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# Culture Shock: Representation and Presentation

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Grounded Theory Method for *The Longest Yard* directed by Peter Segal (2005)

Hannah Chirwa

Honors Speech

The film that I am using Grounded Theory on is *The Longest Yard* directed by Peter Segal (2005). I chose to code this film because I am not extremely interested in sports, but I wanted a film that would help me to enjoy the assignment. The film has a lot of humor and a congenial meaning that makes it enjoyable to watch. The grounded theory method which I used to conclude my films' meaning is completed in three steps. The first step is through Open Coding process in which the spectator writes the main themes of the film that they saw. This must be as objective as possible. This process should be done repeatedly because after this stage is passed, the spectator cannot go back and change any part of the coding they missed. The next coding process is Axial Coding in which the individual now groups the main themes that relate to each other in content matter together. This process should not be forced but rather the individual should take time to let the themes in the Open Coding come together. For the final step of Selective Coding, the individual will continue to put the themes together through the Axial Coding until they reach the meaning of the movie. They will then come to a concluding concept which encompasses the essence of what the film is about (Warren 2016).

When I watched the film, I chose to write everything that I saw in the movie on a piece of paper before Open Coding. I chose to do this because it made more sense to see the patterns in what I wrote about the film and come to a theme from my notes than to try and find the theme in the film as I watched it. This also helped me to stay as objective as I could because the themes I found came straight from what I wrote about the film and not what I thought about it which may have happened by Open Coding while watching the film. I coded by scene, about ten minutes long, and I started by watching the scene three times without pausing and writing what I saw. I reached my saturation point for the first four scenes within the third time of watching the scene. I watched each scene a fourth time to make sure that I found everything that was there. However,

when I got to the fifth scene, I chose to change the approach and watch it once and pause several times throughout documenting what I saw. This method allowed me to get all of the notes I needed for the Open Coding process without watching the scene three or four times. I watched the whole film for a total of three times but from scene five and on I only watched the scenes once. I paused several times within a scene however and included dialogue in the notes I took to Open Code. The second time watching the scene was to make sure that I did not miss anything the first time I watched the film. My Open Codes are done by scene. I took my Open Codes and I made a list of Open Codes. I then took the list and put them together to do my Axial Coding and then concluded my Selective Code. Below is the Open Coding list with memos.

Open Coding:

- Sexualizing:
  - ❖ In the beginning of the film, the first thing that shows in the screen is a woman swimming under the water. The woman gets out of the water and all that is scene is her buttocks with a very small swimsuit bottom. She is tall, slender, and blonde and she walks by some very attractive shirtless men.
  - ❖ The woman who is hosting the party, Paul the main character's girlfriend Lena, is wearing a tight dress that is made by a nice designer.
  - ❖ Lena's friend refers to Paul A "sexy boy toy" about underwear ads Paul had done in the past.
  - ❖ Lena is referred to as "sexy" by a guy, who is not shown, but does not say anything to him. No one addresses how the guy speaks to her.

- ❖ The older lady at the reception desk is looking at Paul in an underwear ad that he did.
- ❖ Guys at the prison who believe they are girls dress up in makeup with crop tops and miniskirts.
- ❖ The “girls” are always trying to get the guys attention by offering their goods to the guys.
- ❖ Torres, and inmate who is recruited to the football team, is found watching the View and Caretaker comments on her chest area.
- Wealth/Luxury:
  - ❖ Lena is hosting a party at which the guests are drinking very expensive alcoholic drinks such as martinis.
  - ❖ Lena owns Bentley which Paul destroys with careless driving.
  - ❖ The Warden went to go and play a game of golf with his other wealthier friends. He is always found wearing a suit.
  - ❖ The guards always have better equipment, better fields to practice on, and better food to eat. The guards always have situations significantly better than the prisoners.
- Relationships:
  - ❖ Paul is in a relationship Lena at the beginning of the film, but ends up splitting up with her after he wrecks her Bentley.
  - ❖ Paul has bad relationships with people due to his history of shaving points during a football game. When Paul and Caretaker toast together with some wine that Caretaker smuggled, he says “toast to having a best friend after who knows how long”.

- ❖ People at the prison form themselves in groups. The black guys, otherwise known as the brothers, separate themselves from the “white boys” which is how they refer to them. When Earl, the first black guy to join the team, leaves to play football, he is forsaken by the black people he spends time with.
- ❖ The guards rule over the convicts and feel as though they can do whatever is necessary to get those guys in order. They beat them with clubs. They feel as though they can call them any name like the n word or piece of sh\*t. When Paul first arrives, they beat him so many times unnecessarily.
- ❖ The guards, as well as the prisoners, fear and respect the Warden. During the game against the cons (convicts), the Warden told the Captain that the game would be fixed to beat the cons. The Captain wanted to win based on their skill, but because the Warden told him how the game was going to work, he feared him and respected him.
- ❖ The Captain used to beat Paul and treat him badly but after Paul did the right thing and played a good game he congratulated him and said he would stand for him in court to prove he did not kill Caretaker.
- ❖ The convicts were told if they tried to escape they would be shot. Paul was thought to be escaping and he asked the Captain, after making right with Paul, to shoot him in the head. The Captain tried to warn him to save his life. Paul ended up only getting a ball and the Captain stood up to the Warden’s order to shoot to save Paul’s life.
- Football:
- ❖ Football is the reason why Paul was on five-year probation and staying with his girlfriend. He shaved points at a game, which had not been confirmed as had been

announced by newscaster when his crash was televised, but was later admitted when Paul wanted to motivate his team during the game with the pros and cons.

- ❖ The Warden brings Paul to his prison in Texas, after the car crash, to get him to help his team out with football. His team has lost in the past and he wanted a prior professional to give pointers.
- ❖ The whole purpose of why the convicts play is to get their opportunity to get at the guards. They use football as a motivator to be able to hurt the people who make their lives more difficult.
- Prison:
  - ❖ The whole movie is centered around the prison. Other than the very beginning where Paul is with his girlfriend Lena, the only things shown revolves around life in prison.
  - ❖ They pretty much wear the same things every day, they eat the worst food, they sleep in the worst places, and are treated horribly by the guards.
  - ❖ Because Paul is known as a superstar, people taunt him the life he now lives in prison. When he first arrives in the bus, the guards and the Captain beat him and call him a superstar while doing it. The convicts boo him and he walks by for his first meal except for Caretaker.
- Violence:
  - ❖ The convicts understand football to let out pent up frustrations that they have about the way they are treated by the guards. Earl, the first black recruit, was in the library putting up books. A guard asks if he knows any good books and he says “no sir I don’t read much.” The guard says he sees him reading there and

Earl gives him the book Malcom X. The guard asks why he would want to read a book about a n word. He drops books on purpose and calls him the n word and a b\*tch but Earl does nothing but smile although he almost hit a guard. When they leave, they drop a bunch of books and Earl is able to recruit the other black guys who left him and saw how he stood up to the guards by not being disrespectful.

On the court, Earl tackles and he lets out frustration on the field during the game.

- ❖ In the beginning of the game, the convicts just hit the guards that have made them upset instead of playing football. In the end of the game, the pros (guards) play dirty and just hit the convicts.
  - ❖ The guards hit the convicts and if they react their sentence could be longer and they would have to stay there longer.
- Blackmail:
    - ❖ The Warden threatens to make Paul's sentence longer when he chooses not to help the Warden with his football team.
    - ❖ Paul is told to throw the other football game against the guards or the murder of Caretaker, which was committed in his cell by a convict named Hunger who was a spy for the guards, would be pinned on him.
    - ❖ Hunger would act like he supported the convicts but would support them to but would take information to the guards.
    - ❖ The Warden forces the Captain to make the convicts pay in the second quarter of the game by hitting them hard. The crowd was booing for the convicts when they would get points, but when the guards were playing unfairly, they were booing the guards.
  - Victory:



- ❖ The Warden expects the guards to win the football game and the convicts to lose.
- ❖ The Warden hires referees to make bad calls and makes Paul give the game away for the guards to win because it is being televised by ESPN.
- ❖ He tries to get Paul to throw the game to win.
- ❖ Paul and the convicts end up coming back and winning the game.

I grouped Relationships, Football, Victory and Prison under the Axial Code of Group identity. I put these together because these are all aspects that bring the characters in the movie together under being a convict. The guards are also involved in this, but the convicts in the prison all share a common issue, being mistreated by the guards. Despite their background or whether they like each other, they all dislike how they are treated. They form a relationship of a group identity as a team, the mean machine, in response to the treatment. They use football as a way to get back at the guards for the way they are treated. They all start out only having the ability to hit the guards to let out their anger and they end up winning the game. This Victory is also a part of their group identity because this victory is necessary for them as a group to prove that they are more than just convicts. Paul gives a pep talk and reminds them that instead of just hitting the guards they need to make plays that win the game. He says that “a broken leg will heal, but a victory from the convicts will last forever”.

I grouped violence and blackmail together under Control because that was the main tool used by the guards to attack the convicts. Because the guards had power over them, they used their liberties to treat the convicts terribly and to beat them. If the convicts did not want to get beaten, they had to do what the guards wanted giving them control. The warden threatens Paul so many times throughout the film. Paul is at the mercy of the warden when he makes Paul do the

scrimmage in order to help the guards feel better about football. When the warden threatens him with twenty-five years in prison for the murder of Caretaker, which he did not commit, if he did not throw the game, he has control over what decisions Paul will make based on what he wants from him. Sexualizing and Wealth/Luxury were themes that were in the film but did not fit together in an axial code due to the context so these were outliers.

In Conclusion, the Selective Code I came to was Identity. This film documents the journey of Paul Crewe to find out what type of man he is. It is about seeing if he is still the same dishonest point shaving football player or if he cares about something other than himself. This is about the convicts determining whether they are useless as the guards say they are or if they are something more than that. Therefore, the victory is so important. If they win the game, which they do, they are more than what the guards believe they are. Are the guards truly controlled by the Warden or do they have the capability to make their own decisions based on what they believe as the Captain did by not killing Paul. The characters are all trying to find and develop their individuality by finding their identity. The idea of identity is something that is found in this particular movie but perhaps not in general life about convicts. This movie showed this concept through the process of looking at every aspect of what was happening and getting a hypothesis about what the film may be talking about. Grounded Theory seeks to conclude from drawing from the findings that are found through the coding process and I was able to find the concept of Identity through the process that I used.

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