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Managing Media Clusters and Spiritual Use of Secular Media
Ideas and Criticism Arising from the Social Science Research of Professor Ken Loomis

Understanding how people act, interact, think, and feel through controlled observation is important in today's society. Dr. Ken Loomis studies such issues through his social science research in which he examines them as they pertain to media, as evident in his study on managing radio clusters. Social science research is extremely valuable because it provides hard evidence and statistical data when examining human actions. Before the presentation I knew absolutely nothing about Dillman, nor his approach to get a high response rate, but after hearing this method in detail, I must say it does seem like an ingenious method. Dillman's method makes use of several tactics to try and attain a high rate of survey responses.

The most interesting part, for me, of Dr. Loomis's work was his quantitative research, and more particularly Factor Analysis. One reason for this lies in my love of numbers and statistics. I am not always able to generate the proper formulas or work out mathematical equations in order to gain the necessary data, but I simply love to read and evaluate statistics based on surveys, polls, or inquiries of any type. I quite enjoyed the information provided to us from his survey, and even more so the Rotated Factor Matrix statistical sheet detailing the clusters that were found during the study.

I completely agree with Loomis' implications for educators, in which he pointed out several possible solutions for common problems that were discovered from his study on managing radio clusters. He points out issues, such as the need for students to have basic financial training and the need to equip students with basic skills utilizing financial marketability skills. But the point that stands out in my mind is his assessment of the need for a greater

emphasis on teaching management ethics, in which he said that we should ask the question of whether there is a need to teach basic ethical standards. As a Houstonian this definitely hits close to home. When I saw this illustrated on the PowerPoint presentation I immediately thought of the Enron situation. I was fortunate enough not to have been a part of the collapse of the once giant corporation, but knew of several people who actually lost their life savings. I remember asking myself how could such a horrific event happen, and why or how could anyone allow such a thing to happen.

For the majority of the presentation, I agreed with the points that Dr. Loomis made and had no real complaints or possible arguments with virtually anything that he had to say. But that was before he dropped a bomb on me that I was ill-prepared for. It occurred during his explanation of the other type of research he conducts. This type of research that Dr. Loomis explained was his qualitative research. With this research, he is able to communicate with and examine his subjects on a more personal level. He examines those who make spiritual use of secular media, through methods, such as contemplation and reinforcement of beliefs. One thing that really caught my attention were his articles reporting on a study done using students involved with religious organizations, specifically Christian. I myself am a Christian and believer in Jesus Christ, so at this point I was extremely interested in hearing how these students were using media to gain a spiritual or religious understanding. While there are several examples in the articles the one that jumps out at me the most drew a comparison between the film *Dead Poets Society* and the story of Jesus Christ. When Dr. Loomis first mentioned this, I was definitely apposed to such a comparison. In my mind, although I consider *Dead Poets Society* to a very decent film, I could in no way liken it to the story of Jesus. As a Christian, I am quite familiar with the story of Jesus' life and even more so with the events leading to his death.

Although the character of John Keating was brilliant in his actions and the way he inspired the students in the film to acquire a love of poetry and seize the day, to me he was definitely no Jesus Christ.

At this point in Dr. Loomis's presentation I did not agree with the article exhibiting the student's assessment. I could have easily decided to tune him out and disregard such a statement, but I am not an easily argumentative person nor am I close-minded, so I continued to listen to Dr. Loomis as he began to explain and elaborate on the student's findings. The findings included several similarities such as the John Keating character having twelve followers which resembled disciples, a follower who betrayed him, and the amount of dedication that each student gave to him. The more I listened to Dr. Loomis read the narrative of the interview with the student, the more holes I was able to see in the originally strong argument against such a comparison that I had quickly built. I began to think back to the film and recall the examples and similarities that were being pointed out at that time. Unfortunately, I have not seen the film in some time and I vaguely remember specific events, but the detail in which the student described the similarities was fascinating. I quickly realized that not only did this student know the details of the film, he was equally knowledgeable about the biblical story of Jesus Christ as well. Although I was not convinced then, nor am I now, that there is an accurate comparison, there is definitely room for an argument, and the comparisons between certain aspects of John Keating and Jesus Christ are not totally far fetched.

Even with this in mind, I stand firm in my belief that the accuracy of the comparison of the two remains in the eye of the beholder. I believe that if someone believes in anything strongly enough, they possess the potential and ability to apply that belief to many other things. One of my fellow graduate students pointed out, that this is somewhat related to Joseph

Campbell's "Hero of a Thousand Faces", where you take an ancient hero myth and apply it to something else. Granted, the filmmakers of the movies mentioned in Dr. Loomis's articles could have been trying to apply religious tones to their plots or could even have just retold the religious stories in a modern context. But at the same time, it could all be a huge coincidence with many religious persons looking too deep into simple Hollywood films, in hopes of finding something highly spiritual or insanely biblical that will further allow them to demonstrate their faith. But that is an entirely different social science research study waiting to happen. I believe Dr. Loomis put it best when he said, "We have to be willing to look at things differently". Amen.