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Reel Principals: A Descriptive Content Analysis of the Images of School Principals Depicted in Movies from 1997-2009

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REEL PRINCIPALS: A DESCRIPTIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE IMAGES OF
SCHOOL PRINCIPALS DEPICTED IN MOVIES FROM 1997-2009

A Dissertation Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

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December 2010

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Title: Reel Principals: A Descriptive Content Analysis of the Images of School Principals Depicted in Movies from 1997-2009

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According to Glanz's early research, school principals have been depicted as autocrats, bureaucrats, buffoons, and/or villains in movies from 1950 to 1996. The purpose of this study was to determine if these stereotypical characterizations of school principals have continued in films from 1997-2009, or if more favorable images have emerged that accurately depict the position of school principal.

This study used both quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyze 49 movies. The results revealed that movie images of principals have not changed significantly in recent years: principals do not tend to have major roles in the movies and most principals are still depicted as stereotypical autocrats, buffoons, and bureaucrats. Most of the school principals were portrayed as middle-aged, white males of average weight and height with receding hairlines or in many instances bald. Most principals are dressed in conservative, drab clothing and typically wear a suit or a sport jacket that is brown, gray, or black with a white or cream-colored dress shirt and a nondescript tie.

Noteworthy is the emergence of the democratic principal in 20% of the movies that were reviewed for this study. The democratic principal exhibits behaviors and qualities that researchers have linked to successful schools; behaviors such as, being visible in the school, firm on discipline, a good communicator, seeks input from stakeholders, nurtures positive relationships, and knowledgeable about curriculum and instructional

practices. The democratic principal is often shown taking on the bureaucratic school system in an effort to provide valuable opportunities for students.

The contradiction in images between reel (movie) principals and actual principals can be attributed in part to the fact that many of the stereotypical portrayals of principals come from the teen movie genre which is written from the point of the student. The principal is the authority figure that the students have to rally against. Additionally, many movie writers, directors, and producers are from a generation where the principal's job was much more focused on managerial duties than it is today. Consequently, the principals in their movies are shown doing low-level administrative tasks.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Who in their right mind would want to be a school principal today? Principals spend their days resolving problems they most likely did not have a hand in creating. No decision a principal makes ever seems to make all constituents happy. Inevitably someone is always upset with the school principal.

Historically, the job of school principal has been to be a building manager. Most principals spend the majority of their day attempting to solve problems involving students, teachers, parents, community members, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, and/or custodians. For example, a principal might include the following in a list of daily activities: “met with two students who fought on bus,” “had phone call from angry parent,” “gave student detention for violation of the dress code,” “met with superintendent regarding special education lawsuit,” and “monitored cafeteria during lunchtime.” None of the aforementioned activities have a direct impact on teaching and student learning, which are most likely the two major reasons the principal entered into the education profession in the first place.

One might surmise that someone would want to be a principal because they make more money than teachers. However, if you compare the number of hours a principal puts in (school day plus after school responsibilities such as basketball games, dances, and school board meetings) versus the average teacher day, the typical principal works 15 hours more per week than does a teacher (Tucker & Coddington, 2002). When you combine the fact that principals work 15 hours more per week than teachers, with the fact that principals typically work an entire calendar year versus teachers who

generally work only 9 or 10 months, the hourly salary for principals is often lower than for teachers (Tucker & Coddling, 2002).

As if the job itself and the pay weren't bad enough, now principals are faced with the added pressure of improving student achievement and meeting the mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act. In today's culture of school reform, principals are the ones held accountable for generating measurable improvement of student learning. Expectations for principals are great and one might even argue unrealistic.

Historically, principals have been portrayed unfavorably in television and film (Burbach & Figgins, 1991; Glanz, 1997; Hershey-Freeman, 2008; Nederhouser, 2000). Burbach and Figgins (1991) reviewed the images of principals in seven films and identified six categories of principal portrayals: (a) principal as figure of authority; (b) principal as simple-minded fool; (c) principal as hero; (d) principal as villain; (e) principal as faceless bureaucrat; and (f) principal as social and emotional isolate. In general Burbach and Figgins found that principals were cast mostly in minor roles and were depicted as bureaucrats, buffoons, or mean-spirited antagonists.

Glanz categorized images of principals that have been portrayed in television and film into three distinct but related views; insecure autocrats, petty bureaucrats, and classic buffoons (Glanz, 1997).

Glanz (1997) surveyed students and teachers to determine if they actually do view principals as insecure autocrats, petty bureaucrats, and classic buffoons. Both groups viewed principals unfavorably. Terms such as jerky, annoying, foolish, and mean were used by students to characterize principals. Teachers used terms like intimidating, bureaucratic, autocratic, and petty to describe principals.

When asked to describe the work principals engage in, respondents made such statements as: monitoring attendance of students and teachers, walking the halls, completing paperwork, balancing budgets, and meeting with irate parents. There was little mention of supervision to improve the quality of instruction (Glanz, 1997).

Nederhouser's (2000) study primarily focused on the portrayal of teachers in popular cinema. However, she identified five negative categories of principal portrayals in her review of 100 popular movies. The categories were authority principals, simple-minded foil principals, villain principals, faceless bureaucrat principals, and social and emotional isolate principals.

Eddleman's (2008) ethnographic content analysis of principals portrayed in 6 television shows and 12 films from 1995-2000 revealed three overarching themes: authority, problems and problem solving, and relationships. In most instances, the principal was depicted communicating a stance of authority.

Most recently Hershey-Freeman (2008) examined 73 major motion pictures from 1986 – 2007 for stereotyped roles of teachers and principals. She found that the portrayals of principals were negative overall. The principals were depicted as inflexible, hostile, and idiotic. Additionally, the "principals were perceived as blindly following the desires of the school board and caving in to public opinion, regardless of whether or not their decisions were actually in the best interest of the students." (p. 130).

How are today's principals being depicted in film? Are the portrayals accurate representations of reality and the intense pressure and scrutiny principals now face? Is there a contradiction between what principals actually do and how they are portrayed in

the movies? Do the portrayals contribute to public understanding and self-perception of what principals actually do?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to analyze how principals were depicted in the movies from 1997-2009. To do this a total of 49 movies were analyzed.

Conceptual Foundations of the Study

Through a historical analysis Glanz (1997) attributed the negative portrayals, in part, to the legacy of autocratic and bureaucratic supervision models established in the late nineteenth century which contributed to the creation of our bureaucratized school system. From a cultural perspective, a function of popular culture is to mock the establishment (e.g., Appelbaum, 1995; Giroux & Simon, 1989; Weber & Mitchell, 1995). Thus, the depiction of principals as buffoons is representative of the comedic satire employed by popular culture to poke fun at authority figures (Glanz, 1997).

The landscape of education has changed significantly in the last decade. School reform initiatives gained momentum in the mid to late nineties and then came to the forefront with the signing of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in 2001. Following the signing of NCLB in January 2002, Secretary of Education Rod Paige declared, "With the stroke of his pen, President Bush changed the culture of education in America" (USDOE, 2002).

After the passage of NCLB, it was as if a spotlight was put on school principals. They are now held accountable for their school's performance. Today's principals are

forced to look at the bottom line and determine the root cause(s) of their schools' success or failure on standardized tests. School principals are now expected to facilitate a deliberate and comprehensive school improvement process that is focused on research-based approaches to improve the achievement of all students (Tucker & Coddling, 2002).

The role of school principal has supposedly switched from building manager to instructional leader. Principals today are responsible for the improvement of instruction, analysis of formative and summative test data, classroom visitations, day-to-day operations of the school, staff professional development, fostering parent involvement in school activities, monitoring and evaluating instructional programs, identifying the social and emotional needs of students, and building positive relationships with community groups.

Additionally, a primary responsibility of any school principal is the safety of all students and staff. Over the past two decades, much attention has been given to school violence, in part, to the passage of the Gun Free Schools Act of 1994 and the shootings at schools in Columbine, Colorado, and Paducah, Kentucky (Austin, 2003). According to the *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2006*, the percentage of public schools experiencing one or more violent incidents increased between the 1999-2000 and 2003-04 school years from 71 to 81 percent. Given the alarming statistics on school violence and the media attention to the issue, it is imperative that principals dedicate significant time and resources to school-wide violence-prevention programs, in addition to all of their other important responsibilities.

Have society's perceptions of school principals changed significantly in the last

decade? Do people now perceive a principal's job as thankless and very difficult task? What perceptions are being portrayed in depictions of principals in the movies produced from 1997-2009?

Has there been an increase in the number of women playing the role of principal in the movies? Previous studies found that white males typically portrayed principals (Burbach and Figgins (1991); Glanz (1997); Hershey-Freeman (2008); and Nederhouser (2000). According to U.S. Department of Education statistics, the number of female principals in public schools increased by over 14,000 from 1994-2004 while the number of male principals decreased during that same time period. Furthermore, in a content analysis of prime-time characters across three decades, Signorielli and Bacue (1999) found that character population continued to move steadily toward greater representation of women between 1967 and 1998. Given more women are principals today; in conjunction with the fact that there has been an increase in the representation of women in media, it follows that more women should be depicted as school principals in the movies.

Research Question

The main research question that guided this investigation was: How were principals depicted in the movies from 1997-2009?

Study Design

This content analysis was a mixed method study whereby both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used. Some of the unit of analysis content was counted to

explain specific qualities, traits, and behaviors of school principals. Data was collected on the number of male and female principals and the settings in which the principals worked. Data was also qualitatively analyzed to explain the professional representation of principals in the movies from 1997-2009.

Movies were accessed from the Internet, cable television, and video stores. Data was collected using a content analysis data sheet (Appendix A) which includes the film; year made; genre (adventure, cartoon, comedy, drama, family, fantasy, and horror); school level (elementary, middle/jr. high, or high school); role of principal (major, supporting, or minor); gender; school sector (private or public); school setting (urban, suburban, or rural); coding categories (autocrat, buffoon, bureaucrat, democrat, or villain); dialogue excerpts; and plot summary.

Data collected on the content analysis data sheets was transferred into a computer database. The information was sorted by fields to generate tables and matrices based on genre, setting, gender, and coding category. Patterns and themes emerged by the cross-referencing of data fields. Interpretive content analysis was used to identify the trends, patterns, and themes; and ultimately support the researcher in telling a story about the portrayal of principals in the movies from 1997-2009.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the definitions of the following terms are provided:

1. Principal as *autocrat* is defined as an authoritarian who uses autocratic administrative practices and employs methods of intimidation to rule.

Example dialogue includes the following: "This is *my* school. What I say

2. Principal as *buffoon* is defined as a dimwitted dolt who doesn't have a clue about what is going on in his/her building. Students consistently outwit and outsmart the out-of-touch principal who is the object of ridicule and mockery.

Example dialogue includes the following:

Principal from *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*: What's so terrible about a kid like Ferris is he gives good kids bad ideas. The last thing I need in my career is fifteen hundred Ferris Bueller disciples running around these halls. He jeopardizes my ability to effectively govern this student body.

Principal's Secretary: He makes you look like an ass is what he does.

3. Principal as *bureaucrat* is characterized as one who is overly concerned with the administrative duties of his/her position. Often they are portrayed as humorless and sticklers for rules and regulations. Example dialogue includes the following: "You see these? Phone calls about you. Good ones. Cesar's mother told me you tried to help him. You're evidently a good teacher. However, I'm afraid I'm going to have to let you go... I can't afford to open the door for a lawsuit." (From *187*.) Or, "John, the curriculum is set. It's proven, it works. If you question it, what's to keep the boys from doing the same?"

(From *Dead Poets Society*.)

4. Principal as *democrat* is characterized as the instructional leader of the school and one who makes student and adult learning the priority. He/she sets high expectations for performance, gears content and instruction to

5. Principal as *villain* is one who sees teachers and/or students as the enemy and is often involved in corrupt activities. Often the villain principal is shown exploiting and victimizing students and/or teachers.

Example dialogue includes the following: “As acting principal, I just can’t allow you to skip class to go to Just Tires. Unless you hook me up with a pair of whitewalls, and that would be official school business then. I can write you a pass. Now, speaking of groceries, who wants to go down to the Korean market and have Mr. Kim fix me a plate?” (From *The Steve Harvey Show*.)

Below is the list of movies that were analyzed:

1. 17 Again
2. 187
3. Akeelah and the Bee
4. American Gun
5. American History X
6. Assassination of a H.S. President
7. Bratz
8. Charlie Bartlett
9. Cheats
10. Cherry Falls
11. Coach Carter
12. Dance of the Dead
13. Dirty Deeds
14. Donnie Darko
15. Doubting Thomas
16. Drillbit Taylor
17. Dumb and Dumberer
18. Durango Kids
19. Election
20. Emperor's Club
21. Heart of America
22. How to Eat Fried Worms
23. In and Out
24. Judy Berlin
25. Light it Up
26. Max Keeble's Big Move
27. Max Rules
28. Mean Girls
29. Music of the Heart
30. October Sky
31. Phoebe in Wonderland
32. Princess Diaries
33. Radio
34. Raising Helen
35. Rebound
36. Recess: Schools Out
37. Rushmore
38. Santa Claus 2
39. Saved!
40. School of Rock
41. She's the Man
42. Sky High
43. Slappy and the Stinkers
44. Take the Lead
45. Teaching Mrs. Tingle
46. The Faculty
47. The Frightening
48. The Great New Wonderful
49. The Pacifier

Limitations and Delimitations

The movies that were analyzed were limited to those released between 1997 and 2009 in an effort to focus on those movies not previously reviewed in similar studies. Although an extensive search of potential movies was conducted, it is impossible to determine if all films from 1997-2009 depicting school principals were identified for analysis. Furthermore, some films were not accessible for viewing. Additionally, only principals depicted in American school settings were reviewed and analyzed as to limit the scope of the study to the American perspective. The focus of the study was to review and analyze the content of the movie. No attention was given to the construction of the movie and how the story was being told. Finally, this study was limited to just one researcher who coded and interpreted the data based on her frame of reference and biases.

Significance of the Study

There has been significant research conducted on how teachers are viewed in popular culture (e.g., Crume, 1988; Joseph & Burnaford, 1994; Moraites, 1997; Nederhouser, 2000; Tan, 2000; Weber & Mitchell, 1995). However, there have been only a few investigations on how principals are portrayed in popular culture (Burbach & Figgins, 1991; Eddleman, 2008; Glanz, 1997; Hershey-Freeman, 2008; Nederhouser, 2000). This study will add to this very limited body of research. According to Farber, Provenzo, and Holm (1994), popular culture media sources such as television and movies are an under examined source of influence that affects the way schooling is experienced and understood in contemporary culture.

Principals have historically been depicted unfavorably in the movies. This study determined if principals were depicted similarly over the past 12 years (1997-2009); or, if principals were portrayed more positively, perhaps reflecting the ever increasing difficulty of the position.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

“Educational leaders are rarely the stuff of the silver screen” (English & Steffy, 1997, p.108).

Introduction

The literature specifically relating to the portrayal of principals in movies is somewhat limited. However, much has been written about educational leadership, the role of the school principal, and the influence of film. The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the examination of the literature into the following categories: (a) portrayals of school principals; (b) the role of the school principal; (c) educational leadership theories; and, (d) the influence of film.

Portrayals of School Principals

There has been significant research conducted on how teachers are viewed in popular culture (e.g., Crume, 1988; Joseph & Burnaford, 1994; Moraites, 1997; Nederhouser, 2000; Tan, 2000; Weber & Mitchell, 1995). However, there have been only a few investigations on how principals are depicted in popular culture. In this section of the literature review, the limited body of research that has been conducted will be reviewed in detail. Stereotypes of principals in general will also be discussed.

Historical Portrayals of Principals in Film

Historically, principals have been portrayed unfavorably in television and film (Burbach & Figgins, 1991; Glanz, 1997; Hershey-Freeman, 2008; Nederhouser, 2000).

In 1991, Burbach and Figgins reviewed the images of principals in films and

limited their analysis to seven films produced between 1984 and 1990. The researchers selected films they felt captured the core elements of the principal's role. The sample included *Teachers* (1984), *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (1986), *The Principal* (1987), *The Chocolate War* (1988), *Stand and Deliver* (1988), *Lean on Me* (1989), and *Pump up the Volume* (1990). Burbach and Figgins analyzed each movie and constructed a descriptive profile of the depicted principal.

In five of the seven films, the principal was a middle-aged, middle-class white male. The characters' dress was drab and almost always included a suit or sport coat with a white shirt and nondescript tie. The characters lacked a range of human emotion and were often depicted as humorless and expressionless.

Burbach and Figgins (1991) identified six categories of principal portrayals: (a) principal as figure of authority; (b) principal as simple-minded fool; (c) principal as hero; (d) principal as villain; (e) principal as faceless bureaucrat; and, (f) principal as social and emotional isolate.

To those coming of age, the principal represents adult and institutional control. In the movies, directors have created two situations that portray the principal as figure of authority: one where the principals are the winners and the other where principals are the losers. In *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, Matthew Broderick consistently beats the system and outwits the principal. In the movie the principal is clearly the loser and is depicted as a simple-minded fool. Conversely, in *The Principal* and *Lean on Me* the principal wins in most situations and emerges as the hero (Burbach & Figgins).

The principal as villain is portrayed in both *The Chocolate War* and *Pump up the Volume*. In both movies the principal is insensitive and self-serving. The principals use

“their position of authority to exploit and victimize the very youth whose interests they are supposed to be serving” (Burbach & Figgins, p. 55).

Burbach and Figgins characterized the principal in *Teachers* as a bureaucrat. Similarly, in *Stand and Deliver* the principal is portrayed as a bureaucrat whose role is perfunctory and whose actions reflect the prescribed rules of the system.

When describing the principal as social and emotional isolate, Burbach and Figgins note that “while principals have one of the most person-centered jobs of any profession, they are rarely permitted to show any signs of emotion or engage in personal relationships” (p. 56). Most films revealed very little about the private lives of principals. Only two of the movies that the researchers reviewed made even a passing reference to the principal’s private life.

In general Burbach and Figgins (1991) found that principals were cast mostly in minor roles and were depicted as bureaucrats, buffoons, or mean-spirited antagonists. These portrayals of principals are part of the tried-and-true themes and scenes from the teacher-film genre as described by a Hollywood film producer:

If anyone is of less help to the screen teacher than his/ her class or colleagues, it is the screen principal. Principals are insulated within their office from the reality of the classroom and are incompetent, indifferent, or intimidating. Principal Eugene Horne (*Teachers*) runs back into his office when he sees two teachers fighting over the mimeograph machine, and he knows neither who does the schools filing nor where the files are kept. Principal Warneke (*Blackboard Jungle*) is more concerned with the softness of teacher Dadier’s voice than with the false allegations of teacher racism in his class or the repeated weapons

infractions or the attempted rape of a staff member. “There is no discipline problem here, Mr. Dadier, not as long as I am principal here,” he says. A death threat against a teacher is swept under the carpet by Principal Claude Rolle (*The Substitute*) because without proof of a direct threat, he'd “have a lawsuit on his hands.” Where screen principals use discipline, they go to sociopathic extremes. Principals Joe Clark (*Lean on Me*), and Rick Latimer (James Belushi, *The Principal*) patrol their hallways with baseball bats (that they are often called upon to use) as well as other management tools like verbal intimidation and threats used on students and staff alike. It is no accident that Rick Latimer is promoted to principal of his inner-city school after taking a baseball bat to his ex-wife's sports car—he has what it takes to turn a school around (Hainsworth, 1998, p. 2). Glanz (1997) conducted a content analysis of over 35 television programs and films from 1950-1996. His two research questions were “what image is communicated” and “what type of principal is portrayed.” Each scene that included a principal was viewed and transcribed. Glanz repeatedly reviewed the transcripts until major themes were identified. Graduate students then reviewed the transcripts and were asked to identify categories and themes. This was done to verify accurate identification and naming of themes. Glanz (1997) categorized images of principals into three distinct but related views: insecure autocrats, petty bureaucrats, and classic buffoons.

The first view portrays the principal as an authoritarian who uses autocratic administrative practices and employs methods of intimidation to rule. The character Mr. Warneke from the 1955 film, *Blackboard Jungle*, is a classic example of an authoritarian

principal as is Morgan Freeman's depiction of real-life principal, Joe Clark, in *Lean on Me* (Glanz).

The second type of principal depicted in television and film according to Glanz is principal as bureaucrat. This type of principal is overly concerned with the administrative duties of his/her position. Often they are portrayed as humorless and sticklers for rules and regulations. The roles of Mr. Bestor in *Up the Down Staircase* and Mr. Rivelle in *Teachers* typify the image of those principals that regard organizational structure and bureaucratic mandates more important than student and teacher needs (Glanz).

Classic examples of a third type of principal depicted in television and film are Mr. Woodman in *Welcome Back, Kotter* and Mr. Belding in *Saved by the Bell*. They both exemplify principal as numskull. The characters are portrayed as dimwitted dolts who haven't a clue about what is going on in their buildings. Students consistently outwit and outsmart the out-of-touch principal who is the object of ridicule and mockery (Glanz).

Glanz administered an anonymous paper-pencil survey to students and teachers to determine if they actually did view principals as insecure autocrats, petty bureaucrats, and classic buffoons. Respondents were asked to make word associations with the word "principal." Respondents included 178 elementary students, 108 high school students, 26 elementary teachers, and 23 high school teachers from urban and suburban schools in New York and New Jersey.

Glanz found that both students and teachers viewed principals unfavorably. Students used terms such as jerky, annoying, foolish, and mean to characterize

principals. Intimidating, bureaucratic, autocratic, and petty were terms used by teachers to describe principals.

Respondents were also asked “to what extent do the images of principals in television and film reflect reality?” Students stated that media images accurately depicted how they perceive actual principals. About half of the teachers that responded, concurred with the students’ assertions. The other half of the teachers believed that the media portrayals were merely exaggerations and characterizations for entertainment value (Glanz).

When asked to describe the work principals engage in, respondents made such statements as: monitoring attendance of students and teachers, walking the halls, completing paperwork, balancing budgets, and meeting with irate parents. There was little mention of supervision to improve the quality of instruction (Glanz).

Nederhouser’s (2000) study primarily focused on the portrayal of teachers in popular cinema. She reviewed 100 popular movies that depicted American K-12 schoolteachers. Nederhouser’s sample of films was guided by the following primary criteria:

1. Is there a presence of a teacher portrayal in the film?
2. Is the film available for viewing?
3. Is the teacher portrayed in the film shown teaching students of elementary through secondary school age in the United States?

Through logical analysis Nederhouser looked for emergent patterns in the content data that had been collected. This was done by cross referencing data fields in a computer database. For example, a list could be run that included an alphabetical list

of films titles that included positive teacher portrayals and were dramas. By cross referencing fields, patterns and trends emerged.

Although Nederhouser's researched focused primarily on the portrayal of teachers in film, she identified five negative categories of principal portrayals in her review. The categories were authority principals, simple-minded foil principals, villain principals, faceless bureaucrat principals, and social and emotional isolate principals (Nederhouser).

According to Nederhouser, educators in the authority category "believe that only strict following of the rules allows a beneficial environment" (p. 92). Mr. Warneke in *The Blackboard Jungle* and George Grandy in *Dangerous Minds* were both coded by Nederhouser as authority principals.

The simple-minded fool principal is one who never has a clue about what is really going on around them and are made a mockery of by the students. The principals depicted in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, *Class Act*, and *No Big Deal* are examples of the simple-minded fool principal (Nederhouser).

Nederhouser categorized villain principals as those who view students as the enemy. They are close-minded and sarcastic. Examples include Principal Rolle in *The Substitute* and Ms. Trunchbull in *Matilda*.

The principal in *Teachers* represents the principal as a faceless bureaucrat who says to a teacher "your job is to get them through this school and keep them out of trouble and that's it!" Nederhouser describes this type of principal as aloof and considers the stereotype to be similar to that of a prison warden.

Social and emotional isolate principals are characterized by their inability to have meaningful relationships with the teachers and students. Their interactions are portrayed as unconnected and superficial. The principals in *Stand and Deliver*, *Teachers*, and *Thicker Than Blood*, and *Up the Down Staircase* are all examples of principals who are virtually unconnected to their students and faculty (Nederhouser).

Nederhouser did identify one positive principal category, the hero principal. Both characters that were identified in this category were principals in crime-ridden schools in an urban setting; Joe Clark in *Lean on Me* and Rick Lattimer in *The Principal*. They rule with an iron fist in order to save the school.

Eddleman (2008) conducted an ethnographic content analysis of principals portrayed in television and film from 1995-2000. Her sample included 12 movies and 6 television shows. She selected the movies and television shows based on the following criteria:

1. The principal in the film or show had to be a primary or secondary character.
2. The setting had to be a U.S. public school.
3. Availability of the movie or television show.
4. Television shows had to have been broadcast by a major network (NBC, CBS, ABC, Fox, WB, and/or UPN) and the movies had to have received wide release throughout the United States.

Eddleman created transcripts from the movies and shows. She also took field observation notes of the visual images on the screen. She coded each line of dialogue in every scene with or about the principal and then grouped similar words, actions, or contexts according to like codes. She then cross referenced characters, movies, and

television shows to identify common language, behaviors, and themes. Eddleman's analysis revealed three overarching themes: authority, problems and problem solving, and relationships. Principals were depicted "dealing with a broad range of problems reflecting the socio-cultural, educational, and managerial dimensions of schools: student safety and order; student rights and responsibilities; student health and development; school management; and curriculum and instruction" (p. 133).

Most recently Hershey-Freeman (2008) examined a total of 73 major motion pictures from 1986 – 2007 for stereotyped roles of teachers and principals. Films were included in the sample if they portrayed American teachers or principals in leading roles. Hershey-Freeman developed lists of descriptors for each major character on a film-viewing critique (data sheet). The lists of descriptors were then compared to Jung's archetypes (hero, trickster, wise old man, and great mother) as well as stereotypes discussed in previous research studies. The comparisons were then analyzed for trends and patterns.

Overall, Hershey-Freeman found that the portrayals of principals were negative. The principals were shown to be far more authoritative, bureaucratic, unlikeable, and professionally inept than teachers depicted in the movies that were included in the study. The principals were depicted as inflexible, hostile, and idiotic. Additionally, the "principals were perceived as blindly following the desires of the school board and caving in to public opinion, regardless of whether or not their decisions were actually in the best interest of the students." (p. 130). Like Burbach and Figgins (1991), Glanz (1997), and Nederhouser (2000), Hershey-Freeman (2008) found that white males (approximately 70%) typically portrayed principals.

According to Nederhouser (2000) few other professions are portrayed so negatively in film as educators. “Police, firefighters, and social workers are not so widely denigrated or treated as incompetent...Is it because we all went to school and familiarity breeds contempt?” (p. 136). As Tan (2000) notes, “everyone has been taught, so everyone believes they know how to teach” (p. 5).

In their article “Using Film to Teach Leadership in Educational Administration,” English and Steffy (1997) describe the advantages of using film to teach educational administration to graduate students. Ironically, not one of the 10 films they use with their students portrays an educational leader. “Because educational leaders are rarely the stuff of the silver screen, the instructor in educational leadership will have to resort to using leaders from other walks of life and teaching” (p. 108). The 10 movies they use to teach about leadership in educational administration are *Nixon*, *Gandhi*, *Joan of Arc*, *Malcolm X*, *The Last Emperor*, *Patton*, *Inherit in the Wind*, *Matewan*, *Lawrence of Arabia*, and *Viva Zapata*.

Similarly, Graham, Sincoff, Baker, and Ackermann (2003) have found that movies are a powerful way to help students become better leaders. They apply movies to teach the tenets of leadership outlined by Kouzes and Posner (2002) in *The Leadership Challenge*. The tenets include: model the way; inspire a shared vision; challenge the process; enable others to act; and encourage the heart.

Graham, Sincoff, Baker, and Ackermann provide a list of 69 movies they feel are extremely useful for teaching leadership. Only a handful of the movies depict an educational leader, principal or otherwise.

General Stereotypes of Principals

Much has been written on what traits are needed to be a principal and the racial and gender stereotypes faced by principals; however, there is not much in the literature about how people perceive principals in general. The popular stereotype of the principal is that of educational leader of his/her school. "This image is implied by the powers and the responsibilities delegated to the principal by the superintendent and the board: he is expected to oversee the instructional program, to make suggestions for improving it, and to evaluate the teaching performance of his faculty" (Swift, 1974, p. 70).

In a study conducted by Paradise and Wall (1986), the researchers examined the influence of male and female school principals on first graders' perceptions of school principals and teachers. The researchers showed 190 male and female first graders four videotapes and asked them several open-ended questions such as what is the job of the teacher and who do you think can be a principal. On the videotapes were all combinations of male and female teachers and principals depicting two scenes related to a child's entrance into the first grade in a new school. They found that regardless of the sex of the principal or the sex of the child, the majority of children saw the role of the principal as punitive (Paradise & Wall, 1986).

Role of the School Principal

Few would argue that the role of the principal is to be the leader of the school. It is assumed that principals possess some leadership skills such as problem analysis, sensitivity, goal setting, and effective communication. However, "leadership tends to be

romanticized in American culture, especially in the culture of schooling” (Elmore, 2000, p. 13). A review of the historical, contemporary, and changing role of the school principal follows in an attempt to provide the reader with a realistic perspective of the past and present duties and responsibilities associated with the principalship.

Historical Perspective

In the early 1800s, one-room schools were administered by the teacher (Goodwin, Cunningham, & Eagle, 2005). A board of laymen made all administrative decisions (Cubberley, 1922). By the late nineteenth century, schools began the transformation into a tightly-organized and efficiently operated centralized system (Tyack, 1974). It was during this time that principals became in charge of supervision and instruction as well as janitorial and clerical duties. In an effort to achieve conformity, early principals adhered to bureaucratic rules and regulations in their supervisory role (Goodwin et al., 2005). According to Smith and Piele (1989) the expansion of secondary schools at the turn of the century led to an increase in school bureaucracy and the addition of the assistant or vice principal.

During the late nineteenth century and into the turn of the century, several educators advocated for bureaucratic and autocratic supervisory practices (Payne, 1875; Harris, 1892; Gove, 1899). Payne (1875) stated that principals “should be a responsible head, able to devise plans in general and in detail, and vested with sufficient authority to keep all subordinates in their proper places, and at their assigned tasks” (p. 17). According to Harris (1892) teachers need to be told what is acceptable

and what is not. In the same vein Gove (1899) said that “autocracy and despotism” were necessary in maintaining a well-organized school system (p. 520).

Between 1920 and 1930 the number of principals doubled. Elsbree and Reutter (1954) described the role of the principal during this time as follows: “The principal was looked upon as kind of foreman who through close supervision helped to compensate for ignorance and lack of skill of his subordinates” (p. 231). The Eight Year Study, a report involving 30 schools from 1933 to 1941, criticized the principal stating that “only here and there did the principal conceive of their work in terms of democratic leadership of the community, teachers, and students” (Goodwin et al., 2005, p. 4). “Principals were continuously and vehemently criticized for autocratic practices and bureaucratic adherence to organizational mandates over individual needs” (Glanz, 1997, p. 16).

During the societal changes of the 1960s and 1970s, principals were required to develop an understanding of legal issues relative to student rights, due process, sexual discrimination, and the mainstreaming of students with disabilities. With the passage of Title IX and the Education Act for Handicapped Children, along with the student rights movement, more legislative mandates, and the strengthening of collective bargaining units, the role of the principal became more about managing compliance issues than supervising teaching and learning (Goodwin et al., 2005). During the 1970s, principals did not “allocate a significant portion of their time to managing instructional activities.” Instead most of their work day was spent in managerial tasks (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985, p. 219).

A Paradigm Shift: A More Contemporary Look at the School Principal

In the 1980s there was a shift from principal as manager to principal as instructional leader. After the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education) in 1983, the American educational system began to focus on school improvement and student achievement (Beck & Murphy, 1993; Burlingame; 1991; Week, 2001). Additionally during the 1980s, *A Nation Prepared* (Carnegie Forum on Education and Economy, 1986) and *Time for Results* (National Governors Association, 1986) called for teacher empowerment and restructuring of school governance. “By the mid-1980s, professional norms deemed it unacceptable for principals to focus their efforts solely on maintenance of the school or even on program management. Instructional leadership became the new educational standard for principals” (Hallinger, 1992, p. 37). The focus on the principalship during this time was on close supervision of classroom instruction and student progress and setting clear expectations for both teachers and students.

During the 1990s principals were confronted with many federal and state mandates. The era of standards-based and accountability systems had arrived. According to Goodwin et al. (2005) principals experienced conflicts among local, state, and federal mandates and between required directives and available resources which resulted in principals suffering from “role overload and role ambiguity” (p. 7). The term *change agent* was used to describe principals at this time and reflected the increasing responsibility of administrators to positively and collaboratively change the culture of schools (Fullan, 1993).

No Child Left Behind: How it Changed the Role of the School Principal

The landscape of the American educational system has changed significantly in the last decade. School reform initiatives gained momentum in the mid- to late nineties and then came to the forefront with the signing of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in 2001. Following the signing of NCLB in January 2002, Secretary of Education Rod Paige declared, "With the stroke of his pen, President Bush changed the culture of education in America" (USDOE, 2002).

NCLB greatly expands the federal role in public education. The law requires states to administer standards-based tests as well as nationally norm-referenced tests in certain grade levels each year. All students, regardless of ability levels and/or socioeconomic factors, are to achieve proficiency by the 2014-2015 school year. Under the law, schools are required to provide report cards to parents and the community detailing the school's progress (NCLB, 2002).

After the passage of NCLB, it was as if a spotlight was put on school principals. They are now held accountable for their school's performance. Today's principals are forced to look at the bottom line and determine the root cause(s) of their schools' success or failure on standardized tests. School principals are now expected to facilitate a deliberate and comprehensive school improvement process that is focused on research-based approaches to improve the achievement of all students (Tucker & Coddling, 2002).

Principals today are responsible for the improvement of instruction, analysis of formative and summative test data, classroom visitations, day-to-day operations of the school, school safety, staff professional development, fostering parent involvement in

school activities, monitoring and evaluating instructional programs, identifying the social and emotional needs of students, and building positive relationships with community groups.

“Schools are now held accountable to rigorous standards and assessments, while simultaneously principals are being called upon to build capacity through shared governance and to nurture the development of a professional community in order to strengthen the teaching profession” (Johnson, 2007). In a study conducted by Goodwin, Cunningham, and Childress (2003), principals identified a “disconnect” between what they perceived as important and what were the daily requirements of their job. They are unable to focus primarily on the instructional aspect of their jobs because they are busy with security, fund raising, and after-school activities. The results of the Alternative School Administration Study (2005) indicate that the majority of a principal’s day is spent on managerial tasks like student behavior management, scheduling, maintenance of the building, transportation, supervision of non-instructional staff, and the budget. Risius (2002) found that principals spend the majority of their day doing paperwork, making and receiving phone calls, dealing with student discipline issues, evaluating student progress, and attending administrative meetings.

Eddleman’s (2008) ethnographic content analysis of principals portrayed in television and film from 1995-2000 revealed that a principal’s day is fragmented, multidimensional, interactive, and unpredictable. Principals were depicted “dealing with a broad range of problems reflecting the socio-cultural, educational, and managerial dimensions of schools: student safety and order; student rights and responsibilities;

student health and development; school management; and curriculum and instruction” (p. 133).

Each day, principals must perform a tightrope routine where they must delicately balance instructional leadership and managerial duties. It is not surprising then that educators increasingly see the role of the school principal as more of a challenge than the job is worth (Lindle, 2004; Pounder & Merrill, 2001).

Principal Leadership

Leadership is a vital component of the effectiveness of any school. School leadership is the single most important aspect of school reform (Friedkin & Slater, 1994; Marzano, 2003; Sergiovanni, 1996). Lashway (2003) defines the school principal as a leader of multiple roles which include improving academic performance and effective collaboration with teachers, parents, and the community. The administrative behaviors of the school principal affect school climate and in turn affect student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 2000; Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005; Stockard & Lehman, 2004).

Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) conducted a meta-analysis to determine what 35 years of research says about school leadership. The researchers explored the relationship between student achievement and the leadership behavior of the school principal. They reviewed the literature from 69 studies conducted between 1978 and 2001 and found a quantitative relationship between building leadership and the academic achievement of students. The researchers identified 21 categories of behaviors that they refer to as “responsibilities” related to principal leadership and their

correlation with student achievement (See Figure 1). Their findings indicate that all the “responsibilities” are “important to the effective execution of leadership in schools” (p. 64).

Responsibility	The Extent to Which the Principal ...	Average <i>r</i>	95% CI	No. of Studies	No. of Schools
1. Affirmation	Recognizes and celebrates accomplishments and acknowledges failures	.19	.08 to .29	6	332
2. Change Agent	Is willing to challenge and actively challenges the status quo	.25	.16 to .34	6	466
3. Contingent Rewards	Recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments	.24	.15 to .32	9	465
4. Communication	Establishes strong lines of communication with and among teachers and students	.23	.12 to .33	12	299
5. Culture	Fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation	.25	.18 to .31	15	819
6. Discipline	Protects teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their teaching time or focus	.27	.18 to .35	12	437
7. Flexibility	Adapts his or her leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent	.28	.16 to .39	6	277
8. Focus	Establishes clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school's attention	.24	.19 to .29	44	1,619
9. Ideals/Beliefs	Communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling	.22	.14 to .30	7	513
10. Input	Involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies	.25	.18 to .32	16	669
11. Intellectual Stimulation	Ensures faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school's culture	.24	.13 to .34	4	302
12. Involvement in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	Is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices	.20	.14 to .27	23	826
13. Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	Is knowledgeable about current curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices	.25	.15 to .34	10	368
14. Monitoring/Evaluating	Monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning	.27	.22 to .32	31	1,129
15. Optimizer	Inspires and leads new and challenging innovations	.20	.13 to .27	17	724
16. Order	Establishes a set of standard operating procedures and routines	.25	.16 to .33	17	456
17. Outreach	Is an advocate and spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders	.27	.18 to .35	14	478
18. Relationships	Demonstrates an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff	.18	.09 to .26	12	505
19. Resources	Provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their jobs	.25	.17 to .32	17	571
20. Situational Awareness	Is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems	.33	.12 to .51	5	91
21. Visibility	Has quality contact and interactions with teachers and students	.20	.12 to .28	13	477

Figure 1. The 21 responsibilities and their correlations (*r*) with student academic achievement.

Note: 95% CI stands for the interval of correlations within which one can be 95% sure the true correlation falls (see Technical Note 9, P. 153). *No. of Studies* stands for the number of studies that addressed a responsibility. *No. of schools* stands for the number of schools involved in computing the average correlation.

Source: *School Leadership that Works*, Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005, p. 42-43.

According to the comprehensive research of Marzano et al., the 21 “responsibilities” are grounded in and strongly support the major elements of the following leadership theories and/or styles. The behaviors and characteristics associated with the 21 “responsibilities” and the following leadership theories and/or styles were “look fors” during data collection and helped frame the narrative analysis.

Transformational Leadership

James Burns is generally considered the founder of modern leadership theory. In 1978 he outlined a general definition of leadership and within that definition he made a distinction between transformational leadership and transactional leadership (Burns, 1978). A transformational leader is a leader who is able to energize, align, and excite followers by providing a vision of the future, whereas the transactional leader is focused on planning, organizing, and coordinating and compliance is exchanged for reward (Marzano et al., 2005).

The transformational model of school leadership was developed by Kenneth Leithwood (1994). He argues that other than instructional leadership, transformational leadership is the most important leadership concept for school leaders to grasp and implement (Leithwood, 2005). Principals are charged with mission and capacity building and a strong emphasis is placed on high expectations for teachers and students. In schools, the transformational leadership model provides a focus to help staff members develop and maintain a collaborative, professional school culture and fosters teacher development.

Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership is based on the hypothesis that followers are motivated through a system of rewards and punishment where one thing is traded for another. Bass and Avolio (1994) detail three different forms of transactional leadership: management-by-exception-passive, management-by-exception-active, and constructive transactional. According to Sosik and Dionne (1997) constructive transactional leadership is the most effective and active of the three styles. The constructive transactional leader sets goals, clarifies desired outcomes, exchanges rewards and recognition for accomplishments, suggests or consults, provides feedback, and gives employees praise when it is deserved. Sosik and Dionne state that constructive transactional leaders invite followers into the management process which generally results in the followers focusing on and achieving performance goals.

Total Quality Management

The concept of Total Quality Management (TQM) is generally accepted to have been developed by Edward Deming after World War II as a solution to the problems faced by businesses to construct plans and strategies that would streamline production and cut costs. There are 14 principles that are applicable to all types of organizations (Deming, 1986).

There is evidence that TQM has and can continue to have a positive impact when implemented in schools. Hernandez (2001) suggests that "TQM can improve education by offering a systematic approach to continuous improvement of the educational system for students, parents, teachers, and administrators; can provide a

set of statistical tools for discovering the causes of low-test scores and high drop-out rate; can promote quality work; and, can provide a common vocabulary for educators” (p. 13). Additionally, other authors have suggested that the quality movement is the answer to educational needs because it provides a structured, systematic educational delivery system, which leads to an improvement in student performance, motivation, self-esteem, and confidence (Cramer, 1996; Weller & McElwee, 1997).

Servant Leadership

The concept of servant leadership is attributed to Robert Greenleaf (1970, 1977) who believed that leadership emerged from an inherent desire to serve other people. “A great leader is seen as servant first, and that simple fact is the key to his greatness” (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 2).

The focus of servant leadership is on collaboration, trust, empathy, and the ethical use of power. Within an organization the servant leader is positioned in the center and not at the top. A key feature of servant leadership is the development of the people within an organization.

Greenleaf focused much of his writings and reflections on leadership in large organizations, educational institutions, and religious groups. According to Newman (2007) educational institutions received Greenleaf’s harshest criticism. The author suggests that Greenleaf saw the untapped potential for servant-leadership training that could benefit society in educational institutions. Greenleaf (1996) stated, “our educational system is not designed to prepare for leadership (the fulsome statements of college catalogs to the contrary notwithstanding)” (p. 289).

Although servant leadership is not empirically-based, many other contemporary leadership theorists have contributed to the tenets of servant leadership in their writings. Authors include Blanchard (1998), Block (1993), Bolman & Deal (1995), Covey (1992), DePree (1992), Elmore (2000), Peck (1978), Senge (1990), Spears (1998), Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond (2001), and Wheatley (1992).

Situational Leadership

Situational leadership is a leadership style, but it also refers to a recognized leadership model. Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard are typically associated with the situational leadership style and the situational leadership model (Blanchard, Carew, & Parisi-Carew, 1991; Blanchard & Hersey, 1996; Blanchard, Zigarmi, & Zigarmi, 1985; Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2001). Both the style and model are based on the idea that the leader adapts his or her leadership behaviors according to the situation. There is a presumption that different leadership styles are better in different situations.

Situational leadership includes four styles that match high and low willingness and ability to perform a task. An effective leader is adept at determining which style to use in which situation. In education, school principals might vary their leadership style to fit the responses and capacities of their teachers if they were employing the situational leadership model.

Instructional Leadership

Although instructional leadership has been a popular theme in education over the last 20 years, the concept is not well defined (Marzano et al., 2005). According to

Leithwood (2005) the instructional leadership model attempts to redirect principals' attention to teaching and learning and away from the managerial duties that typically consume principals' time.

Smith and Andrews (1989) identify four dimensions of instructional leadership in their description of the theory. The four roles are: (a) resource provider; (b) instructional resource; (c) communicator; and, (d) visible presence.

Blase and Blase (1999) identified slightly different characteristics in their Reflection-Growth (RG) model which include: (a) encouraging and facilitating the study of teaching and learning; (b) facilitating collaborative efforts among teachers; (c) establishing coaching relationships among teachers; (d) using instructional research to make decisions; and, (e) using the principles of adult learning when dealing with teachers. Additionally, Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (1995) and Hallinger, Murphy, Weil, Mesa, and Mitman (1983) also identified features of instructional leadership.

Although there is no clear definition for instructional leadership, the major theme of the theory seems to be grounded in the idea that the principal is the key leader in successfully creating a school culture focused on teaching and learning (Hale & Moorman, 2003).

The Influence of Film

As a society we gather information from media. The images we see affect our perceptions of reality. A wide variety of media messages influence our values,

ideologies, and beliefs and affect how we interpret the world (Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes & Sasson, 1992).

In this context, it is important to briefly discuss the theory of social construction of reality, which is the belief that humans actively form their own day-to-day realities based on their social interactions with the world around them. Berger and Luckmann (1967) are credited with being among the first contemporary sociologists to argue that people agree on social institutions and give them meanings as well as agreeing on their roles within those constructions. Rokeach (1966) suggested that the process of constructing reality is determined by what he called “frames of reference.” Preceding social interaction is one’s frame of reference and it determines the way in which his or her experience in the interaction will be organized.

People use media images to help them organize, interpret, and understand the world around them. Therefore, the media influences our ongoing construction of reality. In 1922, Lippmann wrote about the impact of media in shaping people’s thoughts and actions. According to him, media images create pictures in people’s heads that they use to understand reality.

Studies on the Influence of Film

A number of studies have examined the effects of movies on the attitudes and behaviors of children and adolescents. Among the most well known are the Payne Fund Studies which were conducted in the 1930s. Several researchers studied the effects of motion pictures on juvenile delinquency, crime, sexual activity, sleep habits,

and attitudes toward various nationalities and racial groups (Jowett, Jarvie & Fuller, 1996).

Adler (1937) conducted an extensive critique of the Payne Fund Studies and concluded that the studies, except for one by Peterson and Thurstone (1933), were for the most part without statistical merit. Peterson and Thurstone examined the influence of movies on high school students' attitudes toward crime, war, capital punishment, and racial groups. They found evidence of individual films exerting no effect when viewed separately, but when groups of two motion pictures were shown together they became influencing forces.

When Wiese and Cole (1946) investigated the effects of a motion picture on the attitudes of adolescents toward Nazis and the American way of life, they found some evidence of attitude changes. However, they concluded that there is a great deal of variability in the degree in which students are influenced by films and that attitude changes are influenced by cultural and economic backgrounds.

In 1984 Linz, Donnerstein, and Penrod conducted a study to determine the effects of prolonged exposure of violence toward women in films on male students. Their findings revealed that repeated exposure to R-rated films depicting violence towards women significantly lowered the viewers' perceived emotional reactions to violence and lessened the extent to which the students considered the violence degrading to women.

Elliott's (1992) study investigated the influence of exposure to the film *JFK* on a students' knowledge of the assassination of President Kennedy, political mistrust, and the belief in the existence of a shadow government. Elliott concluded that students who

saw the film knew more about the facts of the JFK assassination and were more likely than their non-viewing counterparts to believe in the existence of a shadow government.

Research indicates that, to varying degrees, film has the power to influence viewer attitudes and behaviors. Many variables impact the degree to which a viewer is affected by a film. They include the individual's needs, personality, nature, and social and cultural background (Albrecht, 1954; Considine, 1985).

Film Theory

"Life goes on in the movie, scarcely shaken by the muffled incursion of our troubles, and the movie, by sympathetic magic, may induce life to go on outside it" (Wood, 1975, p. 17). The original purpose of movies was to entertain, but how much have films become "...dossiers of instruction on our social life" (Wood, 1975, p. 189)?

"Movies reflect our society, but also mold our view of it. Film validates reality" (Monaco, 1977, preface). According to Monaco (1977):

Film has changed the way we perceive the world and therefore, to a lesser extent how we operate in it...Historians argue whether the movies simply reflected the national culture that already existed or whether they produced a fantasy of their own that eventually came to be accepted as real. In a sense the point is moot...No doubt the writers...were simply transferring materials they had picked up in real life to the screen. No doubt too, that even if those materials weren't consciously distorted toward political ends, the very fact that the movies amplified certain aspects of our culture while attenuating others had a profound effect (p. 125).

hooks (1996) found that “most of us, no matter how sophisticated our strategies of critique and intervention, are usually seduced, at least for a time by the images we see on screen. They have power over us and we have no power over them” (p. 3). She states that movies provide a shared experience from which difference audiences can discuss issues. Additionally, she says that “whether we like it or not, cinema assumes a pedagogical role in the lives of many people. It may not be the intent of a filmmaker to teach audiences anything, but that does not mean that lessons are not learned” (p. 2).

Over a period of time, viewers of media assimilate the images they observe. When the portrayals of characters are the same in one film after another, viewers come to unconsciously accept stereotypes (Swan, Meskill & DeMaio, 1998). Movies influence our attitudes and behaviors.

Film theory attempts to provide a framework for understanding the film’s relationship to reality. According to Prince (2001) film theory is a “systematic attempt to think about the nature of cinema: What it is as a medium, how it works, how it embodies meaning for viewers, and what kind of meanings it embodies” (p. 286).

According to Thornham (1999), in American films depictions are often “...reflections of reality, whether ‘true’ or ‘distorted’” (p. 12). Considine states (1985):

The depiction of school on the screen, like the depiction of the family, serves as an image of society as a whole...The changing image of the school, and particularly of the schoolteacher, can therefore be read as a reflection, albeit a distorted reflection, of changes not only within the American school system but within the nation itself (p. 123).

For this study, only school principals who appear in American films will be analyzed. It is a purpose of this study to investigate the portrayals of principals in film over the last 12 years. Are principals being misrepresented because they are merely a part of the tried-and-true themes and scenes from the teacher-film genre as determined by Hollywood? Are principals continuing to be depicted as autocrats, bureaucrats, and buffoons (Glanz, 1997) simply because every movie has to have an antagonist and the historical role of the school principal lends itself to that characterization? Is Hollywood not in touch with the fact that school leadership is the single most important aspect of school reform (Friedkin & Slater, 1994; Marzano, 2003; Sergiovanni, 1996)? Must principals be characterized as autocrats, buffoons, bureaucrats, and/or villains for a film to be successful? After all, if the teacher and/or students are the heroes of the show, then they need an antagonist or an enemy to stand in their way and/or to provide comic relief.

But if the principal's role is rooted in the real world of schooling, it is a version of the world that is anchored more in the past than in the present or future. What we are seeing in these films is a rear view mirror image of a system of education that is out of sync with the emerging context of change (Burbach & Figgins, 1991, p. 57).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Most films tell a story. According to Carter (1993), the basic elements of a story include: (a) “a situation involving some predicament, conflict or struggle; (b) an animate protagonist who engages in the situation for a purpose; and (c) a sequence with implied causality during which the predicament is resolved in some fashion (p. 6).”

In this study, the images of principals chronicled in movies from 1997-2009 were analyzed. Historically, principals have been depicted unfavorably in television and film (Burbach & Figgins, 1991; Glanz, 1997; Hersey-Freeman, 2008; Nederhouser, 2000). The research question guiding this study was, “How were principals portrayed in the movies from 1997-2009?” The methodology chosen to answer this question was broken down into three stages. Stage 1 was the Selection Process whereby the researcher selected the films to be analyzed and created a database. In Stage 2 (Data Collection) of the process, the content of each of the films was examined according to predetermined fields. Data Analysis occurred in Stage 3 when the researcher cross-references the fields to determine patterns and themes in the portrayal of principals during the 12 year time period (1997-2009).

This was a mixed method study whereby both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used. Some of the unit of analysis content was counted to explain specific qualities, traits, and behaviors of school principals. Data was collected on the number of male and female principals and the settings in which the principals work. Data was also qualitatively analyzed to explain the professional representation of

principals. Principals' prominence in the plot was reviewed as well as how their level of competence was depicted.

This chapter details each stage of the three-step process. The chapter also includes a discussion on the validity and reliability of the methodology and information regarding the pilot study.

Study Design

According to Krippendorff (1980), the technique of content analysis makes valid inferences from data by counting the frequency of descriptive categories in material. It also includes the qualitative evaluation of the components according to coding categories (Rosengren, 1981). The researcher is able to make valid inferences about the data characteristics, symbols, and messages (Weber, 1990).

In the early twentieth century, content analysis was originally used to count words and measure column inches devoted to particular topics in newspapers (Krippendorff, 1980). The technique has evolved into a process whereby the symbolic content of all forms of recorded communication can be assessed and analyzed (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1987). Berelson (1952) defined content analysis as "a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of manifest content of communication" (p. 18). According to Riffe, Lacy, and Fico (1998), "quantitative content analysis is the systematic and replicable examination of symbols of communication, which have been assigned numeric values according to valid measurement rules, and the analysis of relationships involving those values using statistical methods, in order to describe the communication, draw inferences about its meaning, or infer from the

communication to its context, both of production and consumption” (p. 20). More recently Neuendorf (2002) has written that “content analysis is a summarizing, quantitative analysis of messages that relies on the scientific method and is not limited to the types of variables that may be measured or the context in which the messages are created or presented” (p. 10).

The intent of using content analysis for this study was to reveal how principals were portrayed in the movies over a 12 year period (1997-2009) by quantifying how their traits, characteristics, and behaviors were depicted in the movies. By additionally recording and analyzing dialogue, qualities, and images that are not quantifiable, patterns and themes emerged to help tell the story of how principals were depicted from which valid inferences were made. Specifically, logical analysis was used to identify patterns and themes. The logical analysis process “involves creating potential categories by crossing one dimension typology with another and then working back and forth between the data and one’s logical construction...in a search for meaningful patterns” (p. 468).

Stage 1: Selection Process

The selection process for this study was a two-step process. The first step began with an exhaustive search of American movies produced between 1997 and 2009 which included a school principal with a significant part in the plot, subplot, or storyline. The primary sources that were used for the search were the Internet Movie Database (IMDb), Netflix, and Blockbuster.

A database was created to organize and maintain the following information: movie title, year made, genre, and the principal's name (if available). From this database, a list of 91 movies was generated. For inclusion in the data sample, the following criteria had to be met:

1. Was the film available for viewing?
2. Did the principal engage in substantial interaction with other characters?

For the first criterion: "Was the film available for viewing?" The database was reviewed and it was determined if a movie was available to be rented, purchased, viewed on television, in a movie theater, or online.

For the second criterion: "Did the principal engage in substantial interaction with other characters?" A principal was defined as an adult who was clearly identified as the principal and was responsible for the day-to-day operations of a school. The principal character had to have at least three different interactions with another character during the course of the movie.

There were a total of 5 movies that were not available for viewing. The remaining 86 movies were viewed to determine if they met the second criteria.

Below is the list of 49 movies that met both criteria:

1. 17 Again
2. 187
3. Akeelah and the Bee
4. American Gun
5. American History X
6. Assassination of a H.S. President
7. Bratz
8. Charlie Bartlett
9. Cheats
10. Cherry Falls
11. Coach Carter
12. Dance of the Dead
13. Dirty Deeds
14. Donnie Darko
15. Doubting Thomas
16. Drillbit Taylor
17. Dumb and Dumberer
18. Durango Kids
19. Election
20. Emperor's Club
21. Heart of America
22. How to Eat Fried Worms
23. In and Out
24. Judy Berlin
25. Light it Up
26. Max Keeble's Big Move
27. Max Rules
28. Mean Girls
29. Music of the Heart
30. October Sky
31. Phoebe in Wonderland
32. Princess Diaries
33. Radio
34. Raising Helen
35. Rebound
36. Recess: Schools Out
37. Rushmore
38. Santa Claus 2
39. Saved!
40. School of Rock
41. She's the Man
42. Sky High
43. Slappy and the Stinkers
44. Take the Lead
45. Teaching Mrs. Tingle
46. The Faculty
47. The Frightening
48. The Great New Wonderful
49. The Pacifier

Stage 2: Data Collection

The data was collected using a Content Analysis Data Sheet (Appendix A) which included the movie title; year made; genre (adventure, cartoon, comedy, drama, family, fantasy, or horror); school level (elementary, middle/jr. high, or high school); role of principal (major, supporting, or minor); gender; school sector (private or public); school setting (urban, suburban, or rural); coding categories (autocrat, buffoon, bureaucrat, democrat, or villain); and plot summary.

The role of principal was considered major if the principal was portrayed as a protagonist (approximately 10 or more scenes). To be considered a supporting role, the principal must have played a significant and/or recurrent role in the movie (approximately 6-9 scenes). The role was considered minor if the principal had minimal interactions with other characters (approximately 3-5 scenes).

A private school is one supported by private individuals or a corporation rather than by a government or public agency whereas a public school is tax-supported and controlled by a local governmental authority. For the purposes of this study, an urban school was defined as one located in a city or densely populated area. A suburban school was defined as a school located in the area surrounding a city and a rural school was defined as one located in a small town.

Coding categories were synthesized from the review of previous studies, the researcher's review of literature on the current and emerging role of school principals, the researcher's day-to-day interactions with school principals, and the pilot study.

The first category portrays the principal as an authoritarian who uses autocratic administrative practices and employs methods of intimidation to rule. Descriptors in this category on the content analysis data sheet included:

1. Authoritarian – one who favors strict rules and established authority and is controlling
2. Tyrant – one who exercises power cruelly and unjustly
3. Dictator – one who rules with absolute power, usually by force
4. One who uses intimidation to rule and acts as a bully

The second coded category is that of principal as buffoon. The principal is seen as a dimwitted dolt who has no clue about what is going on in his/her building.

Descriptors in this category on the content analysis data sheet included:

1. Buffoon – one who is out of touch with exaggerated flaws
2. Numskull – one for who others have a low opinion of his/her intelligence
3. Dimwit – one who is seen as a stupid and incompetent person
4. One who is mocked by students and/or teachers

The third type of principal historically depicted in television and film is principal as bureaucrat. This type of principal is overly concerned with the administrative duties of his/her position. Often they are portrayed as humorless and sticklers for rules and regulations. Descriptors in this category on the content analysis data sheet included:

1. Bureaucrat – one who applies rules rigidly and is very official in his/her interactions with others
2. Paper pusher – one who is focused on the routine of paperwork
3. Formal – one who carries out tasks in accordance with established or

prescribed rules and is very regimented

4. One who is a stickler for the rules

The democratic principal is one who is seen as someone that believes in including various stakeholders in the decision making process and attempts to create a school culture focused on teaching and learning. Descriptors in this category on the content analysis data sheet included:

1. Egalitarian – one who believes that all people are, in principle, equal and should enjoy equal social, political, economic, and educational rights and opportunities.
2. Supportive of students and staff
3. Respected by students and staff
4. One who is focused on student learning

The fifth and final category characterizes the principal as a villain who sees teachers and/or students as the enemy and is often involved in corrupt activities.

Descriptors in this category on the content analysis data sheet included:

1. Villain – evil character; antagonist
2. Exploits and victimizes students and/or teachers
3. Mean-spirited and dishonest
4. Unscrupulous and corrupt

The principal depicted in each film were not one dimensional and exhibited characteristics from more than one of the coding categories. However, most often the principal displayed more traits from one image category than the other four. Whichever coding category had the most boxes checked was deemed the main image category for

each principal reviewed.

The content analysis data sheet included a space for a plot summary. The basics of the storyline and a brief summary were recorded in the space provided. Additionally, the dialogue for each scene that included a principal was transcribed. Once each scene involving the principal was transcribed, the scene was viewed a second time and detailed notes were included with the transcribed dialogue that included information about the setting and location of the scene, visible artifacts within the office and/or the school, the principal's dress, gender, age, and general physical appearance. Information about the principal's demeanor, interactions with other characters, and administrative competency were also noted.

Stage 3: Data Analysis

The data for this study was analyzed in two phases:

Phase I: Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Phase II: Quantitative and qualitative data was combined to tell a story about how principals were depicted in the movies from 1997 – 2009.

Data collected on the content analysis data sheets was transferred into the computer database. The information was sorted by fields and cross-referenced to generate tables and matrices based on genre, school level, setting, gender, and coding category. Logical analysis, which is a process of crossing one dimension typology and then working back and forth (Patton, 2002), was used to identify meaningful patterns and themes. For example, data fields were cross-referenced to determine how many dramas portrayed female principal as a villain.

Validity and Reliability

Holsti (1969) states that “validity is usually defined as the extent to which an instrument is measuring what it is intended to measure” (p. 142). The content validity of the coding instrument for this study was strong because it was derived from an exhaustive review of previous content analyses of principal portrayals (see Chapter 2). To minimize problems of external and internal validity, a great deal of time went into describing the coding categories clearly so that coding could be conducted reliably (see Pilot Study). Validity was further established through the use of quoted dialogue and descriptive excerpts from the movies reviewed. Finally, the large sample helps to ensure internal validity of the study (Patton, 2002).

According to Neuendorf (2002) “reliability is the extent to which a measuring procedure yields the same results on repeated trials. The notion relevant to content analysis is that a measure is not valuable if it can be conducted only once or only by one particular person” (p. 121). To minimize issues with reliability the coding categories (see Pilot Study), sampling procedures, and database creation were clearly defined so that the study can be replicated by other researchers.

Pilot Study

The researcher, along with two other educators, separately reviewed transcribed scenes from the movie *School of Rock*. Reviewers used a draft content analysis data sheet to record their data from the movie transcript they analyzed. All three reviewers then came together to evaluate how closely they agreed on the image of the school principal that was portrayed in the movie. Overall, the reviewers agreed that the

principal was depicted as a bureaucrat; however they differed significantly on the descriptors they chose.

The educators worked together to better operationally define the coding categories and descriptors. The researcher suggested using terms and adjectives used in previous content analyses studies that focused on the characterization of principals.

The pilot reviewers used the revised content analysis data sheet to record his/her data from transcribed scenes for the movie *Radio*. Again, the reviewers analyzed the transcript separately and then came together to evaluate their findings. It was determined that further clarification of the coding categories and respective descriptors was still needed. Additional terminology and adjectives from online resources were used to further refine the operational definitions of the coding categories and descriptors.

Using the final draft of the content analysis data sheet, the reviewers separately analyzed transcribed scenes from the movie *Saved!* and when they came together they found that they agreed on the coding category and chose all the same descriptors except for one. The researcher concluded that sufficient clarity of the categories and descriptors had been achieved and that coding could be conducted reliably.

The Pilot Study described above was conducted over the course of two months and then was repeated after a one month break to help establish reliability. After the one month break and reevaluating the transcribed scenes from the three movies, the reviewers agreed on all three coding categories and there was little discrepancy with the descriptors chosen by each reviewer. The final coding categories and descriptors can be found in the Methodology section.

From the Pilot Study, the researcher recognized the need to take very accurate and detailed notes, especially for those characters that exhibit traits from multiple coding categories. Detailed notes and descriptions helped the researcher describe trends, patterns, and themes.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS

Historically, most school principals in the movies have been depicted as autocrats, bureaucrats, buffoons, and/or villains. The purpose of this study was to determine if these stereotypical characterizations of school principals prior to 1997 have continued in films from 1997-2009, or if more favorable images have emerged.

The movie selection process for this study was a two-step process. The first step involved an extensive search of American movies produced between 1997 and 2009 that included a school principal. The primary sources that were used for the search were previous studies, the Internet Movie Database (IMDb), Netflix, and Blockbuster.

A database was created to organize and maintain the following information: movie title, year made, genre, and the principal's name (if available). From this database, a list of movies to be viewed was generated. There were a total of 91 movies that were initially identified. For inclusion in the sample, the following criteria had to be met:

Was the film available for viewing?

The list of films was reviewed to determine if the titles were available for rent or purchase or for viewing on television, in a movie theater, or online.

Did the principal engage in substantial interaction with other characters?

The principal was defined as a character who must have at least three different interactions with another character during the course of the movie and spoke a minimum of approximately 100 words. A principal is depicted as responsible for the day-to-day operations of a school.

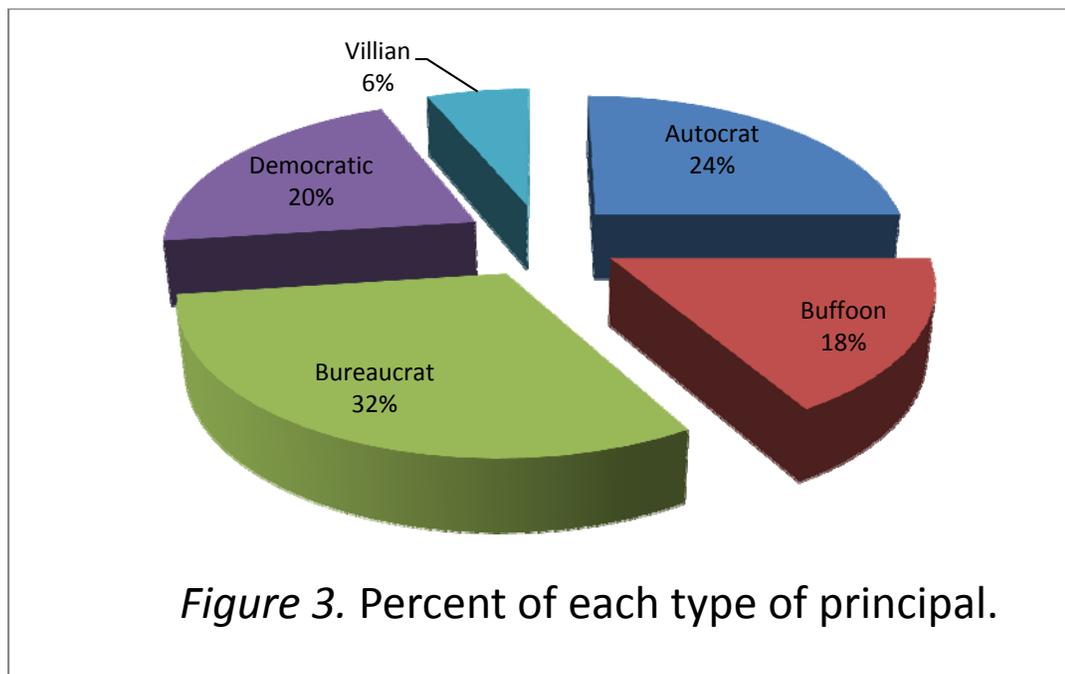
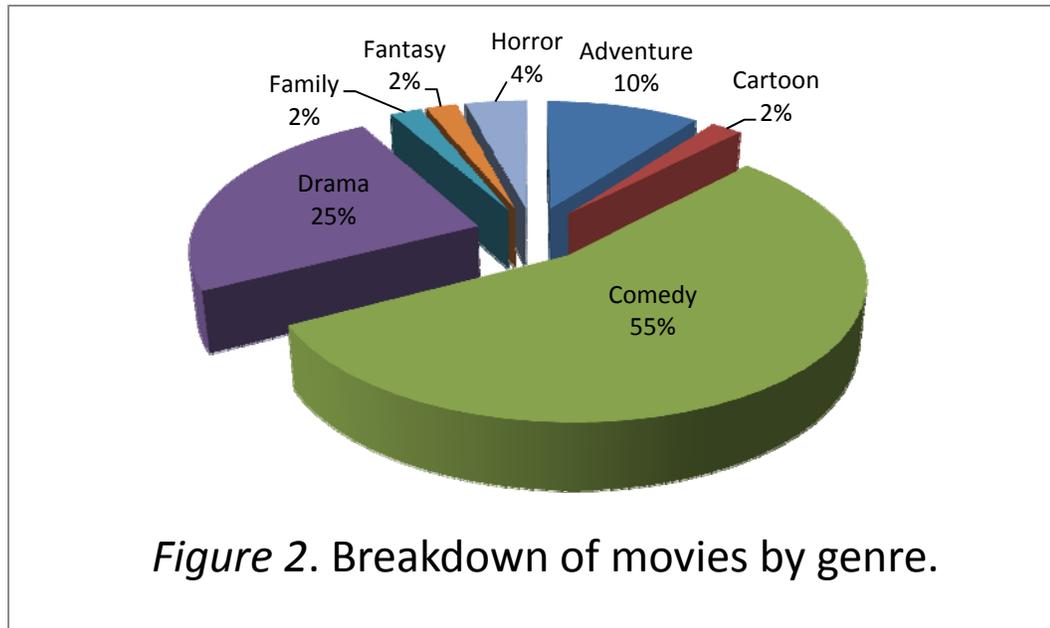
Of the 91 movies that were originally identified, 49 met the criteria to be included in the study. All 49 movies were viewed and any dialogue involving the school principal was transcribed. Once each scene involving the principal was transcribed, the scene was viewed a second time and detailed notes were included with the transcribed dialogue that included information about the setting and location of the scene, visible artifacts within the office and/or the school, the principal's dress, gender, age, and general physical appearance. Information about the principal's demeanor, interactions with other characters, and administrative competency were also noted. At the conclusion of the viewing of the film, a Content Analysis Data Sheet was completed for each film (see Appendix A).

Additional fields were added to the movie database; role of principal (major, supporting, or minor); level (elementary, middle/jr. high, or high school); gender; school sector (private or public); school setting (urban, suburban, or rural); coding categories (autocrat, buffoon, bureaucrat, democrat, or villain); and plot summary. All information from the Content Analysis Data Sheets was added to the database and a variety of combinations and permutations of the data was analyzed.

Quantitative Analysis: The Numbers

A quantitative analysis of the data reveals that of the 49 movies, 27 (55%) were categorized as comedies, 12 (25%) as dramas, 5 (10%) as adventures, 2 (4%) as horrors, 1 (2%) as a cartoon, 1 (2%) as a family film, and 1 (2%) as a fantasy film. Based on the coding categories, 16 (32%) principals were depicted as bureaucrats, 12 (24%) as autocrats, 10 (20%) as democratic, 9 (18%) as buffoons, and 3 (6%) as

villains. Figure 2 shows the breakdown of movies that were analyzed by genre and Figures 3 and 4 indicate how many of each type of principal were depicted in the 49 films.



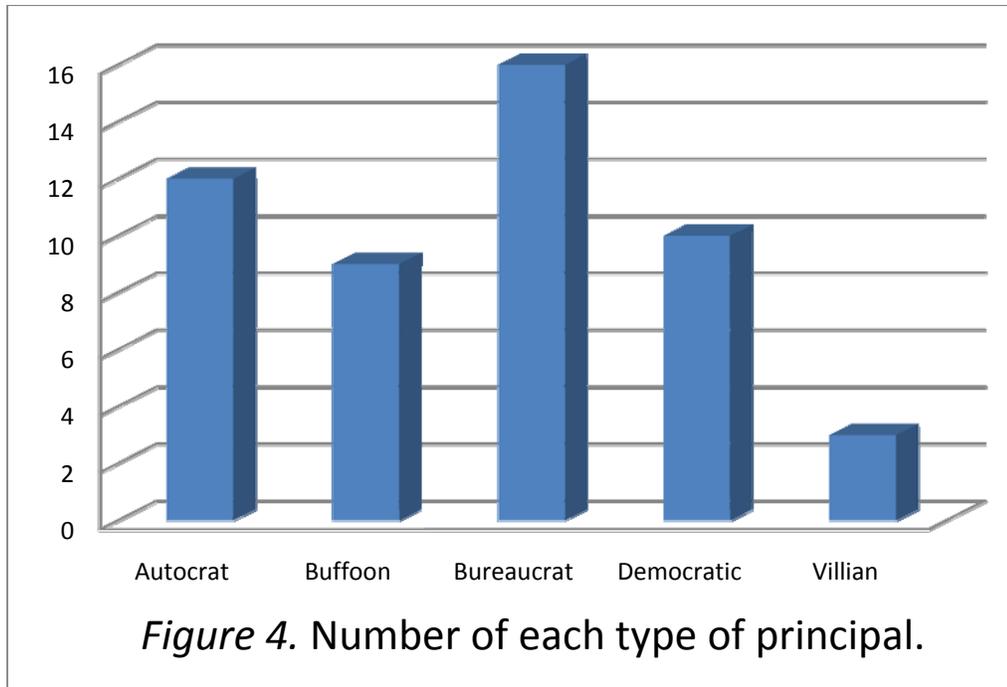
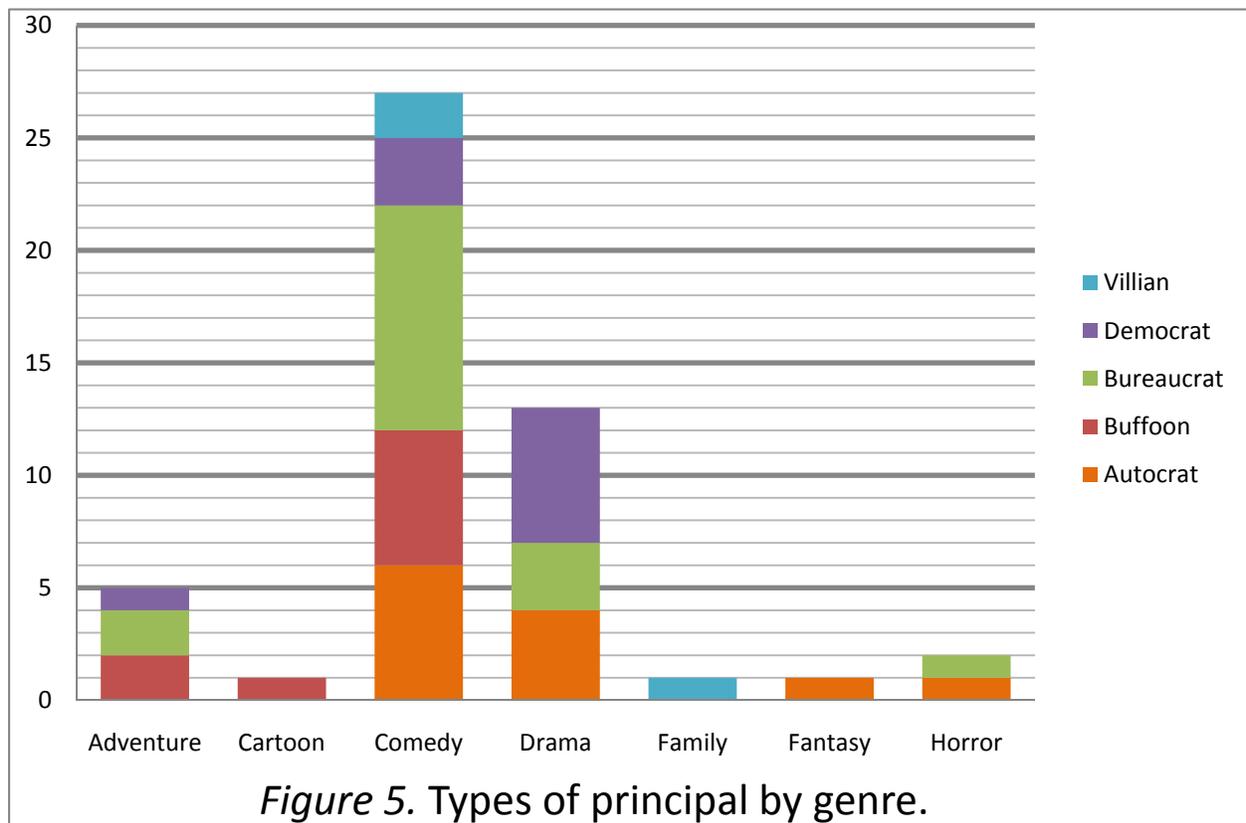
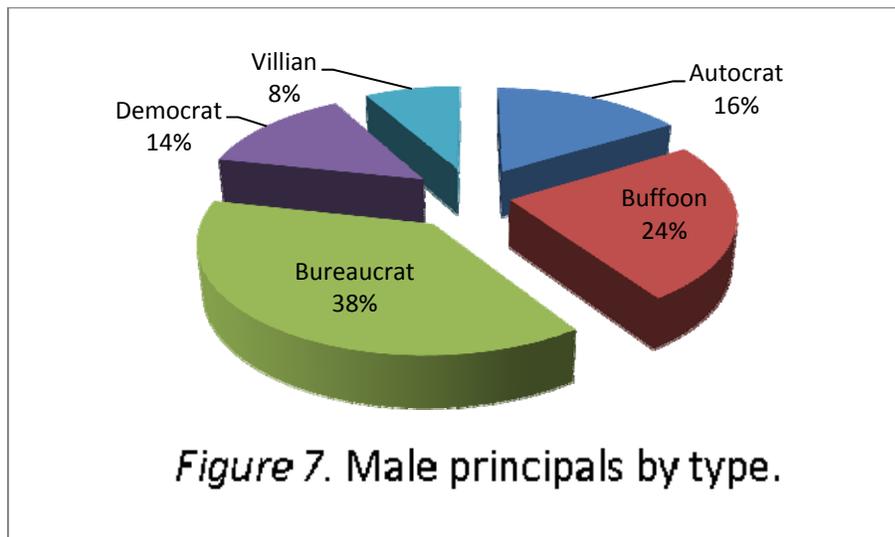
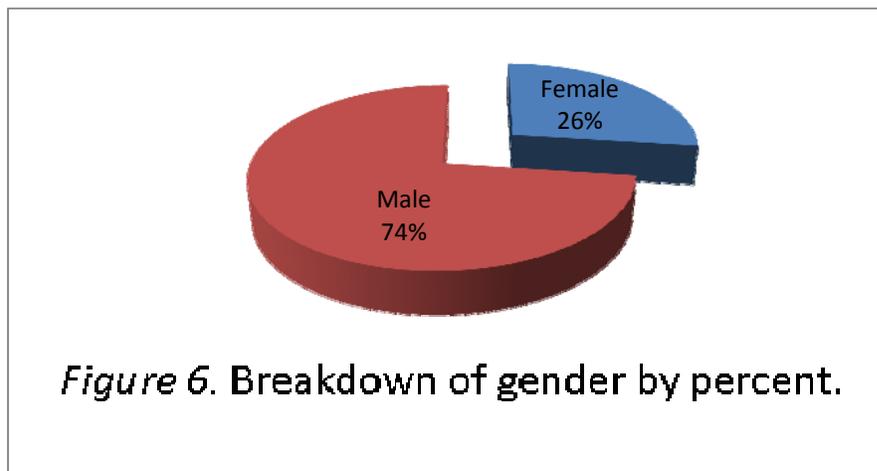


Figure 5 illustrates how each type of principal was portrayed in each genre. Over half (55%) of the movies that were analyzed were comedies.



As one might assume, many of the comedies depicted principals as stereotypical bureaucrats (10 or 37%), autocrats (6 or 22%), and buffoons (6 or 22%) as an easy way to get a laugh from the audience.

There were 13 (26%) women who played principals, 4 (31%) of whom were African-American. Of the 37 (74%) males who portrayed principals, 3 (8%) were African-American. Of the 10 (20%) principals who were represented as a democratic principal, 5 were female and 5 were male. Figures 6-9 illustrate the number of principals by gender, type, and race.



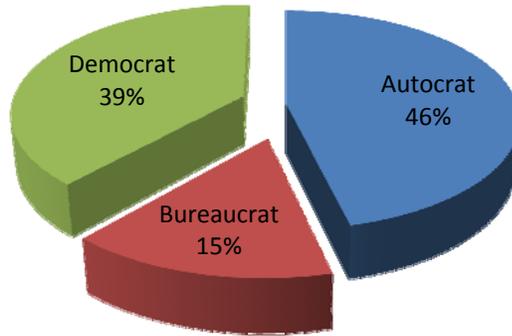


Figure 8. Female principals by type.

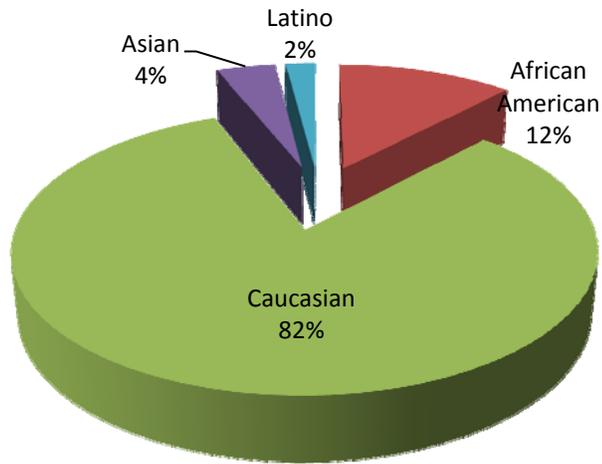
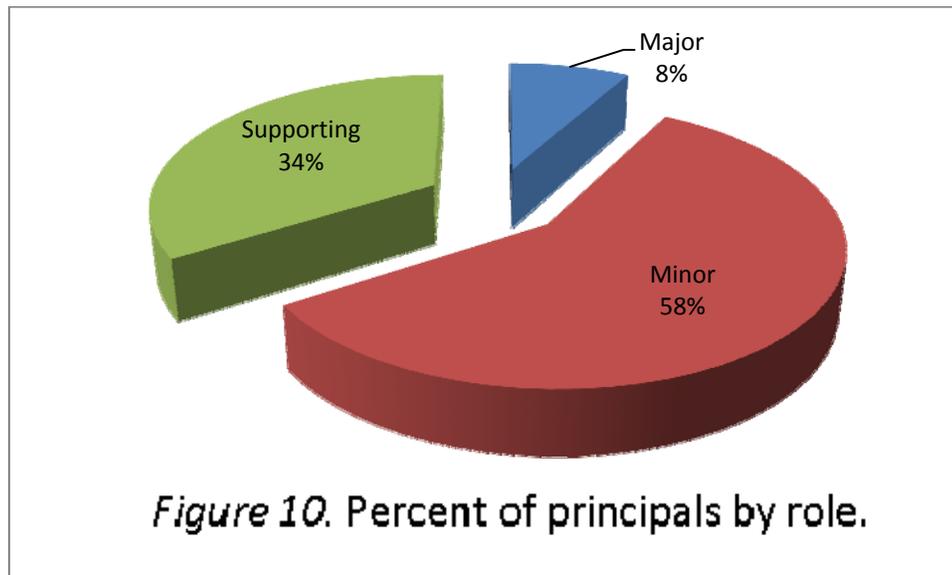
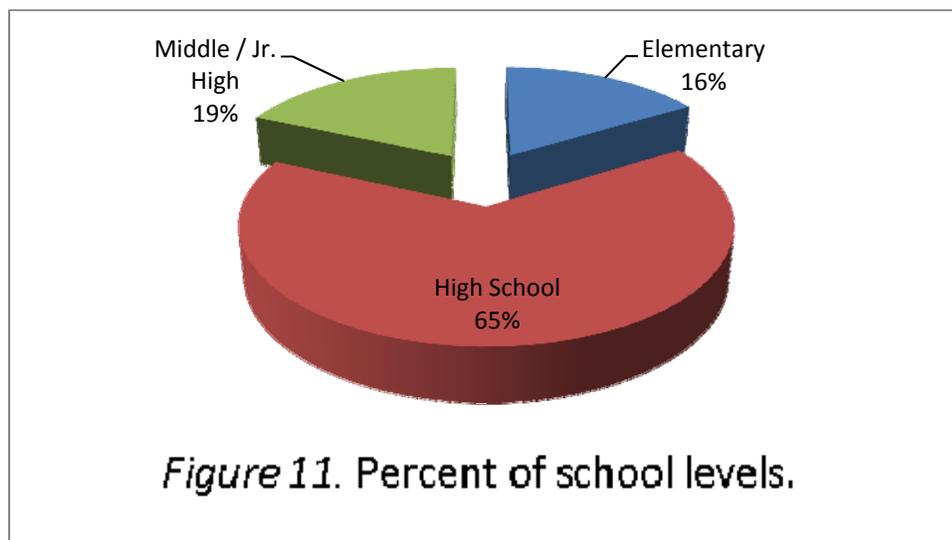


Figure 9. Percent of principals by race.

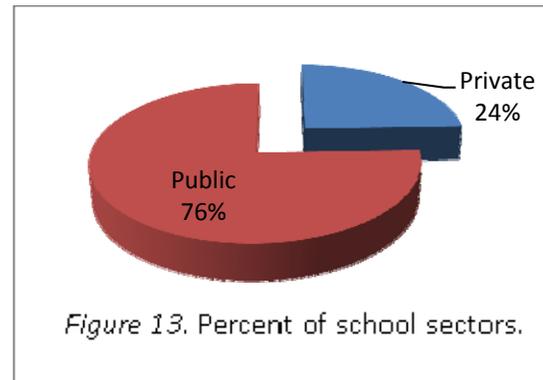
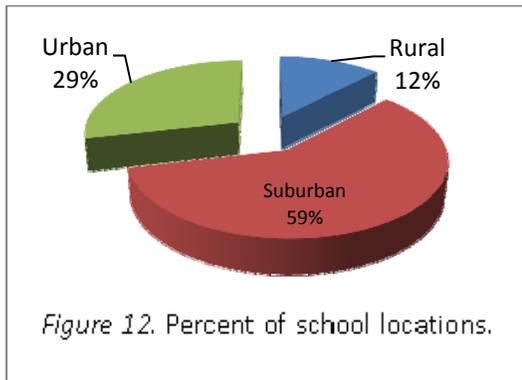
In 29 (58%) of the movies the principal character had only a minor role (an average of 3-5 scenes). There were 17 (34%) films where the school principal had a supporting role (an average of 7-10 scenes) and only 4 (8%) movies where the principal played a major role (10 or more scenes).



The majority of the movies involved high schools (32 or 65%), but 9 (19%) included a middle school/Jr. high setting and 8 (16%) an elementary school setting.



The school locale was most often in a suburban (29 schools or 59%), public (37 schools or 76%) setting. However, some of the schools were set in an urban (14 schools or 29%) area and a few were in rural (6 schools or 12%) settings.



Qualitative Analysis: Portrait of a Principal

The primary research question guiding this study was “how were principals portrayed in the movies from 1997 – 2009?”

Of the 49 movies that were reviewed, 78% of the principals were in their office and behind their desk for at least one scene of the movie. Films make it seem as though school principals spend almost all of their time sitting in their offices behind their desks. Eighty percent of their desks were shown with stacks of paper along with a computer and a telephone. They have a bookshelf or two behind them and their credentials hang on the walls in frames. Principals weren’t always disciplining students when sitting behind their desks, although 55% of the movies did include scenes of that nature. Sometimes the principal was talking with a teacher or with parents. Regardless, principals rarely left the safety of their chair behind their desk. For

example, the Principal Gardner in the movie *Charlie Bartlett* sits behind his desk reprimanding the main character, Charlie (see Figure 14), for selling videotapes of students fighting when the following dialogue is exchanged:

Principal Gardner: Do you understand what you did wrong?

Charlie: (smugly) No sir. Not really.

Principal Gardner: (sarcastically) Not really? Okay, well then you've got three days of suspension to think about it.

In Figure 14 Principal Gardner sits behind his desk and reprimands Charlie Bartlett and another student. His desk includes lots of papers and both a desktop and laptop computer, along with a phone and several framed certificates and diplomas on the wall behind him which promote a bureaucratic image. He is dressed somewhat casually with a loose tie and no sport jacket.



Figure 14. Robert Downey Jr. as Principal Gardner reprimanding Charlie Bartlett in *Charlie Bartlett*. Source: Google Images.

However, most principals in film are typically dressed in conservative, drab, dark suits that are usually brown, gray, or black with a white or cream-colored dress shirt and a gaudy or uninteresting tie. In general, the principal is a middle-aged, white male of average weight and height, who has a receding hairline or is bald, and who wears old-fashioned glasses. Figure 15 represents a stereotypical looking principal who is middle-aged, balding, white, and wears a drab suit with a white shirt and a boring tie. He is the principal from *October Sky* and was portrayed as an autocratic principal.



Figure 15. Chris Ellis playing stereotypical Principal Turner in *October Sky*. Source: Google Images.

Types of Principals

Based on the coding categories, 16 (32%) principals were depicted as bureaucrats, 12 (24%) as autocrats, 10 (20%) as democratic, 9 (18%) as buffoons, and 3 (6%) as villains. Most (81%) of the principals that were depicted as bureaucratic played only minor roles (in an average of 3-5 scenes).

The Bureaucratic Principal

Table 1: <i>Principals as Bureaucrats</i>
Charlie Bartlett
Cherry Falls
Dance of the Dead
Donnie Darko
Drillbit Taylor
Election
Emperor's Club
The Great New Wonderful
In and Out
Judy Berlin
Light it Up
Max Rules
Princess Diaries
Rushmore
School of Rock
Teaching Mrs. Tingle

When the bureaucratic principal was not sitting behind his/her desk disciplining a student, he/she was engaged in mundane administrative activities. For example, the principal in *Dance of the Dead* had only three scenes and in one scene he was auditioning bands for the prom and in another he was chaperoning the prom. Bureaucratic principals in minor roles were also often shown participating in the administrative duty of directing students to morning classes. In almost all instances, the bureaucratic principal was seen performing non-academic, low-level administrative tasks. Such scenes, which included little or no dialogue, were depicted in *Drillbit Taylor*, *The Emperor's Club*, *Princess Diaries*, and *Light It Up*. In these movies the principal participated in menial administrative tasks such as making morning announcements, monitoring the cafeteria, and searching lockers.

When confronted with controversy, at least two bureaucratic principals showed no backbone. For instance, Principal Cole in *Donnie Darko* has to address the unorthodox, yet effective, teaching methods of a new teacher (Karen Pomeroy), and instead of working with the energetic new teacher, he chooses to fire her.

Principal Cole: I'm sorry, Karen, this is a specialized school. We don't think the methods you've undertaken here are appropriate.

Ms. Pomeroy: "Appropriate". With all due respect, sir, what specifically about my methods do you find inappropriate?

Principal Cole: I don't have to get myself into a debate about this, Karen, I believe I have made myself clear.

Ms. Pomeroy: You call this... clarity? I don't think you have a clue what it's really like to communicate with these kids. You don't think that they can smell your bullshit from a mile away? Every day that goes by...that we fail to... inspire them... is another moment that we all lose. And we are losing them to apathy, and this...prescribed nonsense. They are slipping away...

Principal Cole: I am sorry that you have failed. Now if you'll excuse me, I have another appointment. You can finish out the week.

Another bureaucratic principal who chose the path of least resistance when a “sticky” situation came up was Headmaster Woodbridge in *The Emperor's Club*. During a very prestigious competition, the headmaster chooses to ignore the fact that a student (Sedgewick Bell) is cheating. The student is the son of a wealthy alum.

Mr. Hundert (a teacher): Sir, I think Sedgewick Bell is cheating

Headmaster Woodbridge: Let it go

Mr. Hundert: What?

Headmaster Woodbridge: Ignore it

Mr. Hundert: Ignore it?

Headmaster Woodbridge: Ignore it

In general the bureaucratic principal was a very unassuming character with few lines. Many principals depicted as bureaucrats seem to just be going through the motions. When they did speak they were often overly concerned with the administrative duties of their position. Often they were portrayed as humorless and sticklers for rules and regulations. For example in *School of Rock*, the uptight principal Miss Mullins played by Joan Cusack, explains to the substitute teacher (Dewey Finn) why he can't take students on a field trip.

Dewey Finn: Listen, Ros, I was thinking about organizing a field trip at the end of the month. What do you think about that?

Rosaline Mullins: Well, substitutes, as a rule, do not organize field trips.

Dewey Finn: Right, but I figure I'm going be here for a while.

Rosaline Mullins: Well, that remains to be seen. Have you met some of our other teachers?

Dewey Finn: No. But the kids could learn by getting out of the classroom.

Rosaline Mullins: It's more complicated than that. There are safety issues.

Parents need to be notified. It's against school policy.



Figure 16. Joan Cusack as Principal Mullins confronting substitute teacher Dewey Finn (Jack Black) in *School of Rock*. Source: Google

In Figure 16, Principal Mullins (Joan Cusack) is dressed very conservatively in a gray cardigan sweater and an oxford shirt. She is unhappy with the substitute teacher (Dewey Finn played by Jack Black) for not following the rules and procedures; note her facial expression and her hands on her hips.

Like Principal Mullins in *School of Rock*, the principal in *Teaching Mrs. Tingle*, Principal Potter, focuses on the bureaucracy of the position, specifically budget constraints.

Principal Potter: How can I help you this morning, Mrs. Tingle?

Mrs. Tingle: Summer school starts in three weeks. Did you receive my request regarding those necessary research materials?

Potter: Yes, I wanted to talk to you about that. It appears to be a matter of budget. I was thinking...

Mrs. Tingle: No, no, don't do that, Mr. Potter. We so prefer that whistling wind effect you have on us. Now, I requested those materials some time ago.

Potter: We don't have the money.

Mrs. Tingle: Mr. Potter, I'm sure if you take another look at that nasty budget ingenuity will abound. So, thank you in advance.

Again, the bureaucratic principal was depicted as a very unassuming character with few speaking parts. Most often they were shown carrying out stereotypical administrative duties: disciplining students or faculty members in their office, directing students to class, addressing the student body over the loud speaker, and/or chaperoning a school event.

The Autocratic Principal

Table 2: <i>Principals as Autocrats</i>
17 Again
187
Assassination of a High School President
Cheats
Coach Carter
The Faculty
The Frightening
How to Eat Fried Worms
October Sky
The Pacifier (Assistant Principal)
Rebound
Take the Lead

In 12 (24%) of the films that were reviewed, the principal was depicted as an autocrat. Their style was authoritarian in nature and they used intimidation to rule. In *Cheats* and *The Pacifier*, the principal and assistant principal, respectively play

intimidating autocratic disciplinarians who the students have to triumph over. Mary Tyler Moore plays the authoritarian principal Mrs. Stark (an unflattering name) in *Cheats* who suspects a group of high school boys of cheating their way through high school. During the students' senior year, Mrs. Stark sets out on a mission to uncover their scheme and threatens to destroy their chances of getting into college. Instead of trying to work with the boys to get them to understand that cheating is wrong and unethical, Mrs. Stark is domineering and uses intimidation and scare tactics to get the students to stop cheating. In most scenes she sits or stands behind her desk and reprimands the group of boys (See Figure 17).

Mrs. Stark: I know you weren't getting candy. I also know that you've been pulling detention on purpose, so that you could be alone in school with Marty. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves. If I punish you for cheating, it will have to go on the permanent record, so instead I am reducing it to destruction of school property. That'll be three days suspension and your parents have to come to school and I'm gonna tell them what I'm telling you. This is your final warning!



Figure 17. Mary Tyler Moore as Principal Stark reprimanding a student for cheating. Source: Google Images.

Assistant Principal Murney in *The Pacifier* is played by Brad Garrett. He is also the school's wrestling coach and often threatens to discipline students by having them do physical activities like pushups. When Assistant Principal Murney first meets the special agent who is the temporary guardian of three students he attempts to intimidate the lieutenant by saying, "I'm the VP here. I'm in charge of discipline, conduct, and truancy from top to bottom, K-12. You're in my house now strong man."

Autocratic Principal Jane Masterson in *17 Again* is able to merely threaten disciplinary action on students even when they aren't in school. For example, as she and the father of one of her students return home from a date, they find kids partying in the father's mansion. The father unsuccessfully attempts to establish order by shouting, "Everybody out!" However, when Principal Masterson whistles loudly all the students stop dead in their tracks. Principal Masterson yells, "This party is over! If you don't want to spend the next 3 months in detention you will leave...NOW!"

The autocratic principal is often shown maintaining order and control in a very authoritative manner. Rarely are they depicted engaging in anything having to do with teaching and learning. In an early scene in *Take the Lead*, Principal Augustine James is shown walking down the hallway yelling at the students as they make their way to their morning classes.

Principal James: [on the phone about her car] I don't want it pimped I want it fixed!

Principal James: Alright you got somewhere to be and it is not in my hallway, get there and get there fast!

Principal James: Paul Lopez get a belt in those pants, I do not want to see your

drawers.

Principal James: Good morning

Principal James: Chen! If I see you on that cell phone one more time its mine.

Principal James: Eddie French! In my office and you know why.

Maintaining order is clearly the focus of Principal Kirkpatrick in *Assassination of a High School President*. The character is played by actor Bruce Willis who in the movie was a Desert Storm veteran turned educator. He talks to the students as if he is still in the military (See Figure 18. Notice his military stance and intimidating facial expression.) After questioning some students about stolen SATs, he tells the students they are “dismissed.” Over the loud speaker he tells the student body that there has been a “regime” change as far as the school president is concerned. Principal Kirkpatrick approaches two boys at a dance and tells them “at ease” and later that same night tells another student to “get on his feet”. He is definitely portrayed as an autocratic principal with dictator behaviors.



Figure 18. Bruce Willis playing militant Principal Kirkpatrick in Assassination of a High School President. Source: Google Images.

Two (33%) of the autocratic female principals were played by African-American women (*Coach Carter* and *Take the Lead*). Their roles were similar in that their characters played hard-nosed principals trying to maintain control and provide a safe environment in an inner-city public high school when the naïve main character comes along and wants to help kids by working with them in an extra-curricular activity.

In *Coach Carter*, Samuel L. Jackson plays a basketball coach who takes on a losing team and demands respectful behavior and good grades from his players. He makes them sign a contract that they will abide by his strict rules. He talks to Principal Garrison about obtaining progress reports on the players. Instead of supporting the coach's attempt to hold the basketball players to high academic standards, in the dialogue that follows, Principal Garrison lashes out at Coach Carter as she very condescendingly attempts to put him in his place:

Principal Garrison: Progress reports? You're the basketball coach.

Coach Carter: Look, ma'am, we talked about this. I don't see what the problem is.

Principal Garrison: Do you know what the API is, Mr. Carter?

Coach Carter: No I don't.

Principal Garrison: The Academic Performance Index. They judge schools on a scale of one to ten, ten being the best. Do you have any idea where Richmond falls on that scale?

Coach Carter: No ma'am, I have no idea.

Principal Garrison: We're a one, Mr. Carter, and have been for the last seven years. The state rewards schools for their performance. So every year I have less money to pay faculty and staff.

Coach Carter: Look ma'am...

Principal Garrison: Can I ask what it is you want?

Coach Carter: I want my boys to go to college.

Principal Garrison: College? Mr. Carter, Richmond graduates fifty percent of its students, the higher percentage being girls. Now, in my very educated opinion, you have fifteen players on your team, you'll be lucky to graduate five of them.

Coach Carter: I'm sorry, ma'am, but I don't agree with you. Look, these boys signed contracts. Maybe if you'd read one of them...

Principal Garrison: Your job is to win basketball games, Mr. Carter. I suggest you start doing your job.

Coach Carter: And your job is to educate these kids. I suggest you start doing yours.

The idea that the principal doesn't have a lot of faith in the students' potential is also depicted in *Take the Lead*. In the film, actor Antonio Banderas plays dance instructor Pierre Dulaine who wants to help inner-city high school students by teaching them traditional dances like the foxtrot, the tango, and the waltz. Principal Augustine James is skeptical about the idea but takes Dulaine up on his offer because she is desperate to find someone who can cover detention.

Principal James: Heard you had a hell of a class today. I love the tango.

Mr. Dulaine: How did you hear about my class?

Principal James: I hope you understand what you're doing Pierre.

Mr. Dulaine: Yes, I understand very well.

Principal James: Just be careful what you're promising them.

Mr. Dulaine: Every ones entitled to intercultural - to me dance is like life.

Principal James: No that's where you're wrong Mr. Dulaine. Life for these kids is a fight to stay alive and a hustle to make ends meet, not ballroom dancing.

As the movie goes on, Principal James becomes more supportive of the dance program and helps Dulaine demonstrate his point with the PTA when she agrees to dance with him in front of the parent organization. At the end of the movie, Principal James fully supports the students and Mr. Dulaine by attending their prestigious ballroom dance competition and admitting she didn't think the program would be successful.

The Democratic Principal

Table 3: <i>Principals as Democrats</i>
Akeelah and the Bee
American Gun
American History X
Heart of America
Music of the Heart
The Pacifier
Radio
Raising Helen
Santa Clause 2
Sky High

In 10 (20%) of the movies that were reviewed, principals were depicted quite favorably exhibiting democratic characteristics. They were egalitarian in nature and were depicted as being supportive of both students and teachers.

The movie *American Gun* intertwines three storylines that focus on the proliferation of guns in American society. Forest Whitaker, a large (6'2") African-

American actor, plays, Carter, a high school principal in inner-city Chicago dealing with the presence of guns in his school. In the mornings, he stands in the hall by the metal detector helping the security guards check student backpacks for weapons. During other times of the school day, he is shown walking the halls of the school, talking to students and teachers. His office is small with cement walls and cracked ceiling tiles. Behind his desk, is a portrait of Martin Luther King Jr.

Carter stays late after school calling parents and helping students with extracurricular activities. He is clearly trying to make a difference in an inner city high school. However, his dedication to his students and late hours cause problems for him at home with his wife and young son as evidenced in the following dialogue:

Wife: Your son saw a half naked hooker with her stomach cut out. With the knife still sticking in her. I'm 37 years-old and I've never ever seen anything like that, never. You won't let him go to your mother's funeral today he sees a dead prostitute.

Principal: What do you want me to do?

Wife: What do I want you to do? I want you to talk to your son. I want you to ... you spend more time talking to the parents of those thieves, gun-toting...

Principal: That's my job.

Wife: No it's not your job.

Principal: Look, I've got two thousand kids that are...

Wife: They are not your responsibility.

Principal: They are my responsibility.

Wife: No, at the end of the day there's only one little boy who's your responsibility

and that little boy just saw a dead prostitute Carter. That's not normal.

Principal: I just can't leave in the middle of my day ...

Wife: Yes...

Principal: ...and go out and do something...

Wife: You know what, you're out of your mind.

Principal: What do you want from me? You want me to tell the hookers to stop trickin' on Adam. You want me to go out there with a shotgun and say stop, my son is coming out here, you guys gotta go inside.

Wife: I want you to talk to your son.

Principal: I don't have a vice principal

Wife: Just talk to him.

Principal: I don't have a counselor, I got nobody. These parents they like wanna put their foot up my ass, or they gotta stop to complain.

Wife: Talk to your son.

Principal: This one doesn't get on the football team, this teacher she's like giving them sex positions or something like that.

Wife: You're not even listening to me.

Principal: I can't even remember the last time one of them just said thank you.
And I'm not listening to you?

Carter is desperately trying to make a difference in the lives of students, but his frustration is evident in the preceding dialogue. The cards seem to be stacked against him and he feels as if he has no help. In all but three scenes, you see Principal Carter working with either students or a teacher. Unfortunately by the end of the movie he gets

burned out by the job and decides to quit in frustration (See Figure 19. Note Principal Carter's exhausted expression.)



Figure 19. Forest Whitaker as frustrated and exhausted Principal Carter in *American Gun*. Source: Google Images.

Bob Sweeney is the principal in *American History X*. He is an African-American male who attempts to help the younger brother (Danny Vinyard) of one of his former English students (Derek Vinyard) who went to jail for murdering two black men. The brothers are white and associated with a white supremacy group in Los Angeles, California. When Principal Sweeney begins to have trouble with Danny, he visits Derek in prison. There he finds out that Derek has recently been brutally raped by members from his own white gang. Principal Sweeney is incredibly compassionate and tries to get Derek to understand that his hate towards blacks is ruining his life and is beginning to ruin his younger brother's too.

Principal Sweeney: There was a moment, when I used to blame everything and everyone for all the pain and suffering and vile things that happened to me that I saw happen to my people. Used to blame everybody. Blamed white people, blamed society, blamed God. I didn't get no answers 'cause I was asking the wrong questions. You have to ask the right questions.

Derek: Like what?

Principal Sweeney: Has anything you've done made your life better?

Although both of the brothers innately feel hatred towards the principal because he is black, throughout the movie you are aware that they respect him because of his honest, straight-forward approach with them. The brothers realize, albeit to different degrees, that the principal is trying to help them out of a life of revenge.

Half (5 of 10) of the democratic principals were played by females. African-American actress, Alfree Woodard, is the principal of a rural, integrated high school in South Carolina in the 1970s in the movie, *Radio*. Football coach and teacher, Coach Jones (Ed Harris), befriends a developmentally challenged young man after some of the football players torment and abuse him. Initially the unlikely friendship raises some eyebrows with community members and the principal. Principal Daniels confronts Coach Jones as he and the team board the bus for their first away game of the season.

Principal Daniels: No, he is not getting on that bus. Harold, he is not a student. You don't even know how old he is. Look, he has a handicap we know nothing about. What if he has some kind of a seizure or something?

Coach Jones: He's not the one who's going to have the seizure. This has nothing to do with any of that.

Principal Daniels: If you're saying I'm overly concerned about my students being with a severely handicapped black man, I assure you that I am. But my concern is not necessarily for my students. I'm not so sure we're trying to help somebody here...or whether he's being used as nothing more than a glorified mascot.

Coach Jones: You know me a hell of a lot better than that.

Principal Daniels is clearly concerned about the safety and well being of all the students. Throughout the movie she closely monitors Radio's relationships and interactions. In the end, Radio has a profoundly positive influence on the entire student body and the local community. Principal Daniels recognizes him as an honorary graduate of T.L. Hanna High School and announces that he will be returning as an 11th grader the following fall and will be welcome at the school for as many years as he chooses.

Radio is a dramatic film based on a true story as is *Music of the Heart*. In the movie Meryl Streep plays Roberta Guaspari, a woman whose husband left her with two young boys and no job. She goes to the local elementary school and pitches the idea of teaching violin to the school principal, Janet Williams, played by African-American actress Angela Bassett. Initially Principal Williams tells Guaspari no because there is no funding. Eventually she reluctantly agrees to allow Guaspari to try the program on a trial basis. With the support of Principal Williams, the program flourishes over the next 10 years and expands to three East Harlem elementary schools. Then, Principal Williams gets word from the district office that music and arts programs are being cut.

Roberta: There's gotta be a way to fight this!

Principal Williams: Fight it with what? I don't have any other extra programs to

give them instead.

Roberta: Oh, I see. So after ten years, after fourteen hundred children have learned to play the violin, this is just an "extra program."

Principal Williams: You know I don't feel that way and you know damn well I've been standing by you all these years! You think I haven't noticed what you've done for these kids?

Roberta: Then do something!

Principal Williams: (points to her phone) I've been on this phone for the past three days trying to "do something"; the District office can't even stand the sound of my voice. Believe me, there are some people around here I'd much rather get rid of. But as far as the Board's concerned, violin classes are not a priority. I don't have the power here, Roberta. I'm so sorry.

Roberta, with the help of Principal Williams and parents, organizes a concert at Carnegie Hall in an effort to raise money to save the violin program. Before the benefit concert begins, Principal Williams very eloquently addresses the audience.

When I became the principal of Central Park East Elementary, I envisioned a school where children could fulfill their highest potential, despite the challenges of poverty and racism. Ten years ago, Roberta Guaspari walked into my office because she needed a job, and because she had a vision that any child could learn the violin. We put our dreams together and created the East Harlem Violin Program which has helped more than a thousand students expand their vision of what's possible in their lives. When a program like this is cut, our children's future is compromised. I want to thank you for your support. Enjoy the concert.

As one would imagine, there is a happy ending to *Music of the Heart*. The benefit concert raises enough money to keep the East Harlem Violin Program going and Roberta Guaspari is able to keep her job (See Figure 20. Notice the closeness between Principal Williams played by Angela Bassett and Roberta Guaspari played by Meryl Streep.)



Figure 20. Angela Bassett as supportive Principal Williams in *Music of the Heart* at the benefit concert at Carnegie Hall. Source: Google Images.

Akeelah and the Bee is not based on a true story but it has a similar feel-good message as *Music of the Heart* and *Radio*. Akeelah Anderson is an 11 year-old at Crenshaw Middle School in Los Angeles, California who has an aptitude for words but fears being labeled a “brainiac” by her peers. Akeelah’s principal, Mr. Welch, recognizes her potential and encourages her to enter the school spelling bee. Akeelah is reluctant to enter for fear of being ridiculed, but enters after Mr. Welch threatens her with detention for her many absences. Akeelah wins the school spelling bee and Mr. Welch introduces her to a former classmate of his who was a successful competitor in

the Scripps National Spelling Bee. Dr. Larabee (Laurence Fishburne), now a professor in the UCLA English Department, agrees to be Akeelah's coach.

Mr. Welch is a middle-aged white male in a predominantly African-American school. He supports Akeelah's spelling bee pursuits, often driving her to district and regional competitions on Saturdays. Overall, Mr. Welch is portrayed as genuinely wanting to help Akeelah and the students in his school, but at times his motives seem a little self-serving stating that, "If Akeelah does well, that will be just the good PR that Crenshaw needs."

This feel-good movie ends with Akeelah competing at the *Scripps National Spelling Bee*. Her family, her coach, and Mr. Welch are all in the audience cheering her on. I'm not going to give away the ending to this one...you should definitely watch it for yourself as it includes a heartfelt twist that you don't see coming.

The Buffoon Principal

Table 4: <i>Principals as Buffoons</i>
Bratz
Dirty Deeds
Doubting Thomas
Mean Girls
Phoebe in Wonderland
Recess: Schools Out
Saved!
She's the Man
Slappy and the Stinkers

Nine (18%) movies included principals that were portrayed as buffoons. The principals in *Mean Girls* and *Bratz* play stereotypical buffoon principals; incompetent, out of touch, and mocked by students. The principal in *Bratz* goes to his daughter (See

Figure 21), a student in the school, for advice on how to discipline students.

Throughout the movie, he asks his daughter or his bodyguard for help in running the school. Is it any surprise that the principal's name in *Bratz* is Mr. *Dimly*? Notice his stereotypical dress; dark suit, white shirt, and tie. Also notice the title of the book he is reading, *How to Run a Prison*.



Figure 21. John Voight as clueless Principal Dimly in *Bratz* asking his daughter for advice. Source: Google Images.

Principal Duvall in *Mean Girls* is played by African-American actor Tim Meadows, best known as one of the cast members on *Saturday Night Live*. In one scene, Principal Duvall attempts to resolve the “mean girl” issue by calling all the junior girls to the auditorium for an attitude adjustment, but he is clearly out of touch eventually turning things over to Ms. Norbury, a teacher.

Mr. Duvall: Never in my years as an educator have I seen such behavior. And from young ladies. I got parents calling me on the phone asking, "Did someone get shot?" I ought to cancel your Spring Fling!

Students: No!

Mr. Duvall: Now, I'm not going to do that, because we've already paid the DJ. But don't think that I'm not taking this book seriously. Coach Carr has fled school property. Ms. Norbury has been accused of selling drugs. Now, what the young ladies in this grade need is an attitude makeover. And you're going to get it right now. I don't care how long it takes, I will keep you here all night.

Secretary: We can't keep them here past 4.

Mr. Duvall: I will keep you here until 4. Now, what we're going to try to do is fix the way you young ladies relate to each other. OK? Lady to lady. So who has a lady problem that they'd like to talk about?

Student: Somebody wrote in that book that I'm lying about being a virgin because I use super-jumbo tampons. But I can't help it if I've got a heavy flow and a wide-set vagina.

Mr. Duvall: Yeah, I can't do this. Ms. Norbury. You're a successful, intelligent, caring, graceful woman.

Ms. Norbury: I am?

Mr. Duvall: There has to be something you can say to these young ladies. Something to help them with their self-esteem?

Buffoon principals were often mocked by students and they were shown as having low intelligence. As one might imagine based on the name of the movie, the principal in *Slappy and the Stinkers* is depicted as a buffoon. The principal is played by Asian actor, B.D. Wong. He plays an uptight principal who dresses very well in conservative clothing such as sweater vests and linen suits, and runs a summer enrichment program focused on the arts at the Dartmoor Academy. Principal Brinway

isn't very fond of several students who are on an academy scholarship. He calls these students the "stinkers."

Principal Brinway is definitely depicted as a buffoon, constantly being outsmarted by the second-grade stinkers who are trying to save Slappy, a sea lion, who they feel is depressed by being in captivity and is actually being hunted by a notorious animal thief. While on a field trip at the aquarium where Slappy is housed, Brinway mistakes a midget from one of the shows as one of the stinkers. The midget hits the principal in the genitals and he falls into the octopus tank winding up with octopus sucker marks all over his face. In another scene, Brinway is sitting in his office and is hit in the neck with a potato by one of the stinkers who is practicing using a potato shooter on the grounds of the academy. And, at the end of the movie when the stinkers finally save Slappy, the sea lion pushes Principal Brinway into a pool of water just as the stinkers are being commended for their valiant efforts.



Figure 22. DVD cover for Slappy and the Stinkers. B.D. Wong is Principal Brinway. Note that he is underneath the "the stinkers." Source: Google Images.

Like Principal Brinway in *Slappy and the Stinkers*, Principal Prickly (certainly an unflattering name) was the butt of the students' pranks in *Recess: Schools Out* as evidenced by the dialogue below.

Principal Prickly: Why do you do this to me, (TJ) Detweiler (4th grader)? Do you enjoy tormenting me? Do you hate me?

TJ (Detweiler): On the contrary, sir, I have the utmost respect for you.

Principal Prickly: Don't be smart with me, boy. All year long you've been pushing me, testing me.

TJ: I don't know what you mean, sir.

Principal Prickly: Oh, really? How about the time you convinced the FBI I was a Chinese agent and got me arrested?

TJ: You were giving us a speech on personal hygiene. You had to be stopped.

Principal Prickly: How about the time you forged my signature and ordered a motorboat for the school?

TJ: It was for the kindergarteners. Owning a boat's always been kind of a dream of theirs.

Principal Prickly: I've had enough of your pranks. This time I'm really gonna throw the book at you.

TJ: With all due respect, sir, you'd better get throwing, 'cause you're out of time.

Principal Prickly: Huh?

TJ: It's the last day of school, sir. I've only got 20 more seconds of fourth grade left. Look (points to the clock). See you next year, Principal Prickly.

The principal in *Phoebe in Wonderland* was totally clueless about being a principal. While meeting with Phoebe, a nine year-old, and her parents after Phoebe spat on two of her classmates, Principal Davis appears totally inept saying:

Normally, I tend to stay away from the classroom because the teachers can solve things better than I can. Frankly, they're better at it than I am. I don't like....sticky. Well, the gerbil died and I guess the children were a little upset. You know pets are very dear to children and well, um..., she spat.

As Principal Davis talks with Phoebe's parents, he is totally unsure of himself and stumbles over his words. He even admits that he tends to stay away from the classroom because the teachers can solve problems better than he can. He's clearly oblivious on how to discipline a student because during the scene (where he is supposed to be punishing Phoebe for spitting) he gives her a piece of candy.

The Villain Principal

Table 5: <i>Principals as Villains</i>
Dumb and Dumberer
Durango Kids
Max Keeble's Big Move

In 3 (6%) of the movies, *Dumb and Dumberer*, *Durango Kids*, and *Max Keeble's Big Move*, the principals were depicted as villains. Principal as villain is one who sees teachers and/or students as the enemy and is often involved in corrupt activities. Often the villain principal is shown exploiting and victimizing students and/or teachers. The principals in both *Dumb and Dumberer* and *Max Keeble's Big Move* are the antagonists of the comedic films and try to defraud their schools of money.

In *Dumb and Dumberer*, Principal Collins' persona oozes shyster. He has a giant self-portrait of himself on his office wall, dresses in polyester or tweed suits, wears oversized, old-fashion glasses, and has a cheesy mustache (see Figure 23). He is in cahoots with his lover, the lunch lady, Mrs. Heller.



Figure 23. Eugene Levy as the nefarious Principal Collins cavorting over alcoholic drinks in the middle of the school day with his lunch lady girlfriend, Mrs. Heller (Cheri Oteri), in *Dumb and Dumberer*. Source: Google Images.

Principal Collins and Mrs. Heller devise a scheme to create a special needs class where Mrs. Heller is the teacher and the class is filled with misfits.

Principal Collins: You know honey, I think I've finally figured out a way to bilk this school out of enough money to get us that condo in Waikiki.

Mrs. Heller: How, sweet baby? You've done it all.

Principal Collins: This is the big one. This is visionary. This idea is genius. Look at this, the Richard Moffitt Special Needs Grant. This Moffitt guys used to be in a special needs program, and then he learned to string a couple of sentences

together and now he's some big hotshot. Anyway, the state is giving a grand in his name to every school that has a special needs class.

They funnel state reimbursements for the class into their own pockets to buy the condo in Waikiki. Their plan is eventually foiled when the school newspaper reporter figures out their scheme and divulges it to the police.

The principal in *Max Keeble's Big Move* is also a shyster, but he is well dressed, or at least thinks he is. He is a large, bald, white man who is always straightening the jackets of his fancy double-breasted suits and spraying his mouth with breath freshener. He is very mean and is usually filmed looking down at the students (see Figure 24) and several times during the movie he tells students to "cease!"



Figure 24. Larry Miller playing Principal Jindraike and looking down at Max Keeble as he reprimands the student in *Max Keeble's Big Move*. Source: Google Images.

In his first scene of the movie he is standing in his second-story office looking out the window at the students entering the school.

Principal Jindraike: (to himself) Here they come, with their lice and their high-pitched squealing voices and their running noses and their baggy pants. Every one of them a rung on the ladder to my success. A ladder that ends in a vast neon sign stretching across the night sky. And what does that sign say?

His assistant, Mrs. Rangoon, enters his office.

Mrs. Rangoon: Principal Jindraike? These came from your real estate agent.

Principal Jindraike: Mrs. Rangoon, the sign? What does it say?

Mrs. Rangoon: Emergency exit only?

Principal Jindraike: Superintendent Jindraike. Say it for me, Mrs. Rangoon, roll it around your tongue, savor the taste.

Mrs. Rangoon: Um...Superintendent Jin...

Principal Jindraike: SUPERintendent. Emphasis on the SUPER. Try it again.

Mrs. Rangoon: (falsely enthusiastic): SUPERintendent Jindraike.

Ultimately Principal Jindraike wants to replace the superintendent who is a former all-star football player and will soon be retiring. He diverts monies from supply accounts in order to start building a new football stadium in honor of the retiring superintendent. The protagonist of the movie, Max Keeble, a middle school student, uncovers the villainous plan.

Summary of Principal Portrayals

In summary, from 1997-2009, school principals were still portrayed as bureaucrats (16), autocrats (12), buffoons (9), and villains (3). Most of the stereotypical principals were depicted in panned comedies, most of which were unrealistic, formulaic

teen movies written by screenwriters who “love the idea of the high school untouchable who wins the girl, becomes the most popular kid in school, and triumphs over the oppressive adult world around him,” according to movie critic, David Wiegand (2008) of the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

In contrast, a significant number (10 or 20%) of principals were depicted as very caring adults focused on learning and the safety of their students. These principals were categorized into a new category: democratic principals, the majority of which played supporting roles in inspirational dramas based on true stories.

Chapter 5 will include a summary of themes that arose from this content analysis, concluding thoughts about the perceptions of school principals, and recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary of the Process

The primary research question guiding this study was “how were school principals portrayed in the movies from 1997 – 2009?” Historically, most school principals in the movies have been depicted unfavorably as autocrats, bureaucrats, buffoons, and/or villains. The purpose of this study was to determine if these stereotypical characterizations of school principals prior to 1997 continued in films from 1997-2009, or if more favorable images emerged.

To address the research question, the literature was explored and a methodology consisting of three stages was used. Stage 1 was the Selection Process whereby the researcher selected the movies to be analyzed and created a database. In Stage 2 of the process, the content of each of the movies was examined according to predetermined fields. Stage 3 involved cross-referencing the fields to determine patterns in the portrayal of principals in the movies over the 12 year time period. What follows is a summary of the themes that emerged from the data analysis.

Summary of Findings

In general, principals were not cast in major roles in the movies that were reviewed and analyzed for this study. In fact, in only 4 (8%) movies did the principal play a major role and in 3 (75%) of them the principal was depicted as very negative. In 2 (4%) of the movies, *Dumb and Dumberer* and *Max Keeble’s Big Move*, the principals were depicted as villains. Both principals are the antagonists of comedic films and try to

defraud their schools of money. They are shown exploiting and victimizing students and/or teachers.

Another movie where the principal plays a major role which is negative is *Slappy and the Stinkers*. The principal is played by Asian actor, B.D. Wong. He plays an uptight elementary principal who isn't very fond of several students who are on scholarship. He is depicted as a buffoon, constantly being outsmarted by second-graders.

The fourth movie where the principal has a major role is *American Gun*. The film intertwines three storylines that focus on the proliferation of guns in American society. Forest Whitaker plays a high school principal in inner-city Chicago dealing with the presence of guns in his school. In the mornings, he stands in the hall by the metal detector helping the security guards check student backpacks for weapons. During other times of the school day, he is shown walking the halls of the school, talking to students and teachers. Carter stays late after school calling parents and helping students with extracurricular activities. In all but three scenes, you see Principal Carter working with either students or a teacher. He desperately tries to make a difference in the lives of students, but feels as if the cards are stacked against him and he has no help. Unfortunately by the end of the movie he gets burned out by the job and decides to quit in frustration.

Two movies had characters in major roles that played school principals; however, the focus of their roles did not pertain to the school setting. The principal in *Durango Kids* started out as the middle school principal of Ruby Metz Middle School but becomes the sheriff of a small town in the Wild West when all the characters in the

movie travel back in time to 1891 in search of hidden gold. The principal in *Raising Helen* has some scenes that involve him working at his school, but mostly his role is that of love interest to the main character played by Kate Hudson.

So why few principals in major movie roles and why are they typically portrayed so negatively? According to an interview with movie director and producer, Tod Lending (personal communication, September 23, 2010), “movies about schools tend to be neither hot nor sexy. It is very challenging to make a movie about education that is interesting to general audiences.” Reality television producer Brent Montgomery (personal communication, September 24, 2010), adds, “movies are made for specific audiences, for a target market, and movies about schools are targeted at teenagers and are usually written from a student’s point of view.” So, it makes sense that there are few principals in major film roles and when they are depicted in the movies it is usually negative. If most movies about schools are targeted at teenagers and written from their point of view than of course the principal is going to be portrayed as the antagonist that students have to rally against.

It is not surprising that more than half (60%) of the movies reviewed for this study were comedies or adventures. Most of them were from the teen comedy and/or adventure genre which typically employs formulaic plotlines. These types of movies “present a fantasy of tolerance and camaraderie about kids from different social circles - nerds, jocks, hoods, cheerleaders, drama clubbers - coming together to fight adult authoritarianism” (Ebert, 2008). In these movies school in general represents adult authoritarianism. Specifically, the teens have to band together to fight the teachers and the administrators. The purpose of the genre is to have the teen audience “embrace the

film's limp anti-authoritarian mockery and its vague satirical points about adult hypocrisies and failures" (Robinson, 2008). Some names given to screen principals not so subtly attempt to poke fun at the principal's position of authority: Mr. Dimly (*Bratz*), Mrs. Stark (*Cheats*), and Mr. Fuchs (*Dirty Deeds*),

The principals in teen comedies and/or adventures were portrayed as stereotypical looking principals: a middle-aged, white male of average weight and height, who has a receding hairline or is bald. He was dressed in conservative, drab clothing and typically wore a suit or a sport jacket that was brown, gray, or black with a white or cream-colored dress shirt and a nondescript tie. This stereotypical physical depiction of a school principal is similar to what other researchers have found (Burbach & Figgins, 1991; Glanz, 1997).

The screenwriters of teen movies undoubtedly draw on their own school experiences when they develop the school principal character for their films. Almost everyone has attended school, so most writers simply create a principal that looks like the principal they had 20 or 30 years ago, which most likely was a middle-aged, white male of average weight and height, who had a receding hairline or was bald, and dressed in conservative, drab, dark clothing. Even when a woman played the principal in this genre of film, she was dressed very conservatively; typically wearing a dark suit or a sweater and dark trousers. In Figure 25, Linda Carter plays the principal in *Sky High*. Notice she is dressed in a conservative dark suit.



Figure 25. Lynda Carter as the principal in Sky High. Source: Google Images.

According to critic David Wiegand (2008) of the San Francisco Chronicle, the “teen screenplay probably mirrors the awkward teenage years of guys who grew up to run major studios in Hollywood and love the idea of the high school untouchable who wins the girl, becomes the most popular kid in school, and triumphs over the oppressive adult world around him.” The school principal is an easy target as the oppressive adult character. These portrayals of principals are part of the tried-and-true themes and scenes from the teacher-film genre as described by one Hollywood film producer:

If anyone is of less help to the screen teacher than his/ her class or colleagues, it is the screen principal. Principals are insulated within their office from the reality of the classroom and are incompetent, indifferent, or intimidating. (Hainsworth, 1998, p. 2).

Again, writers are most likely drawing on personal experiences. Perhaps these writers perceived their own principal as a building manager focused on keeping the building running and maintaining order. Those who did their job well were most likely perceived as autocrats or bureaucrats and those who fumbled and bumbled through their job were seen as buffoons. It's not surprising that of the 27 comedies that were reviewed 10 (37%) included principals depicted as stereotypical bureaucrats, 6 (22%) included principals depicted as autocrats and 6 (22%) included principals depicted as buffoons.

Screenwriters, directors, and producers probably have little or no first-hand knowledge of what today's principals actually do and how much their job has changed in the last decade. Their perception of what principals do is probably similar to the respondents of a 1996 survey conducted by Glanz. When asked to describe the work principals engage in, respondents made such statements as: monitoring attendance of students and teachers, walking the halls, completing paperwork, balancing budgets, and meeting with irate parents. There was little mention of supervision to improve the quality of instruction (Glanz). Not surprisingly the role of 77% of the high school principals depicted in the movies that were reviewed in this study seems to focus on maintaining order and dealing with discipline issues. Rarely were high school principals shown engaging in anything having to do with teaching and learning.

Principals today are responsible for the improvement of instruction, analysis of formative and summative test data, classroom visitations, day-to-day operations of the school, school safety, staff professional development, fostering parent involvement in school activities, monitoring and evaluating instructional programs, identifying the social

and emotional needs of students, and building positive relationships with community groups.

Instead of seeing principals engaged in activities involving teaching and learning in teen movies, we see principals involved in the bureaucracy of the job. Almost 80% of the teen comedies and/or adventures included at least one scene where the principal was sitting behind the desk in his/her office reprimanding a student or a teacher. Having the principal sit behind his/her desk certainly implies that the principal has the power. The message being conveyed is that the principal is the authoritative figure in charge of the situation. What gets the laughs (or is supposed to anyways) in these teen movies, are when the student(s) triumph(s) over the authority figure through ridiculous and seemingly unbelievable stunts and antics.

As one might imagine, the majority of the teen comedies and/or adventures were panned by the critics, receiving only one or two stars. The films were described as clichéd, derivative, and preposterous. After watching *Dumb and Dumberer*, I felt the same as one critic did – the movie was 85 minutes too long.

A few of the teen movies received positive reviews by the critics. They included *Election*, *Mean Girls*, *Saved!*, and *School of Rock*. These movies aren't formulaic in nature; they lack clichés and include characters with some depth. They are well written satires with a good message. The principals in them aren't portrayed as totally outrageous characters, but rather somewhat realistic. For example, in *School of Rock* Joan Cusack plays school principal Rosalie Mullins, "miraculously, she is not the standard old prune that movies like this usually supply, but a good soul who loves her school" (Ebert, 2003).

An interesting theme that emerged from the content analysis is that the more favorable depictions of principals were seen in dramatic movies based on true stories. *Coach Carter*, *Music of the Heart*, *Radio*, and *Take the Lead*, are all dramatic films based on true stories. In *Coach Carter* and *Take the Lead* the principals were portrayed as autocrats, but not in a stereotypical negative manner. The settings for both movies were tough inner city schools with challenging students and dilapidated facilities. The principals were portrayed as tough but fair. Given their difficult environment, it was understood that an autocratic approach was needed in order to establish and maintain control. Both principals were initially skeptical of “do-gooders” wanting to come in and help their disadvantaged students. The principals gave the “do-gooders” a bit of hard time until they proved that they were committed to the students and had good intentions. In that respect, the principal was portrayed as protecting the students and looking out for their best interest.

The principals in *Music of the Heart* and *Radio* are both depicted as democrats focused on providing students with opportunities and maintaining student safety. The principals play supporting roles and help the main protagonists (teachers) triumph over the bureaucratic school system. They support the teachers in public venues. For example, Principal Daniels in *Radio* supports the history teacher and athletic director, Coach Jones, after he informs the star basketball player, Johnny Clay that he won't be playing in the upcoming big game because of a prank he pulled. When Johnny Clay pleads his case in the hallway to Principal Daniels with Coach Jones at her side, Principal Daniels makes it clear to Johnny that she concurs with the coach's decision to bench him for his antics.

In addition to showing support to teachers and students, the democratic principals in the movies showed compassion and concern. When the son of music teacher Roberta Guaspari in *Music of the Heart* is caught fighting, the principal sits the mother down and talks with her very candidly. Principal Williams expresses her concern that Roberta's son is in trouble and is crying out for help. The principal asks what she can do to help.

Interestingly, all four of the principals portrayed in movies based on true stories are played by African-American women which could be a reflection of more females serving as principals in inner-city schools. In a study of women administrators, Mertz and McNeely (1994) found a significant increase in the number of women administrators in urban areas. Three of the four movies based on true stories were set in urban areas.

Of the movie principals that were analyzed in this study, 13 (26%) were women which is similar to finding from other studies. Previous studies found that women made up approximately 30% of the principals depicted in movies (Burbach and Figgins (1991); Glanz (1997); Hershey-Freeman (2008); and Nederhouser (2000). However, according to U.S. Department of Education statistics, the number of female principals in public schools increased by over 14,000 from 1994-2004 while the number of male principals decreased during that same time period. Furthermore, in a content analysis of prime-time characters across three decades, Signorielli and Bacue (1999) found that character population continued to move steadily toward greater representation of women between 1967 and 1998. Therefore, it is surprising that more females were not depicted as principals in the movies from 1997-2009 that were included in this study. Perhaps, screenwriters, directors, and producers who created the movies were again drawing on

their own school experiences which most likely included few females as principals.

Interestingly, the number of minorities (18%) that were depicted as school principals in the movies from 1997-2009 were representative of the percentage of minorities actually serving as school principals. As of 2008, 17.6% of principals working in U.S. schools were from minority backgrounds (Battle & Gruber, 2009).

Although no major motion picture has recently been produced that gives a truly accurate depiction of today's principal, a documentary and a reality television show set out to do just that. *The Principal Story*, is a 60-minute documentary produced in 2009 and was supported by the Wallace Foundation to help elevate the visibility of leadership as a lever for school improvement. The film follows two female principals in Illinois public schools for an entire year and reveals the complex social and political dynamics that connect children, parents, teachers, principals, principal supervisors, school system executive officers, and elected officials. The purpose of the documentary is to portray what effective educational leadership looks like in the 21st century. The *Chicago Tribune* gave the film four stars and called it excellent and compelling. The film was produced and directed by Tod Lending of Nomadic Pictures.

Lending (personal communication, September 23, 2010) said he was astounded by the skill set needed to be a school principal today.

Principals have to be amazing communicators with both children and adults. They have so many things to deal with: budgets, unions, professional development, curriculum, and data. They have to put in an incredible amount of hours and deal with drama constantly. Effective principals forge these amazing connections with students and teachers. The principals I filmed are nothing like

what I remember from my education. My own principals were not visible in the school and were not strong leaders.

Lending shared that before filming *The Principal Story* he had no idea what a huge responsibility being a principal was. After following two principals for an entire year, Lending concluded that being a school principal today is one of the “toughest jobs there is; principals really affect the future of our country.” In fact, a possible title for the film was *The Toughest Job in America*.

Lending’s impression of school principals today is shared by Brent Montgomery of Leftfield Pictures who was an executive producer for truTV’s *The Principal’s Office*, a reality show that attempted to show what it is really like to be a principal. “We wanted to provide a realistic view of what a principal does. We were not out to sensationalize anything,” said Montgomery (personal communication, September 24, 2010).

Like Lending, Montgomery also found that being a school principal is a very difficult job. “Principals have to walk a line of trying to connect with students and at the same time maintain order. I personally spent a lot of time in the principal’s office when I was a student and while filming I was taken by the volume of different things today’s principal has to deal with. The expectations are higher.”

Montgomery said that he and his staff earned a great deal of respect for the principals they filmed. “I come from a family of educators and I’ve always had an appreciation for the profession, but after filming this project, I have an even greater respect for principals now. The work is really hard and they don’t get paid adequately for all the hours they put in.”

So what happened to *The Principal's Office*? After 2 seasons, 21 episodes, and positive viewer feedback, the show was cancelled. According to Montgomery (2010), "truTV wanted to go in a different direction. They wanted more action-based shows." So, there you have it – the reality of a school principal's day isn't hot or sexy enough and doesn't include enough action for pop-culture movies or television shows...for now. However, as more writers, directors, and producers begin to draw on first-hand experiences with principals through their own educational experiences and/or projects like *The Principal Story* and *The Principal's Office*, and the recently released *Waiting for Superman*, I believe they will see the value and importance of telling the story of one of the most important jobs in America.

Future Studies

This study was a content of analysis of the portrayal of school principals in movies from 1997-2009. Future research could focus on the depiction of school principals in recent television shows like:

1. *Boston Public*
2. *Boy Meets World*
3. *Dangerous Minds*
4. *Dawson's Creek*
5. *Ed*
6. *Education of Max Bickford*
7. *Family Guy*
8. *Glee*
9. *Malcolm in the Middle*
10. *Picket Fences*
11. *Simpson's*
12. *South Park*
13. *Strangers with Candy*
14. *Teachers*
15. *Veronica Mars*

It would be interesting to find out if principals portrayed in recent television shows have been characterized similar to their big screen counterparts or if they have been depicted more realistically like the principals in *The Principal Story* and *The Principal's Office*.

Assembling focus groups around how principals are depicted in the movies and/or television would certainly add to the research on how different populations perceive the work of school principals and if those perceptions have changed over time. I would suggest studying a variety of different focus groups; students, teachers, parents, principals, film makers, community members, etc. Comparing the dialogue from the different groups for similarities and differences would certainly provide interesting data for analysis.

Throughout this process, I have been amazed by the number of people, both educators and non-educators, who have been interested in discussing my research. After someone asks me what my research topic is, they inevitably ask me follow-up questions. They reflect on how their own experiences with principals, both as a student and/or as an adult, are similar or different to the media images of principals. The topic is clearly worthy of further investigation.

Final Conclusions and Thoughts

I wanted to investigate how principals have been depicted in the movies in recent years because the familiar negative images of principals portrayed in the movies seemed to be very inconsistent with my many positive experiences with real principals. Historically, most school principals in the movies have been depicted unfavorably as

autocrats, bureaucrats, buffoons, and/or villains. What I found was that the movie images of principals have not changed significantly in recent years:

- Principals do not tend to have major roles in the movies.
- Most principals are still depicted as stereotypical autocrats, buffoons, and bureaucrats.
- The image of the school principal is that of a middle-aged, white male of average weight and height, who has a receding hairline or is bald. He dresses in conservative, drab clothing and typically wears a suit or a sport jacket that is brown, gray, or black with a white or cream-colored dress shirt and a nondescript tie.

Noteworthy is the emergence of the democratic principal in one out of the five movies that were reviewed for this study. The democratic principal exhibits behaviors and qualities that researchers have linked to successful schools; behaviors such as, being visible in the school, firm on discipline, a good communicator, seeks input from stakeholders, nurtures positive relationships, and knowledgeable about curriculum and instructional practices. The democratic principal is often shown taking on the bureaucratic school system in an effort to provide valuable opportunities for students.

Several factors seem to contribute to the contradictions in images between reel (movie) principals and real principals:

- Many of the stereotypical portrayals of principals come from the teen movie genre which is written from the point of the student. It makes sense that the principal is the authority figure that the students have to rally against.
- Many movie writers, directors, and producers are from a generation where the principal's job was much more focused on managerial duties than it is today. Consequently, the principals in their movies are shown doing low-level administrative tasks.
- Similarly, writers, directors, and producers are most likely recalling what their principal looked like when they cast white, middle- aged males as school principals for their movies.

Although investigating different groups' perceptions of school principals was beyond the scope of this study, anecdotal information was gathered from a group of high school seniors. The students were asked to provide adjectives/word phrases to describe school principals. The following is a list of adjectives provided by the students:

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| 1. Good communicator | 6. Intelligent |
| 2. Strict | 7. Understanding |
| 3. Responsible | 8. Demanding |
| 4. Disciplinarian | 9. Intelligent |
| 5. Approachable | 10. Well dressed |

How students perceive principals and how media images influence those perceptions is an area of interest for future investigations for this researcher. Principal organizations should be interested in this type of research as well. It would serve their membership well to know and understand how they are perceived by different

stakeholder groups. Principal organizations should provide their members with specific strategies on how to improve their image with particular groups and how to combat negative media images. The public needs to know that being a principal today *is one of the toughest jobs in America.*

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Content Analysis Data Sheet

Movie Title:		Year Made:				
<p>Genre</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Adventure <input type="checkbox"/> Cartoon <input type="checkbox"/> Comedy <input type="checkbox"/> Drama <input type="checkbox"/> Family <input type="checkbox"/> Fantasy <input type="checkbox"/> Horror	Coding Category					
	Autocrat	Buffoon	Bureaucrat	Democrat	Villain	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Authoritarian <input type="checkbox"/> Tyrant <input type="checkbox"/> Dictator <input type="checkbox"/> One who uses intimidation to rule	<input type="checkbox"/> Buffoon <input type="checkbox"/> Dimwit <input type="checkbox"/> Numskull <input type="checkbox"/> One who is mocked by students	<input type="checkbox"/> Bureaucrat <input type="checkbox"/> Paper pusher <input type="checkbox"/> Formal <input type="checkbox"/> One who is a stickler for the rules	<input type="checkbox"/> Egalitarian <input type="checkbox"/> Supportive of students & staff <input type="checkbox"/> Respected by students & staff <input type="checkbox"/> One who is focused on student learning	<input type="checkbox"/> Villain <input type="checkbox"/> Exploits and victimizes students/teachers <input type="checkbox"/> Mean-spirited & dishonest <input type="checkbox"/> Unscrupulous & corrupt	
<p>Gender</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	<p>Plot Summary:</p> 					
<p>Level</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Elementary <input type="checkbox"/> Middle/Jr. High <input type="checkbox"/> High School						
<p>Role</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Major <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting <input type="checkbox"/> Minor						
<p>School Sector</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private						
<p>School Location</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Urban <input type="checkbox"/> Suburban <input type="checkbox"/> Rural						

Appendix B: Access Data Table

	Film	Year Made	Type	Genre	Role	Level	Gender	School Locat	School Se
1	187	1997	Autocrat	Drama	Minor	High School	Male	Urban	Public
2	17 Again	2009	Autocrat	Comedy	Supporting	High School	Female	Suburban	Public
6	Assassination c	2008	Autocrat	Comedy	Supporting	High School	Male	Suburban	Private
9	Cheats	2002	Autocrat	Comedy	Supporting	High School	Female	Suburban	Public
11	Coach Carter	2005	Autocrat	Drama	Supporting	High School	Female	Urban	Public
21	The Faculty	1998	Autocrat	Horror	Minor	High School	Female	Urban	Public
22	The Frightenin	2002	Autocrat	Fantasy	Minor	High School	Male	Rural	Public
24	How to Eat Frie	2006	Autocrat	Comedy	Minor	Elementary	Male	Suburban	Public
32	October Sky	1999	Autocrat	Drama	Minor	High School	Male	Rural	Public
34	The Pacifier (A	2005	Autocrat	Comedy	Minor	Middle / Jr. Hig	Male	Suburban	Public
39	Rebound	2005	Autocrat	Comedy	Minor	Middle / Jr. Hig	Female	Urban	Public
44	Take the Lead	2006	Autocrat	Drama	Supporting	High School	Female	Urban	Public
7	Bratz	2007	Buffoon	Comedy	Supporting	High School	Male	Suburban	Public
13	Dirty Deeds	2005	Buffoon	Comedy	Minor	High School	Male	Suburban	Public
15	Doubting Thor	2008	Buffoon	Adventure	Minor	Middle / Jr. Hig	Male	Suburban	Public
30	Mean Girls	2004	Buffoon	Comedy	Minor	High School	Male	Suburban	Public
35	Phoebe in Wor	2008	Buffoon	Adventure	Minor	Elementary	Male	Suburban	Public
40	Recess: School	2001	Buffoon	Cartoon	Supporting	Elementary	Male	Suburban	Public
43	Slappy and the	1998	Buffoon	Comedy	Major	Elementary	Male	Suburban	Private
48	Saved!	2004	Buffoon	Comedy	Supporting	High School	Male	Suburban	Private
49	She's the Man	2006	Buffoon	Comedy	Minor	High School	Male	Suburban	Private
8	Charlie Bartlet	2007	Bureaucrat	Comedy	Supporting	High School	Male	Urban	Public
10	Cherry Falls	2000	Bureaucrat	Horror	Minor	High School	Male	Suburban	Public
12	Dance of the D	2008	Bureaucrat	Adventure	Minor	High School	Male	Suburban	Public
14	Donnie Darko	2001	Bureaucrat	Drama	Minor	High School	Male	Suburban	Private
16	Drillbit Taylor	2008	Bureaucrat	Comedy	Minor	High School	Male	Suburban	Public
19	Election	1999	Bureaucrat	Comedy	Minor	High School	Male	Suburban	Public
20	Emperor's Club	2002	Bureaucrat	Drama	Minor	High School	Male	Rural	Private
23	The Great New	2005	Bureaucrat	Comedy	Minor	Middle / Jr. Hig	Male	Urban	Private
25	In and Out	1997	Bureaucrat	Comedy	Minor	High School	Male	Rural	Public
26	Judy Berlin	1999	Bureaucrat	Comedy	Supporting	Elementary	Male	Rural	Public
27	Light it Up	1999	Bureaucrat	Drama	Minor	High School	Male	Urban	Public
29	Max Rules	2005	Bureaucrat	Adventure	Minor	Middle / Jr. Hig	Male	Suburban	Public
36	Princess Diarie	2001	Bureaucrat	Comedy	Minor	High School	Female	Urban	Private
45	Teaching Mrs. T	1999	Bureaucrat	Comedy	Minor	High School	Male	Suburban	Public
47	School of Rock	2003	Bureaucrat	Comedy	Supporting	Elementary	Female	Suburban	Private
50	Rushmore	1998	Bureaucrat	Comedy	Minor	High School	Male	Suburban	Private
3	Akeelah and th	2006	Democrat	Drama	Supporting	Middle / Jr. Hig	Male	Urban	Public
4	American Gun	2005	Democrat	Drama	Major	High School	Male	Urban	Public
5	American Histo	1998	Democrat	Drama	Supporting	High School	Male	Urban	Public
31	Music of the He	1999	Democrat	Drama	Supporting	Elementary	Female	Urban	Public
33	The Pacifier	2005	Democrat	Comedy	Supporting	Middle / Jr. Hig	Female	Suburban	Public
37	Radio	2003	Democrat	Drama	Supporting	High School	Female	Rural	Public
38	Raising Helen	2004	Democrat	Comedy	Supporting	Elementary	Male	Urban	Private
41	Santa Clause 2	2002	Democrat	Comedy	Supporting	Middle / Jr. Hig	Female	Suburban	Public
42	Sky High	2005	Democrat	Adventure	Minor	High School	Female	Suburban	Private
46	Heart of Ameri	2002	Democrat	Drama	Minor	High School	Male	Suburban	Public
17	Dumb and Durn	2003	Villian	Comedy	Major	High School	Male	Suburban	Public
18	Durango Kids	1999	Villian	Family	Minor	Middle / Jr. Hig	Male	Suburban	Public
28	Max Keeble's E	2001	Villian	Comedy	Major	Middle / Jr. Hig	Male	Suburban	Public