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The Social Construction and Broaden-Build Effects of Appreciation, Recognition, and Reward at Work As Portrayed in Four Contemporary Films

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By

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ABSTRACT

Many employees feel underappreciated, unrecognized, and undervalued in today's corporate, white collar environment (Herman& Dasborough, 2008; Ariani, D. W. 2013). Global economic crises, rising housing prices and high unemployment have all contributed to the prevailing thought that it an employee should just be happy with having a job. However, many organizations have found that evoking positive emotion in the workplace is a win-win situation for them and their employees (Lutgen-Sandvik, Riforgiate & Fletcher, 2009). In order to investigate what is enacted to produce positivity in the workplace, this project applied content analysis to four commercial film dated 2004 to 2013. Verbal utterances, tangible awards, written forms of acknowledgement and symbolic actions were among some of the characteristics that were categorized as evoking positive, negative or ambiguous emotions. The findings of this study suggest that verbal utterances produced the most positivity while symbolic actions produced the most negative emotions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1

Introduction and Rationale

My thesis examines the themes, dialogue, actions, and nonverbal representations featured in four contemporary films focusing on workplace interactions. Although appreciation, recognition, and reward messages positively affect working adults, we currently know little about the language (verbal and non-verbal) and symbols that comprise those messages. We also know little about the perceived effects of these messages, despite considerable theorizing concerning the effects of positive emotions at work (e.g., Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003; Dutton, Roberts, & Bednar, 2011). To date, few communication studies focus on the specific language, non-verbal cues, and symbols that evoke positive emotion at work or the effects of those emotional experiences on receivers. Understanding these features of organizational life is important because positive emotions have a wide range of positive effects on people and organizations whose impact goes beyond the workplace.

Contrary to capitalist ideology, which suggests that money is a strong motivator, Northern American employees often feel positive emotions in response to social and other stimuli such as working with interesting people, working on challenging items, and experiencing others' appreciation and positive regard. Indeed, research points to monetary means as only a moderate motivational force in terms of job satisfaction, job enrichment, and job stability (i.e., reduced job turnover) (Kohn, 1998). Positive emotion can also be motivating. Depending on the situation, people involved, and context in which the positive experience takes place, recognition, appreciation, and rewards can be an effective means of indirect motivation.

This thesis will explore four types of communicative interaction that evoke positive emotion at work: recognition, appreciation, and reward (Lutgen-Sandvik, Riforgiate, & Fletcher, 2011). The study will extend earlier work and will augment past communication research and extend the current state of inquiry into positive emotional experiences and discourses in the workplace through a content analysis using four major motion pictures. The four films I have chosen include *Moneyball* (2011), *Wolf of Wall Street* (2013), *Social Network* (2010), and *In Good Company* (2004). Each one of these films contains many scenes in which characters attempt to evoke positive emotions within the workplace. The films depict a corporate culture where interoffice interaction is important to achieve objectives. This fact is evident by the amount of money and resources spent to promote a positive environment within the workplace (Hackman & Johnson, 2009). Corporate buzz words like team building, group cohesion, and leadership development are now part of the normal business nomenclature. However, the effectiveness of many of these programs, directives and bonding exercises are difficult to track and monitor. Various managerial studies have shown that although these extracurricular activities have proven to increase cooperation and productivity among employees in a before-and-after analysis, many of the benefits associated with these one-time events are short lived. (Salas, Rozell, Mullen, & Driskell, 1999; Tannenbaum, Beard, & Salas, 1992).

Rather than allocate resources to a costly singular event, many of these same corporations have decided to shift their resources to promote a positive workplace every day. This shift in ideology has infiltrated mainstream media as successful films now depict how interoffice dynamics can impact an employee's mental well-being. In each of the four films selected for analysis, evoking positive emotion is not limited to singular events or pre-planned excursions but rather to everyday occurrences. This is one of the main reasons I chose these four films. Another

reason I chose these four films is that each was released during the 2000s. This date is important because it allows me to make connections and references to contemporary social constructionism and modern workplace dynamics.

Finally, the reason that I chose these films is for their critical and popular success. Not only did I factor in the academic worthiness of these four films in terms of quality and content, but I believe that these films resonate with the general populace. I think that a good barometer of how well a film represents the social structure of its times is by how many people pay to see the film. Critical review sites such as *Rotten Tomatoes* and *Metacritic* give these four films above average ratings with *Boiler Room* being rated as one of IMDB's (Internet Movie Database) top 5000 movies of all time. Their critical acclaim, coupled with box office success, gives credence as to why these films are worthy of academic analysis.

Conducting a content analysis of films can uncover themes of portrayal, commentary on current sociocultural norms, and the promotion or marginalization of mainstream ideology (Escamilla, Cradock, Kawachi, 2000). Using the lens of content analysis to investigate communicative phenomena allows scholars to reflect and report the underlying themes presented in such a wide-reaching medium (Himes & Thompson, 2012; Padilla-Walker, Coyne, Fraser, & Stockdale, 2013). I will use qualitative content analysis to adequately and dialectically assess the ways in which employees are motivated at the workplace. Many contemporary scholars (Krippendorff, 2012; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Neuendorf, 2002) use content analysis as a mechanism to interpret concepts, procedures, and imagery to formulate a larger context of meaning. The rationale for choosing the content analysis method includes simplification of thematic analysis, as well as the richness and thick description that qualitative data offers.

Another reason for choosing this particular subject is my interest in how emotion plays a role in the workplace. During my professional career in real estate, I was curious as to why certain employees seemed to be more motivated, committed, or confident in their involvement at the workplace. After conducting limited and casual interviews with my coworkers, I came to understand that many of these individuals differed in their opinions about events evoking positive emotions. The unique and personal nature of these narratives sparked my interest in conducting further exploration into what evokes positive emotions in the workplace. I was curious as to how mainstream media portrayed these same communicative phenomena. More specifically, I wanted to see if popular media, in this case films, mirrored what I had heard and experienced myself. This desire originated from the way in which these interactions uncovered a richness and distinctiveness of information. It was at this point that I formed a desire to conduct a qualitative study involving contextual analysis of major motion pictures which depict positive emotion within the workplace.

The decision to use content analysis includes many factors. When effective data collection is combined with analysis, descriptive content analysis can provide a trustworthy source of scientific information (Elo, Kaarianen, Kanste, Polkki, Utrianen, & Kyngas, 2014). These four movies illustrate the connectivity between cause (e.g., verbal utterances) and effect (e.g., positive emotion). Given this relationship between these two factors, I chose these four films for four main reasons. First, I am familiar with these films as I own all four. Second, all four films are modern films (post 2000) in which contemporary workplace dynamics involving communication are relevant and up to date. Third, all four films are connected in a way that evoking positive emotion in the workplace is a main component of the overall plot and theme.

Given the fact that few communication studies to date have focused on the specific language, non-verbal cures and symbols that evoke positive emotion at work, I have elected to research these message characteristics as presented in four contemporary films focusing on workplace communication. My study will employ content analysis methods and will seek to answer the following research questions concerning the four films:

RQ1:   What language as depicted in the films comprises or constitutes appreciation, recognition, and reward at work? (e.g., What motivational, supportive, or praise words or terms resonate with characters in the films?)

RQ2.   What non-verbal public actions as depicted in the films comprise appreciation, recognition, and reward at work? (e.g., What public actions by others made film characters feel positive emotion?)

RQ3.   What symbolic forms of tangible rewards as depicted in the films evoke positive Emotions in their characters?

RQ4.   What are the effects of feeling appreciated, recognized, and rewarded and how do these effects play out in the film – changes in plot, characters and overall narrative?

Answering these questions is important for organizations because positive emotional experiences can improve larger features of corporate culture, increase productivity, improve retention, and reduce turnover (Isen & Baron, 1991; Staw, Sutton, & Pelled, 1994). Answering the questions is important to employees also because positive emotion contributes to improved health, mental and physical (Floyd, Mikkelson, Hesse, & Pauley, 2007). The next chapter of this thesis will provide an overview of relevant literature pertaining to theories underlying this study and discussions of the benefits of positive emotion and the importance of position emotion-organization research.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The goal of this literature review is to identify relevant research for my study of the power of positive workplace experiences. This literature review draws on works in social construction, broaden and build theories, the benefits of positive emotion, and the importance of positive emotion-organization research in order to examine how language constitutes appreciation, recognition, and reward and to explore how positive emotional responses lead to constructive, positive communication and behavior.

Theoretical Foundations

The two theories that inform this study are social constructionism and the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. Below, I outline the two theories' basic assumptions, past applications, and relevance to my proposed study.

<u>Social Constructionism</u>

Basic Assumptions. Authors Berger and Luckman (1991) theorize that social phenomena, including what positive experiences at the workplace might look like, develop in social contexts. The main theme in this theory is the process in which a social construct is formed and reaffirmed in the workplace. I chose four key assumptions of this theory to form foundational premises for this proposed study. First, a social constructionist view of appreciation, praise, and recognition refers to the individual's dependence on the group's larger interpretation of the context and actions associated with this event. An example of this dependence is present when the praise, the words of affirmation directed to the individual, has no intrinsic meaning beyond the setting in which the action took place. In this case the social

context – the meaning and existence of what is to be praised by both the individual and the group – can greatly determine what the "actual" meaning of the utterance for the people in a particular setting.

Second, Fulk (1993) states that the more connectivity, shared beliefs, and values felt between coworkers, the more a person will engage in joint sense-making and mediated interaction. Many social constructionists contend that cognitive behaviors are associated with the knowledge of social and symbolic interaction. This theoretical framework aligns itself with my research in the way in which I intend to discover how four contemporary American films depict words, actions, and tangible rewards that resonate with employee characters relative to positive experiences in the workplace. In addition to the exact enacts that evoke these positive experiences in the workplace, social learning theory, in particular the process of modeling (Bandura, 1986), outlines what it means to feel appreciated, respected, wanted, and otherwise valued at the workplace.

A key component of this theory describes various verbal expressions that preclude the attraction to the desired group. Group affiliation is predicated on the expressions and gestures of appreciation, recognition, and gratitude felt by the incoming employee. Moreover, the absence of this internalization process implies an absence of convergence between employee and organization/peer group. Thus the less attractive, via the communicative vehicle of verbal affirmations and nonverbal gestures, the less communication occurs between these two entities (Back, 1951; Festinger, Schachter, & Back, 1950; McCauley, 1989; Tuckman, 1965).

Past applications. Social constructionism has been used in a wide body of research including, but not limited to, the social construction of email use by scientists and engineers (Fulk, 1993), communication of power (Benford & Hunt, 1992), and mass media renderings of reality (Adoni

& Mane, 1984). Specific to work life, research using a constructionist perspective has explored how this theoretical framework may be applied to organizational communication research. In particular, I will look at the way in which social construction influences how employees feel in the workplace. An underpinning of past organizational communication research states that communicative resources, both tangible and intangible, are one way by which an employee can make sense of the workplace. This research focuses on film depictions of (a) positive experiences in the workplace, (b) the various ways in which an employee can experience this positivity, and (c) how organizations can foster this positive environment for current and future employees. Although other communication scholars have conducted similar studies (Luthans, 2000; Isen & Baron, 1991; Staw & Pelled, 1994; Kohn, 1998) this study differs in four fundamental areas.

First, this study focuses its attention around film depictions of verbal utterances that create positive emotions in employee characters. Related to other organizational research, this analysis of film interactions places emphasis on the lower level employee rather than the supervisor. This perspective differs from recent communication and management studies in the way the "bottom-up" approach helps to illuminate the feelings and thoughts of the larger workforce (Iun & Huang, 2007; Parsons, Reid, & Crow, 2003; Schyns, 2004). Viewing positivity from this standpoint can shift the focus from motivation to emotional empowerment. Although the hope of this study is to examine a linkage between positivity and production, the focus is what makes an employee feel good about where they spend the majority of their waking hours.

Second, this study builds on the work of another well-respected organizational communication scholar, Pamela Lutgen-Sandvik. Lutgen-Sandvik addresses many

communication phenomenon in her work dealing with workplace bullying, employment

metaphors, and employment trauma and stigmatization involving verbal abuse (Lutgen-Sandvik,

2003; Alberts, Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2005; Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2007).

The application of this type of research is to illustrate what words, actions, and

experience can lead employees to feel positive about their contribution to the workplace. In

particular, the intention of this research is two-fold: to create a discussion amongst

communication and organizational scholars concerning how to create and maintain positivity and

to use this data as a compelling case for consultation on improving inter-organizational relations.

This project will look at how language, verbal and nonverbal, constitutes these four variables. I

will explain how these assumptions inform my data collection and data analysis. The intention of

this research to focus on the data on actions, words, and verbal utterance management

Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions

Basic assumptions. Fredickson's Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions

(2003, 2004) explains how positive emotion expands people's temporary thought-action

repertoires in response to stimuli and builds durable resources for future situations and

interactions. The theory has two key assumptions important to the proposed study. First,

"positive emotions appear to broaden peoples' momentary thought–action repertoires and build

their enduring personal resources" (2004, p. 1368), unlike responses to negative emotion.

Negative emotions narrow people's behavioral urges toward action, narrowing that association

with preserving safety and combating or neutralizing immediate threats (e.g., fight, flight, and

freeze). Conversely, the first assumption of the theory suggests, "Positive emotions widen the

array of thoughts and actions called forth (e.g., play, explore), facilitating generality and

behavioral flexibility" (2005, p. 679).

This widening or expanding effect of positive emotion on people's *"thought-action tendencies"* (Fredrickson, 1998, p. 303) *opens up* perceptions, thought processes, and responses to the external environment, allowing people to realize new and creative ways of thinking, doing, or interacting. Positive emotions move people to "discard time-tested or automatic (everyday) behavioral scripts and to pursue novel, creative, and often unscripted paths of thought and action" (p. 304). The idea that positive emotion expands the range of people's immediate thought-action responses suggests that "joy sparks the urge to play, interest sparks the urge to explore, contentment sparks the urge to savor and integrate, and love sparks a recurring cycle of each of these urges within safe, close relationships" (Fredrickson, 2004, p. 1367).

The second theoretical assumption has to do with the effects of the positive emotion. "By broadening an individual's momentary thought–action repertoire…. Positive emotions promote discovery of novel and creative actions, ideas and social bonds, which in turn build that individual's personal resources; ranging from physical and intellectual resources, to social and psychological resources" (Fredrickson, 2004) (p. 1367). Notably, these assets function as reserve resources that people can use in subsequent situations to advance their chances of effective coping, resilience, and endurance. "The benefits of broadened thought–action repertoires emerge over time. Specifically, broadened mindsets carry indirect and long-term adaptive value because broadening builds enduring personal resources, like social connections, coping strategies, and environmental knowledge" (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005, p. 679). Hertzberg's pivotal study of organizational life reports similar patterns, arguing that "good feelings about the job tend to persist long after the specific events around them passed" (Herzberg et al., 1959, p. 63).

Past applications: Experimental research confirms Fredrickson's first assumption that positive emotions broaden people's emotion-action tendencies. When people are happy and upbeat they are more fluent, provide more responses, and generate a broader range of responses to stimuli than persons in neutral or sad moods (Abele-Brehm, 1992; Hirt, Melton, McDonald, & Harackiewicz, 1996; Vosburg, 1998). One such study that has incorporated the components of Fredickson's work is that of organizational behaviorist T.A. Wright. In his work concerning disposition-based interactions, this author states that positive emotions have implications for leadership, HR development, and employee participation (Wright, 2003). Further investigation into this study shows that failure to recognize the connection between recognition and positive emotion can undermine the organization's workforce goals and directives. Wright continues his discussion by stating that a utilitarian perspective on business management has been problematic in determining the research focus for organizational research. This study supports further academic study where new micro-level or employee-centric approaches are used to produce positive emotion in the workplace.

In addition to the work of Wright, organizational scholars Avery, Wernsing, and Luthans discuss the way in which the broaden and build theory gives an explanatory framework in which cognitive actions, thoughts, and beliefs experienced by employees can be attributed to positive emotion (2008). This study discusses the inter-dynamic at play between organizational initiatives and employee motivation or adaption. The rationale for this study is similar to mine in the way in which many organizational communication studies and scholarly ventures has been centered around how organizations can overcome employee resistance to change. In response to the extensive amount of research concerning positive organizational change, this thesis will

provide an alternative viewpoint in which micro-level dynamics are explored (Avery, Wernsing, & Luthans, 2008).

Application to proposed study. The Broaden-and-Build Theory informs RQ4 in the proposed study. In addition to examining the social/linguistic construction of appreciation, reward, and recognition, I will examine film protagonists' demonstrated associations among positive emotions, communication and behavior patterns, and positive outcomes. That is, I will analyze representations of uniqueness-individualism communication to determine if positive responses to this communication broaden and build participants' emotion-action tendencies.

Benefits of Positive Emotion

Starting around the mid-1980s, the percentage of United States adults working fifty hours per week increased by more than a third (Reich, 2002). This figure points to the importance of working and the impact that employment can have on working adults' happiness and well-being. Coming to work day in and day out without experiencing positive emotions (interest, fulfillment, value, self-esteem, etc.) can be arduous and unfulfilling. On the other hand, working has the potential to provide adults with enriching, constructive life experiences. Understanding positive emotions and their function is central to the proposed study.

Positive emotions can serve as a benchmark for the perception of well-being. An individual can characterize their lives as "happy" if they experience such enjoyment, curiosity, love, and belongingness. The positive impact that these emotions have on people can increase their cultivation of these emotions. The powerful effect of positive emotions on people's wellbeing is substantial (Kahneman, Diener, & Schwarz, 2003). A word or utterance of praise and validation is associated with improved well-being, optimism, and participation in altruistic activities (Lutgen-Sandvik, et al. 2011).

Positive emotion and mood at work are associated with supportive interpersonal relationships, enhanced problem-solving, and greater satisfaction on the job (Isen & Baron, 1991). In terms of health and general quality of life, "laughing, pleasant relationships, [and] enjoyable moments … expand … cognitive skills and strengthen resiliency" (Siebert, 2006, p. 4). Positive affect contributes to longevity (Danner, Snowdon, & Friesen, 2001), intuition (Bolte, Goschkey, & Kuhl, 2003), and efficiency (Grawitch, Munz, & Kramer, 2003). Positive emotions can swiftly undo the cardiovascular after-effects of negative events (Fredrickson, Mancuso, Branigan, & Tugade, 2000) and protect against coronary heart disease and depression (Kivimäki et al., 2005). In fact, simply thinking about and writing to someone a person loves can reduce the writer's stress hormones and serum cholesterol (Floyd et al., 2007).

Positivity is associated with increased helpfulness (Isen, 2001), generosity (Moore, Underwood, & Rosenhan, 1973), cooperativeness (Carnevale & Isen, 1986), and graciousness (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Considerable evidence points to the importance of positive emotion at work to shift working arrangements from grinding (or worse) to flourishing and expanding human potential (Fisher & Ashkanasy, 2000). Employees who feel and express positive emotions at work are likely to have more favorable supervisory evaluations, higher pay, and more support from coworkers and supervisors (Kensinger, 2004). Feeling good enhances recall (Isen & Baron, 1991), contributes to and heightens creative, flexible problem-solving (Isen and Daubman, 1984; Isen, Daubman, & Nowicki, 1987), and increases creativity (Amabile, Barsade, Mueller, & Staw, 2005). Staw and colleagues' (1994) found associations between positive emotion and "evidence of work achievement (more favorable supervisor evaluations and higher pay) and a supportive social context (more support from supervisors and coworkers" (p. 510). Upbeat mood can also enhance "integrative bargaining exercises in which achieving the

optimal win-win outcome requires considerable exploration of alternatives" (Carnevale & Isen, 1986).

Compassion in organizations can provide supportive spaces for persons suffering loss as well as be "a factor in both attracting and retaining staff" (Frost, Dutton, Worline, & Wilson, 2000, p. 38). Positive affect enhances physical and mental performance (Bryan & Bryan, 1991). Dealing with conflict when feeling good can lead to more cooperative approaches during conflict resolution (George, Brief, & Motowidlo, 1996). Positive mood leads to using a greater number of informational cues and making more accurate judgments in the electronic group decision making (Djamasbi, 2007). A higher ratio of positive to negative statements and questions differentiates high-performing teams from their lower-performing counterparts (Losada & Heaphy, 2004). These studies are but a small portion of an overall grouping of writings and studies that show that positive emotions are indeed a positive addition to one's overall health.

Research suggests that employees who feel respected are more confident and self-assured at work and at home (Fredrickson, 2001)—workplace feelings and moods felt at work carry over into the personal life. Studies such as these exemplify that positive emotions that occur at work do not simply stay at work. Employees possessing positive feelings about themselves and their work produce favorable outcomes in the workplace. Furthermore, feeling and expressing constructive emotions can positively affect how employees interact with their coworkers (Ashkanasy, 2002). Organizational communication scholars argue that positive emotion can increase the likelihood that employees feel more independent from negative occurrences in the workplace (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2011). Additionally, positive emotion can increase emotional intelligence willingness to help others in need (Staw, Sutton, & Pelled, 1998). These positive emotions have been linked to a greater sense of personal achievement, better supervisor

evaluations, higher salaries, and belonging to a team (Bono, 2006; Sheldon & Elliot, 1998). This mimicry and imitation brings positive emotion full circle as the more people express and evoke positivity, the more they experience positivity in a reciprocal sort of effect. Smiling and laughing are often contagious, and these emotions are more than a superficial mirroring of communicators; the emotions are shared experiences stemming from and creating meaning in interpersonal interactions (Fredrickson, 2004). A possible metaphor to encapsulate this idea is to see the positive emotion as armor that is formed and perfected as it used as a defense mechanism against negative emotions.

Lastly, employees who feel mentally and emotionally engaged likely contribute to flourishing in organizations (Baker & Schaufeli, 2008). Companies with high rates of employee satisfaction likely have cultures and communication climates that lend themselves to positive corporate narratives and perspectives of organizational reality. Employees consistently rank companies such as Google, SAS, and Edward Jones as the best places to work, likely due (at least in part) to the positive emotions that come from working in these environments (http://money.cnn.com/ magazines/fortune/best-companies). The top-100-rated workplaces come from subjective perceptions by employees in these companies.

Narratives and contemporary text such as movies lend themselves as viable tools of research and analysis when discussing the ways in which companies evoke emotions in their employees. Swanson (2013) provides a narrative content analysis of over half of the organizations listed in Fortune Magazine's ratings and "100 Best Companies to Work for in America". His study investigates the ways in which these respected organizations convey their positive corporate culture. His findings concluded that "more than half offered text- or video-based narratives of employees discussing their satisfaction with work" (p. 2). In this case it

seems as though these positive emotions are indeed contagious or at least self-fulfilling in the way in which these emotions are passed on from one employee to another. One of the common threads among these organizations is the way these companies publicly present their narratives to include positive emotions felt by their employees. The fact that these companies share the positive experiences of their employees shows the pride and conviction that these organizations have for fostering an environment where employees are valued and are told as much.

Quite likely, positive emotion improves work performance, an assumption that has been researched and found to hold in communication and psychological studies (Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002; Martin, 2004). Both these studies investigate the link between positivity and productivity in the way in which positive emotion can be a predictor and cause of an increase in productivity, interest, and security in the workplace. Moreover, depending on the strength and degree to which the employee feels and contains these positive emotions, the greater the likelihood that this individual will create "workplace resilience" when faced with negativity from other internal and external forces (Martin, p. 113).

Research also suggests a link between justice and positive emotion (Hubbell, Chory, & Assad, 2005). Feeling fairly or justly treated (procedural justice) can be a strong predictor of both organizational and managerial trust (Hubbell & Assad, 2007). The greater the communicative connection felt by the employee, the more likely he or she will be experience compassion, immediacy, and receptivity. Conversely, the less satisfied employees become with communication at work, the more likely they will feel unsupported, and the more structured and task-orientated they become (Lamude & Daniels, 1995). This research suggests that experiencing justice evokes positive emotion, which in turn contributes to trust and improved relationships in the workplace.

Importance of Positive Emotion-Organization Research

Although psychological research explores the connections between emotion and behavior, few organizational studies have examined the language and symbols that constitute positive communication at work or the effects of the positive emotional responses to such communication. Sadly, nearly two-thirds of US working adults are unhappy at work (Douglas, 2013). This staggering figure points to importance of investigation into what makes workplaces better places to be—the communication and behavior that evoke positive emotion in the workplace.

The study of what makes the workplace more humane and increases employee well-being crosses many disciplines. This interdisciplinary focus underscores the importance of linking positive emotion at work to the communicative features of workplace dynamics and people's search for fulfilling, pleasing employment. The commitment required—emotional, physical, and mental—to spend the majority of adults' waking hours working is taxing. Authors Bono and Ilies found that adults reported more satisfaction at the work and less desire to change jobs when challenging tasks, supportive relationships, and employee self-determination were involved (2006). Similarly, communication scholars Schaubroek and Jones describe various scenarios in which employees do not feel or express positive emotions and their work there exhibits lower levels of involvement, emotional adaptability and identification within the organization (2000).

Although organizational research has given less attention to positive processes, focus has shifted over the past decade, and the emerging area of positive organizational scholarship (POS) is growing (e.g., Cameron et al., 2003; Dutton & Ragins, 2006). POS research suggests that positive interactions and episodes can have affirmative, constructive effects on employees

(Cameron), trigger employee emotion-action tendencies that benefit the organization, and engender upward spirals (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2005).

Despite the growing area of POS, more work is needed to understand and benefit from positive emotions at work. There are a number of reasons for lack of focus on positive phenomena in organizations. First, many professionals and academic researchers focus on the impact that negative phenomena have in the workplace (Fox & Spector, 2005; Lutgen-Sandvik & Sypher, 2009). Organizations limit their internal improvement efforts to how interpersonal negativity impacts productivity, absenteeism, interpersonal conflict, and turnover rate (Cox, 2001). Research typically places emphasis on problems and their causes, because organizations are viewed as machines that malfunction (Scott, 1997). My thesis will contribute to the emerging POS field by providing insight into how communication constitutes the experiences that evoke positive emotion at work. The study also looks at the effects of these positive experiences, at least the film protagonists' portrayals of the effects of how being recognized, rewarded, and appreciated at work affected them.

Most corporate images online (personal narratives from employees within the organization) emphasize intrinsic over extrinsic value, emotion over money. Valuing emotional assessment over financial gain has initiated a shift in approaches to motivate prospective employees. The impact of this shift in framing corporate identity will be an important factor in attracting well-qualified Millennials. Millennials are considered the upcoming pipeline for prospective employees, and the more traditional way of evoking attraction to a company via positive emotion (e.g., monetary incentive) is likely to be insufficient for this new generation (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010).

Another intention of the proposed study is to explain how employees' positive emotion might benefit organizations. Management research indicates that employee' displays of positive emotion can increase customers' willingness to return to the store and to pass positive comments to friends (Tsai, 2001). Studies such as Tsai's suggest that encouraging positive emotions makes good business sense. One of the main tenets of Tsai's study is the importance of external organizational stakeholders in terms of contagious positivity. The customers experience the power associated with the positive emotions felt and displayed by the employees and are drawn to the emotional environment that it creates. Moreover, the display of positive emotion by employees is positively related to customers' positive affect following service encounters and their evaluations of service quality (Pugh, 2001). These findings provide a strong case as to why scholars should continue to develop and refine how positive emotion is evoked at the workplace. The proposed study will explore the dynamic effects of positive emotions, at least in terms of film characters' perceptions, as these effects relate to both individual and organizational benefits.

Positive emotion and the communication evoking these emotions likely contribute to respectful and supportive workplaces. In some cases, employees may see the workplace as more of a familial environment than strictly a place where business is conducted. Metaphorically, coworkers can feel like a "second family" or "work family." Workers can be seen as members of kinfolk, a collective that shares many of the same objectives, emotions, and beliefs as would with a biological family (Major, Fletcher, Davis, & Germano, 2007). The major difference between the two life domains is that the relationships and connections in the workplace are more objective-focused then relational. Ironically, however, the stronger the relational bonds between coworkers, the more likely that employee will feel long-term commitment to the organization (Kuwabara, 2011). These social exchanges bring coworkers together through the mutual

exchange of information and initiatives that increase the commitment to the common good and bring about cohesion and cooperation—features usually found in marital and familial relationships.

By learning new skills by imitation, these mirror neurons, employees feel compelled to follow the directives of those in positions of power (Rizzolatti & Craighero, 2004). This modeling or mimicry sheds light into the reasons why people do the things that they do. Moreover, this repeat behavior can be a predictor of future behavior. In other words, the more see this behavior or utterance utilized and promoted the more likely this behavior is going to become second-nature. This communicative phenomenon has been further investigated to the field of sociology in which mirror neurons are stated to be the basis for such cognitive feelings as empathy, self-awareness and gender differences (Iacoboni, 2007).

Approach to This Research

With this project I intend to view films as a social model. I will focus on the realism of these films and more specifically the interactions between co-workers, employees and their supervisors and equal status colleagues. I will be focusing on the intra-office dynamics relating to evoking positive emotion in the workplace. A useful tool in analyzing the field of business I will use an emerging field of exploration known as the theory of the mind, particularly developing understandings of mirror neurons. The concept of mirror neuron was first developed by Italian scholar Dr. Giacomo Rizzolatti (1996) and then further investigated by Marco Iacoboni of UCLA in 2005. This study described the process in which animals mimic one another. This cognitive theory has been applied to human interactions to describe how the brain understands the actions, intentions and motives of others. Based on this research, communication

and psychology scholars state that humans often modify their behavior after what they perceive to be positive behaviors in other humans.

Some of the possible functions of these shared cognitive occurrences include learning facilitation, language, human self-awareness and empathy. These findings are important to my study as I investigate the rationale and utterances of particular actors as they relate to the thematic structure of a film. I am particularly interested in how a behavior or utterance is related to the actions of others. I would like to investigate what constitutes positive, negative and ambivalent experiences in the workplace through the medium of film.

Films can act as a mirror or metaphor for a specific snap shot in time. Films offer insight to predominate socioeconomic ideology during this time period. German scholar and film critic Siegfried Kracauer (1947) examines the interconnectivity between film and pop culture; how each creates and influences each other in a symbiotic manner. In his book entitled ***From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*** (1947), Kracauer takes a critical approach to the way films can construct reality for its viewers. Kracauer uses psychoanalysis to describe how the Nazi propaganda influenced German social politics during the 1920s and 1930s. One of the tenets of Kracauer's research is that films can shape the views of reality.

The work of this scholar relates well with the intentions of this research. Film is seen as a vehicle of transmission to mirror and reflect reality. Kracauer was one of the first scholars to see film in this manner. Kracauer describes how the interconnectivity between films and reality play out in the forms of plots, characterizations and themes. Drawing some small similarities between the negativity seen in the portrayals of sociopolitical Germany in the 1920s and 30s, there exists a negative portrayal of business in the post-Enron era. Using the current narrative of big

business, greedy and self-surviving, my study will be more relevant and consistent with the predominant thought of corporate culture if I showed a countercultural viewpoint.

The theoretical concepts present in this theory mirror that of the social learning theory developed by Albert Bandura (1961). Following many of the principles grounded in developmental psychology, humans often imitate others that they hold in high esteem. Even without the presence of positive reinforcement various experiments concluded that modeling aids in the learning process as to what behaviors are and are not acceptable in the workplace. It is this social engagement between movies and reality that is useful in studying films as a form of discourse. The components and illustrations presented in this study can act as a theoretical lens in which I can view specific occurrences in these organizational-centric films.

Given the fact that few communication studies to date have focused on film portrayals of the specific language, non-verbal cures and symbols that evoke positive emotion at work, I have elected to research these message characteristics as presented in four contemporary films focusing on workplace communication. My study will employ content analysis methods and will seek to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What language as depicted in the films comprises or constitutes appreciation, recognition, and reward at work? (e.g., What motivational, supportive, or praise words or terms resonate with characters in the films?)

RQ2. What non-verbal public actions as depicted in the films comprise appreciation, recognition, and reward at work? (e.g., What public actions by others made film characters feel positive emotion?)

RQ3.   What symbolic forms of tangible rewards as depicted in the films evoke positive

Emotions in their characters?

RQ4.   What are the effects of feeling appreciated, recognized, and rewarded and how

does these affect play out in the film – changes in plot, characters and overall

narrative?

Chapter 3

Methods

The fundamental motives behind making major motion pictures are to entertain and to make money (Howkins, 2002). Commercial films have a tendency to over-dramatize plots, characterizations and narratives. They act as metaphors or fictitious depictions of the world around us. Juxtaposed to this position of commercialism are documentaries and compilations. In order to achieve this hubris and levity films expand and exaggerate what they represent as typical workplace occurrences. The primary goals of these vehicles for narration are realism and artistry with entertainment a distant second. Although it can be a reach to consider commercial film as accurate, real life situations, they can act as a filter or cloudy mirror of modernity. Once placed in a proper context; motives driven by finances and amusement, a viewer can see a little glimmer into the light of reality.

Given the current state of contemporary films, I chose four films to conduct my content analysis. These four films are *Moneyball* (2011), *Wolf of Wall Street* (2013), *Social Network* (2010), and *In Good Company* (2004). The reason that I chose these four films is because of the specific instances of positive emotions, recent production dates and the metaphorical representation of contemporary corporate workplace environments. It was important for me to establish a connection between films and reality in a way that movies do not reflect time.

To answer this study's research questions about film depictions of positive workplace communication, I used a qualitative approach to content analysis. After careful consideration, I chose to use content analysis as to analyze four films about workplace interaction. The objective of this research was to discover how film representations of workplace interaction can shed light on the specific language, non-verbal cures and symbols that evoke positive emotion in

employees. More specifically, this study used a content analysis design to assess how films portray evoking positive and negative emotions in the workplace. The purpose of the design was to investigate how narratives in major motion pictures reflect the various communicative phenomena in modern corporate environments.

Commercial films are not an actual representation of reality like documentaries and educational productions; they can influence mainstream sociocultural dynamics (Kracauer, 1947). It is this interconnectivity that was intriguing to me and served as the driving force in my investigative efforts. I was captivated by the way in which emotion impacts motivation within the workplace. A foundational premise of this project was to investigate, through the medium of film and content analysis, what words, actions, tangible and intangible events would produce positive, negative and ambiguous emotions. I felt that a total of twenty-eight selected workplace interaction scenes (seven from each movie) would provide a wide-ranging and comprehensive look into evoking emotion in the workplace.

Although I have taken a critical look into all scenes, interactions, and overall tonality of these four films, there were some scenes that I decided to leave out of my analysis. The rationales for omitting these particular occurrences are three-fold. First, some of the scenes occurred outside of the workplace. In order to provide a more focused and effective analysis of evoking emotion in the workplace I decided that the scenes that provide background or contextual information were not necessary to complete my study. Secondly, I tried to include a representative, well-rounded yet diverse selection of scenes by including interactions between major and minor characters. I did not want my study to be overly critically of the communicative behaviors between the main actors as there seemed to be an inherent redundancy in tone and outcome among these scenes. Last, I tried to limit my selection to scenes that had a major impact

on the communicative relationship between the participants. I thought that in order to focus on the true impact of evoking emotion in the workplace, a significant change should occur due to the influence of emotion. The resulting data set is in line with other qualitative studies as it relates to reliability (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Pope, Ziebland, & Mays, 2000). In addition to achieving a robust sampling size, I tried to incorporate a diverse selections of scenes to showcase various elements of all four units of analysis (positive, negative and neutrality).

Data Collection and Coding Schema

In order to effectively explore these four films, I chose to conduct a content analysis grounded in qualitative methods. The first step in this process was to examine any and all emergent categories of evoking emotions. Instead of limiting myself to predefined definitions and meanings of words, which can be problematic in their usage, content and sarcasm, I chose to define my own criteria as outlined in my coding schema. Once the categories of emotions were finalized as well as what action constitutes each emotion, I then proceeded to develop four units of analysis. Beginning with elements within a scene, then the scene itself and the film as a whole, I was able to give each film a numerical value of either positive or negative. The rationale for using this mathematical approach was to assign significance to what actions, utterances and nonverbal actions produced the greatest amount of emotion, both negative and positive.

My method for data collection and analysis was based on emergent categories of themes. I developed my own schemas based on the specific moments in the four films. I used the work of Kracker and Wang (2002), Lincoln and Guba (1981) and Elo et al. (2014) as guides for my personal construction of coding schemas. I believed that clarity is of the utmost importance as I navigated through contextual analysis using inductive reasoning. It was important to use an inductive approach because of the innate flexibility of words. In lieu of using academic dictionaries and thesaurus to explain the multiple meanings of English words, I felt that it was

better to provide a personal narrative or decision making rules for how specific occurrences can be analyzed in films. Much like the approach taken by Krippendorf during the 1950s and 1960s, I felt that developing my own coding schema would provide the best means of clarity and replication.

Although my focus was on the effects of positive reinforcement in the workplace, I felt that it would be best to describe the entire communicative interaction. By making notations of negative and ambivalent occurrences, I was able to fully describe the dialogue between the participants. This thick description allowed for consistency across all four films. Based on viewing a few of these films beforehand, I had discovered a few emergent categories. Using these preliminary emergent categories, I approached this film study from a micro to macro level. More specifically, my units of analysis investigated the specific elements of a scene, the scene itself, and the film as a whole.

After viewing each unit of analysis (elements within a scene, the scene itself, and the movie as a whole), I placed each occurrence within four categories; positive, negative, and ambivalent. How and why each occurrence was placed within a particular category was based on the emergent categories characterizing what constitutes a positive, negative, or ambivalent outcome. Some of the emergent categories contained within the positive reinforcement classification include such things as rewards, moments of appreciation, recognition and sharing, mentoring between colleagues, shared companionship, a sense of approval, and, finally, positive facial expressions (smiles, winks, raised eyebrows). Second, the negative reinforcement category included words of criticism, sarcasm, looks of disapproval, belittling, rude behavior, argumentative traits, aggressive behavior, written forms of punishment, and negative facial expressions (frowns, furrowed brows, intense gaze). Finally, the ambivalent category included

the absence of either positive or negative reinforcement -- a type of consistency of emotional state – the same mood or feeling prior to and after the interaction. Due to diverse and multidimensional nature of each of these categories, I combined my personal and professional experience to define why an event is given these designations of recognition, rewards, and so forth.

Due to the multidimensionality of the English language, I did not confine my study to analyzing specific words. The reason for this decision involves the challenges associated with assigning a specific meaning to a word. The meanings and connotations of words change so rapidly that it would be misguided to limit my research to counting and analyzing the presence of words. Rather, I devised a rubric or coding schema as to why I classified an occurrence as positive, negative, or ambivalent. Finally, I gave a description of the events leading up to these codable interactions prior to conducting my analysis.

After the events or occurrences were coded into the various categories (positive, negative, ambivalent), I then placed each classification into a mathematical equation in order to compare and contrast two units of analysis – the scene and the movie. For example, if one scene contained four positive reinforcement elements and two negative reinforcement elements, then that scene was given a score of + 1. The converse also held true, where scenes could contain a negative value. Ambivalent elements received a neutral or zero value. Additionally, certain elements in each category were assigned two points for their rarity and importance. In this case, rewards (tangible items) and mentoring (investing personal time with another outside of work) were scored as a plus two for positive reinforcement while aggressive behaviors (name calling, physical violence) and written forms of punishment (write-ups and reduction in pay) both were given a score of negative two.

Chapter 4

Results

Findings

After careful analysis of these four films, in a context of evoking emotions, some compelling data emerged. Although the fundamental intention behind making major motion pictures is to make money, films can act like a mirror or metaphor for the world around them (Howkins, 2002). I believe that through a qualitative approach, films can be used to study the reality that they seek to represent. Combining qualitative research with the medium of content analysis, I was able to discover some interesting connections between film depictions of someone's verbal and nonverbal actions and evoking emotions in others. Of course this premise is an intuitive principle, but the true impact on productivity, motivation, and longevity is underrepresented. A gap in the knowledge base in both managerial and communication disciplines comprise the nature of the actions or words produce these emotions.

Although this project brings to light a few new discoveries in the area of film depictions of evoking emotion at the workplace, many of my findings align with previous organizational communication studies (Bono & Ilies, 2006; Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002; Fisher & Ashkanasy, 2000). A foundational principle of these studies is that evoking emotion, both positive and negative, greatly impacts employees in their workplace. Moreover, theorists such as Fredrickson (2004), Isen, (1991), and Bandura (1961) stated that positive emotions trigger increased wellbeing and productive thought-action repertoires. Many aspects of my findings reinforce what is already known and theorized in these two disciplines.

Additionally, I would like to highlight the fact that the interconnectivity between film and reality mirrors studies done by Kracauer (1947). Kracauer uses a critical approach to frame the way films can construct reality for viewers. To this early German scholar, film is seen as a vehicle of transmission to mirror and reflect reality. Kracauer was one of the first scholars to see film in this manner. Similarly, I speculate that although these films are closely related in production date, their plots and narratives closely mirror mainstream culture. For example, *Wolf of Wall Street* (2013) comes soon after the 99% movement, where citizens from diverse backgrounds, emboldened by a political agenda, descended onto Wall Street to protest the great disparities between low-level employees and their CEO counterparts. Yet another example of this interconnectivity is the film *In Good Company* (2004), where the success of the U.S. economy enabled and promoted mergers and acquisitions. However, the mid 2000s made us aware the potential pitfalls of hostile takeovers by way of layoffs, terminations, job transfers and demotions.

Below is a breakdown of each movie based on my coding schema.

Film #1: *Moneyball*

Synopsis: This is a story of Oakland A's GM Billy Beane and his incredible journey into changing a corporate culture. Saddled with a low budget and a lack of creativity, Beane tries to invent a new way to be competitive. This competitive advantage is called Sabermeterics. However, this story is not merely about baseball but about how to communicate your passion and commitment to achieve your goals.

Scene #1: Time (10 min) = 4 Negative Emotions/Reinforcement

In this scenario, Billy Beane (Brad Pitt) is going over his roster and a list of available free agents to replace his top four players with his staff of coaches, scouts, and other front-office personnel. In this tension-filled discussion, Billy is trying to convince these middle-aged men to think differently about how they should look at the sport of baseball. In order to demonstrate the importance of this paradigm shift, Billy uses a few curse words -- "fuck" and "dammit" -- while displaying looks of disappointment and frustration. In addition to this nonverbal and verbal demonstration of negative emotion, Billy mocks his employees by "mouthing" with his hand. Throughout this discussion, Billy is trying to explain the futility of thinking about baseball the same way decade after decade. In total, I counted four occurrences of evoking negative emotions.

Scene #2: Time (14 min) = 4 Negative Emotions/Reinforcement + 1 Positive Emotions/Reinforcement = 3 Negative Emotions

Billy is meeting with the Cleveland Indians front office to discuss the possibility of trading for a pitcher named Ricardo Rincon. The point of this meeting is to try to find players under the control of the Cleveland Indians that can be bought or traded to replace the players Billy lost in free agency. This meeting is clearly one-sided in the manner in which the Cleveland Indians hold all the leverage in making these transactions. They know that the Oakland A's need players more than the Cleveland Indians' need to trade these players. Accordingly, Mark Shapiro (Reed Diamond), general manager of the Cleveland Indians, makes a few snide comments about the players that they "can afford" or "within their price range". In addition to these comments, Mr. Shapiro smiles sarcastically at Billy as he counters some of the offers given by his front office team. The meeting ends with Billy giving a look of surprised satisfaction to a Cleveland

Indian's special assistant by the name of Peter Brand. This is the only positive emotion that is exchanged in this communicative interaction. After reflecting on this meeting, I counted four negative instances and one positive instance of emotion.

Scene #3: Time (47 min) = 7 Negative Emotions/Reinforcement

Billy is asked by one of his scouts, Grady Fuson (Ken Medlock), to speak one-on-one outside their meeting room. Grady is upset with the new direction of the team and wants to voice his opinion to Billy. The exchange becomes heated when Grady asks Billy for "permission to speak freely". Once Billy hears this loaded phrase, he instantly becomes tense and stern. He rests his arms on his waist and looks intently at Grady as he explains his position. When Billy tells Grady that he and the entire organization needs to "adapt or die", Grady takes offense and respond with "this is about your shit", implying that the new management strategy is about Billy Beane's failure to live up to his own expectations as a professional baseball player. After discussing the failure to meet each other's expectations, Billy tells Grady that despite their differences he isn't going to fire him. Grady sees this gesture as an offense and lays his hand on Billy's shoulder in a mocking manner. Billy is shocked by Grady laying hands on him, as Grady tells him to "fuck off". Combining the insults and the physicality (added value for the physical violence), I found a total of 7 moments of negative emotions.

Scene #4: Time (1 hr. 8 min) = 5 Negative Emotions/Reinforcement

After another tough loss, Billy makes his way down onto the playing field to talk to Art Howe (Philip Seymour Hoffman), the A's manager. Billy wants Art to understand that he wants the players he signed to play and not the ones Art feels are the best. In the middle of the conversation between the two men, Art interjects that he is "done with this conversation".

Additionally, Art states that he disagrees that that he needs to have a strong "resume once the season is over", implying that he will be fired at the season's end. Combining Billy's folded arms and Art's looks of contempt with the verbal phrases, I counted 5 occurrences evoking negative emotions at the workplace.

Scene #5: Time (1 hr. 30 min) = 6 Positive Emotions/Reinforcement

In this scene, Billy and Peter are trying to convince Cleveland Indians general manager Mark Shapiro to trade a player to the Oakland A's in exchange for $ 225 K. This is a pivotal scene in the movie, because it harks back to the beginning of the film, when Billy was unable to make a deal for the same player. Billy entrusts Peter to help him negotiate the deal for Ricardo Rincon. Billy is constantly nodding his head in encouragement, smiles graciously and pumps his fist in the air after completing the first stages of the transaction. Peter also displays his positive emotion by clenching his fist in victory and saying "yes" under his breath. To put a cap on this very positive interaction, both men exchange energetic high fives once they get their man. I counted a total of six different ways in which positive emotion is evoked.

Scene #6: Time (32 min) = 5 Positive Emotions/Reinforcements

Billy Beane is a rising star in the ranks of high school baseball. He is considered a "five tool" player -- a player that can do everything and do it exceptionally well. Talent scouts from the New York Mets see Billy play in a skill contest; he is head and shoulders above everyone else. His talent is so great that he is offered a signing bonus in hopes of getting him to forego a scholarship offer at Stanford. In a meeting with Billy's parents, the talent scouts say that Billy is a "great player who doesn't come along often" and has "five tools" that make him a first round

selection. These verbal utterances accompany the "sizable" (we are not told the exact amount) signing bonus. I counted five moments of evoking positive emotions in this scene.

Scene #7: Time (35 min) = 6 Negative Emotions/Reinforcements - 3 Positive Emotions/Reinforcements = 3 Negative Emotions/Reinforcements

Similar to an earlier scene in the movie where Billy meets with his talent scouts, Billy discusses what players are available to add to the team. He must again consider which individual players can replace the outgoing members, but this time he has brought with him Peter Brand. The older employees feel threatened by Peter and ask Billy if it is necessary for him to be in the meeting. This comment is preceded by the looks of confusion and hostility as Peter walked with Billy into the room. To combat this unwarranted opposition by the old guard, Billy shows his compassion and commitment to Peter by nodding his head in agreement and saying "yes" and "I agree". Although the positivity helps to lighten the overall tone of the discussion, the difference between the positive (three) to negative occurrences (six) leaves a score of – 3.

Table 1: Scene Analysis, *Moneyball*

SCENE #	RUNNING TIME (MINUTES)	CHARACTERS	SCORE
1	10	Beane, coaches, scouts	**-4**
2	14	Beane, Shapiro, Cleveland Indians front office	**-3**
3	47	Beane, Fuson	**-7**
4	68	Beane, Howe	**-5**
5	90	Beane, Brand, Shapiro	**+6**
6	32	Beane (young), New York Mets scouts, Beane's parents	**+5**
7	35	Beane, Brand, scouts	**-3**
		TOTAL OVERALL SCORE	**-11**

Conclusion

Combining the scores of all seven scenes of analysis produced a total negative score of 11. This score signifies that overall the film depicts many more occurrences of negative emotions than positive emotions. This score is indicative of the overall composition of this film, as Billy Beane struggles to shift the thought process of baseball's old guard in order to usher in the new wave of computer analytics. Although the ending of the film is one of collective enthusiasm and optimism for the future, the journey to get to this state is troublesome and riddled with negative emotion.

Film #2: *The Social Network*

Synopsis: This film depicts how Harvard undergraduate and computer programmer Mark Zuckerberg invented a new software program to document the college experience. What begins as innocent fun soon becomes a global social network known as Facebook. This revolution in interpersonal communication makes Zuckerberg the younger billionaire in history. However, the new communication system and investment opportunity signals the end of friendships, love, and reputation for Zuckerberg.

Scene #1: Time (23 min) = 4 Positive Emotions/Reinforcement

Once Mark Zuckerberg (Jesse Eisenberg) figures out that college students like to talk about one another online, he is approached by twin brothers Cameron and Taylor Winklevoss (Armie Hammer) about a business venture. Due to the personal and academic reprimands Zuckerberg received as a result of his first social networking venture, he thinks that these two men are seeking some sort of retribution. Surprisingly, the Winklevoss want to talk about a joint

business venture between the four. To start off the meeting the twins ask Mark if he was the one who built the website that had 22,000 "hits" in one night. They use phrases like "gifted" and "awesome" to convey their respect for his work. In addition to the words of praise and affirmation, the twins smile and shake hands to evoke positive emotions in Mark. I counted a total of four positive emotions evoked.

Scene #2: Time (1 hr.) = 4 Negative Emotions/Reinforcement + 4 Ambiguous/Neutral Emotions = 4 Negative Emotions/Reinforcement.

After the success of Mark's "The Facebook", the Winklevoss are granted a meeting with the president of Harvard. President Summers is bothered by this trivial meeting and feels like there is nothing he can do to assist these two students in the pursuit of justice. President Summers displays four moments of apathetic gestures that fall into the ambiguous category. On the contrary, with each gesture of indifference the twins become more and more angry, using words like "unfair" and "shit". The last gesture evoking negative emotion occurs when one of the twins intentionally breaks a doorknob on the way out of Summers' office. By combining the ambiguity and negative emotion category, I deciphered that this event had a total score of -4.

Scene #3: Time (1 hr. 17 min) = 6 Positive Emotions/Reinforcement

Mark and his partner Eduardo Saverin (Andrew Garfield) are trying to find additional coders to increase the storage capacity of Facebook. In this scene, Mark and Eduardo are shown smiling and laughing with each other as they watch these prospective coders feverously prevent computer viruses from spreading. Adding to the celebratory atmosphere are the free shots given to the contestants. The purpose of the shots is twofold: as a reward for the coders' making it to the final rounds and as motivation to keep up their hard work despite the distractions. Once the winner is crowned, the crowd in attendance erupts in jubilation with hands raised, applause, and

shouting. Adding together all the occurrences of positive emotions, I counted a total of 6 occurrences.

Scene #4: Time (1 hr. 22min) = 4 Positive Emotions/Reinforcement

Mark and friend Sean Parker (Justin Timberlake) are at LA nightclub discussing the growth of Facebook. Sean Parker tells Mark the tragic story of Roy Raymond, the creator of Victoria's Secret, who committed suicide shortly after selling the company to the Limited. Sean uses phrases like "once in a lifetime", "holy shit idea", and "change the world" to influence Mark not to degrade Facebook into the hands of venture capitalists. Also, Sean smiles at Mark to reassure him that he is making the right decision by keeping the company on the West Coast. Sean tells Mark that his dream is to have Sean's business card read "CEO … bitch!" Although most of the positive emotion is evoked via verbal communication, there still exists a fair amount of positivity. I counted a total of four occurrences of positive emotion.

Scene #5: Time (1hr. 43 min) = 4 Negative Emotions/Reinforcement + 4 Neutral/Ambiguous Emotion = - 4.

This scene is the climatic ending to Mark's and Eduardo's relationship. It is here that Eduardo is notified that his shares in the company have been diluted to .03 %. Eduardo displays his anger a few different ways. First, he uses words and phrases like "fuck you flip-flops", "pretentious", and "douche bag". In addition to the verbal abuse he unloads on Mark, Eduardo slams Mark's computer and threatens to punch Sean in his face. The scene ends with Eduardo's being escorted by security out of the building. Adding together the verbal and physical elements of this scene, I counted a total of 4 occurrences of negative emotion, along with 4 ambiguous emotions.

Scene #6: Time (1 hr. 5min) = 4 Positive Emotions/Reinforcements - 3 Negative Emotions/Reinforcements = 1 Positive Emotions/Reinforcements

As Eduardo struggles to find capital for Facebook, Mark is contacted by Sean Parker (Justin Timberlake), the creator of Napster. Mark is instantly in awe of Sean, as they seem to share an entrepreneurial spirit, as well as a vision for online communication. However, Eduardo is cautiously optimistic about meeting with such a notoriously hotheaded and arrogant inventor. To evoke positive emotion about the fledging company, Sean emphatically uses words such as "cool", "exactly", and "great". In addition to the verbal utterances, Sean uses nonverbal feedback to illustrate his positivity about this new business venture. He frequently smiles and expresses gestures of confidence, while Mark contemplates his suggestions for financial growth.

All these symbolic actions and self-gratifications only solidify Eduardo's preconceived notions about Sean as an egotistical and pompous interloper. Eduardo is seen giving looks of disapproval, responding with sarcastic remarks and a slouched posture. To mark the significance of this meeting, it is Sean Parker who suggests that the name of the new company be changed from The Facebook to just Facebook. Based on the communicative interaction by all three members, I counted four distinct moments of positive emotions shared between Sean and Mark, while I counted three moments of negativity between Sean and Eduardo resulting in a score of +1.

Scene #7: Time (1 hr. 30 min) = 8 Negative Emotions/Reinforcements

This is a pivotal moment in the movie, as Eduardo flies from the east coast to meet with Mark at the new Facebook headquarters in California. The meeting starts off in an inauspicious manner, as Mark forgot to pick up Eduardo at the airport. To complicate matters even more, Eduardo is greeted by Sean as he opens the front door. The two share a moment of awkward

silence and looks of surprise. After exchanging these looks of displeasure, Eduardo proceeds to tell Sean that he doesn't belong in the house that Eduardo is paying for. Sean's response to this remark is to tell Eduardo that Sean has been an integral part of securing meeting with angel investors. The verbal jousting is observed by Mark, who sees the two bickering back and forth.

The interaction between Eduardo and Mark is very contentious, as Eduardo is trying to convey to Mark that he has just spent the month trying to find financial support for the website. Mark is convinced that California is the best to be because of all the "energy", "connections", and "openness". Eduardo is upset that Mark has allowed Sean to be a contributor to these shifts in strategies and punctuates his anger by slamming the door shut so Sean cannot eavesdrop on their heated discussion. Both Eduardo and Mark verbally spar with one another as tensions continue to rise. The pinnacle of Mark's negative emotions occurs when he sarcastically asks Eduardo how it's going on the East Coast, knowing full well that nothing has transpired. In total I counted eight negatively weighted occurrences experienced by all three parties.

Table 2: Scene Analysis, *Social Network*

SCENE #	RUNNING TIME (MINUTES)	CHARACTERS	SCORE
1	23	Zuckerberg, Winkelvoss twins	**+4**
2	60	Winkelvoss twins, Harvard President Summers	**-4**
3	77	Zuckerberg, Saverin, coders, crowd	**+6**
4	82	Zuckerberg, Parker	**+4**
5	103	Zuckerberg, Parker, Saverin	**-4**
6	65	Zuckerberg, Parker, Saverin	**+1**
7	90	Zuckerberg, Parker, Saverin	**-8**
		TOTAL OVERALL SCORE:	**-1**

Conclusion

Following the same formula for *Moneyball* and the other two films, *The Social Network* received a total score of -1. This means that the positivity shared amongst the main characters was slightly less than the negativity associated with the growth of the world's largest social media site. I believe that part of the reason for the large positive score is due to the friendship and camaraderie experienced between Mark and Eduardo and between Mark and Sean. Most of the animosity or negative emotion is between Eduardo and Sean. This is an interesting finding, given the fact that Mark is the common denominator for both positive interactions. It would seem that Mark serves as both protagonist and antagonist. He is torn between his two partners and experiences positive emotions with both. As such, Eduardo and Sean see each other as inhibiting their respective relationships with Mark. Each individual feels threaten by the other and will stop at nothing so sabotage their relationship with Mark.

The essence of this film is that there comes a time when business supersedes friendship. The dissolution of the partnership between Mark and Eduardo is based on the advice of Sean Parker. The entrepreneurial bond between Mark and Sean comprises the relational connection between Mark and Eduardo in such a way that Sean convinces Mark that Eduardo is just a "means to an end". Sean communicates to Mark that Eduardo is holding back this business venture and that although he may have been the co-creator and financier of The Facebook, *Facebook* destined for something far greater then Eduardo's capabilities. In the end the positivity experienced between Mark and Sean outweighs the original affirmative nature between the original co-founder. This transition is further solidified by removing Eduardo's name from the Facebook's masthead.

Film #3: *Wolf of Wall Street*

Synopsis: This film shows how naïve stockbroker Jordan Belfort learns to become an overnight millionaire by cheating the system. In this massive and complex securities scam, people are motivated to steal and trick their way to the top. Known as one of the first modern-day Ponzi schemers, Belfort serves 36 months in prison for his dastardly deeds.

Scene #1: Time (6 min) = 6 Negative Emotions/Reinforcements

In one of the opening scenes of the film, the main character Jordan Belfort (Leonardo DiCaprio) is anxiously awaiting his first day as a financial assistant. He is greeted by an unnamed employee of Rothschild Investment Company. In this exchange, the higher ranking employee repeatedly tells Jordan that he is "pond scum" and that his job is to make 500 calls a day to make more money. Additionally, Jordan is told not to pick up his head from the phone until 1 p.m. for lunch. This verbal abuse is punctuated by his manager's insistence, with a strong pointing gesture, that Jordan sit down. I counted a total of six elements of evoking negative emotion.

Scene #2: Time (10 min) = 4 Positive Emotions/Reinforcements

In this scene, Jordan and Mark Hanna (Matthew McConaughey) discuss Jordan's first day on the job. Hanna describes the process of making money as a broker on a Wall Street. He describes the invisible world of money in the stock market. In order to evoke positive emotions in this new hire, Hanna uses words like "success" and "super excited". In both instances, the actors are seen smiling as they utter these words. Mark completes his motivational speech by singing a song about New York in which Jordan is told to keep the beat. After combing both the

verbal and nonverbal elements of evoking positive emotion, I saw four items contained within my positive emotion category.

Scene #3: Time (32 min) = 5 Positive Emotions/Reinforcement + 2 Ambiguous/Neutral Emotions = 5 Positive Emotions.

After realizing the profit potential of selling penny stocks, Jordan recruits some of his friends from childhood to work as partners in his new firm called Stratton Oakmont. After introducing the new name of the firm to his partners, Jordan then proceeds to tell them about a script he wrote to convince big time investors to diversify their portfolios with penny stocks. In order to successful motivate his naïve employees, Jordan uses phrases like "you are going to be Captain Ahab and you are going to 'harpoon Moby Dick'". While Jordan is on the phone, he acts out his passion and enthusiasm by making lewd gestures and bombastic motions with his hands. Although there seems to be many actions and words that would constitute evoking negative emotion by contemporary public standards, the more adrenaline and testosterone the coworkers exhibit, the more obscene Jordan becomes. I counted a total of 5 positive motions of emotions and 2 ambivalent emotions totaling a score of five.

Scene #4: Time (1hr: 19min) = 7 Positive Emotions/Reinforcements

In this scene, Jordan Belfort introduces Steve Madden (Jake Hoffman) to the firm as he unveils the company's first IPO. In order to start the process on a positive note for his employees, Jordan uses many different motivational tactics, such as using phrases like "Steve's power", "my killers, my warriors", "hottest person in fashion", and "genius". In addition to the verbal utterances, Jordan uses smiles, stern face, angry looks of determination, and bombastic gestures of superiority. At the pinnacle of this diatribe, Jordan throws his $ 40 K watch into the ravenous crowd as a symbol of positive energy and uncompromised motivation. After counting

all the moments of positive emotion, including the added significance of the thrown Rolex watch, I counted seven total moments of positive reinforcement.

Scene #5: Time (1hr: 52 min) = 8 Negative Emotions/Reinforcements

Here we see Donnie Azoff dropping off a series of briefcases full of money to his business partner Brad (Jon Bernthal). During this exchange, Donnie starts to curse at Brad, using such name calling as "shithead", "mayor of Fuckville", and many other very derogatory references. As Donnie continues to berate Brad, Brad finally snaps and pulls out a handgun in attempt to frighten Donnie into speaking more respectfully. The scene ends with the local police intervening. Based on the number of slurs and insults, in conjunction with the threat of violence, I designated a total of eight counts of evoking negative emotions.

Scene #6: Time (32 min) = 7 Positive Emotions/Reinforcements

As Jordan tries to make his vision a reality, he must first train his employees to sell like he does. In order for him achieve this goal, Jordan develops a script for his employees to help them sell penny stocks. To show the effectiveness of this approach, Jordan displays his mastery over the phone to a new client. Jordan expresses his persuasiveness and positivity by utilizing such words as "benchmark", "comfort", "trust", and "fair". As he utters these words over the phone, he physically acts out the emotions that he feels inside by smiling, standing up, and fist pumping. This overflow of emotions is transferred to his employees as they begin to high five one another and clap their hands in enthusiasm as they watch their leader close the deal. I counted a total of six occurrences of evoking positive emotion in this scene.

Scene #7: Time (1 hr. 20 min) = 6 Positive Emotions/Reinforcements

In anticipation of the firm's first IPO, Jordan invites Steve Madden to introduce himself to the rest of the sales team. After Madden sheepishly describes his shoes and why they are unique, Jordan feels he himself needs to properly motivate his employees to sell this new stock. It is here that Jordan truly becomes "the Wolf of Wall Street" as starts his overture to becoming filthy rich. To stress the importance of selling this IPO, Jordan uses words and phrases like "trained killers", "warriors", "my children", and "gifts". In conjunction with the emboldening speech, Jordan uses grimaces anger and passion for those individuals he wants to convince to become beacons of capitalism. The crowd shows its appreciation for Jordan's rhetoric as they begin to clap, curse, and smile, all the while wholly heartedly agreeing with Jordan's pleas. In a rare case where preconceived notions of negativity become positivity, I counted a total of six occurrences of evoking positive emotion.

Table 3: Scene Analysis, *The Wolf of Wall Street*

SCENE #	RUNNING TIME (MINUTES)	CHARACTERS	SCORE
1	6	Belfort, Rothschild employee	**-6**
2	10	Belfort, Hanna	**+4**
3	32	Belfort, new sales recruits	**+5**
4	79	Belfort, Madden, crowd	**+7**
5	112	Azoff, Brad, police	**-8**
6	32	Belfort, client, salesmen	**+7**
7	80	Belfort, Madden, salesmen	**+6**
		TOTAL FOR FILM OVERALL:	**+15**

Conclusion

Although this movie portrays stock trading and the sales profession as very negative, when isolating the various elements of evoking emotions in the workplace *The Wolf of Wall Street* ends with an overall score of + 15. Given the overtures of sex, drugs, criminal activities, and lewdness, a viewer might infer that the actors in this scheme would experience negative emotions on a daily basis. On the contrary, the very large amounts of money and professional liberties available trumped the inevitable fall from grace. What I found interesting was how negativity (drug use, infidelity, and dishonesty) was used to evoke positive emotions. The debauchery was celebrated to such a large degree that these common occurrences were the expectation set by upper management. In addition to the obscene behavior displayed by all, foul and derogatory language was often used to motivate someone to trade more illegal stock.

Film #4: *In Good Company*

Synopsis: This movie is about a middle-aged executive (Dan) who discovers that his beloved company is being restructured. In addition to the reorganization of the company, he learns that he himself has a new boss who is much younger and much less experienced. Considering his situation at home, with two daughters in college and retirement looming, Dan decides to "suck it up" and work for the much younger boss. A big part of the overall narrative here is the relationship between Dan and his new boss, Carter.

Scene #1: Time (5 min) = 3 Positive Emotions/Reinforcements

In this scene, Carter Duryea (Topher Grace) is presenting a new toy to his sales and marketing team. Carter is trying to convince his boss Mark Steckle (Clark Gregg) that this new toy will be hit with both parents and kids. Mr. Steckle uses three positive reinforcement techniques: smile (positive facial expression), a sense of approval (head nodding), and moments

of recognition ("PFG" – Pretty. Freaking. Good). Carter's coworker has one ambivalent emotion as he is perplexed as to what "PFG" stands for. This scene would qualify as a + 3 based on the coding schema.

Scene #2: Time (6 min) = 4 Positive Emotions/Reinforcements

In another interaction between Carter and his boss Steckle, Carter is notified that he is being "groomed" for a promotion within the company. All he has to do is to "kick ass" in his new position as ad sales manager. Carter uses multiple positive reinforcement items (moments of appreciation), such as "I will kick ass so much ass", "Thank you, thank you", and "I am going to be your ninja assassin". Meanwhile, Steckle uses another positive reinforcement tactic by stating that Carter reminds him of a younger version of himself (sense of approval). In total, there are four instances of evoking positive emotion in this scene.

Scene #3: Time (32 min) = 3 Negative Emotions/Reinforcements

Carter starts his first set of layoffs by firing Enrique Colon (Ty Burrell) in the office of Dan Foreman (Dennis Quaid). This scene is a pivotal moment in the movie as this is the first time that Carter and Dan act as a team. Mr. Colon is shocked by the news and starts to curse – "shit storm" -- and asks sarcastic questions such as "Are you smiling?" In addition to these negative emotions, Colon slams the door behind him and looks angrily at his coworkers as he leaves the building. All of these actions and verbal utterances would fall into the categories of sarcasm, rude behavior, and aggressive behavior. In this instance, I counted four occurrences of negative emotions.

Scene #4: Time (1hr: 30 min) = 3 Negative Emotions/Reinforcements + 1 Positive Emotions/Reinforcements = 2 Negative Emotions/Reinforcements

Media mogul Teddy K (Malcolm McDowell) stops by the offices of *Sports America* to share his vision on how synergy is the way corporations survive in this new global economy. After being questioned by Dan about how synergy operates in the business world, Teddy K instructs Steckle to confront both Dan and Carter for an explanation. During this exchange, Steckle wants answers as to why Dan felt the need to have Teddy K explain himself. He uses phrases like "Do you know who you are talking to?" and "Mr. Teddy K, goddamn it!" to emphasize his displeasure and even goes so far as to threaten to fire Dan on the spot. However, Carter steps in on this heated discussion to tell Steckle that they have a new client that he and Dan are working on that will greatly increase the bottom line. Carter uses phrases like "working hard", "saving the company", and "big account" to stress his and Dan's importance Steckle feels that Carter is bluffing and that he is just trying to save Dan's job. However, it is Carter's sly smirk that convinces Mr. Steckle that he is indeed not bluffing. In this scene, I counter a total of 3 negative and 1 positive interaction, resulting in a total score of -2.

Scene #5: Time (1 hr. 34 min) = 5 Positive Emotions/Reinforcements

In this scene, both Dan and Carter meet with one of their old clients, Eugene Kalb (Philip Baker Hall), to convince him to increase his ad budget in their magazine. Before the meeting starts, Kalb asks Carter why he has a black eye. Carter is hesitant to tell Kalb the reason, because Dan gave him the black eye. In an odd turn of events, Dan smiles at Carter and encourages him to tell Kalb why Dan hit him. Before Carter has a chance to come up with an obvious lie, Dan tells Kalb that he punched Carter in the eye because Carter called him a dinosaur. Kalb states that he can relate to this situation as his "asshole" son-in-law says the same thing. Both men smile at each other's plight, and Kalb states that Dan is not a dinosaur and that he is going to double his investment in *Sports America* magazine. After this bonding experience, both Dan and Carter

have their own bonding experience as they smile at each other, high five each other, and state

that the sales meeting was "very fun". Based on the communicative interaction by all three

characters, I counted five distinct moments of positive emotions shared by one or more parties.

Scene #6: Time (7 min) = 6 Positive Emotions/Reinforcements

In one of the first scenes in which we see the main character at his job, Dan Foreman is

trying to convince a long-time client to continue advertising in his company's magazine. In a

curious manner that sets the tone for the entire movie, Dan is seen smiling and acting gracious as

he tries to sell his services. Even his client is taken aback by Dan's passive but confident

approach to sales. Dan uses phrases like "I believe", "trust", and "personally" to describe his

intentions. His client, Eugene Kalb, sees Dan's genuineness as a positive indicator that Dan does

indeed have the client's best interests in mind. The result of this meeting is that Eugene commits

to staying with the magazine despite industry trends to shift advertising to online and television

markets. I counted a total of six occurrences where Dan evokes positive emotions within his

client Eugene.

**Scene #7: Time (14 min) = 7 Negative Emotions/Reinforcements + 1 Positive
Emotions/Reinforcements = 6 Negative Emotions/Reinforcements**

As *Sports America* is bought out by a new company, Globe Com, the employees at *Sports

America* wonder if they are going to be able to keep their jobs. Word spreads quickly that layoffs

are coming; coworkers talk among themselves to see who is staying and who is going. Within

these quick exchanges, words and phrases such as "fired", "laid off", and "canned" are used to

convey employees' feelings of insecurity and fear. One of the only people able to keep a positive

outlook is Dan, as he is convinced that there is no reason to fire any member of his sales team

due to their banner year of sales. Overall, I count seven occurrences of evoking negative

emotions, with the only positive exception being Dan's assurance of employment.

Table 4: Scene Analysis, *In Good Company*

SCENE #	RUNNING TIME (MINUTES)	CHARACTERS	SCORE
1	5	Duryea, Steckle, coworker	**+3**
2	6	Duryea, Steckle	**+4**
3	32	Duryea, Colon, Foreman, coworkers	**-3**
4	90	Teddy-K, Steckle, Duryea, Foreman	**-2**
5	94	Duryea, Foreman, Kalb	**+5**
6	7	Foreman, Kalb	**+6**
7	14	*Sports America* employees, Foreman	**-6**
		TOTAL FOR OVERALL FILM	**+3**

Conclusion

This film sets the tone early on that there will be negative emotions (layoffs, new quotes,

demotions) that will have to be dealt with. After some awkward moments of transition (Carter

being much younger than his boss and Carter's running sales meetings), Carter realizes Dan's

integrity, as well as his stable life after hours. Carter soon realizes that Dan treats people with

more respect (words of encouragement and praise) and defends his employees overall value to

the company (team building activities and tangible rewards). Due to the unexpected positivity

experienced by both Dan and Carter through shared experiences and exceeded expectations, this

film as an overall score of +3.

Relevance of Study Findings to Research Questions

As the four films analyzed were diverse with regard to their plots, the types of characters portrayed, and the overall levels of positivity/negativity exhibited, their relevance to answering the study research questions varied.

Table 5: Overall Positivity/Negativity Score of Films Analyzed

FILM ANALYZED	OVERALL POSTIVITY/NEGATIVITY SCORE OF SCENES ANALYZED
Moneyball	**-11**
The Social Network	**-1**
The Wolf of Wall Street	**+15**
In Good Company	**+3**

Thus, below each film's relevance to the respective research questions is discussed separately.

RQ1:   What language as depicted in the films comprises or constitutes appreciation, recognition, and reward at work? (e.g., What motivational, supportive, or praise words or terms resonate with characters in the films?)

With regard to *Moneyball,* I found that the verbal utterances evoking positive emotion were the phrases (or variants therein) most related to baseball terminology. Such phrases as "five tool player" or "good ballplayer" were used to solidify or verify a person's value to the organization. I find this fact to be interesting in the way in which insider-talk carried with it a high level of positivity -- an outsider would not be privileged enough to fully understand the positive connotations of such phrases.

Conversely, *The Wolf of Wall Street* uses very derogatory and crude words to evoke positivity in the workplace. Curse words and sexual references are used in a misogynistic manner that bonds together the male coworkers. The more vile the language, the more committed this group of men became to "dismembering" and "choking-out" their victims, in this case the

unsuspecting clients buying stock. Similar to the "Groupthink affect" (Janis, 1972) seen in fraternities and sororities, the more charismatic and demonstrative the leader Belfort was, the more likely the other group members were to follow.

The main characters in *In Good Company* seem to create a personal bond through a shared language of respect and admiration. More specifically, Dan Forman assumes a mentorship role for the younger Carter Duryea as Carter navigates the early stages of his career. In turn, Carter sees the strong familial bonds created by Dan and looks at Dan as a potential father figure. An example of this dynamic is Dan's telling Carter that he is "going to make it" and Carter's response that "it would be fine with [me]" if he turned out to be like Dan at when he reached Dan's age.

The language used in *The Social Network* to convey appreciation, recognition, and reward is based on the entrepreneurial bonds between Mark Zuckerburg, Sean Parker, and Eduardo Saverin. I found that when they referred to each other as "CFO", "inventor", or "partner", the recipient felt honor and respect. Upon further investigation, I found that in interpersonal interactions involving negative emotions (anger, frustration, confusion), such titles were absent. Thus, while characters in *Moneyball* and *The Social Network* relied upon positive language common to their industries, characters in *In Good Company* created their own personal language of support. And the actors in *The Wolf of Wall Street* engaged in the use of lewd, obscene, and insulting language to motivate subordinates.

RQ2. What non-verbal public actions as depicted in the films comprise appreciation, recognition, and reward at work? (e.g., What public actions by others made film characters feel positive emotion?)

The non-verbal public actions used to appreciate, recognize, and reward employee characters differed across the four films

The characters in the movie *Moneyball* often used high-fives and firm handshakes as symbolic actions intended to evoke positive emotions. The physical act of touching another man in a celebratory manner brought smiles and looks of satisfaction in both parties. Like the language used, such gestures are common in the sports world and in the larger world of interaction between male coworkers.

Following the same trajectory as the use of crude and insulting language, in *The Wolf of Wall Street* public actions involving drugs, sex, and lewd behavior created the most positive emotion. In a gross display of hedonism, the more the predominately male stock traders of Stratton Oakmont participated in illicit activities, the more they felt "a part of the exclusive group" and the more positive emotions they exhibited.

With regard to *In Good Company,* participation in team activities and organizational meetings seemed to produce the greatest number of public displays of affections. In one pivotal scene, the main characters are seen working together to triumph over upper management. This is the first time we see these characters as a unified team rather than as objects of contention. I found this fact to be interesting related to the way men often use competitive sports to show their dominance over others (Cashdan, 1998). Additionally, the film portrays a few moments of positivity in the workplace when both Dan and Carter stand up for the employees in public spaces by highlighting their value to upper management.

Throughout *The Social Network*, the symbolic actions of positive emotion involve grandiose online celebrations. Each milestone of Facebook, its creation and its 1 millionth member, are all celebrated publically online. This tactic seems to align itself with the overall theme of the movie, in which the college life (and life in its entirety) should be shared with everyone.

Thus, characters in *Moneyball* used stereotypical sports actions to appreciate, recognize, and reward characters, while characters in *In Good Company* similarly used business-related conventions such as teamwork and agreement in meetings to signal such positivity. Players in *The Wolf of Wall Street* continued to flip convention on its head by engaging in illegal or immoral actions to give positive nonverbal feedback, and characters in *The Social Network* took advantage of the internet to take reinforcement viral.

RQ3. What symbolic forms of tangible rewards as depicted in the films evoke positive emotions in their characters?

In *Moneyball*, there was an absence of tangible rewards given to individuals for their performance. Rather, I found that the intrinsic reward of a job well done seemed to be sufficient for evoking positive emotions. Knowing that there were others who believe in you and your commitment, as portrayed in the bond between Billy Beane and Peter Brand, served to keep these characters motivated and accountable to the process at hand.

In stark contrast to *Moneyball*, *The Wolf of Wall Street* contains many scenes where tangible rewards are used to evoke positive emotions in the workplace. By my count, there are a total of seven scenes in which money, expensive watches, or cars are used to evoke positive emotions. An interesting connection I found was that there was a point at which the additional incentive did not motivate the individual as much as it once did. This point of diminishing returns is found in recent managerial studies stating that money can lose its efficacy over time (Will, 2008).

Due to the dynamics at play with the merger between Global Com and *Sports America* in *In Good Company*, many employees were satisfied with merely keeping their jobs rather than looking for any additional recognition. The only scene in which tangible rewards were given is when Carter symbolically takes over Dan's old office as he replaces Dan as the vice president of

sales. This positional swap is symbolic because of its signifying that Globe Com's employees (Carter) are in a position of power as it relates to *Sports America's* employees (Dan).

As in *Moneyball*, where intrinsic values were placed above tangible rewards, there was only one scene in which the main characters in *The Social Network* used incentives to add significance to their achievements. This scene involves Mark Zuckerberg's printing his own business cards that state that he is "CEO … Bitch". This otherwise trite title was suggested by Sean Parker to signify that Zuckerberg alone was the genesis of such a successful business venture. That there exists only one scene portraying such an event makes the implication of this reward important to consider. The existence of these cards reinforces the narrative that the first person one should answer to is self. Thus, only *The Wolf of Wall Street* emphasized the importance of tangible rewards in evoking positive emotions. In contrast, *Moneyball*, *In Good Company*, and *The Social Network* stressed the importance of intrinsic satisfaction with the job in keeping employees happy.

RQ4. What are the effects of feeling appreciated, recognized, and rewarded and how do these effects play out in the film – changes in plot, characters and overall narrative?

With regard to *Moneyball,* I believe that the overall effect of evoking such positive emotions in the workplace was that Billy Beane and Peter Brand became united in their commitment to each other and to their analytics. Throughout the film, there are many antagonists and moments of doubt as to whether Billy and Peter's system can work. However, shared moments of positivity and triumph bring together these two individuals in such a way that they commit to one another and to their ideas "until the bitter end".

The Wolf of Wall Street offers the most extreme case of positive connectivity -- the employees of Stratton Oakmont are willing to go to jail for Jordan Belford. The excesses of

money, sex, and drugs seem to trump employees' morals, ethics, and legal obligations. In a gross depiction of the evils of excess, what seemed to be positivity in the workplace causes the moral degradation and incarceration of more than ten employees. The obscene amounts of money and decadence act like a veil to the world around these employees. This utopian environment provided for by money is so prevalent that all those involved in Stratton Oakmont see the hedonistic nature (negative or unlawful activity) as a positive motivator for continued behavior. Uncovering this interesting dynamics led me to believe the producers of this film see financial excessive, rampant drug use and sexual promiscuity as positive reinforcements. Contrary to the morals and virtues present outside the workplace, the employees of The Wolf Wall Street see the workplace as a place in which excessive is a virtue. The main motivation, positivity reinforcement experienced by the characters is the desire for wealth at all costs. At one point this positivity or desire supersedes reason and logic as they continue down this downward spiral of destruction.

The effects of evoking positive emotions in the workplace depicted by *In Good Company* resulted in an unlikely bond between the main characters – the younger new boss, Carter, and the older, displaced boss, Dan. A type of mentorship, personal and professional, developed between Dan and Carter, with Carter deciding he wants to find a career that he can believe in as much as Dan believes in *Sports America*. This fact transcends the preconceived notion of how positivity in the workplace should make an employee feel more connected and committed to an existing job. A central theme of this film involves first finding something to believe in, then finding recognition within that field, not the other way around.

Unlike the other three films, the positivity between the original main characters in *The Social Network* -- Mark Zuckerberg and Eduardo Saverin -- ends in their complete separation.

The film details the persuasive nature of a third character, Sean Parker, as he effectively ends the creative partnership between the two inventors. It seems as though the positive connectivity experienced between Mark and Sean negates the previous commitments Mark had with Eduardo. I believe that overall narrative of the film changes from the excitement created by the entrepreneurial spirit to the spirit of self-preservation of capitalism.

Thus, the effects on employee characters of feeling appreciated, recognized, and rewarded were similar across all four films: as a result of these positive emotions, the main characters formed strong bonds with each other. However, the denouements of the films were not the same. For the characters in *Moneyball*, their close working relationship and loyalty produced the success of the venture made the subject of the film. For the characters in *The Wolf of Wall Street,* their close working relationship and loyalty ended in prison sentences. For the characters in *In Good Company*, the mutual admiration between the two main characters resulted in the younger character's rejecting the idea of blind loyalty to an employer and instead embracing the idea of intrinsic motivation leading to career satisfaction. And for the characters in *The Social Network*, the positive emotions evoked in Mark Zuckerberg ended with his severing his relationship with his longtime partner Eduardo Saverin and forming a new bond with Sean Parker.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Lessons learned from analysis of the four films

Some of the additional findings that I notated for this particular project were the top ranking items for both positive and negative categories. Words of affirmation or praise scored the highest in regards to relevancy and prevalence. Words or phrase shared between communicative participants were instrumental to the relational development. These verbal utterances resulted in a greater depth and increased comradery between individuals. This sense of connectivity had a correlation to the increased positivity seen in the film's overall narrative valence. On the contrary tangible rewards ranked last in terms of increased positive emotion in the workplace. I find this fact interesting in the way in which contemporary white collar organizations use finical incentives as their primary source of positivity (Amabile, 1993; Staw, Sutton & Pelled, 1994).

Concerning negative emotions, acts of violence evoked the most negativity. The threat of bodily harm caused many of the employees to submit to their managerial counterparts, even at the possibility of termination or incarceration. These findings are supported by psychologists and sociologists as acts of intimidation are the strongest indicators of unjust compliance in the workplace (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008; Hoel, Rayner & Cooper, 1999). Words of disapproval rank second on the scale relating to negative emotions due to their intrinsic impact on the other's sense of worth (Pelham & Swann, 1989). Written forms of negativity ranked last in terms of frequency. This finding may not be indicative of the overall impact of written form of reprimand as *Social Network* was the only film in which a contractual separation was present.

Some additional findings that I think adds to the corpus of data for this discipline were the conclusion that long tenured employees were the most resistant to change. The fact was a prevailing theme in the film *Moneyball* as Billy Beane struggles with his tenured scouting department. The shift in ideology, from the eye-test to Sabermeterics, was meant with strong opposition. Another interesting finding is the fact that there seem to exist a singular driving force for managerial oversight. The more bombastic and charismatic the leader became the more committed and steadfast their employees become to the vision. The power dynamics between top management and their employees is similar to the groupthink theories portrayed in sororities and fraternizes (Whyte, 1952; Janis, 1982).

I think that these findings might relate to the real world situations in the way in which film often imitates reality and vice versa. For example, *The Wolf of Wall Street* was released in 2013 which coincides with the 99 % movement against the concentration of wealth around Wall Street. The part of the reason for its popularity and critical acclaim is due to its portrayal of the hedonism and gross excess of Wall Street as the concentration of wealth is unequally distributed to the top 1 % of the population. Disengaging the elitist myth is part of the reason why this film was taken on (Zweig, 2009; Partnoy, 2009). I believe that I can connection can be made between the narrative and thematic overtures portrayed in *The Wolf of Wall Street* and current organizational communication. Additionally, the film *In Good Company* is released in 2004 at the height of America's surging economic growth. Mergers and acquisitions were running rampant during the early 2000s as a signal of economic prosperity here in the United States. However, increased awareness in mainstream media occurred as to the negative impact these transitions had on human resources. Similar to the film's narrative on layoffs, terminations and

demotions there exists an internal analysis of what impacts these dealings had on the workforce and not just the bottom line.

Contribution to the Discipline

One of the premises of this investigation was to see how films portray the communicative dynamics between manager and subordinate. Many studies, in both managerial and communication disciplines, have explored the communicative dynamics from a managerial perspective (Ariani, 2013; Chang, Sy & Choi, 2012). My position in these matters is that communication and managerial studies place too much importance on the macro to micro levels of communication. This top-down dynamic limits the discourse to those who have the power to enact change and influence. The significance of this problem is seen in the limited number of studies that center on both perspectives; those in positions of power and their subordinates. One of the intentions of this project is to illustrate and give voice to the lower level employees who often times feel disenfranchised. Moreover, the focus of the previous studies has embraced a managerial perspective: what a supervisor can do to increase motivation and productivity. Although this intent is aligned with my study, one of my purposes was to give voice to both parties by showcasing fictional workplace interactions as depicted in four feature films.

Instead of looking at the power dynamics and distribution of influence, I wanted to explore the interconnectivity between a supervisor and his or her employees. More specifically, I was interested in what words, actions, or nonverbal communication would evoke various types of emotion in the workplace as depicted in film. Given the metaphorical value and thick description inherent in film, I felt that recent commercial films would be an effective vehicle for study. In addition to the rich content offered by film, I was able to dig deep into the material as I

watched and re-watched specific scenes in each movie in order to fully understand the narrative and communicative exchange between these actors. Another motive for using film in my analysis was the reliability and validity of applying concepts in films to aspects of contemporary workplace environments (Kracauer, 1947; Babbie, 2012). Unlike observational studies that offer a snapshot or singular moment in time, films allow the researcher to rewind the scenes of study in a way where context and narrative can be taken into consideration.

Additionally, I was able to identify a few new developments in the field of organizational communication, based on my analysis of the four contemporary films. First, the action that was the most evident in evoking positive emotion were words of affirmation or praise. In this case, I found that there was a greater degree of positivity when the sender used words like "proud", "value", and "smart". These verbal utterances seemed to transcend other forms of recognition. In particular the presence and receiving of tangible awards (money, bonus and trophies) where not nearly as effective in evoking positive emotion in the workplace. To illustrate the motivational difference between these two revelations, in the film *In Good Company* (2004), the main characters quickly realize that it is not the gap in age or income that matters but the mutual respect that is discovered by both parties. Even in the film *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013), where millions of dollars hang in the balance, the main character Jordan Belfort resorts to crude language to evoke positive emotion in his employees. Indeed there is an obscene amount of money to be made in his company, but it seems that his strongest appeal involves verbal utterances.

Coming in a close second are nonverbal actions such as smiles, head nods, and handshakes. These nonverbal signs of agreement and approval ranked very high with regard to evoking positive emotion. I noticed that when coworkers feel a connection to each other and to

the moment, they are compelled to show their shared connectivity in a physical way. This fact is especially true in the film *Moneyball* (2011), where the two main characters, Billy Beane and Peter Brand, are overwhelmed with emotions on two separate occasions, with both parties high fiving each other and coming together in a warm embrace. This type of physical contact put emphasis on the shared moment of positivity.

Conversely, there were many occurrences in which the individual's actions (sarcasm, threats of violence, and curse words) produced negative emotions. In these instances, I noted the impact that these actions had on the recipient. Issues of productivity, motivation, and retribution were considered when analyzing the impact of negativity in the workplace. The most detrimental action taken by these actors was the threat of physical violence. Although this finding is consistent with other studies pertaining to toxic workplace environments, I found that the perception of violence evoked the highest number and greatest degree of negative emotions (Lutgen-Sandvik & Sypher, 2009; Madlock & Kennedy-Lightsey, 2010). An example of this impact is seen in *The Social Network* (2010) when both antagonists (Eduardo Severin, Sean Parker) meet to confront the protagonist (Mark Zuckerburg) to talk about ownership of the company. In this climatic scene, Eduardo threatens to punch Sean in the face to see his cowardly reaction. Once Eduardo transforms his emotionality to physicality, he can no longer be friends with either Sean or Mark. An interesting conclusion from my study is that these cinematic threats of violence seem to be an unforgiveable offense.

Overall, I think that my unique contribution to the corpus of data is twofold. One, I believe that I was able to uncover how films portray evoking emotion in the workplace. Through my methodology and coding schema, I was able to reveal what specific actions (verbal utterances, nonverbal actions, and tangible rewards) evoke emotions in the workplaces depicted

in the films analyzed. Also, I think that my research was able to illustrate how films can be a metaphor for or representation of reality (this case, contemporary workplace environments). I understand the difficulty of coming to any firm conclusion given the limited scope of this study, but my hope is that this project will open the discussion of what constitutes evoking emotion in the workplace. These factors differ from and extend current knowledge in the area of organizational communication.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

After further review of my data and sample population, I have concluded that there were some limitations that inhibited a more comprehensive study. One of these limitations was the homogeneous nature of male-dominated interactions in the films chosen for analysis. I noted only a select number of interactions between males and females that would classify as evoking emotion in the workplace. Limiting this research to predominately male-to-male interactions does not adequately represent the contemporary workplace. Further investigation into the role that gender plays in evoking emotion in the workplace would be warranted. Another issue at hand is relating these dramatic scenes to a much more malign workplace. I understand that the events that I analyzed are creations of a screenwriter, a director, and a production company. Even though two (*Moneyball, The Social Network*) of the four films are based on true stories, there assuredly were creative liberties and exaggerations taken at will.

I understand that I should be mindful of the fact that films are representations or mirrors of reality, and unlike studying and observing an actual workplace environment, my findings are based on a medium whose primary purpose is to entertain and be profitable. Another limitation to this study was the specific date range for all films (production date 2004 or later). An

interesting research project would be to see the how earlier films compare to their

contemporaries in regards to the workplace environment. This investigation would align itself

well with the work of Kracauer (1947) as it relates to film being a conduit for reality. With a

broader range of production dates, a communication scholar could conduct a longitudinal study

of evoking emotion in the workplace. I would like to suggest implication for my project to other

studies such as psychology and administration. The reason I suggest these two disciplines lies in

the interconnectivity between the mind and managing human resources. I believe that it would be

advantageous for both disciplines to see the benefit of evoking positive emotion in the

workplace.

Appendix

Coding Schema/ Procedures

1. View film once without analysis

2. Locate emergent themes

3. Generate categorizations

4. Meticulously view film a second time to confirm analysis

5. Determine units of analysis

   a. Elements within a scene

   b. Scene itself

   c. Movie as a whole

6. Describe context

7. Describe and apply decision rules

8. Assign values or valence to each occurrence

9. Compute the difference

   a. I.e. – 4 Positive – 2 Negative = + 2 Grade
10. Discuss results

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