculpted actors in critical moments, such as the baseball scene. My main request of the lighting was for the scene in which Beethoven commits suicide: I wanted Beethoven to be on stage with CB while Beethoven contemplated suicide. Beethoven was to have his own pool of light, while CB was to have his own, showing that they had fallen into different worlds. The two only looked at one another at the very end of CB's narration of

¹⁹ Please refer to Appendix A for photos from the production.

²⁰ To see the realized designs, please refer to Appendix A for photos from a dress rehearsal (taken by Gion DeFrancesco) and a photo call (taken by myself).

what was going on, and upon the conclusion of his speech, Beethoven's light went out, leaving CB visibly alone, before CB's light also fades. Given Robert's involvement as an actor in the show, and having been quite familiar with Robert's talent and abilities for lighting design, I trusted his design choices.

Ultimately, I crafted my own sound design. The sound design was originally going to be handled by Les Dershem, but Les had to back out of the production for reasons beyond his control. Les did give me many cues he had already recorded, as well as his production binder containing cue placement. However, once the production was nearing tech, the show had changed to a drastic degree from what I anticipated, so many of the cues had to be replaced. The preshow was a mixture of contemporary pop music, to reflect what I feel the characters would listen to, but with a classical twist, reflecting Beethoven's piano playing abilities. I did this to activate the memories of the familiar with the audience (Schroeder's piano skills), then show how things can evolve while retaining their fundamental elements, much like stereotypes are portrayed. Thus, it would reflect how the *Dog Sees God* characters are memories of the familiar *PEANUTS* characters, but are evolved while retaining fundamental elements. I also wanted to capture the atmosphere of the performance through the music, especially during the scene in which Beethoven commits suicide. To best capture this, I wrote a piano parody of "Linus and Lucy," the piano song by Vince Guaraldi that underscores the *PEANUTS* television show and films. I had heard a version of this theme that had been transposed into a minor key,²¹ but was unable to acquire the sheet music for this version, leading me to craft my own version and record it.²² It was designed to capture the memory of the *PEANUTS* while showing evolution, while simultaneously dealing with the sorrow of the suicide from both CB and Beethoven's perspectives, which I felt the minor key achieved.

Performance Elements

Before casting this play and seeing the casting pool, I had several considerations. First, I had to consider the physical characteristics and personas of the characters from the *PEANUTS* comic strip. Second, I had to consider the physical characteristics and personas of who the

²¹ As of January 23, 2015, this version remains on Youtube, titled "Creepy Charlie Brown Theme Song", and was uploaded by Alex Lukens.

²² After several attempts to contact Lukens went without reply, I crafted a similar version that was designed specifically for the production. Lukens did, eventually, reply to my request and offered the sheet music, but it was too late to incorporate his version.

characters from the *PEANUTS* comic strip become for this play. Obviously, the characters have undergone significant changes in personality that come with age and the change in social settings between elementary school and high school.

For example, I noticed several comparisons with the characters in *Dog Sees God* to their *PEANUTS* counterparts. CB is much more well-built than Charlie Brown, Beethoven has to be more abuseable than CB, all of the characters that have queered sexualities have to be able to pull off the complexity that comes with having the desires of non-heteronormative lives while simultaneously building the heteronormative lifestyle dominant in today's society. In casting, I chose the following cast:

| | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| CB | Grant Lemasters |
| CB's Sister | Nora Papke |
| Van | Simon Sedmak |
| Matt | Robert C. Stimmel |
| Beethoven | Adam Joesten |
| Tricia | Becca Braun |
| Marcie | Sarah Zaffiro |
| Van's Sister | Emily Jordan Carlson |

What observers of the play will notice in this cast is a physical resemblance to the original *PEANUTS* characters, but in adult bodies, as well as the relationships between characters. CB and CB's sister appear to be physically similar, as both Grant and Nora are thin actors and have the same eye color and similar hair coloration. Simon Sedmak and Emily Jordan Carlson were able to be made to look related with Emily's willingness to dye her hair. Sarah Zaffiro and Becca Braun were a most pleasant surprise during callbacks: the two had a natural chemistry which amazed me and the other auditors. Sarah, additionally, has a voice which is unbelievably similar to Marcy's voice in the *PEANUTS* television specials and movies. Robert Stimmel is clean-cut, which is the opposite of PigPen in the comics, but fits the description of Matt in *Dog Sees God*. He also has the emotional depth to run the gamut required by Matt in the show. In Adam Joesten's audition, he revealed his ability to play the piano. This led me to consider him for the role of Beethoven.²³

²³ Unfortunately, despite receiving the sheet music and practicing with it, Joesten was unable to play the piano live during the performance of *Dog Sees God* due to the stage piano

The issue with casting that became apparent through the run of the show was the physical differences between CB and Beethoven. CB has to be able to be big and carry himself with authority, while Beethoven has to be one who is able to be physically beaten up by CB. Adam was over six inches taller than Grant, and was significantly more athletically built. Thus, the audience might not believe that CB, in Grant's body, could subdue Beethoven, in Adam's body. However, I was able to justify this decision considering that it is possible CB had studied martial arts: Though we don't see him practicing martial arts on stage (save for when he briefly subdued Matt in "You're Invited"), many martial artists with whom I am personally familiar do not appear very athletically built, but are still able to violently attack people. This became a big point of consideration in my thesis with regard to the typing of actors. Both actors worked diligently toward fulfilling the roles required by the writing of the text, including the dominance question between the two of them. Just because Adam is bigger than Grant does not mean that, physically, he is more able to attack Grant. I deliberately cast against stereotypes to show that people are more complex than they may appear, and oftentimes violate types they present. A person's physicality and personality relate as a correlation, not as a causation. The story in a play may have been more well told if the roles of the play were typecast, however, it is not necessary for the function of the play.

It's important to remember, though, that while the characters are stereotyped by one another, they are all individually very complex human beings. The character of Beethoven, for example, is stereotyped as a "faggot."²⁴ CB instructs him that if he didn't "act so... gay,"

being non-operable. However, Joesten and I recorded the *Heart and Soul* clip which was called for in the script.

²⁴ Matt: (To Beethoven) what the fuck are you looking at, cocksucker? (To CB) Did you see the way that fuckin' faggot just looked at me? (Shouting to Beethoven as he exits) You fuckin' fairy, I'll kick your fuckin' ass. (Royal 10)

Later in the script, the following dialogue ensues:

Beethoven: Well it's just that you haven't spoken to me in years. Except to call me a 'faggot' or to dislocate my shoulder...

CB: I never dislocated your shoulder! (Royal 27) (Text removed from Beethoven's line for emphasis)

perhaps he wouldn't be made fun of (Royal 28).²⁵ Beethoven responds with a list of activities that must show everyone that he's gay, most of which are sarcastic; the only one which is true is that he plays the piano (Royal 28).²⁶ Beethoven even admits that he doesn't know if he's gay, stating that he thinks he might be simply because others feel he is, "sort of a self-fulfilling prophecy" (Royal 30).²⁷ It shows the impact that repeated pejoratives have on an individual in that he considers that he might be gay, but has never really considered any alternative once he reached the age of maturity. In reality, Beethoven is a complex individual who is not defined by the mental and physical torment that he experiences from his peers, he merely reacts to it. For example, Beethoven hides himself in the music room during the lunch period instead of eating in the cafeteria, and Beethoven no longer uses the restroom while on campus because he had his head smashed into a wall once when he did (Royal 28).²⁸ No amount of bullying ever kills Beethoven's drive toward his music, which I find to be his escapism. It is when his music dies through his hands being crushed that Beethoven also dies. CB wasn't worth living for, only Beethoven's music was. CB, however, felt Beethoven was worth living for, and he continues his life even after Beethoven's death, because he feels the need to show others how wrong they were about stereotyping Beethoven. Even before Beethoven's death, CB decides to devote his life to Beethoven, as seen in the scene titled "Warsaw War Song": "*We'll be revolutionaries! With our sporks raised, we'll show the world that it's okay to be different and no one will have to*

²⁵ CB: Maybe if you didn't act so --
Beethoven: What? What CB, how do I act?
CB: Well. Gay.

²⁶ Beethoven: And how does one act gay?
Silence.
Beethoven: By playing the piano? Oh it must be all those times I ogle the football team. Maybe I'll stop carrying around a pink purse. Or openly sucking dick in plain view of the entire student body!

²⁷ CB: Hey. Are you gay? It's cool if you are. You can tell me.
Beethoven: (Looking to the floor) Honestly?
CB: Honestly.
Beethoven: Sometimes I think I am. But then I think that that's just because everybody else says that I am. You know. Sort of like a self-fulfilling prophecy.

²⁸ Beethoven: ... I haven't had lunch in the cafeteria in two and a half years for fear of going home with some part of it smeared across my shirt! I haven't been in a bathroom on campus since the time my head got slammed into the wall.

apologize” (emphases mine) (Royal 68). Beethoven hadn’t achieved that level of feeling for CB yet. When they go to have sex in the baseball field, it’s CB who wants it more; he tries to take Beethoven’s shirt off, but Beethoven resists it (Royal 44)²⁹. The direction by the playwright is ambiguous, so I directed it that Beethoven is not ready, he’s still nervous. In “Mal Di Luna,” Beethoven is secretly giddy about wanting to be with CB, but he doesn’t show it to CB, because he is not ready for the commitment (Royal 72)³⁰. His troubles and the cons of being in an openly male-male relationship seem to outweigh the pros of being with CB. Perhaps, had he fallen in love with CB as quickly as CB fell in love with him, he wouldn’t have killed himself when his hands got crushed.

Given CB’s new physical characteristics via this script in terms of his muscular composition, he isn’t plagued by the torture or the torment Beethoven has been in regards to his sexuality, and tells other people that if they pick on “my boyfriend,” he would hurt them (Royal 69).³¹ The only person who is seen to question CB’s sexuality in a negative light is Van’s Sister, who says that he’s “not cool enough” to be gay (Royal, 53).³²

Handling of Data

In this chapter, it is necessary for me to respond to the data I gathered through audience reactions. I wished to have audience members give feedback to the stereotypes portrayed on stage, if they felt any stereotypes were portrayed at all. To do this, after each performance, I gave a speech to the audience assuring them that any responses to this performance would remain anonymous, the raw data to only be seen by myself and my advisers. In this speech, I

²⁹ Beethoven throws himself onto CB and they kiss. CB begins taking his shirt off, but Beethoven won’t let him.

³⁰ He [CB] leaves.
Once the coast is clear, Beethoven smiles.
Beethoven: (To himself) Oh my God.
He resumes his playing and he can’t get the grin off of his face.

³¹ CB: Hey, we made it halfway through the day and I only got called a queer three times.
Beethoven: That’s because people are scared you’ll beat them up.
CB: Don’t worry. I’ve already started spreading the word that if they mess with my boyfriend, I’ll be kicking some ass.
He kisses the top of Beethoven’s head. (Emphasis Royal’s).

³² Van’s Sister: No offense, CB, but I don’t think you’re cool enough to be gay. Don’t get me wrong, I love you to death, but if I had to imagine you giving a shit about home decoration or musical theatre, I just don’t see it.

also thanked the audience for their time in filling out the surveys, and assured them that filling out the surveys was completely optional, and that at any point, they may stop, retract their participation, and/or skip any questions they wish to not answer. I also thanked Alpha Psi Omega for their kindness in agreeing to produce my thesis play. The cast then distributed surveys and pens and pencils to the audience members, while I stood away from the audience to allow them anonymity so that I did not even see which color ink an audience member was using to fill out their surveys. The surveys and the consent forms for human subjects research were then turned in to a box in the lobby of the theatre, such that I could not see who was submitting what and in what order. This was necessary practice under the IRB exemption I received from Miami University to survey.

I chose to keep the surveys open-ended. Each question had several lines for open-ended response, save one question “Have you ever seen or read *Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead* before this production?” Given the sensitivity and complexity of stereotypes, as well as the sensitivity of issues discussed in this play such as suicide, queer/questioning identities, and bullying, I wanted to give the audience an ability to express themselves beyond a multiple-choice survey. Therefore, in analyzing this data, I do not wish to quantify much of my data, as doing so would over-simplify the results and de-humanize or sanitize my audience’s emotional feedback, which I, as a theatre practitioner, cannot in good conscience do. Therefore, I will respond to the data in broad strokes, qualifying my results as much as possible.

The questions were as follows:

1. Describe your familiarity with the PEANUTS characters. Have you ever read the PEANUTS comics, seen the television programs or a movie with the characters, or seen or been involved in a theatrical production which contained the characters?
2. Have you ever seen or read *Dog Sees God: confessions of a Teenage Blockhead* before this production?
3. Given your knowledge of the PEANUTS characters, do you believe that they could grow up to become the characters seen in *Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead*? Why or why not?
4. Do you believe the characters in this production label or stereotype one another? Why or why not?
5. What do you think are the effects of labeling and stereotyping?

6. Why do you think people label or stereotype others?
7. Are there benefits to labeling or stereotyping?
8. Are there consequences to labeling or stereotyping?
9. If any, how has this production changed your perspective of labeling or stereotyping?
10. How have you, as an audience member, labeled or stereotyped these characters or the PEANUTS characters? Howso?
11. Is there anything else you would like to share with the researcher in regards to labeling, stereotyping, or anything else?

Before I analyze this data, I need to state my positionality in analyzing this thesis. Much of my life has been devoted to answering the bullying question and pushing people to open their minds in regards to the stereotyping of others. From eighth grade until my freshman year of college, I grew out my hair in an effort to show that not all long-haired people are drug-addicted has-beens or are into “sex, drugs, and rock and roll.” I was forced to cut it in my freshman year of college because I was on the speech team at Miami University, and was told by my coaches that if I did not cut my hair voluntarily before the national tournament, a haircut would be forced on me to better our team’s chances of victory. This occurred after my speech coach told me to “get a haircut and stop taking it up the ass.” After being cut from the speech team the next year for reasons which were never explained to me, I regrew my hair from my sophomore year through the end of my senior year/first year of graduate school (which were concurrent), when I cut it for a production of *All in the Timing*, as was required by the costume designer. I have always, until after this production, resided in the Camden, Ohio area, which is just 20 minutes north of the campus where this piece was performed. After this production, I lived in San Francisco for a few months while interning for the San Francisco Mime Troupe (an experience which I feel deepened my understanding of stereotype for this thesis).

Each question was asked for a specific reason: Question 1 shows importance because it reveals whether or not there have already been first impressions of the characters in *Dog Sees God* via *PEANUTS*, which is important due to the researcher trying to use the *PEANUTS* as the virtual social identity, and *Dog Sees God* as the actual social identity. Question 2 lets the researcher know whether or not an audience member has seen or read *Dog Sees God*, thus revealing whether their impressions of the characters in the play were due to his production, or external factors. Question 3 is the believability question: it shows whether or not the audience members were able to suspend disbelief and accept the *Dog Sees God* characters as part of

Schulz's canon, thus necessary to answer whether or not their opinions are able to be changed as a result of the new information in the play. Question 4 asks the audience to identify whether or not they saw characters labeling one another in the production, thus, whether or not they identified the characters' actions as labeling. Jumping to Question 9, it asks whether or not the play had an impact on the audience and their labeling actions, thus showing the power of theatre as a form of medium to change stereotypes. Questions 5, 7, and 8 ask for the effects, benefits, and consequences of labeling, alluding to the audience's perception of the power of labeling. Question 6 asks the audience members whether or not they identify or agree with Goffman's labeling theories in regards to why people label one another. Question 10 asks what labels the audience has assigned to the characters in the play, thus showing what phenomenological labels the individual audience member has created for the characters. Question 11 was left open ended so that the audience could share any additional thoughts on the subject matter.

102 surveys were submitted in response to the play, and one survey was rejected for nonsense answers such as "FUCK SALT" and "COCK MEAT SANDWICH HAHA," leaving 101 valid surveys for analysis. Of the 101 surveys, 94 had some recollection of the *PEANUTS* characters, while 1 was unsure of whether or not they had seen anything related to *PEANUTS*, and 6 had no past memories associated with the *PEANUTS* characters. This proves that *Dog Sees God* is ripe for checking the change in labels of the characters from *PEANUTS*, due to the sheer saturation of *PEANUTS* in the marketplace. Worth noting is that a small number of those with some familiarity had very little familiarity, one respondent saying "I have seen the television show a couple of times but I'm not very familiar," and thus, my results may be derived from some audience members who have very vague, scant memories of characters, thus making the study of changing labels quite difficult for them to analyze. Still, another said "Yes. Lots of familiarity - read all of them as kid and seen all movies," meaning that the data will be a mix of those with vague memories and those with potent memories. If I had the chance to ask the audience these questions over, I would likely have asked the audience to rate their familiarity with the *PEANUTS*, thus allowing a more empirical study of the data than this qualitative examination.

In response to question 2, 13 audience members had some familiarity with *Dog Sees God*, having read it, or even as one respondent said, "directed" it.³³ This shows that the impact of this

³³ For clarity's sake, this is not my answer. This is the answer of another director.

play will largely be the result of my production. Even those who had only read the play will likely still find an impact from the production presented to them, as theatre impacts an audience differently than reading a script does.

In response to question 3, a significant number of audience members indicated that they struggled to make the leap between *PEANUTS* and *Dog Sees God*. It seems that many of the audience members didn't want to connect them because the new identities presented in *Dog Sees God* rupture memories of the audience's youth, or alters something in *PEANUTS* that they wish to cling to. One respondent said "I can't believe that Charles Schultz [sic] would have ever have written anything with such a limited vulgar vocabulary. The theme yes, the vulgarity no." Another wrote, "No... not really... I see the characters as I knew them when I was a child. I was not exposed to homosexuality or drugs."³⁴ However, an overwhelming majority of respondents stated that they could see these characters as future versions of the *PEANUTS* characters, even if reluctantly so. Many felt the changes were a bit more extreme than they would have predicted, but others admitted that, due to their own impressions of society, they could see this as a realistic effect of growing up. Audience members wrote: "Yes because growing up in a town where no one accepts people could do that"; "Yes. Society would have this effect on them"; "Absolutely. People change all the time during the span of their lives"; and "Yeah, totally. People change a lot when they grow up." One interesting pattern with the answering of question 3 was that not a single person responded that the actors were miscast. The only real dissention patterns were audience members reacting to the loss of innocence, which they felt were unbelievable within the context of the show relative to *PEANUTS*, and the extremes to which the characters are portrayed on stage. Therefore, the use of Grant as CB and Adam as Beethoven were considered believable by the audience, despite their previously mentioned size differences. Therefore, it proves the idiom that if the actors on stage believe in the message that they are displaying to an audience, the audience will believe it as well. This is an interesting correlation, and one that I would encourage future directors to employ: casting against type does not doom a production to failure or unbelievability. If an actor works diligently on embodying their character, the audience will likely follow along and suspend disbelief.

³⁴ This response has been truncated, as it included the age of the respondent, thus risking identifying them to the public.

In response to question 4, every respondent who chose to answer this question identified that there was labeling occurring in the play, with a handful of respondents writing examples they recalled from the play.

A surprising result of this thesis data analysis is the heavy use of binaries. While I admit, the questions are slanted by asking about benefits and consequences, many respondents would refer to labels as “bad” or “good.” In question 5, which only asked for the effects (and was asked before the benefits/consequences questions) almost every respondent replied by identifying the negative effects of stereotyping. Only a few identified possible positive effects, such as “...mak[ing] interpersonal relationships easier,” and “Many - notably they can limit how we think of others, and perhaps ourselves based on the labels applied to us. However, this also allows us to build and refine, eventually, an accurate abstract profile of someone, without which it would be impossible to know or understand them.” One response, in particular, summed up the essence of the problems of stereotyping in theatre: “It made me immediately understand who they are for the purposes of a short play. In real life, it can be a bit disastrous.” I will editorialize momentarily to say that this response is the crux of why I chose to research this topic: labels are easy tools for a playwright to use to immediately acquaint an audience with a character, but can bear disastrous effects, and should be used with caution.

Question 6 identified many respondents who had clearly devoted significant thought to the question. “One has to deal with people same way. Perfect complexity would imply perfect inscrutability,” “It seems like it comes naturally to people, perhaps for the sake of convenience. Someone’s character can be extremely complex,” “It is easy - it continues the non-communication of society,” and “to make sense of the world, to find a group they can belong to, to feel safe by separating from others who are different,” are a few answers that seemed to deviate from the still negative-tinged answers of “insecurity and the need for power,” “ignorance and laziness,” “because they’re jerks and are raised that way,” and “I think it has to do with their own insecurities.” Goffman didn’t take an implicitly negative approach, such as the latter answers have given, but alluded to the humanistic nature of labeling others for ease and complexity’s sake. These answers go to show that many people have an inherently negative view of labels and stereotyping. I would implore future scholars to determine how negative the terms “stereotyping” and “labeling” are considered to be on a wide-spread scale, without a play accompanying them, because my data is significant enough, given the past two questions, to

show that many people have an overall negative view of stereotypes, and not all of those who can identify stereotypes can explain why they occur outside of negative explanations.

Question 7 asked about the benefits of stereotyping and labeling. For something so embedded in human nature as labeling and stereotyping, 46 out of the 96 respondents who answered the question could not think of a single benefit of labeling or stereotyping. Included in that number is one person who said “Probably in some scenarios, but none comes to mind.” Some of those 46 had never considered whether or not there were positive benefits before, while others were defiantly against there being any positive benefit, one respondent stating “Never. End of discussion.”

Everyone who answered question 8 agreed that there are dire consequences to stereotyping, some respondents indicating that the consequences include suicide.

Question 9 speaks to the power of the theatre to change stereotypes. Unfortunately, this play didn't seem to have the desired effect with this audience. Very few people said that this play changed their views, while many have said that it reinforced or affirmed their current views on stereotypes. One person, interestingly enough, said that “It seemed to perpetuate the stereotypes of homosexuals.” I wish this response would have been more drawn out so as to explain the stereotypes this respondent saw and how they were embodied, as my actors were doing everything they could to create characters not based upon stereotypes. Another person also seemed to think that the characters were “so judgmental and archetypes that I wanted to punch them into reality.”

Fifteen people who were unable to name a benefit to stereotyping wrote that they had labeled the characters from either *Dog Sees God* or *PEANUTS* in some capacity, as a reply to question 10. This further goes to show how engrained in human nature the very act of labeling and stereotyping are. One cited that “It is very easy to apply all of the obvious stereotypes b/c of how apparent they are in the world I've grown up in,” while another said that they stereotyped the characters “initially, by putting them into their categories “popular,” jock,” “geek.” But I let that go.” Of particular note is one response, which seemed to explain the stereotypes present in the play, stating “To be fair, characters portray hyperbolized people, i.e., made to be stereotypes. I felt the production itself stereotypes the characters - repressed kid = bully, artsy kid = gay, bullying = suicide, etc.” This is of note because this respondent critiques how the playwright and director wrote and presented the script to include stereotypes.

One audience member used question 11 to inform me that they felt the script was prescriptive in regards to how one is supposed to feel and was a bit manipulative. Another stated that they feel this should be shown in high schools to help prevent bullying, stereotyping, labeling, and suicide. A third said that they felt the play transitions from the characters being stereotyped to being multi-dimensional and complex, and that the character development and actions were very true to life.

Conclusions

Returning now to the original research question: “How do theatrical audiences engage with labeling?” we see that audiences who saw this play performed at this specific time found the play to broadcast the negative effects of stereotypes. While Kyrulo argues that that communication can change stereotypes and create new ones (5), as I explained earlier, this theatrical venture did not produce results that could confirm her sentiment. Other plays might be able to do so, but this one, as far as my audience was concerned, only reaffirmed their currently held beliefs, and did not change the perception of their individual labels or stereotypes. While the audience did not state, in their surveys, that they felt the actors were miscast, casting against type as I have done with Grant Lemasters and Adam Joesten did not seem to change any views of the stereotypes embodied by CB or Beethoven, respectively. Ultimately, though, I still hold that this play had several of the trappings necessary to change stereotypes, as the audience was, overall, successfully able to suspend disbelief and place *Dog Sees God* within Schulz’s cannon, but was unable to deliver on the result by casting against type.

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APPENDIX A - Production Photos

These photos are from the dress rehearsal which occurred one day prior to opening, and were photographed by Alpha Psi Omega's adviser, Professor Gion DeFrancesco, or were taken at a photo call by myself.



CB (Lemasters) in "Dear Penpal..."



CB and CB's Sister (Papke) in "Canis Exequiae"



CB and Van (Sedmak) in “Nirvana”



Matt (Stimmel) and CB in “Where Swine Live”



Beethoven (Joesten) and CB's Sister in "The Pianist & The Platypus"



Marcy (Zaffiro) and Tricia (Braun) in "Spork"



Tricia and Marcy in “Spork”



Matt and Tricia in “Spork”



CB and Beethoven in “The Viper’s Nest”



Beethoven in “The Viper’s Nest”



CB and Beethoven in “The Viper’s Nest”



CB's Sister in "Drama"



Marcy in "You're Invited"



Beethoven, Tricia (lying), CB, Matt, and CB's Sister in "You're Invited"



CB and Beethoven in "Nocturne"



Tricia and Marcy in "The Hangover"



Van's Sister (Carlson) and CB in "Fire is Bad"



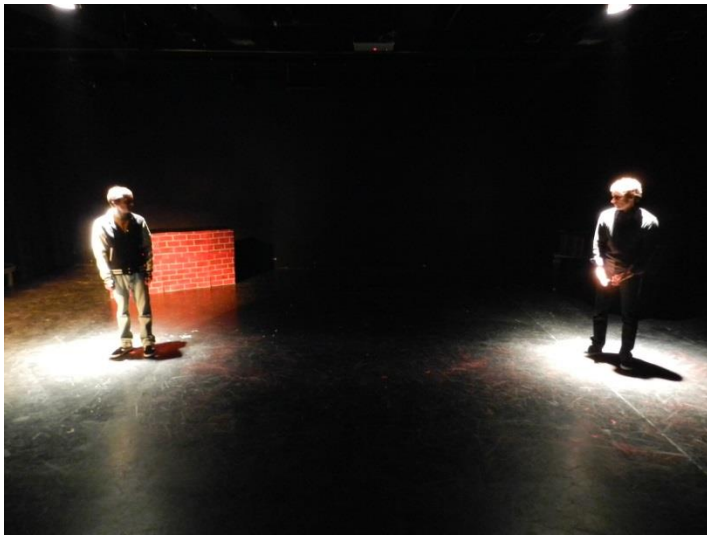
Van's Sister in "Fire is Bad"



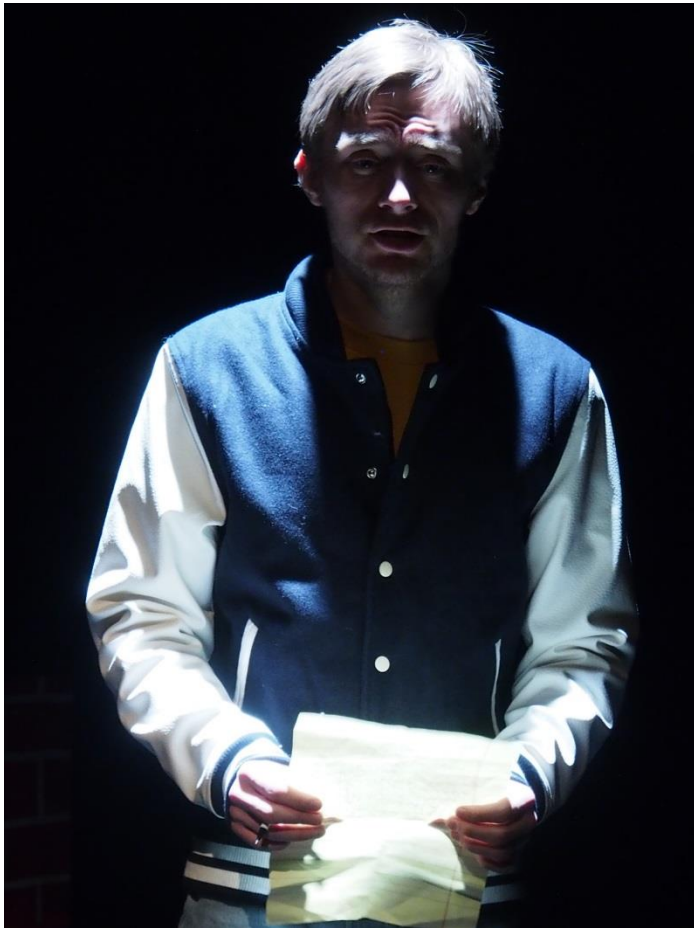
Matt, Tricia, Van, and Marcy in “Salisbury Steak”



Matt in “Mal Di Luna”



CB and Beethoven in “Taphephobia”



CB in “Taphephobia”



Tricia, CB, Van, Marcy, and CB's Sister in "Peer Counseling"



CB and CB's Sister in "Brothers and Sisters"



CB and Marcy in “Dear CB”



The cast, sans Beethoven, in “Dear CB”

APPENDIX B - Casting Photos

Due to the nature of the thesis in regards to casting against type, it is necessary for me to include these pictures and descriptions of the cast members as they were seen at auditions. Pictures were taken by stage manager, Jennifer Studnicki, except of Grant Lemasters, who provided his own picture.



Role: CB
Actor: Grant Lemasters
Height: 5'-9"
Weight: 120 lbs
Hair: Brown
Eyes: Blue



Role: CB's Sister
Actor: Nora Papke
Height: 5'-2"
Weight: 99 lbs
Hair: Auburn
Eyes: Blue



Role: Beethoven
Actor: Adam Joesten
Height: 6'-2"
Weight: 175 lbs
Hair: Brown
Eyes: Blue



Role: Matt
Actor: Robert Stimmel
Height: 5'-11"
Weight: 178 lbs.
Hair: Auburn
Eyes: Blue



Role: Van
Actor: Simon Sedmak
Height: 5'-10 ½"
Weight: 183 lbs.
Hair: Brown
Eyes: Brown



Role: Van's Sister
Actor: Emily Jordan Carlson
Height: 5'-4"
Weight: 130
Hair: Brown
Eyes: Brown



Role: Marcy
Actor: Sarah Katherine Zaffiro
Height: 5'-3"
Weight: 120 lbs.
Hair: Brown
Eyes: Brown



Role: Tricia
Actor: Becca Braun
Height: 5'-1"
Weight: 125 lbs.
Hair: Brown
Eyes: Blue

APPENDIX C - Program Notes

ALPHA PSI OMEGA PRESENTS

DOG SEES GOD: CONFESSIONS OF A TEENAGE
BLOCKHEAD



BY: BERT V. ROYAL

DIRECTED BY: KEITH ARCURAGI

Director's Notes: Keith Arcuragi

I have long been interested in studying stereotypes, because stereotypes have such a profound impact on how we see the people who surround us. While some are hurtful, all of them serve a purpose, whether that purpose is to elevate oneself or put another down. I learned of Ervin Goffman's theories of labeling, which show that we identify people through two labels: the virtual social identity (our opinions of someone based on our first glance of them), and the actual social identity (the truth about a person, once we can push aside our primary judgments and better understand that person).

A person who appears very non-threatening might have a blackbelt, while a person who looks very physically fit can have a medical condition and be in horrible health. Upon first glance, one might be able to tell a lot about someone, but one might also be able to wrongly assume the identity of said person. For me, this play is a prime example of how these labels change over time. People change over time, and as we constantly learn about ourselves and others, our opinions and labels also change.

Anyone and everyone can always be *seemingly* relegated to a few words. Those words, however, will **never** capture the complexity inherent in any one human. Despite the inaccuracy of these broad, sweeping labels, they are still used, and their effects are sometimes far-reaching. Despite all of the intense and grueling work my actors have done to take these ideas from paper and manifest them as living, breathing humans, it is human nature for an audience to make a quick assessment of the character's essence and label them. After all, we only get to spend an hour and forty-five minutes with them, hearing their stories, and we don't get to ask questions: we can only make assumptions about the things on the stage, and inferences about the things that are not on the stage. Throughout the night, you will certainly create labels for these characters. Doing so is part of human nature, and in and of itself, is not a problem. However, if we can't see one another past these labels, we lose the humanity that unites us all as members of the human race, and divides us all into unique individuals. I ask you, the audience, to please realize and remember the labels that you apply to these characters upon first glance (virtual social identity), and then please consider how your opinion of the characters change over the course of the play, once you get to know them better (actual social identity), and to consider how their history in the PEANUTS comics affects your perspective of them.

I need to thank Alpha Psi Omega for agreeing to sponsor this foray into these important questions, and the cast, advisers, designers, crew members, and other volunteers who have all contributed their time on this project. Theatre is not theatre without an audience, so thank you, my audience, for witnessing our journey and providing comments on it. Your witnessing our effort is the invaluable conclusion of our collective journey, and I am forever grateful.

CAST (in order of appearance)

CB: Grant Lemasters*
CB's Sister: Nora Papke
Van: Simon Sedmak
Matt: Robert C. Stimmel
Tricia: Becca Braun
Marcy: Sarah Zaffiro
Beethoven: Adam Joesten
Van's Sister: Jordan Carlson

DESIGN TEAM

Director: Keith Arcuragi*
Advised by: Professor Bekka Eaton Reardon and Dr. Elizabeth Reitz Mullenix
Stage Manager: Jennifer Studnicki*
Assistant Stage Manager: Christina Casano*
Scenic Designer: Matthew Ebersbach*
Advised by: Christina Casano*
Costume Designer: Caroline LeMasters*
Lighting Designer: Robert C. Stimmel
Sound Designer: Keith Arcuragi*
Sound Co-Designer: Les Dershem*
Properties Manager: Steph Niro*
Dance Choreographer: Tess Stanifer*
Fight Choreographers: Robert C. Stimmel and Grant Lemasters*
Marketing Coordinator: Steph Niro*

PRODUCTION CREW

Matthew Ebersbach*, Theresa Liebhart, Meryl Juergens

ALPHA PSI OMEGA LEADERSHIP

Christina Casano* (President), Erin Mizer* (Vice President), Tamara Ljubibratic*
(Treasurer), Gion DeFrancesco* (Adviser)

* denotes membership in Alpha Psi Omega

CAST AND DESIGNER BIOS:

Keith Arcuragi (Director, Sound Designer) is a graduate student at Miami University, currently holding bachelor's degrees in theatre and political science from Miami University. He has previously stage managed *Dead and Buried*, *12th Nite*, *My Left Breast*, *Good vs. Evil*, and has stage managed a show by performance artist Tim Miller. He has acted in *The Wiz*, *The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later*, *The Normal Heart*, *12th Nite*, and *All in the Timing*. Previous sound design credits include *9 Circles* for Miami University, and he was part of a team which received an honorable mention from Region III of the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival in the Design Storm event, for which he contributed the sound design for *Story Theatre*.

Becca Braun (Tricia) is a Freshman Theatre major and Music theatre minor here at Miami University. This is her first experience with Alpha Psi Omega, and she has really enjoyed how close the cast and crew has gotten, and seeing the show come together so quickly! She is an aspiring actor and director for the stage. Becca would like to thank her amazing family and awesome friends for supporting her in everything she does, and thank everyone involved in *Dog Sees God* for allowing her to have this fun experience.

Jordan Carlson (Van's Sister) is a senior theatre and mass communication major. She has been in Miami University Hamilton's production of *The Normal Heart*, and Oxford Community Arts Center's *See How They Run*. She was the casting director for Miami MAFIA's film, *Competitive Nature*, and will lead in a new film, *Wells and Mary*.

Christina Casano (Assistant Stage Manager) is a senior Theatre major with a double minor in History and Mass Communication, and is the current president of Alpha Psi Omega. This summer she served as a Stage Management intern at the Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey. Her selected work at Miami includes *Angels in America* (Assistant Director), *Macbeth* (Lennox), and *Independence* (Stage Manager).

Matthew Ebersbach (Scenic Designer, Run Crew) is a sophomore theatre major and musical theatre minor who is excited to show off his artistic creativity in his first play as a scenic designer. He has recently acted in Miami University's *MacBeth* as Banquo, *8 the Play* as Spencer/Dr. Meyer, and *Into the Woods* as Cinderella's Father. Now, he is anxious in showing that he is more than just an actor, but an artist - especially in this production that has become one of his favorite shows to be a part of!

Adam Joesten (Beethoven) is a freshman at Miami University. Recently, he has performed as Macduff in Miami University's theatre department production of *Macbeth*, or as Theodore Olson in The Walking Theatre Company's production of *B*. He would like to thank the cast and crew for making the production such a wonderful experience.

Caroline LeMasters (Costume Designer) has previously acted as Lucinda in *Into the Woods* and Belle in *Beauty and the Beast*. She has also worked on hair and makeup for Miami University's production of *Angels in America*. She recently completed the Disney College Program.

Grant Lemasters (CB, Fight Choreographer) has previously been seen onstage as the Baker, in *Into the Woods*, the Stage Manager in *Our Town*, and Sylvius in William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. He is a third-year student in Alpha Psi Omega, and a member of the Lambda Chi Alpha general fraternity.

Steph Niro (Properties Master and Marketing) is a senior Theatre and History double major with a focus on educational theatre and theatre for social change. Her interest in props arose when she worked on a number of construction crews in props, costumes, and scenery. As a part of her internship at Northlight Theatre this summer she taught an elective course on props, where students not only learned all about the world of props but got to make their own props from a story. She hopes you enjoy the show!

Nora Papke (CB's Sister) has credits which Doris Hook in First Stage Children's Theater's production of *Witness*, the Snow Queen in Milwaukee Youth Theater's *The Snow Queen: A Musical*, Rose Mundy in First Stage Young Company's *Dancing at Lughnasa*, Anne Frank in the Kettle Moraine Players' production of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, "Monkey" in First Stage Children's Theater's musical production of *The Little Engine That Could*, and Esther Smith in the Musical Masquers production of *Meet Me in St. Louis*. She also performed in a night of one-acts with the Stage Left theater organization at Miami University. This is her first show for Alpha Psi Omega. Nora would like to thank everyone who has encouraged her growth as an actress.

Bert V. Royal (Playwright) quit his profession as a casting director to write the play *DOG SEES GOD: CONFESSIONS OF A TEENAGE BLOCKHEAD*, which was awarded the 2004 New York International Fringe Festival Overall Excellence Award, as well as the GLAAD Media Award for Outstanding Off-Off Broadway Production. He also penned the screenplay for "Easy A." He lives in West Hollywood with his partner, Clay, and their two dogs.

Simon Sedmak (Van) is a junior Theatre major and Russian minor. He has been cast in several musicals during his school years before college such as Bert in *Mary Poppins*, Gaston in *Beauty and the Beast*, and Leaf Coneybear in *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. He has been in the Miami University Theatre Department productions of *As You Like It* and *Macbeth*. He has also again been cast in *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, this time with the Miami University student organization, Stage Left, and played the role of Mitch Mahoney.

Robert C. Stimmel (Matt, Lighting Designer, Fight Choreographer) is a senior theatre major and a proud alumnus of Fairfield Senior High School. He has performed in *Into the Woods*, *Spring Awakening*, *The Glass Menagerie*, and *The Wiz* here at Miami as well as performing in 10 other shows and a few short films in the area over his college career. His lighting design credits include *2012 One Act Festival*, *Flipzoids*, *Vision Dance: Good vs. Evil* and *Crumbs from the Table of Joy* and has assistant design credits on various other shows. Robert has also worked as a Sound designer for *All in the Timing*, *Beyond Therapy*, and *12th Nite*. As a Director he recently directed Miami Theatre Department's production of *Gruesome Playground Injuries* and MU Summer Scholars' production of *All in the Timing*. He has worked as a lighting and sound assistant and in the scene shop since his sophomore year. For the rest of the semester he will be directing a short film entitled *Blood is Thicker Together* with fellow theatre major Ryan Knapper as their Senior Capstone Project. Robert is extremely grateful to his professors for their guidance and trust in his abilities, his friends for their undying support, and his family for their unconditional love.

Jenn Studnicki (Stage Manager) is a Senior Theatre and Spanish double major with a focus in acting. You may have seen her in MU Theatre Department's production of *Macbeth* as Lady Macbeth, as Harper in *Angels in America*, or as Amanda in *The Glass Menagerie*. She also has worked on marketing with many shows throughout the collegiate career. She is excited to stage manage her first show, and has loved working with the cast, crew, and friends.

Sarah Zaffiro (Marcy) is a junior English Education major and is not at all surprised that she was once again cast as a slutty sassmuffin with bisexual tendencies. She would like to thank her awesome friends and roommates for supporting her theatre career and her fabulously handsome boyfriend for always being a source of comfort and encouragement (love you, bae). Her favorite roles include Eponine in *Les Misérables*, Babette in *Beauty and the Beast*, Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice* and Maureen in *Rent*. ENJOY THE SHOW, FRIENDS!!!! Peace and leedles!

Scenic Design Notes: Matthew Ebersbach

"Making the Most with Little"

Never have I thought that I would start off my role as a member of Alpha Psi Omega as the head scenic designer for our first season production. Had it not been for the guidance of Christina Casano, Jennifer Studnicki, and our director, Keith Arcuragi, I would not be able to do it as well as I had hoped.

I feel that the real challenge for me was designing scenery that could recycle as many props as we can over and over again.

As an independent branch of our theatre department, we do our best to make our shows look dazzling and appealing to our audiences with whatever we can use. I feel that this show has truly inspired me to use my imagination and creativity to solve just how we can transform a small black-box theatre into a cafeteria, a patio, music practice room, a backyard, and a psychiatric ward all in one. Needless to say, I cannot take all of the credit, for this was a team effort- something that makes me very proud when I am part of any theatrical production here at Miami University.

Not every famous show has to have a huge set in order to capture the audience's attention- some of them make use of little or none at all. This past winter, during my London Theatre studying abroad program, I went to see a play called *The Woman in Black*, which tells a chilling ghost story with very little scenery in it, which inspired me to do the same for our production. This show effectively caught my imagination and earned the reputation of the second longest-running non-musical production in the West End, and one of my favorite shows.

I feel that each and every one of us has put a lot of effort into this show- not just in the roles we were assigned, but in the assistance we each have done for each other. That is what truly makes this production an example of how a play's production should run: we are a team. No leaders, only directors of all sorts who can help guide us in the right direction- although, Keith is amazing! I can only hope that our group effort really makes this a play that everyone, especially Peanuts comics' lovers will never forget.

Sound Design Notes: Keith Arcuragi

"Classic Pop"

One of the most important aspects of this show is memory. The play relies on nostalgia and the memories we have of the characters from our childhood. However, this play shows that things change over time, they morph into something different. They don't completely change -- they keep fragments from their past, traits that will live with them forever, but they have grown and developed over time. Through the selection of music in this production, I hope to convey this. Classical instruments can play a contemporary pop song and retain all of the same trills, contemporary rock can still allude to classical pieces, and the lines can get a bit blurry. Things can be reused, things can change... there is no binary.

IRB Program Notice:

Dear Participant,

My name is Keith Arcuragi, and I am a graduate student at Miami University studying the effects of labeling under the advising of Dr. Elizabeth Mullenix and Prof. Bekka Reardon.

You are invited to participate in a research study related to labels and stereotyping. I will ask you to complete a short questionnaire about your reactions to this production and personal opinions of labels and stereotypes, so that the researcher may gather information on how stereotypes affect you, and how this play impacts your opinion of stereotypes. Please only participate if you are over the age of 18. If you agree to answer the questionnaire/survey, you will place the surveys into a container, so that I cannot tell who said what. You will not be asked to include your name on any of the questionnaires, thus your answers cannot be associated with you. Nonetheless, the questionnaires will be treated as confidential information, stored in a secure location for the duration of the project, accessed only by myself and my advisers. Again, in the records, your name will not be associated with your responses. This questionnaire should take approximately 10-15 minutes. Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the session at any time or decline to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable. You will not be asked to do anything which exposes you to risks beyond those of everyday life. The benefit of the study is it will help us understand more about how people think about themselves and how people view others. At the end of the study, the researcher will make the general results available via his thesis. The generalized results may be presented at professional conferences or published in articles describing the results of the research.

If you have further questions about the study, please contact Keith Arcuragi at (513)529-9942 or Arcurakb@miamioh.edu, or his advisers Dr. Elizabeth Mullenix at Mullener@miamioh.edu or Proesor Bekka Reardon at Eatonrl@miamioh.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please call the Office of Advancement of Research and Scholarship at 529-3600 or email: humansubjects@muohio.edu.

Thank you for your participation. We are very grateful for your help and hope that this will be an interesting session for you. You may keep this playbill.

This production would not be possible if not for the advice, assistance,
and other support from the following people. Thank you!

Bert V. Royal
Stephen Bell
Associated Student Government
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Josh Wilson
Zach Dailey
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Barry Zaslow
Laura Sheppard
Eric Weaver
Arianne Hartsell-Gundy
Dr. Paul Jackson
Karen Smith
Sam Buchholtz
The Walking Theatre Company
Ms. Polly Heinkel
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