Facebook me: Applying The Social Network film to student development theory and practice

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Media Review: Facebook me: Applying The Social Network Film to Student Development Theory and Practice

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The Social Network film can serve as a helpful tool for student affairs educators to facilitate learning about issues related to student development theory and practice. In this media feature, the following is provided: (a) a brief synopsis and review of the film; (b) an outline of student development theories and how these can be integrated into the main themes of the film; and (c) a description of how student affairs practitioners might apply key concepts and issues to several campus contexts.
"Did you know there are more people with genius IQs living in China than there are people of any kind living in the United States?" asks Mark Zuckerberg's character in The Social Network film (Fincher et al., 2010). He continues this line of inquiry with his girlfriend, Erica: "How do you distinguish yourself in a population of people who all got 1600 on their SATs?" As this rapid-fire exchange between the two characters unfolds in the opening scene of the film, viewers quickly realize that the focus of the discussion is clearly on Mark, a sophomore at Harvard University, who is surrounded by other high-ability, high-achieving students. Though not motivated by money or material possessions, he yearns to "distinguish" himself through profound accomplishment — "I'm saying I need to do something substantial," he proclaims.

Moreover, Mark desires to belong, to be included socially in an exclusive on-campus final club despite his outward awkwardness and personality quirks. Like many new college students, Mark grapples with the transitions of entering a new phase of his life, including the struggles of developing his social identity, managing interpersonal relationships, and making decisions about his future. The Social Network story—with a focus on the Hollywood version of Mark Zuckerberg's character—therefore provides a relevant lens to analyze and apply college student development theory to practice.

**Using Film as a Teaching Tool for Student Affairs**

The purpose of this article is to explore how The Social Network film can be used as an effective teaching tool in student affairs. The practice of applying entertainment media including film and other media sources to better understand student development concepts is well-documented in student affairs and college teaching literature (Dunn & Forney, 2004; Forney, 2004). The application of entertainment media has been utilized in numerous areas of student affairs work including career development (Amundson, 2006), multicultural affairs (Howard-Hamilton & Hilton, 2004), leadership development (Callahan & Rosser, 2007), sexual orientation and gender identity issues (Cawthon, 2004), counseling contexts (Taub & Forney, 2004), and residence hall experiences (Levine & Shapiro, 2000). Dunn and Forney (2004) outlined several contexts, including film analysis, in graduate level student affairs coursework as well as in training opportunities for student affairs practitioners and paraprofessionals.

There are advantages to using film in educational settings (Champoux, 1999; Saldaña, 2009; Seyforth & Golde, 2001). The Millennial generation (individuals born after 1982) responds favorably to technology, edutainment, and visual imagery (Carducci & Rhoads, 2005; Junco & Cole-Avent, 2008), and film can provide an engaging narrative that allows students to apply complex theoretical concepts. Effective teaching films can be used to analyze student development and higher education issues (Conklin, 2008; Nehls, Todd, & Morgan, 2009). Concepts depicted in film can be tied to psychosocial issues, moral and intellectual development, career decision making, social identity, diversity, and multicultural awareness—student development issues embedded within The Social Network.
With over 800 million users, Facebook is ubiquitous among the college population (Heiberger & Harper, 2008). Millennials’ use of social networking sites has far surpassed that of Gen Xers and Baby Boomers. According to the Pew Research Center (Taylor & Keeter, 2010), three-fourths of Millennials have created a profile, whereas 50% of Gen Xers and 30% of Boomers have created their own. The trend has been consistent with Millennials since 2008. Of the Millennials who created social networking profiles, 81% were between the age of 18 and 24. Educators and students who watch the film will likely have an interest and connection to the topic based on their personal experiences with social media (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007). More importantly, the film can be used in student affairs training and development contexts (e.g., graduate-level student development theory courses, training for residence hall staff, and multicultural workshops). In the following sections, we (a) provide a brief overview of the film, (b) highlight several student development theories and demonstrate how the film can be integrated with these theories to be used for educational purposes, and (c) describe how student affairs practitioners can integrate and apply the film across contexts.

**Synopsis of Film**

*The Social Network* is a loosely based, fictionalized account of the real-life story of Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook (Fincher et al., 2010). The film received high acclaim, winning three Academy Awards. The story begins in the fall of 2003 when Mark (played by Jessie Eisenberg) is a sophomore at Harvard University. Mark desires to stand out and be noticed by the prestigious final clubs on campus. In Mark’s mind, getting into a club is “exclusive; they are fun and they lead to a better life.” Erica, his girlfriend (played by Rooney Mara), breaks off the relationship. Jilted and intoxicated, Mark returns to his room and with the help of his roommate, Eduardo Saverin (played by Andrew Garfield), creates a web site, Facemash, which compares the “hotness” of female students on campus. The web site becomes so immediately popular that the Harvard computer system crashes. Mark gets noticed on campus, even if for the wrong reasons. He is admonished by the Harvard administrative board and apologizes to several women’s student groups whom he has offended.

Later, the Winklevoss twins, who are distinguished members of the Porcellian final club, and their colleague, Divya Narendra, approach Mark about a social networking site. They seek Mark’s computer programming expertise and, as an incentive, offer Mark the chance to redeem his reputation on campus. Mark agrees in principle, but in the interim he begins work on a different web site that later becomes Facebook. Mark’s idea starts to take off, his relationship with Eduardo founders, and he eventually makes new connections that influence the trajectory of his journey (Sean Parker, played by Justin Timberlake, serves as an important mentor). Mark leaves Harvard, moves to Silicon Valley, and Facebook quickly reaches millions. The film chronicles his struggles with issues related to fostering identity, striving for achievement and status, developing purpose, managing interpersonal relationships, and ethical and moral decision making.
In the first section below, we analyze the film, with a focus on Mark's character, from several student development theories. We discuss the implications of the film and describe how key concepts may be used in student affairs contexts including multicultural affairs, residential and campus life, judicial affairs, career development, and advising services.

**Student Development: Using The Social Network to Teach Theory**

Film can be an engaging and innovative strategy to teach student development theory, and The Social Network film can be applied to any number of student development theories and frameworks. For example, we opted to analyze two traditional theories (Chickering, 1969; Perry, 1968), in addition to four newer, more contemporary approaches to student affairs that are integrative and inclusive (multiple identity theory, diversity development, heterosexual identity development, and developmental ecology). Though it is important to acknowledge the limitations of traditional theories in college student development, these theories form the foundations for later student development theories. The earlier theories were incorporated into our analysis to demonstrate the application of film to foundational developmental work. We emphasize that the discussions below are used to demonstrate potential applications of theory to film. One should be aware that not every theory or framework perfectly aligns with the characters depicted.

**Intellectual and Ethical Development Theory: Perry**

Perry (1968) developed his theory of intellectual and ethical development by relying on longitudinal, qualitative interviews of undergraduates at Harvard University from the 1950s. As a result, his theory may have limited applicability for today’s college students. Despite that, it serves as an important foundational theory in student development. Based upon students’ responses, Perry conceptualized a scheme for intellectual development that was intertwined with moral development. He surmised that a developmentally "advanced person showing a high rate of growth somehow becomes a 'better' person" (Perry, 1968, p. 61). Perry's theory consists of nine positions that lie on a developmental continuum. As individuals develop, they move from basic dualism toward multiplicity and relativism. The dualistic perspective centers on a division of "authority–right–we" versus the "alien world of illegitimate–wrong–others" (Perry, 1968, p. 83).

A few fundamental story lines in The Social Network involve Mark’s development of www.facemash.com, a web site that rated the attractiveness of Harvard women; his violation of Harvard University student policies; and his unsavory business dealings with Eduardo, Divya Narendra, and the Winklevoss twins. Due to the frequent occurrence of similar events on college campuses today (e.g., cyberbullying, ratings of faculty attractiveness and competence on www.ratemyprofessor.com, student violations of code of conduct, and proprietary business practices), each storyline can provide a relevant framework to promote deeper understanding of college student development theories in the area of ethics.
In *The Social Network*, student affairs professionals can see aspects of dualism in Mark's character. For example, his black-and-white viewpoint can be seen when he proclaims to the Winklevoss twins, "If you guys were the inventors of Facebook, you would have invented Facebook." In another scene, Mark’s steadfast convictions of what is “right” and "wrong" can be clearly seen as he addresses the Harvard University administrative board and believes that they owe him recognition for revealing gaping holes in their security system. This stance is indicative of the intolerance Mark feels toward others who have allegedly wronged him. Presented with an opportunity to apologize, take responsibility for his actions, and mend his relations with authorities on campus, he chooses instead to seek congratulatory recognition from the board for his wrongdoings.

The development from dualism to multiplicity indicates a shift from "you're either right or you're wrong" to "everyone has a right to his own opinion" (Perry, 1968, p. 134). Ultimately, Mark resigns to the fact that the final destiny of the lawsuits lies outside of his control. He passively delegates his "responsibility to fate" and lets others (e.g., his lawyers) take control and determine the punishment and outcomes related to his wrongdoings (Perry, 1968, p. 255).

**Psychosocial Theory: Chickering**

Mark’s development as a young adult can be viewed through the lens of Chickering’s (1969) theory of identity development. Chickering’s theory was introduced in *Education and Identity*, and most student affairs programs integrate it as a fundamental component of their curricula. Chickering referenced seven areas of identity development, which he termed vectors: developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity. For purposes of this analysis, Mark’s development is examined through managing emotions, developing mature interpersonal relationships, and developing integrity.

**Managing emotions.** In *The Social Network*, Mark struggles to control his disappointment, anger, and resentment. Chickering and Reisser (1993) explained that a student’s development can be affected by toxic feelings, including fear, anxiety, and anger, the latter of which can lead to aggression, depression, guilt, shame, and dysfunctional attraction. Mark’s anger and aggression serve as catalysts for his initial website experiment that would ultimately become Facebook. In the managing emotions vector, “students develop the ability to recognize and accept emotions, as well as to appropriately express and control them” (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010, p. 67). In the final scene, when Mark realizes that a settlement against him is imminent, he states to his attorney that “he was drunk, angry, and stupid” when he blogged about Erica, perhaps a key incident used to question his character if the case were to go to a jury trial.

**Developing mature interpersonal relationships.** Mark’s inability to develop mature interpersonal relationships sheds light on his interactions with his peers. This vector references the ability to tolerate and appreciate cultural and personal differences as well as maintain healthy and lasting interpersonal relationships. Mark’s relationships with those around him
challenge his ability to tolerate those who are different from him intellectually, ethnically, and socioeconomically. One specific example occurs early in the film when Mark suggests to Erica that she does not need to study because she attends Boston University, a less prestigious university than Harvard, in his opinion. Mark’s relationship with Eduardo is also an example of intolerance in scenes where he downplays Eduardo’s success in the admission process of the Phoenix final club as merely “a diversity thing.”

**Developing integrity.** Three stages make up the developing integrity vector: humanizing values, personalizing values, and developing congruence (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). According to Evans et al. (2010), the humanizing values stage is one in which “students progress from rigid, moralistic thinking to developing a more humanized value system where the interests of others are balanced with their own interests” (p. 69). In the film, Mark is adamant about protecting his interests in Facebook over those of his former friend, Eduardo, and those of the Winklevoss twins. Mark appears to be stuck in the rigid, moralistic thinking pattern and does not consider the interests of the other parties in the development of Facebook; in other words, he experiences challenges with the humanizing values stage.

There are several times throughout the film when Mark does not acknowledge or respect the beliefs of others, thus indicating challenges with the personalizing values stage. In this stage students develop a value system as well as respect and acknowledgement of others. The final stage in developing integrity involves a balance between establishing a personal value system and adhering to greater social responsibility. Mark, however, cannot maintain relationships; he never acknowledges the roles others play in the development of Facebook and shirks his responsibility to honor his business and social relationships.

**Spiritual Development, Meaning, and Purpose: Astin, Astin, and Lindholm**

A relatively new area of study in higher education literature includes the study of students’ spiritual development. Astin, Astin, and Lindholm (2011) defined spiritual development as “how students make meaning of their education and their lives, how they develop a sense of purpose, the value and belief dilemmas they experience, as well as the role of religion, the sacred, and the mystical in their lives” (p. 58). A criticism levied against foundational theorists, such as Chickering (1969) and his vector model, is that the implications may not be as relevant and applicable to today’s college undergraduates; however, recent research on spiritual dimensions parallels the work of Chickering. Astin et al. created 12 measures for studying the spiritual and religious development of undergraduates. They found that at least four of the seven vectors described by Chickering and Reisser (1993) were reflected in their measures, including “managing emotions (Equanimity), establishing identity and purpose (Spiritual Quest), and moving through autonomy toward interdependence (Ecumenical Worldview)” (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2011, p. 58).
When applying spiritual development approaches to The Social Network, it is clear that Eduardo and Mark are both dealing with decisions related to belief dilemmas they experience, including personal and professional values clarification, belonging, and purpose (Nash & Murray, 2010). Hurtado and Carter (1997) introduced the concept of membership, especially for historically underserved student populations. Eduardo seeks out this membership when he strives and eventually is “punched” (i.e., invited) into the Phoenix Club; his affiliation with the club provides a sense of purpose and meaning. One could argue that although Mark is not officially in a student club, he aims to establish his own group of like-minded computer hackers. Parks (2000) argued that development occurs for students when they feel unease or discomfort with their current situation. From this perspective, student affairs educators could encourage students to view the film using the spirituality lens, especially given that the characters in the film are searching for personal identity, meaning, and interpersonal connection in varied ways.

Social Identity Approaches

Issues related to social identity and, in particular, social status, dominate the narrative of The Social Network. For purposes of this article, we selected the conceptual model of multiple dimensions of identity as proposed by Jones and McEwen (2000) and later reconceptualized by Abes, Jones, and McEwen (2007). In this model, each student assumes a personal identity with unique traits and preferences. Around this core is the context in which the identity develops, including family background, status, race/ethnicity, privilege, religion, sexual orientation, peer influences, and sociopolitical factors. Depending on the student and what is occurring in that person’s life, these identity dimensions represent different levels of importance. Abes et al. added the meaning making filter, which provided a greater understanding of how students came to understand how they perceive these influences that impact identity formation.

Applying the multiple identities model to the film, educators can use Mark and Eduardo’s characters to explore the self-perceptions of multiple identity dimensions, including contextual factors. The three areas that most closely relate to multiple identities include privilege, gender identity and masculinity, and multicultural diversity development. First, the film provides a unique lens to examine the concept of privilege in higher education. Examples include social class privilege (e.g., both Mark and Eduardo come from affluent families) and White, gender, heterosexual, and Christian privileges (e.g., both Mark and Eduardo are Jewish and final clubs historically have excluded Jews from membership). The characters interact with symbolic representations of what privilege means for those who have opportunities that allow them to prosper. Deresiewicz (2008) contended that some students who attend prestigious colleges and universities may come away with the message that measures of intellect and academic success are equated to measures of value in some moral or metaphysical sense. Even though Mark hails from a middle- to upper-class family and attended a private academy, he is viewed in the film as someone who resents the privilege of the Winklevoss twins.
Second, issues related to gender identity and masculinity can be explored using the multiple identities model. Mark’s behavior in the film allows us to examine how college men often project masculinity. Edwards and Jones (2009) explained that performing masculinity is like a mask men put on to cover ways in which they do not meet external expectations of what it means to be masculine. In the opening scene, Mark attempts to impress Erica with his intellect, social aspirations, and academic abilities, yet his interpersonal skills lack tact. Mark attempts to portray himself as a guy who is tough, arrogant, and ruthless.

Third, a focus on social identity allows viewers to explore issues related to diversity development. This includes but is not limited to race and ethnicity as well as contemporary approaches that complement foundational theoretical perspectives. Student affairs professionals may incorporate at least two nontraditional, inclusive approaches to help understand the characters and issues presented in *The Social Network*: diversity development and heterosexual identity development. Chávez, Guido-DiBrito, and Mallory (2003) contributed a model of diversity that includes six dimensions of development in a nonstage progression that focus on affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects. Unawareness or lack of exposure to the “other” is an initial dimension that ideally would change and enable students to make choices that integrate and validate others. Mark devalues Eduardo throughout the film, indicated by his comments about Eduardo getting into the Phoenix Club because of diversity requirements and egregiously cutting him out of the company. Educators might consider what healthy diversity development might have looked like for Mark if he had used the framework of individual diversity development.

Using *The Social Network*, educators could explore heterosexual identity development, especially given that the assumption of heterosexuality is a strong theme throughout the film. Worthington, Savoy, Dillon, and Vernaglia (2002) contributed a multidimensional model of heterosexual identity development, with six interactive factors that potentially impact sexual identity development. Several of the six factors that could apply to the film include systemic homonegativity, sexual prejudice, and privilege. Student affairs educators can discuss the assumptions and privilege of heterosexuality, including an underlying assumption that heterosexuality is the norm (Evans et al., 2010). Issues of campus climate and its impact on historically underserved student populations might also be explored (Harper & Hurtado, 2007).

**Developmental Ecology Approach**

Another integrative approach to student development receiving attention in recent years is developmental ecology (Renn, 2004; Renn & Arnold, 2003). It is a framework used to view student development processes as opposed to models that focus on outcomes. The main objective that supports ecological approaches is the interaction between the person (e.g., the student) and various factors within the environment.

The philosophy builds on the work of Bronfenbrenner’s (1977, 2005) ecology of human development framework and his model that included four inter-related components:
process–person–context–time. A key premise of the ecological approach as applied to higher education settings is that if development is to occur, students must intentionally engage in increasingly complex situations in and outside of classes. The person component includes the holistic make-up of the individual, including previous experiences brought to the environments.

Context refers to the ecological environment, and Bronfenbrenner (1977) created the environment as a nested arrangement of structures. The individual (or student) is at the core of the structure and the other levels emanating from the core include microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. The microsystem is the most immediate setting for the student and is significant in terms of developmental processes (Renn & Arnold, 2003). Microsystems can include academic contexts, student–faculty interaction, social engagement, peer groups, and family. The mesosystem level involves interrelations among the various microsystems. In other words, the mesosystem is a collection of microsystems including their integration with each other. According to Bronfenbrenner (1977), the exosystem is an extension of the mesosystem, and includes factors that inevitably impact the student, though the individual might not have direct influence or control. Examples of the exosystem include administrative rulings, course requirements, and university policies. The final level, the macrosystem, is the broadest one and involves institutional patterns that represent cultures relating to political, economic, legal, and social system factors.

For purposes of this review, we will analyze two main components of the Bronfenbrenner (1977) model: the person (in this case Mark Zuckerberg) and the context, including the system levels. Using Mark as a case study, what do we know about him as a person? Characteristics include behavioral, biological, cognitive, psychological, and emotional traits. Based on the fictionalized version of Mark, he is introverted, focused, concerned about status, privileged, and recalcitrant. There are also important influences in the context of Mark’s ecological environment. The microsystem effects in Mark’s life as depicted in the film include his roommates; residence; girlfriend; relationships with friends, including Sean Parker; and other settings with which he interacts during the film. The mesosystem is the interactions between the microsystem components; for example, Mark’s roommates help create Facemash, which in turn creates interactions with other students. The exosystem level factors that are evident in the film include university judicial policies, administrative board decisions, and Mark’s access to funding for Facebook via Eduardo. The macrosystem is the largest and broadest level because it includes social, historical, and culturally related factors that indirectly impact student development. Macrosystem effects that likely influence Mark include the Harvard culture, societal expectations about exclusivity, and what it means to project a successful masculine identity (Harper & Harris, 2010). Mark’s journey as a college student starts in the early 1990s, and the time element, from a historical perspective, impacts him. Mark happens to be at Harvard just as the social media movement emerges and subsequently takes off. Had he enrolled in college earlier or much later, would this opportunity to start Facebook have presented itself? Perhaps not.
Implications for Student Affairs Practitioners

How can student affairs practitioners put theory into practice using *The Social Network*? The film allows for rich discussion in a variety of contexts including multicultural affairs, residential and campus life, judicial affairs, and career development and advising.

Multicultural Affairs and Diversity

Gender and race/ethnicity. Student affairs practitioners who work in multicultural affairs can use *The Social Network* to foster discussion about issues of diversity, including gender, race/ethnicity, and masculinity. For example, there are no leading female characters in the film. Women are portrayed in numerous scenes as prizes to pursue, especially by members of the final clubs. Student affairs educators could discuss the perpetuation of both gender and race/ethnicity stereotypes from an ecological or other theoretical perspective. For instance, female Asian American characters in the film are portrayed as promiscuous and irrational (e.g., the scene when Eduardo's girlfriend, Christy, burns the scarf he gave her).

Multicultural centers can use the stereotypical portrayal of students to address the concerns of ethnically diverse students on their campus. How might Eduardo's character be used to discuss identity development of biracial and multiracial students? Many campuses have long dealt with negative stereotypes of African American, Native American, and Hispanic students. How might Christy's character bring to light negative stereotypes of Asian Americans? Do the attitudes and expectations of the Winklevoss twins resonate with the student culture on your campus? Are White students aware of their privilege and social capital? Are they willing to discuss these? Do they understand how their roles on campus can help educate their peers on the subject?

Masculinity and men's issues. Many scenes in the film perpetuate stereotypical views of masculinity, especially those of affluent, White, heterosexual males (Harris & Edwards, 2010; Kimmel, 2008). Research on college men indicates that many male students feel pressure to fit in through involvement in prestigious organizations, either through the Greek system or intercollegiate sports teams (Harris & Struve, 2009). Student affairs educators, including multicultural affairs practitioners, could use *The Social Network* in a workshop format to address how these issues impact men. How might the party scenes perpetuate stereotypes of men who join fraternal organizations? What might student affairs professionals do in terms of programming to reach out to male students on campus?

Privilege. Issues related to exclusivity dominate the film. The Winklevoss twins note that the www.Harvard.edu address is the most prestigious and exclusive e-mail address. Privilege is depicted in several party scenes where attractive college women from the Boston area are transported to the final clubs. The message conveyed is that many of these women strive for status, privilege, and money. Student affairs practitioners can facilitate discussion about issues of status, belonging, and social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977). Are the scenes in the film an accurate representation of what actually happens on campuses? Does social stratification occur at
institutions that are not private and as exclusive as the final clubs? Students can also discuss how White privilege is portrayed (McIntosh, 1989). Discussion might focus on the impact of ecology and contextual influences on student development processes—mainly history, culture, institutional racism, and the culture of Harvard.

**Residential and Campus Life**

A predominant theme in the film is Mark’s desire to gain admittance into the prestigious final clubs. In the beginning of the film, he mentions to Erica that he needs to “do something substantial in order to get the attention of the clubs” because they are exclusive and “lead to a better life.” He also believes that joining a final club will elevate Erica’s social status by proxy. Mark’s initial designs for Facebook included making it exclusive, mimicking the final clubs into which he yearned to be admitted. After hearing that Eduardo had been punched for the Phoenix final club, Mark tells Eduardo that he wants to create the website “like a final club, except we’re the president.” How might students who desire admittance into Greek life or student organizations become similarly motivated? How do they alter their behaviors or identity to join these social networks? To what extent might students be willing to engage in unethical, illegal, or undesired behaviors to gain the attention of idealized social networks? How can campus administrators respond to these behaviors?

Mark’s attitude toward his peers is one that can be seen in many settings on campus. In residence life, young men and women often struggle to make meaning of their experiences. In what ways can one view Mark’s behavior as typical of a residence life setting? How might leaders train residence hall paraprofessionals to recognize and engage those residents who are using their talents in more harmful ways? In male residential settings, how can staff combat misogynistic attitudes towards women? Advisers in student clubs can use teachable moments to change the perceptions of student members. Student affairs practitioners who work in new student orientation, first-year experience programs, and welcome week activities find themselves in situations where they interact with students who are new to their campuses and seek interpersonal connections.

**Student Judicial Affairs**

Individuals interested in judicial affairs can gain insights from *The Social Network*. The film alludes to several ethical and moral dilemmas, many of which occur within the context of higher education. For example, how does one help a student like Mark develop beyond a dualistic perspective and maturely take responsibility for his or her own actions? In the film, Mark exhibits a lack of general remorse for most of his actions. In what ways should a judicial hearing board respond to a student like Mark, who feels no guilt or remorse for his behavior? The punishment imposed on Mark by the administrative board has little impact on his future directions. How might judicial affairs professionals develop sanctions to support Mark’s ethical development while providing retribution for those whom he wronged? How might alternative dispute processes, such as
restorative justice, have shaped the outcomes of this film? These reflection questions may assist judicial affairs practitioners with understanding and preparing for situations that may occur on their campuses.

Finally, Mark's lawsuits against the Winklevoss twins and Divya Narendra as well as the manner in which he undercut Eduardo's financial stake in Facebook are prominent ethical and legal situations portrayed in the film. College students may engage in proprietary research or product development with faculty or fellow students. In these scenarios, students may need to receive guidance about where to seek information regarding their legal protections.

Career Development and Advising

There are at least three implications that career development and advising professionals might take from the film and integrate into their practices. These include (a) teaching students the concept of planned happenstance, (b) promoting creativity and entrepreneurship to undergraduate students, and (c) discussing the potential advantages and disadvantages of obsession with work over other priorities.

Career development practitioners might consider the concept of planned happenstance, a non-traditional, non-linear approach to life-career planning (Mitchell, Levin, & Krumboltz, 1999). A premise of this approach is that one can observe possible chance events and then take advantage of them (Krumboltz & Levin, 2004). Whether right or wrong, Mark identified chance opportunities that led him to create Facebook at the right time. As Sean Parker exclaimed during an initial meeting with Mark, "This is a once in a generation opportunity." Luck is another hallmark of planned happenstance. Mark's enterprise was in jeopardy until Eduardo helped them financially, action that helped Zuckerman move Facebook forward. Mark met Sean at an opportune time. There were a number of other unplanned circumstances that contributed to Mark's success. Some of these factors were predetermined (e.g., family support, social economic status); others, such as meeting Sean Parker, were happenstance.

Reviewers of The Social Network lauded it as a tool to teach the importance of creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship in a global marketplace. From this perspective, Mark's story is inspirational. Career development professionals can encourage students who are considering business areas to watch the film. Messages embedded in the film teach students about risk-taking, creativity, and opportunity. The Social Network will likely find a popular place in entrepreneur business classes as well as student business organizations and clubs. Nocera (2010) hailed it as one of the best business films ever made.

Mark's character in the film also conveys an insightful message about work obsession and pursuing one's passion. Career development professionals can use Mark's obsession with developing Facebook as a relevant topic of discussion. Nocera (2010) outlined how Mark opted to become obsessed with Facebook, at the expense of his own undergraduate education and friendships. But it was this obsession and laser-like focus that allowed Mark to launch Facebook at the time that he
did. The Winklevoss twins were focused on rowing; Eduardo was focused on securing the summer internship rather than joining the team in California. Mark put more energy into Facebook than did the others and, as a result, he benefited—even if it meant making ethically questionable decisions and ruining relationships. Finally, career counselors can caution students about exercising judgment regarding media content that could negatively impact future hiring decisions.

In addition to the examples noted, there may be other student affairs contexts not mentioned where the film is applicable. These include admissions professionals who may consider issues (e.g., access) that are related to the competitive nature of highly selective processes at many higher education institutions.

**Guidelines for Facilitators**

When using the film in practical contexts, student affairs educators will want to give careful consideration to the objectives of the training curriculum. Why use the film? What learning outcomes might be achieved? Educators will want to consider whether they ask students to view the film before the intended discussion or use excerpts during the training. Allowing participants to reflect on questions in advance of the dialogue allows rich interaction. Interested readers can consult *Using Entertainment Media in Student Affairs Teaching and Practice* (Forney & Cawthon, 2004) for additional ideas on how to integrate film and other resources. Finally, several topics mentioned in the article could be considered controversial, ones that elicit charged dialogue. Facilitators should encourage this debate while remaining aware of their level of professional competence regarding student learning and development. These competencies are outlined in the ACPA/NASPA guidelines for student affairs practitioners (ACPA & NASPA Joint Task Force on Professional Competencies & Standards, 2010).

**Conclusion**

Film has the potential to serve as an innovative and creative tool to help others learn and apply student development theory. *The Social Network* is a popular film that can be applied by student affairs educators to facilitate learning across numerous contexts. Although the Mark Zuckerberg character was fictionalized, he encounters transitions that are common to many undergraduates. Readers are encouraged to consider the film as another tool in their professional toolbox. By exploring issues related to belonging, identity development, and ethical decision-making, student affairs professionals can apply excerpts of the film with the intent to engage and educate others about relevant student development topics.

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