Understanding The Use Of Feature Films To Maximize Student Learning

Charles S. Mathews, Florida Gulf Coast University, USA
Charles J. Fornaciari, Florida Gulf Coast University, USA
Arthur J. Rubens, Florida Gulf Coast University, USA

ABSTRACT

Feature films, old and new, have been used for many years to teach management education in general and leadership skills in particular. Films are often able to affect not only our emotional responses and perceptions of events, but they can also have an impact on our personal lives over long periods of time. Although anecdotal evidence (primarily based upon Social Learning Theory) has generally supported the use of feature films to teach management education, the paper draws upon theoretical advances in universalistic self-theory as part of cognitive-experiential self-theory (CEST) as an epistemological basis for why and under what specific conditions management educators should use feature films to maximize student learning. From this reasoning, the paper proposes that management educators apply contextual self-theory as a pedagogical guide for the actual selection of films for classroom use. In addition, the paper highlights the importance of how the management educator needs to look at other factors, such as the age and cultural background of students, as important considerations for the selection and use of feature films in the classroom.

Keywords: Self-Theory; Films; Classroom Learning

INTRODUCTION

*M*any adult learners and younger students enrolled in our management courses were raised watching films. These films not only defined their generation but, in some cases, also defined how they perceived life. Films not only affect our emotional responses, but also our perceptions of events and our personal lives over long periods of time. Over the years, management faculty around the world have used feature films or movies to teach and demonstrate management and business principles.

Shaun O'L. Higgins, one of the writers for the website "Movies for Business" (http://moviesforbusiness.com/), believes that movies can do more than anything else to provide a fictional situation that can be translated into a hypothetical situation in the workplace. Higgins says that "movies for business not only provide insight into the way business is perceived at a given time in a given culture, but also serve as instructional vehicles for teaching and training executives and the people they manage" (Higgins, 2011). Thomas Wood (2001) feels that films can truly create a useful way to view the organization, while Seglin states: "you can learn some truly useful lessons if you're willing to scratch beneath the surface" (Seglin, 2001, August 7-8).

Classic films, such as the *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Magnificent Seven, Hoosiers, Wall Street, The Arturo Sandoval Story, Apollo 13, Field of Dreams, Wall Street, All the King's Men,* and *12 Angry Men*, and more current films, such as *Crash, Remember the Titans,* and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, have been used to teach and illustrate a variety of management concepts ranging from ethics, risk-taking, decision-making, strategic planning, communication, recruitment and selection, and leadership (Billsberry & Gilbert, 2008; Blanchard, 1990; Buchanan & Hoffman, 2001; Bumpus, 2005; Huczynski, 1994; McCambridge, 2003). Leading training gurus, such as Ken Blanchard, the author of the *One Minute Manager* (1986), used scenes from the film *Twelve O'clock High* to demonstrate situational leadership, and films, such as *Young Frankenstein, Karate Kids, Nine to Five, Butch Cassidy the Sundance Kid, Bandit Queen, Ghandi, and Elizabeth,* have been used to teach and illustrate leadership concepts. Other films, such as *American Beauty*, *Bringing Out the Dead*, *The Firm*, *Full Metal Jacket* and *Sixth Sense,* have

been used to teach motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational satisfaction (Blanchard, 1986, 1987; Huczynski & Buchanan, 2004). Recent years, perhaps in response to the emergence of the Millennial generation, have seen an increasing use of animated films for management teaching (Billsberry & Gilbert, 2008; Champoux, 2001a). Management professors are increasingly finding, as part of their textbook's instructor packets, short video clips or links to the websites, such as YouTube (www.youtube.com), for classroom use. Indeed, we have now reached the point where enough resources are available that some instructors are attempting to teach entire management courses, primarily via films (Smith, 2009).

Despite this deep interest in the pedagogical use of films, the literature is somewhat limited on understanding the theoretical foundations why films may increase student learning and under which conditions movies may be used for greatest effect. In addition, the literature is still not well-developed concerning the theoretical foundations for how specific films should be selected to maximize student learning.

This paper examines the historical theory for the use of feature films, offers theoretical foundations for using films in the study of management education, and presents specific steps to follow in the use and selection of feature films in management class. In doing this, the paper first describes two disparate personal events which took place in the life of one of the authors to illustrate the notion that movies can have a significant long-term impact on student learning. Next, the paper examines the literature which has discussed the use of feature films at the college level and argues that most of the work on film used in the classroom has focused more on a description of films used and anecdotal evidence of its effectiveness rather than on a theoretical explanation of why film usage is pedagogically effective. Next, the paper builds upon theory concerning the effective use of cinema in the classroom by going beyond the dominant paradigm of Social Learning Theory that is often used to justify most film use in the classroom and explains why some films and film role models are more effective in influencing the values, emotions, and perceptions of a specific audience (age group) as opposed to other audiences (age groups). This theoretical foundation is based on the use of universalistic self-theory and cognitive-experiential self-theory (CEST) in an attempt to provide a more coherent and specific pedagogical framework to guide the use and specific selection of feature films in the classroom, especially as they apply to teaching geared towards maximizing learning that appeals to experiential learning systems. We believe that this is one of the reasons why so many instructors use films in the classroom (even when they are not aware of the underlying learning theories). Finally, the paper provides an applied example of items to be considered by the management instructor in the selection and use of features films to use in the classroom.

BACKGROUND

In the late 1980s, one of this manuscript's authors took a graduate seminar taught by James O'Toole[1] on Leadership and Change Management at the University of Southern California. Somewhere in the middle of the second class meeting, O'Toole commented in response to a student's query that a good source of knowledge on the subject of leadership and its impact on organizational change was T.E. Shaw's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. Based on the ensuing silence of the class participants, it appeared to the author that few, if any, of the seminar's participants had either read the *Seven Pillars Wisdom* or even recognized the name of Shaw as an expert on the subject of leadership. O'Toole waited for a moment for someone in the class to respond to his comment about Shaw's book and then went on to discuss a different leadership topic.

After class, the author mentioned to a fellow student that he had read Shaw's book during his sophomore year in high school and that Shaw's birth name was Lawrence and, more specifically, he was "Lawrence of Arabia." The author also recounted to his fellow classmate that Shaw had written *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* almost fifty years ago. The classmate responded with the comments, "If you knew all this when O'Toole had asked his question, then why didn't you say something in class?" and "What does a book written fifty years ago have to do with contemporary organizational leadership and organizational change?" The author's somewhat sheepish response was that he really did not know what the book had to do with leadership and change because he read the book some twenty years ago and could not remember anything about it.

---

[1]O'Toole is the author of many leadership books including *The Executive's Compass: Business and the Good Society* (1993) and *Leading Change: Overcoming the Ideology of Comfort and the Tyranny of Custom* (1995)

At the next seminar meeting, O'Toole again asked the question, "What does Shaw's book tell us about organizational leadership?" A few minutes of uncomfortable silence passed and O'Toole commented that it might be a good idea for us to at least glance at Shaw's book before coming to class the next week. The author anxiously searched his mind and still could not remember anything from Shaw's book other than Shaw's birth name was actually Lawrence. Then all of a sudden a few scenes from David Lean's movie *Lawrence of Arabia* flashed through the author's mind. It didn't seem to matter that the author had also seen the movie *Lawrence of Arabia* some twenty years ago. In his mind, he could still see clearly a scene from the film where the character of Lawrence, played brilliantly by the then young actor Peter O'Toole, donned Bedouin garb and learned to ride a camel in Arab fashion. In a flash, the author said to Professor O'Toole and the other seminar participants that Shaw s' book teaches us that in order to be an effective leader, one must come to see the world first through the eyes of the followers. Silence ensued, the author's colleagues looked at him somewhat stunned, and then O'Toole said, "That's a great observation!"

Ironically, almost ten years later another incident took place in the same author's life that supports the belief that movies can, and often do, have a long-term lasting educational impact upon student learning and memory formation in the classroom. In the late 1990s, the author received a phone call from the registrar's office at the University of Southern California. The issue precipitating the call was that a supposed former student had taken a strategy course from the author during the late 1980s. Due to a fluke in the registrar's office record computerization, the student's semester grades had been lost. Subsequently, the student was now being denied a diploma from the university and the student's attorney was raising the issue of litigation against the university. The registrar wanted to know if the author would consent to talk by phone with the student in an attempt to ascertain whether the student had actually taken a strategy class from the author during the late 1980s.

The author consented to speak with the student over the phone in hopes of thwarting student litigation against the author's alma mater. The student called shortly thereafter. She politely said that she realized that it was unrealistic to expect the author to remember her because she was such a shy student and seldom said anything in class discussion. A conversation ensued for over an hour and still the author could not ascertain whether the student actually had taken his class. The student said all the right buzz words (i.e., a difficult group project, a class group presentation, the correct title of textbook used, etc.) in an attempt to convince the author that she had actually taken the strategy class from him, but still the conversation was not convincing until…

The student said to the author, "You have the reputation of being a very unorthodox teacher and you often use movies to teach your students organizational concepts." Somewhat curious now, and a little more convinced that the student might have been in the author's class, the author asked what movies he had shown in class and what were the teaching points that were covered by those films shown?

The student immediately replied that the author had shown the movie *Gung Ho*. She then proceeded to reiterate all the major teaching points that the author usually covered when using that particular film. She then proceeded to name two other films that had been used in that course - *Local Hero* and *The Coca-Cola Kid*. A discussion then ensued in regard to the three movies and, in a short time, the author was convinced that this student had actually taken his strategy class. The next day he called the university and told the registrar that he was convinced the student had sat in his strategy course.

What is fascinating about these two anecdotal examples is the seemingly powerful long-term effect that the films seemed to have had on student memory and learning. It should also be noted that this long-term effect is not restricted to the student alone; the author too had vivid recall of the learning objectives of the assignment and major themes of the film, even though it was many years before that he taught the class or saw the film.

What the authors of this paper now propose is to describe a cognitive information processing model that explains how films are able to impact our long-term memories in such a powerful manner. In addition, the authors of this paper proffer "self-theory" as a guide for future investigation into the processes that contribute to the tremendous impact and lasting effects that feature films can have in the classroom.

THE PEDAGOGICAL USE OF FEATURES FILMS

Articles discussing the use of feature film as a basis for teaching at the college level started to consistently appear in literature in the late 1970s. They reported on the use of film in a variety of courses, including social development (Boyatzis, 1994), psychopathology (Flemming, Pidemont, & Hiam, 1990), basic psychology (Doris, 1978; Nissam-Sabat, 1979), and psychology and law (Anderson, 1992). More specifically, in addition to reporting on how feature films may be used in the classroom to teach general subject information, there have been a number of reports describing the use of feature films to teach management and organizational behavior (Serey, 1992), leadership and power (Harrington & Griffin, 1989), and the interaction between the individual and bureaucracy (Gartner, 1989). There have also been reports of the positive effects of this medium on students in regard to skill-based acquisition (Boyatzis, 1994; Flemming et al., 1990; Leeper, 1993). Huczynski and Buchanan (2006, p. 79), in commenting on Joseph Champoux's (2001b, 2001c) analysis of films, state that "film is capable of more than showing things or reinforcing a message….it creates fresh substance, challenges, dilemmas, provocations, disputes, and theories of its own."

In addition to transmitting subject information, it has also been argued that movies can be a powerful and effective medium for developing changes in students' attitudes (Walters, 1994) as well as well helping students develop their moral reasoning processes (Collier, 1993). In an important earlier study, Gladstein and Feldstein (1983) argued that films were an effective medium for developing empathy. Additionally, sociological researchers (Tipton & Tieman, 1993) have argued that feature films can be effectively used to develop students' imaginative processes. Also, there finally seems to be some consensus (Pflaster, 1988) that students generally prefer the use of feature films in the classroom as an educational medium in comparison to more traditional lecture-oriented classrooms (Serey, 1992). Without a doubt, the literature supports the notion that feature films in the classroom can be a powerful pedagogical device. However, except for a few cases (Collier, 1993; Gioia & Brass, 1985), the literature in this area is limited to general descriptions of feature film use and anecdotal reports concerning effectiveness. Those few cases that have attempted to explain why films may be more effective than other more traditional teaching methodologies have relied primarily upon a superficial rendering of Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) to explain and support the use of feature films in the classroom (Gioia & Brass, 1985; Gladstein & Feldstein, 1983).

While anecdotal reports based upon Social Learning Theory may lend credence to speculations, they do not provide specific theoretical constructs that may be examined to determine the extent of benefit to be gained or offer directions as to and how student learning gains may be maximized. For instance, drawing primarily upon Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, Gioia and Brass (1985) argue that students today learn primarily by watching and that they do not engage in passive learning or "couch potato" vegetation. Yet, without further theoretical elaboration, management theorists have a very difficult time explaining why a movie, like *The Breakfast Club* for Generation X students or *The Social Network* or *Madagascar* for Millennials (or Net Gen), may have a longer lasting impact on a particular age group in comparison to a movie like *Twelve Angry Men*. Although many of these classic films, like *Twelve Angry Men*, might appeal to faculty, it could be argued that a large number of faculty are primarily from the "Boomer" generation, thus they would find a classic film like this appealing. However, many of their students would predominately be classified as "Gen X (born approximately between 1961 and 1981) or Millennials (born 1982 to present), thus their appeal would be for films that better represent their generational group (Skiba & Barton, 2006). The next section develops and elaborates upon a theory for why certain films may be more impactful for one audience versus another audience.

A THEORETICAL BASIS FOR THE EFFECTIVE USE OF FEATURES FILMS

In reviewing most of the literature and observing some of our colleagues teaching management and leadership in undergraduate and MBA programs, it appears that their choice of films to use to teach their students is focused on some arbitrary selection or primary skill area that they want to support, such as communication, leadership, etc., in the class topic outline and not on some theoretical basis what might be right for the background and orientation of the students or how that film will be received from a learning systems perspective. It is our contention that, without consideration of theoretical elaboration on observational learning theory, the choice of feature films is at best arbitrary and sub-optimal from a learning outcomes perspective. We argue that there are two

theoretical bases to guide the selection and use of specific films. These are universalistic self-theory and contextual self-theory. We provide a brief overview and generalized application of the theories in this section of the paper.

The Universalistic Study of Self

The universalistic approach to self-psychology rests upon the objectivist notion that certain generalist observations can be deduced from the study of the self. Further, it holds that these observations can be applied across cultures and time periods to accurately explain human behavior regardless of the behavior's specific historical context (Cushman, 1995). A practical example that illustrates the objectivist/universalist approach to the study of the self is the following: the Aspen Institute in Colorado often uses the ancient Greek play *Antigone* to teach complex ethical reasoning and decision-making (e.g., idealism, honesty, and civil disobedience) to corporate CEOs. A universalistic approach to self-psychology argues that the principles raised in Sophocles' ancient Greek play have just as much relevance today to contemporary corporate governance as they did twenty-five hundred years ago in ancient Greece.

Seymour Epstein (1994) has expanded on universalistic/objectivist self-theory. He proposed a multiple information processing theory labeled cognitive-experiential self-theory (CEST), which is modeled after two-factor theory (Schacter & Singer, 1962). CEST proposes the existence of two distinct modes of processing information - the experiential system and the rational system. The experiential system is identified as holistic and affective-based. It has been compared to the episodic memory system proposed by Tulving (1985) or narrative representations, as proposed by Bruner (1986). This is contrasted with the rational system - a logical/analytical system - which is similar to the semantic (Tulving, 1985) or propositional (Bruner, 1986) structures others have proposed. Epstein provides an overview of how these systems differ. For example, the experiential system is based on an affective pleasure-pain orientation versus the rational system's logical reason orientation. Other experiential-rational dyads include associationistic connections versus logical connections and behavior modified by "vibes" from past experiences versus behavior modified by conscious appraisal of events (see Epstein, 1994, for a more complete listing of the differences between the two systems). These ideas have been expanded upon recently by a Nobel laureate in Economics, Daniel Kahneman, in his book *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (2011).

Epstein argues that most stimuli from the environment are processed effortlessly and unconsciously by the cognitive unconscious or experiential component, as this is the natural mode of operation of the human mind. However, information that is presented in a logical structured and rational manner does not appeal to the cognitive unconscious, but rather appeals to the rational system. Therefore, this information is processed by - and becomes part of - the rational system. Unfortunately, the rational system remains the secondary system and acts to mediate the response of the primary system or experiential system. Consequently, information which appeals to and becomes a part of this secondary system will not, and indeed cannot, exert the same influence over the responses and behavior of the individual as information that is processed via the primary or experiential system.

Thus, human information processing research has culminated with the identification of two very different ways of knowing and processing information. Furthermore, it is now widely recognized that there is a difference between the acquisition of intellectual knowledge and insight. Indeed, Epstein (1994) demonstrates that insight has a more compelling influence on behavior than knowledge. Information obtained from textbooks and lectures and other rational systems is clearly of a different quality than information acquired from experience. Conversely, experientially derived knowledge is often more compelling and more likely to influence behavior than is abstract knowledge (Brewin, 1989; Fazio & Zana, 1981; Shiffrin & Schneider, 1977). Therefore, it would be expected that learning which occurs through an intuitive and/or experiential approach (i.e., movies, stories, role-plays, etc.) will have a more substantial impact on students and their behavior than knowledge which is primarily aimed at the rational system.

Feature films, which are primarily narrative in nature and affective and metaphorically based, are typically (but not always) presented in such a manner as to stimulate the experiential informational processing system. Once evoked, information appealing to the system will be processed and encoded by the individual unconsciously. Hence, we begin to understand why David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia* had such a powerful effect upon the author's mind in comparison to the forgotten information contained in Shaw's book, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. The learning by the

author occurred as the experiential system worked to integrate the stimuli within the present schema, unlike the information found in Shaw's book which was presented in an analytical fashion and needed to be deliberately encoded by the reader in order for it to be retrieved. The information in the film bypassed the rational system and was unconsciously stored in the author's experiential system. Another reason why the film had such an impact upon the author is that information processed through the experiential system is of a different qualitative nature than the information processed through the rational system, which explains the author's ability to easily retrieve the insight (lesson) from *Lawrence of Arabia,* but not *Seven Pillars of Wisdom,* in response to his professor's query.

The Contextual Study of Self

The second methodological approach to the study of the self is contextual in nature. The study of the self from a contextual perspective is somewhat different from the universalistic approach in that the contextual approach assumes that not all self-phenomena is trans-historical. In other words, from a contextual perspective, to fully understand some aspects of the self, one must assume that self-behavior can only be understood accurately from the perspective of its local context. Specifically then, from a contextual perspective, there is no "trans-historical self, only local selves - no universal theory about the self, only local theories" (Cushman, 1995).

Cushman (1990) has argued that the concept of the self is contextually bound while Kohut (1977) and Lasch (1978) have maintained that each generation suffers from different problems of the self in comparison to the previous generation. For instance, Cushman (1990) pointed out that in the early part of the twentieth century, psychological problems were primarily the result of a repressed conflicted Victorian self. According to Lasch (1978), as the twentieth century came to a close, the ailments stemming from a repressed conflicted self are almost nonexistent and in their place are ailments stemming from an "empty self." Conversely, when we think of today's youth - the Net Generation (Tapscott, 2009) or Millennials who were born in the 1980s - there is also a very different sense of self. Often called "trophy kids" (Alsop, 2008) or "the most praised generation" (Zaslow, 2007), where everyone is special and yes, everyone got a trophy, this generation has a sense of the "Über Self" (a term coined by this article's authors) that reflects their strong sense of self and entitlement (Twenge, 2006).

Subsequently, the different notions of the self dictate that the effective pedagogical use of feature films has to take into account the different developmental stage of the audience's self. For example, each of the following feature films - *Twelve Angry Men*, *The Flight of the Phoenix*, *The Breakfast Club*, and *The Social Network* - can be used to illustrate the different stages of group development. Each of these films illustrates small group formation from different historical contexts. *Twelve Angry Men* would have a strong impact on people who were raised at a time when impulse control was highly valued. On the other hand, *The Breakfast Club* would more likely appeal to a generation of individuals raised at a time when impulse expression was commonly tolerated. Finally, *The Social Network* would resonate with a generation accustomed to praise and a strong sense of self-worth. Using contextual self-theory as the basis for maximizing pedagogical effectiveness would dictate using each of the above-mentioned films with very different audiences.

This concept of the contextual self is more important than ever with the diverse age and cultural groups taking MBA programs. For example, there are vast differences between the Baby Boomers and their perception of self and association with the selection of feature films that professors might use. Baby Boomers grew up in age of television where the orientation to films and film themes often had a nuclear family focus (e.g., *Father Knows Best*). Generation X grew up with video games, PC's, and email and often are described as being more individualistic in nature. Millennials are growing up in an always "on" and constantly interconnected world where their friends and family are continuously in contact through text messages, Facebook, and Twitter. Furthermore, they have grown up in an era of reality television where seemingly "regular" people's lives and talents are always on display for some form of profit or gain. Although there are these differences, a feature film from the Baby Boomer generation that stresses respect for social conventions and established institutions might be very effective with both Baby Boomer and Generation X students. Conversely, for Millennials, films' production and content need to be somewhat different. Older films, such as the 216 minute long and deliberately paced *Lawrence of Arabia*, might not be effective where *Remember the Titans* might be well received even though it is from a different time (for Millennials) because of its central "building a community" message. The *Harry Potter* film franchise may be the classic Millennial series given its complex visuals and plot, often frenetic energy, and centering around an apparently

"regular" group of friends (albeit, "ordinary" wizards) who are dealing with many of the common issues relating to growing up and who are thrust into an extraordinary situation. In short, the "magic" of Harry Potter represents norms and expectations of many Millennials. However, as theory reminds us, there are some classic figures and messages that can stand the duration of time. For example, Gordon Gekko, as the man that promoted the belief that "greed is good" in *Wall Street* and his return in *Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps* is understood by students and faculty alike.

Equally important is how external events in recent years have shaped this generation of students. Business students are finding a financial market that has probably not been seen since the Great Depression. The first decade of this century has produced unprecedented economic downturns and outrageous acts of greed ranging from Bernie Madoff and his long-running Ponzi scheme to Enron, to a housing bubble that has crippled the world. Business students are seeing record-setting bankruptcies and high unemployment, all coupled with increased CEO compensations. Events such as these has resulted in a rash of docudramas, such as *Money Never Sleeps*, *Too Big to Fail*, *The Smartest Guys in the Room*, or *The Insider*, showing not only how our financial system has failed us, but a new cast of villains whose greed led to financial collapse. The plight or result of these recent economic conditions are being shown both humorously and seriously ranging from *Horrible Bosses* to George Clooney's recent film *Up in the Air* where he plays a character who fires employees. The next section of this paper attempts to provide a guideline for selecting films to use in class based on the insights presented above.

A SELF-THEORY GUIDED PROCESS FOR CLASSROOM FILM SELECTION

The idea presented in this paper, which we hope will serve as a useful pedagogical guide for the use of feature films in the classroom, rests upon the combined insights of universalistic and contextual self theories. We apply these two theories below to illustrate both why and how films can be successfully used to improve student learning.

Overview of the Process

Theory tells us that films can be successfully used in the classroom because they often deal with universal themes that transcend time, place, and culture. However, while films often deal with universal themes, theory also informs and reminds us that specific films will likely appeal primarily to one of two very different learning systems (experiential or rational), therefore the instructor will need to carefully consider which system best suits each film if student learning of the subject material being illustrated is going to be maximized. Theory also reminds us that the decision about what film to use needs to be based on the unique (contextual) characteristics of the audience. While many teachers focus primarily on selecting a film that matches the content of their overall learning outcomes (e.g., ethical issues, leadership, decision-making, etc.), we argue that while overall objectives will drive the process, more concrete and specific objectives will typically be the last step in the selection process.

The first step of the process, using the dictates of universal and contextual self theories, is to decide whether the primary goal is to appeal to the students' rational or the experiential learning systems, as this will heavily influence how the film is chosen, how students need to watch the film, and how it is debriefed. Although, we believe films tend to be more commonly apropos for supporting experiential learning systems and it is likely the reason most instructors use films in the classroom, even when they are not consciously aware of the theoretical reasons for doing so. For example, where the goal is a rational learning systems approach, it may be best to give students clearly presented debriefing questions up front so they can take careful notes. Conversely, experiential-based assignments may want to focus on immediate and unscripted emotive feedback as the debriefing starting point.

If the goal is to appeal to the students' experiential systems as the basis of the learning experience, the instructor needs to pay close attention to the general composition of the students' background, history, and age. This is especially true if, as we suspect will often be the case, the backgrounds of the students differ from those of the instructor, as the teacher may not even be consciously aware of these differences and thus unconsciously be working according to his/her own patterns. For example, as noted earlier, Baby Boomers, Gen X, and Millennials all have unique characteristics that will heavily influence the selection of an appropriate film from a contextual perspective.

We also urge instructors to consider other important background elements as well - for example, urban versus rural populations or perhaps a classroom that is comprised of executive MBA engineers. The key point is to understand the important context of the students. From a contextual perspective, the 1960's themes of rebellion and freedom in *Easy Rider* that so appealed to Boomers will, at best, be viewed as a curious history note to today's conformist, structured, and achievement-oriented Millennials. This is not to say that *Easy Rider* can never be used with Millennial students, as it may be appropriate for use as a rational learning systems perspective where the idea is to get students to identify and/or describe the specific situations that the film portrays. Thus, the question is not whether *Easy Rider* works in the classroom, but it is instead deciding if the goals are rational learning outcomes that are apropos for a specific set of learning outcomes across all groups or whether the goals are deep behaviorally-based internalization of concepts that will likely be possible with one group (Baby Boomers) and impractical with another (Millennials).

The next step in the process is the selection of the actual film. This step may be somewhat iterative as the instructor looks at the available pool of films that have met the general filtering criteria but that may or may not match the specific learning goals (e.g., while many films can show leadership, the specific learning outcome may be focusing on leader-member dynamics). The Hartwick Leadership Institute (2012) provides very detailed material for students and instructors which target specific management topics and learning objectives that can assist with the last steps of this process; but again, we emphasize that instructors should "filter out" films from resources like this that don't match the initial selection criteria, especially as it relates to the experimental and rational learning systems. Another resource is Huczynski and Buchanan's (2006) list of nearly 40 films and their concurrent management learning focus. For example, they note that *American Beauty* can aid in the teaching of job satisfaction and motivation while *Contact* can be used to explore organization politics. Additionally, the *Journal of Management Education* routinely publishes articles that focus on how to use a particular film or video clip to explore a management concept (cf. Billsberry & Gilbert, 2008; Holbrook, 2009; Taylor & Provitera, 2011 as recent examples). Finally, Joseph Champoux (1999, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2004, 2006, 2007a, 2007b) is a one man cottage industry of reference information for using films in management education. His work includes hundreds of summaries of scenes from classic and contemporary films to explain organizational theories and concepts.

Finally, we emphasize that the instructor also needs to consider the design of the debriefing, especially for those films attempting to connect to students' experiential learning systems. While rational systems-based examples may be fine with straightforward identification and discussion-type debriefing questions, overly rational approaches to experiential-based exercises may significantly reduce the effectiveness of the student's learning experiences. For example, Champoux (2001b, 2001c) discusses, and Huczynski and Buchanan (2004) elaborate upon, eight ways of using films, including film as case, experimental exercise, metaphor, satire, symbolism, meaning, experience, and, time. Regardless of the Champoux "film as" categorization approach used, we remind instructors that effective debriefing designs will continue to be heavily dependent on the underlying learning system instructors are attempting to connect with.

A Brief Example of the Process in Action

Below is an example of a group and individual exercise for the film *Fried Green Tomatoes* (Flagg & Sobieski, 1991). This film is shown as part of a virtue ethics class that is heavily geared toward experiential learning activities, thus most of its activities are designed to tap into students' experiential learning systems. The primary pedagogical focus of this film is to explore the nature of empathy and the ethical virtues of care, loyalty, and friendship with students. Despite the fact that the film was released in 1991 and its setting is the rural pre-Depression Deep South United States - and thus unlikely to be part of most Millennial students' experiences and natural movie-viewing choices - its selection for use in a class populated primarily by Millennial freshmen was guided by the insights from contextual self-theory. In particular, Millennials connect well with this film due to its portrayal of exceptionally strong friendship bonds as a group of very disparate characters essentially create their own family and community - its connections closely mirror the Millennial experience, albeit without the technological assistance of Facebook, Twitter, and text messaging. The film deals extensively with issues such as racism and gender equality, yet it receives relatively little attention from our students since it is often outside their own personal experiences. We believe that conversations on these topics would be much more likely to occur if the students were primarily Baby Boomers who came of age during the Civil Rights and Women's Liberation

movements. Thus, in following contextual self-theory, we would likely select an entirely different focus and set of questions for the film if we were to use it with Baby Boomers.

As part of our teaching, we give students preliminary instructions encouraging them to watch the film in its entirety before the student proceeds to answer any of the study questions, thus preventing them from dropping into a rational learning systems approach as they are watching the film. Specifically, we divide students into small groups of 3-4 to respond to the study questions. This group approach mirrors both the learning material of the film and also honors this generation's strong preference to share and interact with their friends, and thus further honors the contextual learning imperatives of the Millennials. After the students' view the film, they are asked to respond to the following study questions in their groups:

Study Questions

1. Describe the way the screenwriter and the director of the movie use interpersonal relations to explore the foundation of moral-ethical values.
2. Based upon your view of the movie, how does the concept of "the law" relate to the concept of what is right and wrong?
3. How is the concept of "care" interwoven throughout the film?
4. What part does the community play in this film?
5. Selfishness, self-pity, and selflessness play an important part in the movie. Describe scenes in the film that illustrate these behaviors. Subsequently what part does courage and self-sacrifice play in the film? Based upon your viewing of the film, where does the concept of caring come from?
6. Who are the major characters in this movie? Describe the nature of their relationship among the film's main and minor characters.

As an adjunct to this group viewing, we have added an individual exercise that is focused on the theme of friendship shown in the film (which further reinforces learning through the experiential system). The exercise is posed to the students as an "individual experiment". Briefly, after viewing the film and responding to the group study questions, students are each asked to call their best friend and set up a meeting. As a rule, the students are instructed to have no alcohol involved in the exercise and are reminded that lunch is always a good venue to conduct this experiment. During this meeting, each student is told to tell their friend that they consider them their "best friend" and, more importantly, would like to share with them some of the reasons they consider them their best friend - e.g., they are good listeners, trustworthy, compassionate, etc. The students are told that they can tell their friend they are doing a class experiment, but it is not necessary. In addition, they are to ask their friend "what special gifts they think they possess". Students are instructed to ask their friend politely and to be specific as possible. After the meeting, students are asked to write up a summary of what they were feeling at the time of the meeting and also what was the response of their friend in telling them how much they valued their friendship. Finally, students are asked to include in their write-up of the meeting at least "three concepts" that were illustrated in the film.

Again, both selection of the film, the debriefing questions, and the "experiment" were designed with experiential learning and the unique characteristics of the Millennial generation in mind. Millennials - the Facebook generation - are deeply and continuously connected to the lives of their friends and families and the questions guide them through the core elements of this experience. Furthermore, the exercise is ultimately one that asks the students to both deliver praise to a friend and to seek out specific praise from the same friend. Considering that this generation has been nicknamed the "trophy generation" (Alsop, 2008) and the "most praised generation" (Zaslow, 2007), it should not be a surprise that students typically report back that they find the activity to be both valuable and fun.

CONCLUSION

Feature films offer the management educator an opportunity to tell a story and teach an important management and leadership concept and it has become a common teaching tool used in management classrooms in business schools throughout this country and abroad. Although feature films are effective with the adult learners, they are especially effective for Generation X and Net Generation students who are brought up with MTV, emails,

and surfing the web. In addition, feature films can have a strong lasting impact on students' learning and behavior. As Hunter (1990) noted, films offer a "transcendent" experience and a sense of engagement which can be long-lasting.

However, essential to using feature films as a teaching tool is understanding the theoretical concepts of the learning and cognitive theory and being able to reflect on these theories in the selection and application of your feature film. In our own work, we have used feature films to illiterate theoretical concepts in a variety of disparate areas, including leadership theory, small group development, culture transmission, and organizational behavior. Armed with the ideas proposed by universal (Epstein, 1994) and contextual (Cushman, 1990) self theories, the management educator can now begin to maximize the impact that films can have on student learning in the classroom. This is especially important in this new century and new world where images and messages can instantly be accessed across classrooms of management students worldwide.

For future research, the authors are exploring which "specific" films work best with the highly connected Net Generation that is living in an increasingly flat world. Although the Net Generation appears to have a sense of this Über Self – as the authors have termed it because they are able to upload a short video clip that can show themselves around the world in an instant - this generation, perhaps more than any others, is trying to find themselves in this uncertain world, and this new identity can be seen from the films that they watch.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

Dr. Charles S. Mathews is a Founding Faculty member at Florida Gulf Coast University. He comes from the University of Southern California where he was a research scientist in the Center for Crisis Management. Mathews earned the Ph.D. in business administration from the University of Southern California; the M.S. in psychology and the B.S. in social and behavioral science from the University of Utah. He is an organizational consultant specializing in change management, executive team building and technological and organizational innovation. Presently Dr. Mathews is writing a series of children's books on moral virtues. E-mail: chuckm@fgcu.edu

Dr. Charles J. Fornaciari is a Professor of Management and the Uncommon Friends Chair in Ethics in the Lutgert College of Business at Florida Gulf Coast University in Fort Myers, FL. He received an MBA in finance and a Ph.D. in strategic management from Florida State University. His primary teaching interests are strategy and ethics. He has published in areas including the role of spirituality and religion in management, effective classroom teaching practices, corporate strategic change, and the use of technology in education. E-mail: cfornaci@fgcu.edu (Corresponding author)

Dr. Arthur Rubens is a Professor of Management in Lutgert College of Business and founding faculty of Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) in Fort Myers, FL. He currently teaches in the BS, MBA, and EMBA programs at FGCU. He is also actively involved in executive professional education with FGCU's partners, as well as international educational degree programs. Dr. Rubens primary areas of teaching and research interests are in Business Strategy, Leadership, International Management, Economic Development, Entrepreneurship, Ethics, and Quality Management. E-mail: arubens@fgcu.edu

REFERENCES

1.   Alsop, R. (2008). *The trophy kids grow up: How the Millennial generation is shaking up the workplace*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
2.   Anderson, D. D. (1992). Using feature films as a tool for analysis in a psychology and law course. *Teaching of Psychology, 19*, 155-157.
3.   Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
4.   Billsberry, J., & Gilbert, L. H. (2008). Using Roald Dahl's Charlie and the Chocolate Factory to teach different recruitment and selection paradigms. *Journal of Management Education, 32*(2), 228-247.
5.   Blanchard, K. (1986). *One minute manager*. New York: Wm Morrow Publishers.
6.   Blanchard, K. (1987). Leadership and the one minute manager. Escondido, CA: Blanchard Training and Development.

7.   Blanchard, K. (1990). Team building and The Wizard of Oz. Escondido, CA: Blanchard Training and Development.
8.   Boyatzis, C. J. (1994). Using feature films to teach social development. *Teaching of Psychology, 21*, 99-101.
9.   Brewin, C. R. (1989). Cognitive change processes in psychotherapy. *Psychological Review, 96*, 379-394.
10.   Bruner, J. S. (1986). *Actual minds, possible worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
11.   Buchanan, L., & Hoffman, M. (2001). Everything I know about leadership I learned from the movies. *INC, 22*(3), 1.
12.   Bumpus, M. A. (2005). Using motion pictures to teach management. *Journal of Management Education, 29*(6), 792-815.
13.   Champoux, J. E. (1999). Film as a teaching resource. *Journal of Management Inquiry, 8*(2), 206-217.
14.   Champoux, J. E. (2001a). Animated films as a teaching resource. *Journal of Management Education, 25*(1), 79-100.
15.   Champoux, J. E. (2001b). *Management: Using films to visualize principles and practices*. Mason, OH: South-Western College Publishing.
16.   Champoux, J. E. (2001c). *Organizational behavior: Using film to visualize principles and practices*. Mason, OH: South-western College Publishing/Thomson Learning.
17.   Champoux, J. E. (2004). *Our feature presentation: Management*. Mason, OH: South-western.
18.   Champoux, J. E. (2006). *Our feature presentation: Strategy*. Mason, OH: Thompson South-Western.
19.   Champoux, J. E. (2007a). *Organizational behavior: Using films to visualize principles and practices*. Mason, OH: Thomson South-Western.
20.   Champoux, J. E. (2007b). *Our feature presentation: Human resource management*. Mason, OH: South-western.
21.   Collier, G. (1993). Learning moral judgment in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education, 18*(3), 287-297.
22.   Cushman, P. (1990). Why the self is empty: Toward a historically situated psychology. *American Psychologist, 45*, 599-611.
23.   Cushman, P. (1995). *Constructing the self, constructing America: A cultural history of psychotherapy*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Book Group.
24.   Doris, P. (1978). Teaching moral education: Principles of instruction. *Peabody Journal of Education, 56*, 33-44.
25.   Epstein, S. (1994). Integration of the cognitive and psychodynamic unconscious. *American Psychologist, 49*, 709-724.
26.   Fazio, R. H., & Zana, M. P. (Eds.). (1981). *Direct experiences and attitude consistency* (Vol. 14). New York: Academic Press.
27.   Flagg, F., & Sobieski, C. (Writers) & J. Avnet (Director). (1991). Fried green tomatoes. J. Avnet (Producer). Universal Pictures: United States.
28.   Flemming, Z., Pidemont, L., & Hiam, C. (1990). Images of madness: Feature films in teaching psychology. *Teaching of Psychology, 17*, 185-187.
29.   Gartner, W. B. (1989). To live: The obligation of individuality [review of Ikiru]. *Organizational Behavior Teaching Review, 14*(2), 138-143.
30.   Gioia, D., & Brass, D. (1985). Teaching the TV generation: The case for observational learning. *Organizational Behavior Teaching Review, 10*, 11-19.
31.   Gladstein, G., & Feldstein, J. (1983). Using film to increase counselor empathic experiences. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 23*(December), 125-131.
32.   Harrington, K. V., & Griffin, R. W. (1989). Ripley, Burke, Gorman and friends: Using the film *Aliens* to teach leadership and power. *Organizational Behavior Teaching Review, 14*(3), 79-86.
33.   Hartwick Leadership Institute. (2012). from http://www.hartwickinstitute.org/
34.   Higgins, S. O. L. (2011). The business movie as genre & tool. *Movies for Business*. Accessed February 26, 2012 from http://moviesforbusiness.com/business-movie-as-genre-tool/
35.   Holbrook, R. L., Jr. (2009). OB in a video box: Using Remember the Titans as a microcosm for the organizational behavior course *Journal of Management Education, 33*(4), 490-513.
36.   Huczynski, A. (1994). Teaching motivation and influencing strategies using The Magnificent Seven. *Journal of Management Education, 18*(2), 273-278.

37.   Huczynski, A., & Buchanan, D. (2004). Theory from fiction: A narrative process on the pedagogic use of feature film. *Journal of Management Education, 28*(6), 702-726.
38.   Huczynski, A., & Buchanan, D. (2006). Feature films in management education: Beyond illustration and entertainment. *Journal of Organizational Behavior Education, 1*, 73-94.
39.   Hunter, P. (1990). A designer guide to scriptwriting: Video capabilities and limitations. *Performance and Instruction, 29*(3), 18-22.
40.   Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, fast and slow*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
41.   Kohut, H. (1977). *The restoration of the self*. New York: International Universities Press.
42.   Lasch, C. (1978). *The culture of narcissism: American life in the age of diminishing expectations*. New York: Norton.
43.   Leeper, R. (1993). Mutiny on the Bounty: A case study for leadership courses. Paper presented at the Proceedings of the Annual Central States/Southern States Communication Association, Lexington, KY.
44.   McCambridge, J. (2003). 12 Angry Men: A study in dialogue. *Journal of Management Education, 27*(3), 384-401.
45.   Nissam-Sabat, D. (1979). The teaching of abnormal psychology through the cinema. *Teaching of Psychology, 6*, 121-123.
46.   Pflaster, G. (1988). Students' preferences in types of classroom Instruction and the compatibility between teaching/learning styles. Saint Ann de Bellevue, Quebec: John Abbott College.
47.   Schacter, S., & Singer, J. (1962). Cognitive, social, and physiological determinants of emotional state. *Psychological Review, 69*(5), 379-399.
48.   Seglin, J. (2001, August 7-8). HMU goes to the movies. *Harvard Management Update*.
49.   Serey, T. (1992). Carpe diem: Lessons about life and management from Dead Poets Society. *Journal of Management Education, 16*(3), 374-381.
50.   Shiffrin, R. M., & Schneider, W. (1977). Controlled and automatic human information processing. *Psychological Review, 84*, 127-190.
51.   Skiba, D., & Barton, A. (2006). Adapting your teaching to accomodate the Net Generation of learners. *The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing, 3*(2), manuscript 4.
52.   Smith, G. W. (2009). Using films as the primary instructional medium to teach organizational behavior. *Journal of Management Education, 33*(4), 462-489.
53.   Tapscott, D. (2009). *Grown up digital: How the Net Generation is changing your world*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
54.   Taylor, V. F., & Provitera, M. J. (2011). Teaching labor relations with *Norma Rae*. *Journal of Management Education, 35*(5), 749-766.
55.   Tipton, D., & Tieman, K. (1993). Using feature film to facilitate sociological thinking. *Teaching Sociology, 21*.
56.   Tulving, E. (1985). *Elements of episodic memory*. New York: Oxford University Press.
57.   Twenge, J. M. (2006). *Generation Me: Why today's young Americans are more confident, assertive, entitled--and more miserable than ever before*. New York: Free Press.
58.   Walters, A. S. (1994). Using visual media to reduce homophobia. *Journal of Sex Education and Therapy, 20*(2), 92-100.
59.   Wood, T. (2001). Spectacular metaphors: From theater to cinema. *Journal of Organizational Change Management, 18*(1), 11-20.
60.   Zaslow, J. (2007, April 20). The most praised generation goes to work, *Wall Street Journal,* p. W1.