Using diverse examples from film and media to teach Communication Studies

**Proposed work**

*Use of Multi Media in Higher Education*

Research demonstrates that using clips from popular videos can be a useful tool for enhancing learning (Borko & Pittman, 2008; Dawkins, 2010; Richardson & Kile, 1999 ). Media, when connected conceptually to course content can help with active learning processes (Moskovich & Sharf, 2012). Using media can help students with critical thinking by providing visual examples that reinforce lecture content (Bluestone, 2000). Using media examples increases retention by delivering content through different channels (Moskovich & Sharf, 2012). These findings are replicated across various fields of study. Examples of this include (but are not limited to); Teacher Education (Borko & Pittman, 2008; Brophy, 2004; LeFevre, 2003; Moreno & Valdez, 2007; Pryor, & Bitter, 2008; Richardson & Kile, 1999; Seago, 2003; Sherin, 2003; Wang & Hartley, 2003), Interpersonal Communication (Proctor & Adler, 1991), Writing (Leland, 1994), Sociology (Demerath, 1981;Tipton & Tiemann, 1993), and Diversity and sensitivity training (Pintertis & Atkinson, 1998; Tyler & Guth, 1999). What all of these example share is evidence that use of video examples aid in learning in the college environment.

Many of these projects provide examples of specific movies or television shows that demonstrate specific concepts from a specific field of study. For example, the Proctor & Adler (1991) list 72 feature films with suggestions for the Communication topics that each film covers. For example, an instructor could show the movie “Parenthood” and the authors suggest this movie will cover the Interpersonal topics of conflict and family. Lists such as these are helpful for an instructor. The problem with this list (and others like it) is that the chosen examples include films and TV with writers, producers, and actors that are predominately white. The Proctor and Adler list (1991) includes only a handful of films that feature a diverse cast.

In 2002, Proctor released “Communication in Film III” in an attempt to provide a more updated, complete, and robust guide for media use specifically for Interpersonal Communication courses. This volume provides sections on both feature length films as well as identifying specific scenes from popular films that relate to interpersonal concepts. In this updated version, there are still only a handful of movies that represent a diverse population. Other recent publications such as, “How it’s done: Using Hitch as a guide to uncertainty reduction theory (Dawkins, 2010),” have used examples with a more diverse cast. However, this article discusses only one film and one application. It would be useful to have a list, such as the one proposed by Proctor (2002), that provides a variety of media sources (for example TV and YouTube) and maps them across multiple concepts in Communication Studies and that include more diversity in the writers, producers and characters. The goal of the proposed work is to fill this need. In doing so, the researcher will also learn essential concepts in Communication, learn how to create video content, and learn how to prepare a manuscript for publication in an educational journal.

**Background**

*Why Diverse media examples matter*

Entertainment can be used as an educational method to promote healthier social behaviors and development (Singhal, A., & Brown, W. J. (1996). If students look for course content and supporting materials to find evidence of their social group and acknowledgement of their viewpoint throughout the curriculum and do not find any, they may experience alienation and withdrawal from the educational process (McKeachie, 2001). Diverse examples benefit all of our students. As Gabriel (2018) points out in her book on success in the classroom, “Having examples of people from multiple cultural backgrounds can be a powerful tool for building connections for all our students-not just for historically underserved and underrepresented students (pg. 39).” Using entertainment as an educational process will bring knowledge on an issue that can change observable behavior dealing with the educational issue. (Singhal, A., & Brown, W. J. (1996). By including diverse and cultural films in entertainment-educational presentations, it brings real life examples that are not experienced by the general public. The entertainment-educational method can promote an understanding of a different lifestyle that can generate multicultural conversations to better understand communicative differences (Singhal, A., & Brown, W. J. (1996). Also, diverse and cultural films in educational presentations will aid cross-cultural interactions and make functioning in today’s society more manageable. This will allow intrapersonal, interpersonal, small group and professional communication easier to understand. Intrapersonal communication will be affected through self-reflection from the ability to see how diverse and cultural differences affect oneself. Interpersonal communication will be affected through the ability to see how diversity and cultural differences affects personal relationships from the entertainment-educational efforts (Singhal, A., & Brown, W. J. (1996). Small group and professional communication will be affected through the ability to better understand how to work well with others that have a diverse and/or different cultural background. All of which will affect everyday life and how one can interaction with others. It is important that“.. we can find ways to start infusing culturally relevant materials into our courses. Because as role models and mentors to our students, it is important that we take the time and effort to ensure that our classrooms, and our course materials, are culturally inclusive (Gabriel, 2018; pg. 40).”

*The value of student produced digital media*

While this project will ultimately create a useful guide for Communication educators, there is also educational value in creating video content. For example, one study found “student-generated digital video tasks are strongly aligned with principles of independent, authentic learning (Kearney & Schuck, 2005; pg. 2867).” Another study by the same author found that when students produce video content, it provided them with, “contemporary ways of communicating, culminating in a product that could be shared and discussed with a real audience (Kearnery & Schuck, 2006; pg. 205).”

**Methodology**

Dr. Erlandson and I will replicate and update discussion guides from Proctor (2002) using recent, diverse examples from popular media to illustrate important communication concepts. This will involve several stages. First, we will purchase Camtasia and I will take the tutorials to learn how to create and edit video content. Once I am confident I have learned this, we will identify one communication topic for practice. I will find an example from popular media, create a clip and prepare a draft of a discussion guide. Once this process is satisfactory, I will create further content and discussion guides. Dr. Erlandson and I will meet regularly to develop new lists of topics until we have completed about twenty scenes with accompanying discussion guides. See Appendix A for an example of the discussion guide.

When the short clips are completed, I will move to feature films. Again, replicating and updating Proctor’s (2002) discussion guide, I will view movies aimed at featuring multiple communication concepts in the same source and create a discussion guide for each film that illustrates how the concepts are used in the film as examples. See Appendix B for an example of the discussion guide.

At the end of the project, we will compile all the discussion guides into one manuscript. Video clips themselves will be published on Screencast for use in Dr. Erlandson’s courses.

**Proposed Outcomes**

The project has several goals. The observable outcome will be a publishable compendium for instructors in Communication Studies to use for diverse classroom examples. I will also do an Elkin Isaac presentation where I discuss the project and it’s outcomes. I will both learn and reinforce Communication concepts and finally, I will learn how to create digital content.