ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS: CULTURALLY MEDIATED LEARNING THROUGH DISNEY ANIMATION

Martyn Griffin
University of Leeds

Mark Learmonth
Durham University

Nick Piper
University of Leeds

Abstract

This article develops the notion of organizational readiness, a construct that describes the anticipatory expectations about future organizational life that children develop as they imbibe the cultural influences to which they are exposed. We conduct our analyses through an exploration of the depictions of work in Disney's 56 'Classic' feature-length animations (from Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs [1937] to Moana [2016]). We can, of course, make no direct cause and effect claims about the effects of the animations. However, we argue that Disney animations are likely to shape children's learning about organizations significantly. This is because the Disney animated canon regularly provides children with consistent and vivid impressions of the nature of working life; impressions that will have important implications for them, and the staff who teach them, when they eventually enter business schools as undergraduates.

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THROUGH DISNEY ANIMATION

Oliver: What kind of work do we do anyway?

Tito: Investment banking man…didn't you read about us in the Wall Street Journal?

Oliver: Really?

Tito: Yes, captains of industry

Oliver: Can I be one too?

Tito: We've got to clean you up and give you some on-the-job training!

Oliver & Company (1988)

The above exchange would be unremarkable if not for its context. It takes place within a Disney animation between a Chihuahua called Tito and a kitten called Oliver, in what is a modern re-telling of Charles Dickens's Oliver Twist. Given the audience are likely to be primarily young children being exposed to some of their first representations of work, the scene addresses themes such as recruitment and preparation for work in a fairly direct and adult language.

This is by no means an isolated example. We can see in almost all of Disney's feature animations that issues of work and organizational life, if relatively unnoticed, are in fact paramount. In Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937) and Cinderella (1950), for instance, young girls are forced to become scullery maids within their own homes. In the latter, Cinderella is dominated by her wicked step-mother and her ugly step-sisters, and – in her own words – made to 'work, work, work' and locked in the attic so that she cannot attend the ball. In the former, songs like 'Whistle while you work' and 'Heigh Ho!' offer portrayals of work that shape how young audiences view Snow White and the dwarfs.

In other earlier animations, such as Pinocchio (1940) and Dumbo (1941), we see this pattern of domination and misery within the workplace continued as each of the main characters are reduced to tears by their working conditions. Dumbo cries as his mother is imprisoned and he is plunged in to a working life that he isn't prepared for or initially capable of carrying out. Pinocchio weeps as his manager Stromboli says, 'Pinocchio, you will make lots of money for me, and when you are too old you will make good fire wood'. We suggest these early Disney animations are by no means an exception to the whole oeuvre, capturing a characterization of work that can be found in a large number of their subsequent animations up to and including the most recent. This is important because such representations are unlikely to be passive: they are likely to have performative effects (Gond et al, 2015) in that they contribute to the development of the norms, values and cultural expectations that may go on to influence child viewers' expectations of work and their place in organizations.

Indeed, there is now substantial evidence that TV and film play a central role in shaping children's attitudes and behaviors (American Academy of Paediatrics, 2013; Christakis & Zimmerman, 2009; Rideout, 2010). For instance, a 2009 study showed that children in the US have an average of 32 hours of screen time (TV/DVDs/streaming) a week (McDonough, 2009). Numerous studies show the potential positive and negative effects that this may have on individual behavior and aspirations, as well as their learning and development (Bushman & Anderson, 2009; Thakker et al, 2006; Vandewater, 2005; 2006; Zimmerman & Christakis, 2005). For better, or worse, TV shows and film, therefore, play a central role in shaping the perceptions of children and their expectations surrounding issues like work and organizational life. What is more, children (here understood as ages 0-16) are exposed to TV and film at ever younger ages (often in their first few months of life) and viewing seems

typically to intensify with age as they gain greater independence and access to viewing devices.

Disney animations are one of the most widespread of such reality-shaping influences in the modern era, with many scholars writing about their pervasive effect on society, attitudes and behaviors (e.g. Cummins, 1995; Davis, 2006; England et al, 2011; Lieberman, 1972; Orenstein, 2014; Do Rozario, 2004). This influence does not seem to be abating. In 2014 Disney's Frozen became the fifth highest grossing movie of all time (taking in $1.06 billion at the box office) and in May 2015 the corporation announced that they expected to generate over a billion dollars in merchandising sales from Frozen in that financial year alone. The almost unavoidable presence of Disney and its products in the lives of children in the West is surely, therefore, highly significant. With this in mind, we suggest that Disney animations can be understood as a complex and ambiguous stock of lore; a lore that may underpin and transmit taken-for-granted expectations, images and ideals of organizational life. At the same time, however, the lore is itself a product of the cultural expectations, images and ideals that have influenced its production and interpretation between the 1930s and today.

In this article, our aim is to develop what we call 'organizational readiness' – a construct that describes the anticipatory expectations about organizational life that children develop as they imbibe the cultural influences to which they are exposed. To do so, we identify instances of work being represented within Disney animations and provide a characterization of the way those instances are inflected through narrative. Our research question is concerned with uncovering Disney's depictions of organizational life; in presenting our own reading of these depictions we pose questions about how other audiences – especially children – might view this material and engage with it in their future working lives. An analysis of Disney

animations, therefore, as an example of a set of narratives within the wider culture, enables us to inhabit some of the virtual space of the child. At the same time we bring a particular set of adult and academic analyses to bear upon the content. In this context we can more thoroughly understand how organizational readiness might develop.

We are not, of course, suggesting that Disney animations are the sole (or even the main) influence on children's learning about organizational life – their organizational readiness. There are clearly a whole range of other diverse influences not least parents, schools, and other cultural media (TV, films, computer games etc.). However, making empirically-based claims on such a diversity of influences would be extremely challenging – if not impossible. Therefore, we chose to limit our discussions to Disney animations, primarily on pragmatic grounds. As one of the most significant single sources of influential material which reach children across the globe, Disney animations represent a coherent body of empirical material – material that can be analysed in order to make plausible claims about how children might learn from them about the nature of working life.

The paper proceeds as follows. We begin by discussing the importance of Disney as a cultural phenomenon, moving on to a more detailed discussion of the construct of organizational readiness. We present a conceptual developmental basis for it, primarily using the work of developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky. We then explore the depictions of work found within Disney's 56 'Classic' feature-length animations (from Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs [1937] to Moana [2016]), (Pallant, 2013). After we have discussed the implications of our findings and conjectures, we then consider how the ideas in this paper might be of direct relevance to management educators in business schools. Indeed, we

suggest that armed with an appreciation of organizational readiness, management educators are likely to be able to address student learning more fully.

ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS

Disney's Cultural Influence

Disney corporation can legitimately claim to be one of the most powerful and recognizable brands on the planet (Bryman, 2004; Wasko, 2013). The cultural dominance it has come to possess over the past 80 years through characters like Mickey Mouse and Snow White and more recently through the Disney Princess phenomenon has been profound and some would argue, even dangerous in its magnitude (Giroux & Pollock, 2010). This influence shows no signs of slowing down. For example, the company earned $52 billion in revenue in 2015 and produced five out of the top ten grossing films of 2016 (including the top four). Its films were critically acclaimed with its two flagship animations (Moana and Zootopia) both receiving 2016 Oscar nominations for best animated picture. Moreover, the associated merchandise attached to these animations ensures that their influence goes beyond the immediate cinema-going experience and into the living rooms and bedrooms of children around the globe through DVD/Blu Ray products and toys (Kline, 1993).

This cultural dominance is important because there is a significant body of evidence which suggests that children not only absorb the narratives found within TV and film that they watch but that these narratives find their way in to the games that they subsequently play (Giroux, 1994; Kelly, 2004; Marsh & Bishop, 2012). Consequently, whether children are casually or intently watching the animations (often with repeated viewings) it is clear that they can have a significant effect – an effect that can be thought of as indirectly educative –

on young children, teaching them about different modes of behavior and ways of acting (Barnett, 2006) . Indeed, the Disney Corporation explicitly considers itself to be more than just a film making studio, but to be a much wider source of education for children (Bowdoin Van Riper, 2011). Walt himself collaborated with educationalists in developing stories and movies that focused on moral growth and the creation of a future productive worker (Sammond, 2005). Giroux (2004: 164), one of the staunchest critics of Disney studios, suggests that the work of Disney 'appear[s] to inspire at least as much cultural authority and legitimacy for educating about and teaching specific roles, values, and ideals as more traditional sites of learning such as public schools, religious institutions, and the family.'

The animations are therefore very likely to have an effect on the construction of childhood and their earliest conceptions of organizational life. While it is probably impossible to make any direct cause and effect links between the animations and specific forms of behavior, it is undoubtedly the case that the animations are culturally important and relevant to children and that they will, indeed, have an educative and developmental effect. However, the question of how children learn about work and organizational life is an area which is as yet more or less unexplored in the management education literature. Indeed, more generally, the subject of children and their experiences of, and learning about, organization and work are under-researched. As Kavanagh suggests (2013: 1488; emphasis in original) 'even those authors who work hard at identifying what organization studies is not doing are silent about the absence or exclusion of children from the field. Children, evidently, are to be neither seen nor heard.' In a previous study – a rare exception to Kavanagh's claim – Ingersoll & Adams (1992) considered how children's literature contributes to a certain 'perceptual readiness' for the workplace which reflects dominant themes within US children's story books. While, like us, they are unable to claim that this literature shapes behavior directly, they argue that it

contributes towards a construction of social reality in which the idea that people are happiest when they accept and perform their organizational roles becomes dominant (Ingersoll & Adams, 1992: 513). In this sense, they argue that children's literature informs images, ideas and symbols of organizational life and that it filters through to form a part of shared consciousness of the reality of organizations (see also, Grey, 1998). However, Ingersoll & Adams (1992: 497) make it clear that they are:

> Not prepared to argue that children's stories determine one's later organizational behavior, or to even influence that behavior in any directly correlatable, one-to-one relationship. Rather, we would like to suggest that children's literature is a part of the social construction of reality…which does powerfully impact organizational life.

We agree with, and seek to emulate, this approach. However, in demonstrating how Disney animations are part of this wider social construction of reality around work we have developed the theoretical construct of organizational readiness – to which we now turn.

Organizational readiness defined

We are interested in further understanding the effects of dominant socio-cultural influences (especially Disney) on the development of children's' understandings about organizational life. In this context, organizational readiness is a useful construct. We use organizational readiness rather than "work" or "professional" or "job" readiness as while it can include these things it also captures a wider array of instances, perhaps not usually considered professional, work or even jobs. In doing so, it moves beyond similar concepts such as "occupational aspirations" (Cook et al, 1996; Rojewski, 2005) or "child vocational development" (Hartung et al, 2005) which are directional, instrumentalist and ultimately capitalist in nature (i.e. built around specifically guiding children to productive roles, while implicitly encouraging

progression, greater pay, increased status etc). Organizational readiness describes a certain understanding and state of mind including anticipatory expectations about work and organizational life that children gradually develop over the whole of their childhood as they imbibe all the cultural influences to which they are exposed. These expectations would include, for example, ideas about how one should conduct oneself at work, gender appropriate behavior and other aspects of social relations more generally. Organizational readiness is therefore a very broad construct with multiple dimensions as captured in Figure I.

[Insert Figure 1 here]

Figure 1: Dimensions of Organizational Readiness

The development of organizational readiness as a theoretical construct (cf. Suddaby, 2010) builds upon the influential 'life course' approach which suggests that there is a significant connection between individual lives and the historical and socioeconomic context in which these lives unfold (Heinz & Marshall, 2003; Mills, 1959). Life course theory accentuates the importance of the culturally and socially constructed nature of context, time and meaning that develop within children and in to emerging adulthood (Bynner, 2007; Gubrium et al, 2000). A wide range of structural and institutional forces, therefore, shape young people's lives and attitudes and may go on then to influence future life events (and corresponding attitudes towards life events) in all areas of life, including, most importantly here, work. In our ideas about organizational readiness we identify these overarching institutional forces as

'**architects**', in that they provide a wider structural environment for attitudes and perspectives to be formed. Clearly, as Figure 1 shows, a wide range of individuals, organizations and institutions will typically contribute to children's organizational readiness. Individuals with whom children have a lot of contact, such as parents and teachers will obviously do so, as will institutions that loom large in children's lives – such as schools and religious groups.

Religious institutions are one of the oldest influential forces of this kind (Chusmir & Koberg, 1988; Hemming et al, 2011) but we might also think of the family (as an institutional unit) (Schulenberg, 1984; Loughlin & Barling, 2001), governments, particularly through educational policy (Ball, 2007; 2013) and more recently the corporation as having a significant influence on attitudes towards work (Schor, 2014). For instance, Bakan (2012, 5) describes how 'a massive and growing marketing industry is targeting children with increasingly callous and devious methods to manipulate their forming and vulnerable emotions.'

In this article, however, we concentrate on film studios as architects, and Disney in particular as probably the most influential children's film studio of the twentieth century (Tudor, 2013). Bryman (2004; 1) coined the term 'Disneyization' to capture the growing influence of this film studio, suggesting that 'the principles of the Disney theme park [and the films on which they are organized around] are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world.' Globalisation has made it easier for institutions or architects of this kind to have such a widespread effect, particularly on the development of children and what has been referred to as the 'commercialised child' (Schor, 2014; see also

Wolff, 2016). From here, the development of our theoretical construct builds outwards to consider the '**builders**' of organizational readiness – those who work consciously or otherwise within these institutions to cultivate anticipations and expectations about future work. In a wider context builders of organizational readiness might include figures like priests in churches. But within Disney, we are thinking about people like the animators, writers, producers and directors who actually bring the animations into being.,

Building on our architectural metaphor, the '**sites**' of organizational readiness are those places where the architects and builders do their work – so in the context of Disney it is the cinemas, the living rooms, schools and so on. We then extend upon this further to think of the "**tools**" which these builders use on these sites – the Disney animations themselves but more widely books, songs, and other methods of (consciously or otherwise) crafting organizational readiness. Finally, we move to the '**building blocks'** of organizational readiness. This aspect of the theoretical construct is the main focus of our article and they are what we primarily use to build or flesh out the idea of organizational readiness (Creed, Dejordy & Lok, 2011; Zundel et al, 2013). The building blocks in this context are the themes and narratives within the animations that children use to learn about the world of work and organizational life. In pursuing this line of thought and the socio-cultural context of the life course approach we follow the work of Soviet developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1934; 1978) and the empirically grounded and rich tradition of activity theory that his work inspired. It is using Vygotsky's ideas that we argue that Disney animations can be understood as socio-cultural tools (Vygotsky's term) that have the potential to mediate the development of organizational readiness in the minds of children.

Vygotksky and Organizational Readiness

Vygotsky's developmental process explains how children develop through cultural tools. We use the content of Disney animations – the building blocks – as examples of what might be internalized from an especially prominent and influential set of cultural tools which displays a particular view of the world of organizations to children. Vygotsky is of particular value as his theory of child development is based around the notion of mediation through socio-cultural tools (Vygotsky, 1934; Wertsch 1985; Cole 1990). His work has increased in prominence over the last couple of decades particularly in education (Forman & Cazdan, 1998) and empirical work based upon his ideas has a wide influence in today's school classroom (Daniels, 2016; Davydov, 1995; Wertsch & Rupert, 1993). However, it has not yet had a significant influence in management education and learning. Engeström (2000; 2001) is one of the few scholars to apply Vygotskian activity theory to understand work and organizational learning. He shows how cultural-historical activity theory can transcend the dichotomies of micro- and macro-, mental and material, observation and intervention in the analysis and redesign of work. Whilst this is extremely valuable, it is aimed at development and learning within the present organization rather than the development of children for work or any sort of organizational readiness as we conceive it.

Vygotsky is often contrasted to his great rival and contemporary, Jean Piaget (Honig, 2004; Hoover et al, 2011; Kolb & Fry, 1975; Kohlberg 1981; Lewin 1947; Raelin, 2007). In the Piagetian account of development, social and mental capacities 'emerge inevitably in normal human ontogeny [individual development] through a combination of organism maturation and experience with the constant, universal properties of the physical world' (Duncan 1995: 466; our italics). In contrast to Piaget's organic and biological approach, Vygotsky

concentrated on the cultural origins of development. As Cole (1990) (cited in Pass, 2003: 74) states, 'If you go back and look closely at Language and Thought of the Child [Piaget's seminal publication], you will see that Piaget hovers over the issue of individual/society and takes the individual path while recognizing that it is not the only way to go.' Whereas theorists like Piaget suggest that children begin with non-verbal autistic speech and progress to egocentric speech and then to socialized speech, Vygotsky suggests children begin with social speech, progress to egocentric speech and then to inner speech.

So, according to Vygotksy, 'the true direction of the development of thinking is not from the individual to the social [as it is in Piaget], but from the social to the individual' (Vygotsky, 1934: 36). Consequently, inner speech – the development of the child's internal monologue – is mediated by cultural tools, including films. As Smidt (2013: 23) argues, 'one of the most important things about cultural tools is that they allow us to think about things when the things themselves are no longer present. We can remember a film we watched in the cinema last night or a book we read last summer'. In this sense, Vygotsky and his followers have shown how culturally dependent the nature of thought is, and that children draw on cultural tools and mnemonics in order to develop mental capacities (Tabak & Baumgartner, 2004; Wertsch & Rupert, 1993). The point here is that the medium of film – such as Disney animation – functions in memory and thought as a cultural tool enabling us to understand complex concepts and develop critical faculties (Mills, 2010; Wertsch, 2000).

In Vygotskian terms one could say that the memory of the film along with its various metonymic functions, adds to the cultural scaffold one has created to access ideas and meaning about the world. In this sense Disney has a kind of schematic role to play in which ideas about work contained in the animations have the potential to be included in a general

schema of ideas about work. One can speculate then, that if children access ideas about work in Disney they may play a role as building blocks in future schematic formulations. We are suggesting that animations of this kind are so routinized for many, that Disney-fied ideas about work are likely to exist in memory, however (sub or un)consciously (Bryman, 2004). So, we can be sure that for most children these tools will be drawn upon, but we can only speculate here about the most likely building blocks (the content) that will be drawn from these tools, because it is the most readily available.

In the following two sections, therefore, we present an empirical study which explores Disney animations as a cultural tool that can be read, amongst other things, to be providing a resource for the development of organizational readiness in children. Let us now turn to the methodology that we use for the study.

METHODOLOGY

The data for this study – the tools of organizational readiness – are productions found within the 'Disney Animated Canon', a list based on Disney's own published classification of its best or 'classic' animations regardless of when they were released (see http://www.imdb.com/list/ls056368786). The 'classics' or 'Disney Animated Canon' label is one of which there has been much discussion (Pallant, 2013) and there are numerous 'non-classic' animations – often straight to DVD – that could have been explored. Nevertheless, building and extending upon similar studies (e.g. Tanner, 2003; Towbin, 2004) the 56 animations of the animated canon – generally considered their best and well-known animations – were considered sufficient.

These 56 animations within the canon were analyzed for building blocks of organizational readiness (from Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs [1937] to Moana [2016]). That is, narratives and characterizations of work and organizational life. The animations (all in DVD format, aside from Moana which, because it was released so recently, was viewed twice in the cinema) were watched independently by each author and as Appendix One indicates, the appearance of work (and type and gender of work) was recorded. In addition to this, extensive notes were taken on instances of organizational or working behavior within the animations, pausing where necessary to record longer quotations of interest. These were descriptive notes at this point or verbatim copies of interactions about work or organizational life. Animations took on average 3-4 hours to watch. Scripts of the animations were used to do this more productively (available from sites such as:

http://www.fpx.de/fp/Disney/Scripts/) enabling us to cross-check song lyrics or difficult to decipher parts of the dialogue. Notes were then integrated to form a single document for each animation and following Holt & Zundel (2014) meetings took place to discuss the content of findings across the animations. Where discrepancies or disagreements were found over an interpretation or instance of work these were usually resolved or in the rare instance where this did not happen, the different interpretations were kept with explanatory annotations.

The coding of the resulting documents itself had two stages. Firstly, recognizing the benefits of such an approach, a general analysis was conducted on representations of traditional and non-traditional work within the animations (MacNamara, 2005) (see Appendix I). Work was defined both traditionally – 'oriented towards producing goods and services for one's own use or for pay' (Reskin 2000: 3261) and non-traditionally – and categories of work were generated as a group and agreed from this so to include house-work, unpaid or forced labor as well as other non-paid forms of work as distinct from leisure and play-time or time for

relaxation and sleeping. This was, for the most part, a straightforward process without disagreement as we were happy to generate many different broad codes for the types of work as were required. At this stage, and through discussions among the authors based upon its potential value, we also agreed to code for gender in the study. (For the results of a gender based reading of the Disney animations and representations of gendered work see [Griffin et al, in press).

Secondly, a thematic analysis was conducted on the notes that explored issues relating to work within the animations (Boyatzis, 1998). In this part of the study, following previous investigations into TV and film (Bowman, 2011; Panayioutou, 2010) a more specific coding of themes was developed (see Appendix II). The authors generated codes such as 'humor in working tasks' (witnessed for example in Big Hero Six [2014] when Hiro is first introduced to his brother's school/work colleagues and their various whacky scientific specialities); 'death in job' (witnessed for example later on in the same animation where Hiro witnesses his brother dying within this same place of work); 'training at work' (viewed within Oliver & Company [1988] where the young kitten is told that he will require 'on the job training' to cut it on the streets); or 'workplace bullying' (seen within The Sword in the Stone [1963] where a young kitchen-attendant Wart is bullied by an older male manager). Themes were developed in this manner to provide us with 20 original thematic codes (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006, see Appendix II for a full set of codes.).

However, as three adult men coding animations aimed primarily at children we remained particularly aware of how our own perspectives, beliefs, values and backgrounds might have influenced the conclusions we have drawn (Köhler, 2016: 412). For example, as scholars who aspire to be critical management educators, we feel that it is at least a possibility that we have

interpreted the animations (albeit without consciously intending to do so) partially in line with our preferred predilections and sensibilities. Indeed, we agree with Alvesson & Skoldberg (2000) who argue that, researchers inevitably experience:

> Selective interpretation [which] means that on the basis of the[ir] prestructured understanding – the theoretical framework and less conscious personal and cultural ideas and beliefs, including taken-for granted assumptions and expectations – the scientist structures an account in such a way that a potential multiplicity of meanings is neglected in favour of what is regarded as the 'primary' meaning (204; emphasis in original).

In part because of the caution we felt about the coding processes, we adopted a Ricouerian interpretative approach to qualitative data analysis (see also Propp, 1968, and Tan et al, 2009). Ricouer (1994: 148) suggested that fiction 'proves to consist in a vast laboratory for thought experiments in which the resources of variations encompassed by the narrative identity are put to the test of narration.' His work has often been used as the methodological basis for similar textual analyses (the notes produced from watching the animations were therefore particularly valuable in this context) with an explicit focus on understanding through narratives, imagination, metaphors and symbols (Friedman, 2010: 161) in which meaning can be found through critical examination of the stories that we tell about our lives (Ricouer, 1981). This approach has been adopted within TV and film studies as a method for exploring narratives across a range of outputs as it provides a freedom of interpretation of meaning and connected meanings (Andrew, 1984; Stadler, 1990). This is ideal for the Disney animations which all take place in the same 'Disney Universe', with interrelated narratives, symbols and imaginary settings.

In attempting to understand how work is represented in Disney animations, it was then possible to look for repeating patterns that exist within and between the narratives of the animations. In essence we were looking for those building blocks of organizational readiness that appeared most regularly. Following Ricouer, while we were able to agree upon the basic coding structure adopted and feel that our interpretations have a high level of plausibility, we acknowledge that there will always be multiple readings (Boje, 1995; Rhodes 2000; Learmonth & Humphreys 2012) of these animations available to viewers and these are merely our own interpretations of possible patterns. However, this hermeneutical methodology enabled us to interpret five themes within Disney's characterization of work that due to their repeated nature we feel amount to building blocks of organizational readiness (for a full list of the animations that each building block appeared in, see Figure II). Through discussion about the codes and the wider data available the five themes (and the codes related to each from Appendix Two) involve:

a. **Subjection to dangerous, dirty or unfulfilling work** (through 'violence at work', 'death at work', 'boredom', or being 'scared/frightened in work'). Appears as a building block of organizational readiness in 30 of the animations.

b. **Manipulation and deception by managers** (by way of 'manipulation/deception', 'domination', 'bullying'). Appears as a building block of organizational readiness in 35 of the animations.

c. **Accentuating the positive at work** (by way of the corresponding code). Appears as a building block of organizational readiness in 32 of the animations.

d. **Being rescued and returned to a safe non-working environment** (by way of 'quitting job'). Appears as a building block of organizational readiness in 24 of the animations.

e. **Leave unrewarding work and renewing identity in a new working role.** Appears
   as a building block of organizational readiness within 7 of the animations but
   uniquely in all of the most recent.

These themes are now discussed in turn. We then use the discussion and conclusion to
explore the significance of these narrative building blocks found within the cultural tools in
developmental terms.

Building Blocks of Organizational Readiness	Representations in Disney Animations
Subjection to dangerous, dirty or unfulfilling work	Snow White; Pinocchio; Dumbo; Fantasia; Cinderella; Lady and the Tramp; Sword in the Stone; Jungle Book; Rescuers; Black Cauldron; Great Mouse Detective; Oliver and Company; Rescuers Down Under; Beauty and the Beast; Aladdin; Lion King; Pocahontas; Hunchback of Notre Dame; Hercules; Mulan; Atlantis; Lilo & Stitch; Bolt; Princess and the Frog; Tangled; Wreck it Ralph; Frozen; Big Hero Six; Zootopia; Moana
Manipulation and/or deception by managers or overseers	Snow White; Pinocchio; Dumbo; Cinderella; Lady and the Tramp; Sword in the Stone; Jungle Book; Rescuers; Black Cauldron; Great Mouse Detective; Oliver and Company; Little Mermaid Rescuers Down Under; Beauty and the Beast; Aladdin; Lion King; Pocahontas; Hunchback of *Notre Dame; Hercules; Mulan; Tarzan; Emperor's New* Groove; Atlantis; Lilo & Stitch; Treasure Planet; Home on the Range; Meet the Robinsons; Bolt; Princess and the Frog; Tangled; Wreck it Ralph; Frozen; Big Hero Six; Zootopia; Moana
Accentuating the positive in the working role	Snow White; Pinocchio; Dumbo; Cinderella; Lady and the Tramp; Sword in the Stone; Jungle Book; Rescuers; Black Cauldron; Great Mouse Detective; Oliver and Company; Rescuers Down Under; Aladdin; Lion King; Pocahontas; Hunchback of Notre Dame; Hercules; Mulan; Fantasia 2000; Atlantis; Lilo & Stitch; Treasure Planet; Home on the Range; Meet the Robinsons; Bolt; Princess and the Frog; Tangled; Wreck it Ralph; Frozen; Big Hero Six; Zootopia; Moana

Being rescued and returned to a non-working environment	Snow White; Pinocchio; Dumbo; Cinderella; Lady and the Tramp; Sword in the Stone; Jungle Book; Rescuers; Black Cauldron; Great Mouse Detective; Oliver and Company; Little Mermaid; Rescuers Down Under; Aladdin; Lion King; Pocahontas; Hunchback of Notre Dame; Hercules; Atlantis; Lilo & Stitch; Treasure Planet; Home on the Range; Meet the Robinsons; Bolt;
Leave unrewarding work and renewing identity in a new working role.	Princess and the Frog; Tangled; Wreck it Ralph; Frozen; Big Hero Six; Zootopia; Moana

Table I – Disney animations depicting characterisations of work

RESULTS

Building Block 1: Subjection to dangerous, dirty or unfulfilling work

There are well known examples of this building block of organizational readiness in animations such as Cinderella and Snow White. The young girls are subjected to work – and the nature of the work is forced and monotonous in the chores that they perform as scullery maids. In Dumbo the young elephant is also forced to work in the circus for the first time whilst his mother is locked away for attacking a customer. His inexperience on the job leads to the collapse of a pyramid that the working elephants are forming and to the others in his troupe suggesting that he 'is no longer an elephant now'. This failure requires Dumbo to re-establish his identity through a new working role as a 'clown' elephant, in which he goes on to do other dangerous and frightening work such as jumping off the tower in to a small swimming pool. In a later animation, Oliver & Company (1988), a re-imagining of Dickens'

classic novel, Oliver (an orphaned, stray kitten) is thrust into a seedy world on the streets where individuals exploit others in their work. Set in the 1980s, Sykes is portrayed as a violent, pin-striped-suited capitalist-cum-gangster who at one point is on the phone to an unseen employee and says menacingly: 'you start with the knuckles, no you don't kill him yet…put on the cement shoes'.

In Mulan [1998], a young girl pretends to be a man, Ping, in order to sign up to the army so that her elderly father doesn't have to go. The Captain of the army picks on her repeatedly, 'thanks to your new friend Ping you will spend all night picking up every grain of rice....and tomorrow the real work begins'. The next day Mulan is late for work and a montage follows with the song 'I'll make a man out of you'. The soldiers bully Mulan and she is told she is 'unsuited for the rage of war. So pack up, go home, you're through. How could I make a man out of you?' In one of Disney's most recent offerings, Big Hero Six [2014], Hiro a child prodigy witnesses his own brother dying in his place of work, confirming a running theme. Indeed, in Zootopia (2016) the world of work in to which Judy is subjected to is one in which she is nearly killed on several occasions throughout the animation. The world of work, therefore, whilst exciting and thrilling, is also considered dark and full of potential threats.

Building block 2: Manipulation and/or deception by managers or overseers

The work being experienced in the animations is usually controlled by manipulative and deceptive individuals – often portrayed explicitly as managers or overseers – whose pretense to be caring and compassionate hides their deceitful exploitation of children. The theme of manipulation by managers or overseers appears in no less than 35 of the Disney classic animations. There are very famous examples of this phenomenon in the earliest Disney

animations including the ringmaster in Dumbo (1941), who whips and chains his mother; Stromboli, who imprisons Pinocchio and puts him to work; and the wicked step-mothers in both Cinderella (1950) and Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937). More recently however, the animations have taken on an even more explicit portrayal of the manipulative manager.

The core plotline of The *Emperor's New Groove* (2000) is essentially a revenge story about discrimination in the workplace and a wrongful dismissal. The Emperor decides to sack Ysma (his elderly female advisor): 'you are being let go, you are part of being downsized, you have a replacement, we are going in a different direction, we're not picking up your option, take your pick. I've got more...' She says she has given years of service but he replies 'everybody hits their stride – you just hit yours fifty years ago!' Ysma pretends to accept his decision but tricks him in to drinking a potion that turns him in to a Llama. She then mockingly turns the tables on him and declares 'back to business....just think of it as you're being let go, that your life is going in a different direction, that your body is part of a permanent out-placement'. In Big Hero Six (2014) we learn that the widely respected professor in charge of the laboratory is in fact at fault for the death of one of his students and that he has been misleading people all along. We also learn that the reason for his deception is to gain revenge against the CEO of a hi-tech science corporation who he believes killed his daughter through neglectful and dangerous practices within the workplace. In Zootopia (2016) Judy – the young female bunny rabbit police officer – is routinely abused, ignored and manipulated by her police chief who does all that he can to hold back her development.

This selection of examples of manipulative and deceptive bosses within the workplace represents a repeated theme – and a building block of organizational readiness – within

Disney animations. It is quite rare, in fact, to encounter a manager or somebody in a position

of authority in an organizational context within these animations who is not in some way

domineering and devious.

Building block 3: Accentuating the positive in the working role

The third building block of organizational readiness we identify in the animations is learning

to accentuate the positive and bravely soldiering on in the face of adversity and abuse

(Learmonth & Humphreys, 2011; Luthans & Youssef, 2010). This theme appears in 30 of the

feature-length animations and is represented clearly in Pinocchio (1940) where, despite his

dire situation, he remains positive throughout the animation. In his on-stage act for his

abusive boss Stromboli and a paying audience, Pinocchio sings the song 'There are no strings

on me' which includes the lines: 'I've got no strings to tie me down, to make me fret or make

me frown. I had strings but now I'm free there are no strings on me'. This positive attitude in

the face of adversity is also captured in the early Disney animations through Cinderella's

repeated utterance to herself that you must 'keep on believing and the dream that you wish

will come true'.

The Rescuers (1977) is a particularly relevant animation when considering this aspect of

organizational readiness. The basic premise of the animation is of a secret mouse agency that

travels the world saving orphans from situations of forced labor. In one scene, Miss Bianca (a

secret agent mouse) sings to an orphaned child being forced to mine a diamond for a wicked

speculator: 'Don't cry little one, there'll be a smile where a frown used to be. You'll be part

of the love that you see. Someone's waiting for you. Always keep a prayer in your pocket.

And you're sure to see the light. Soon there'll be joy and happiness and your little world will

be bright.' Interestingly, in the sequel, The Rescuers Down Under (1990) Miss Bianca also says to a boy in a similar situation 'now Cody, we mustn't give up hope...you don't know Bernard [her agent partner] like I do, he will never give up'.

Building block 4: Being rescued and returned to a non-work environment

The Disney characterization of work suggests that if individuals persevere in exploitative situations they will eventually be rescued by well-meaning and decent heroes who will save the day and ensure the individual is returned to a safer and happier environment (Fletcher, 2004). This occurs in no less than 29 of the Disney animations and traditionally the rescuing has happened through characters such as fairy godmothers (Pinocchio [1940], Cinderella [1950], Sleeping Beauty [1955]) and princes (Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs [1937], Sleeping Beauty [1955]) who provide lead characters with a 'happy' (i.e. presumably work-free) ending. In Pinocchio, the boy-puppet is ultimately rescued from Stromboli and numerous perils by the Blue Fairy and Jiminy Cricket who finishes the animation singing 'when you wish upon a star', about continuing to believe in dreams, whoever you are and however bad it gets. Similarly, at the end of Cinderella, once she has been rescued by the prince from her terrible working situation, the animation ends with the line 'the dream that you wished will come true', directly suggesting to the viewer to remain positive as Cinderella did.

In the Sword in the Stone (1963) Wart (a poor kitchen worker) thinks he has missed out on his chance to become squire to the King – he has too many dishes to clean due to the unfair punishments of his foster father. Merlin says 'we will have to modernize, start an assembly

line system' and casts a spell that leads the dishes to clean themselves so that he is then free to pursue his dream. In later animations, such as Oliver &Company (1988) we see the young kitten and his homeless friends rescued by Fagan and they sing together happily 'we may not have a dime but we have each other' and continue with a life of grifting or petty swindling fulfilled and grateful for what they have. In Bolt (2008) a small but resourceful dog rescues a young and exploited actress, Penny, from a film studio after a fire starts. The agent says 'we are going to make this work for us...this is great' to which Penny's mother says 'we quit!' and she punches the agent in the face, ensuring that the young girl returns to the safety of a non-working environment. This oft-repeated pattern of rescuing from dangerous working environments is therefore resolved and the viewer receives a distinct impression of an organizational and working life that is far from positive.

Building Block 5: Leave unrewarding work and renewing identity in a new working role.

In the most recent animations there has been something of a shift from building block 4. It is such a common shift in these latest animations however, that it is worth recording as a central building block of organizational readiness. In the most recent Disney animations the main characters are rescued from exploitative or poor working conditions but in being so rescued are delivered to new, more empowering working lives which, we are led to believe, more accurately reflect who they wish to be and who they truly are. In Zootopia, for example, Judy is eventually helped by friends to 'prove' her capacity as a police officer and to move away from mundane parking duties (in which she was abused and undervalued) to the kind of proper police work (previously denied) that she feels captures her identity more appropriately and allows her to be the best that she can be.

Disney's most recent animation at the time of writing, Moana, also captures this aspect of organizational readiness. Set on a Polynesian island the animation offers us a tale in which the lead protagonist – Moana – grows bored of the work on the island and realises that to save her people she must embrace a new way of working that may be dangerous but is essentially much more fulfilling and rewarding. She takes on a leadership role and risks everything to save her tribe and her community by embracing this new way of working, discovering her talents as a master navigator who can control the sea with her hair. Like Judy (in Zootopia) is helped to adapt to her new working conditions by her best friend Nick, and Elsa (in Frozen) is helped by her best friend and sister Anna, Moana is helped by her friend the Demi God, Maui, who helps her to perfect her navigator skills. This element continues a new trend in recent Disney animations to portray platonic friends (rather than romantic interests) as those whom we lean upon in working environments to ensure that we maximise our potential. The lesson is clear: we can be happy and fulfilled in our work, but we will need support along the way from our friends.

DISCUSSION

Looking back on our findings, one of the most striking things about Disney's portrayal of managers, employment relations, and the everyday experience of work is how very dark and pessimistic the overall picture generally is. It is often possible to understand individual instances as convenient plot devices, but taken as a whole, the recurring pattern might seem (at least on the face of it) to amount to nothing short of a capitalist critique. This is something that, given Disney's own position as a multi-national corporation is at least unexpected, if not actually contradictory. Nevertheless, it would be surprising if repeated themes within these

highly popular and influential animations did not contribute towards young viewers' organizational readiness. As Vygotskian theory suggests, media like Disney animations are not just passively observed by young children. They are visual and audio representations of thought, which mediate the development of the child's capacities and understanding of the world (Vassilieva, 2013). They are cultural tools which contain building blocks of organizational readiness.

The significance of these repeated patterns within the animations can be understood by considering how cultural tools affect the way that children might understand the world of work even at a very early age. For instance, In Vygotsky in Practice, Smidt (2013) recounts a situation in which children in a year 2 class of a London primary school (i.e. children aged 6 – 7 years) were asked to rank a group of people in the school according to importance and power, and to give reasons for their responses. The people who they were asked to rank were the following: 1) Children; 2) Nursery teacher; 3) Nursery nurses; 4) Dinner ladies; 5) Lollipop person [i.e. a crossing guard in US parlance]; 6) Teaching assistants; 7) school keeper; 8) head teacher; 9) secretary; 10) teachers. She explains that 'almost universally children were ranked lowest, and highest were either the school keeper or the secretary.' (Smidt, 2013: 51). After asking children to explain their decisions it became clear that the children ranked the secretary highly 'because "she's got all the money"…[and] because they believed that all the dinner money went directly to the secretary. Those who had selected the school keeper as the most powerful person in the school said it was because "he has all the keys"' (Smidt, 2013: 51).

Interpreting this analysis through a Vygotskian developmental lens the important thing to note is that the children believed that money and keys were powerful cultural tools. In this

sense, they reflected their beliefs about power within the workplace. But such beliefs are not self-evident. They had presumably been shaped by various social and cultural influences that the children had encountered – beliefs that resonate with the sort of bleak picture of organizational life provided by Disney animations.

In a similar vein, if children consistently see workplaces represented in Disney animations as arenas where bad things happen (as in building block 1), it seems highly probable that this will influence how they initially begin to form understandings of organizational life. If they witness children being subjected to monotonous, dull and dirty forms of work, and being dominated by manipulative and exploitative managers (as in building block 2) this seems likely, in itself to shape how they view what work is – at least to some extent. Work and organizational life might become something to be feared, a dangerous world which they should avoid. Indeed, in the context of fictional portrayals of workplaces Parker (2006: 2) suggests that:

> workplaces are often imagined as places of repetitive violence. Bored bodies serving machines; lowering mills and office blocks; rows of heads bent in sullen silence. Whether in Marx, Dickens, Weber, or Kafka, the image is one of repeated acts of indignity, leaving hidden injuries that last a life time.

This bleak view of organizational life may be a contribution of building blocks 1 and 2 towards organizational readiness for some children. Equally, however, it is possible that others may ultimately interpret such dangerous, almost gothic worlds as not really threatening, merely part of the fun and adventure in the animation. This seems plausible particularly in view of the fact that the next of our building blocks – accentuating the positive

– reinforces the sense that organizational life may be scary, but that the best way through is faith that everything will resolve itself in time. In this reading, the organizational readiness on offer tends to suggest that rather than actively resisting oppressors, we should instead smile and get on with things because they will work out in the end.

We suggest that this reading is the key to resolving the apparent contradiction between Disney's ostensible capitalist critique on the one hand, and, on the other, the fact that the critique is being offered by the very corporation that arguably represents the height of successful American capitalism. Maybe the intent of the (apparent) critique was not to undermine capitalism, but rather to encourage audiences to become the kinds of children who would work hard at school – so as to avoid the hard manual labor (and exploitative bosses) that are typically portrayed in the animations. Maybe, but intentions are notoriously hard to call. Equally, it could just be that the creative people who develop the storylines are sympathetic to anti-capitalist views, whereas the financiers who back the animations and run the corporation do not mind the criticism – as long as they are making money.

Whatever the intentions may be, it seems a good possibility that the outcome of building blocks 2 and 3 and their representations of working life is to create the sort of organizational readiness that produces future employees who are 'docile bodies' (Foucault, 1979). In other words, these kinds of representations produce a workforce whose organizational expectations mean that they expect oppressive managers and happily choose compliance – they simply wish upon a star – because they see poor management and compliance as natural and inevitable. As Rose, interpreting Foucault, puts it:

> To rule citizens democratically means ruling them through their freedoms, their choices, and their solidarities rather than despite these. It means turning subjects, their motivations and interrelations, from potential sites of resistance to rule into allies of rule (1998: 117).

Indeed, one of the most notable absences throughout the portrayals of work in Disney animations is any sense of a collective, or otherwise 'political' resistance to figures of authority. The organizational readiness provided by Disney never portrays or even implies the possibility of, say, union membership nor of anything like Prasad & Prasad's (2000) routine workplace resistance. It not only asks us to accentuate the positive (building block 3) but that the ultimate answer to an oppressive workplace is to be rescued to a workless environment (building block 4). In other words, while its negative portrayal of working life – and of managers – might superficially link the organizational readiness provided by Disney animations to critical management education (CME) (Grey, 2004), early Disney animations seem only to offer the ultimately naïve and unrealistic option of whistling while you work as an escape from workplace oppression. Hardly the 'emancipatory change' that Learmonth (2007: 111) and others in CME envisage. (See Collinson & Tourish, 2015; Griffin et al (2015), or King & Learmonth (2015) for recent accounts of CME.)

In later animations, in which building block 5 (escaping to more rewarding work) occurs some of the actions within can be considered resistance (in Zootopia [2016], Judy challenges the authority of her police chief to secure a promotion; in The Princess and the Frog [2007] Tiana overcomes the opposition of the bankers to own her own restaurant). However, these acts of resistance are never in a collective context – they offer children an organizational readiness that is starkly individualistic; one that reinforces rather than challenges the received

logic of a capitalist society. Other animations from alternative cultural heritages such as the Japanese Studio Ghibli are much more explicit about the role of community in workplace resistance (and more widely) in helping children to anticipate their future working lives. This studio can therefore be considered a competing architect of organizational readiness – one that offers a very different, more collectivist portrayal of the nature of work and success.

The last two building blocks 4 and 5 – leaving unfulfilling work to a non-working environment, or, in the most recent animations, an escape to more fulfilling work, again provide an ambiguous organizational readiness to young viewers. The earlier Disney animations seem to provide an organizational readiness that suggests it is desirable for children not to work; whereas that of contemporary Disney animations is that children should be visible and active within organizations. So while the earlier animations portrayal of workplaces could perhaps arouse fear and the desire for rescue (from subservient, manual labour), the more recent may induct young viewers into a sense of their own power and strength (in leading roles). The most optimistic reading of these sorts of contradictions is that the organizational readiness provided to the next generation of workers by these ambiguous messages may enable them to be more tolerant of contradictions and to reinvent themselves in different working environments throughout their lives as they grow bored and discontented. Perhaps too, it might encourage an understanding of the self as agentive, and therefore more able to cope with organizational paradox.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT LEARNING

In this penultimate section we discuss some of the ways in which organizational readiness can help us to understand the pre-existing conceptions students (especially undergraduate

students) might hold as they enter business schools – or when they start their first jobs – and how these conceptions might have arisen. We show, in other words, that armed with an appreciation of organizational readiness, management educators are likely to be able to address student learning more fully than they otherwise would. Indeed, an awareness of organizational readiness has practical implications, both for the conduct of management teaching in day-to-day classroom situations and for the demands of post-secondary program design.

Perhaps most fundamentally our analysis encourages management educators to think in new ways about what their students already know (albeit tacitly) about work and organizations – even before they set foot in a university – or in their first day of employment. It suggests that rather than being blank slates upon whom business professors can freely write, even the most inexperienced student will already possess organizational readiness. They will attend their first class with a whole host of preconceived ideas about the world of business – ideas imbibed from representations of organizations from the wider culture – which may well include the building blocks we have identified within the Disney animations. Students will also have been influenced by alternative builders of organizational readiness (their parents for instance) and alternative tools (novels or computer games) which different messages. They are also unlikely to have fully recognized that they have this kind of knowledge; indeed they may well not have ever examined it in any conscious way. Nevertheless, it seems highly probable that the formal learning students receive in class will be filtered through the lenses provided by this pre-existing organizational readiness – albeit in a filtering process that is subtle and complex.

Some of this filtering might promote ideas about work that are conventionally seen as positive. It is easy to see messages from within building block 3 (accentuating the positive) like 'Work hard!' 'Don't give up!' or 'Don't be cynical!' in many Disney animations. Building block 4 might promote ideas that many would see as simply naïve and unrealistic. As we have seen, the Disney canon typically seems to suggest that our problems can always be fixed; that we can rely on getting rescued from exploitative work if we are patient enough; that life always has a happy ending (if only!). In other words, Disney animations work through caricature – they tend to oversimplify solutions – while exaggerating darkness.Indeed, the knowledge of organizations provided by Disney animations generally provides a counterpoint – both in content and tone – to the official 'textbook' kind of knowledge presented in much standard management education.

For example, the organizational readiness provided by Disney (such in building block 2 as when managers are presented as threatening or as ridiculous figures of fun [cf. Tyler & Cohen, 2008]) could be read as mocking and parodying the knowledge purveyed in the business school classroom. In fact, parts of Disney animations can be seen as even more hostile to official portrayals of managers; similar, perhaps, to Chamberlain's (1948: 138) analysis of the popular fiction about American business people in the first half of the 20th century. In his reading, these novels provide 'a distilled malevolence, a cold and frightening spite, [in] … the painting of practically every fictional businessman … encountered.' Thus, in contrast to Michaelson (2016: 589), who argues that 'reading great novels can help make business students better business people' we suggest that watching Disney animations could problematize and complicate students' fundamental understanding of what a 'better' business person might look like in the first place.

Our own experience bears out this sort of claim. Many students appear to us to have complex and ambivalent attitudes towards what 'good' business people should be like, as well as about issues that include: how they themselves should act as members of the workforce, the role of collective action, when (if ever) resistance is appropriate – and so on. Clearly, such attitudes will not be derived exclusively from Disney animations, and we are not suggesting any kind of straightforward cause-and-effect relationship between what people watch on the one hand, and how they act and what they believe on the other. Nevertheless, our insights might be used, for example, to build upon the recent research of Caprar et al (2016: 207) who investigated why 'college students do not always accept even well-documented research findings'. Caprar et al primarily favor psychological explanations for these phenomena; but it seems plausible to suggest that a further reason for students' non-acceptance of research might be that the counter-messages unconsciously imbibed from popular culture are in some ways more attractive and prominent for many students than the coldly rationalistic appearance of most research. Indeed, one of the things that the organizational readiness provided by Disney animations is very likely to do is to predispose people to learn through narrative, in that the animations are themselves stories par excellence.

Morrell & Learmonth (2015) have criticized much mainstream organizational research for underutilizing or even dismissing the importance of stories as a way to learn about organizational life. Quoting a brief extract of a story from an organizational ethnography by Korczynski (2011) they comment:

> Korczynski's study shows people in the midst of drudgery and routine satirizing and joking about work. In doing this they impose control and impart a sense of unique significance to events in an environment where all the work pressures are to conform

and routinize. Amid the drudgery and repetition in this factory, this moment is unique

and human, and because it involves humor, the particular context is of prime,

irreducible importance (Morrell & Learmonth, 2015: 524).

Their reading of this ethnographic story resonates strongly – both in terms of its humor and

its drudgery – with the kinds of stories of working life we have examined from Disney

animations (particularly in building blocks 1 and 2). Such similarities suggests that research

which contains human stories is more likely to be welcomed, understood and taken on board

by students – while work which plays down narrative and presents exclusively (say)

statistically orientated data is more likely to be resisted (Trank, 2014). Furthermore, while

formal management research findings typically encourage their readers to take away

unambiguous and definitive messages, insights about organizations from Disney and other

forms of popular culture tend to be much more obviously open to multiple readings,

ambiguity and uncertainty. In other words, the organizational readiness provided by Disney

might encourage in students a certain sense of negative capability; what Saggurthi & Thakur

(2016: 182) define as 'being in a position of not knowing, resisting conceptual closure,

tolerating uncertainty, alive waiting, experiencing the emotions of the self and others, and

imaginative openness.'

As educators we can use this state of affairs to our advantage by engaging in the classroom

directly with the building blocks of organizational readiness within popular culture. Indeed,

we can harness the immense power of sources like Disney animations and use them to help

students understand and critically reflect on concepts found within management and the

world of work. Many business educators already use film and other cultural media in the

classroom. One of the things we are suggesting, however, is that in doing so it would be useful to develop a feel for students' unexamined pre-configured knowledge in order to start to problematize it. For example, using the building blocks of organizational readiness that we have proposed as a framework, Disney's portrayals of work and organization could be compared and contrasted with the sorts of representations of work and organization more usually adopted in the classroom. Doing so could raise a wide range of thought-provoking questions. Questions like, for instance, what does Stromboli (Pinocchio's manager we mentioned near the start of this paper) have in common with the managers students may have encountered in other films and TV shows? Or what does Stromboli have in common with the image of 'the manager' that is implicit in students' OB textbook? Which, among all these competing images of the manager is the more realistic or the most compelling – and why?

In any event, it seems almost inevitable that future generations of students entering business schools for the first time will have more and more access and exposure to media – including TV and films – than any previous generation. A recent report by the American Academy of Pediatrics (2013: 958) suggests that 'young people now spend more time with media than they do in school – it is the leading activity for children and teenagers other than sleeping.' Whether, as management educators, we like it or not, it seems highly likely that our students will continue to consume and internalize narratives about work found within cultural tools such as those in Disney animations.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored a specific example of cultural tools – Disney animations – and considered ways that the narrative building blocks within them might contribute towards organizational readiness. The animations repeatedly capture instances of management practice and worker experience that undoubtedly provide distinct impressions of work and organizational life. To what extent these animations shape the perspectives and values of future workers cannot be known precisely – it will vary from child to child; nevertheless their contribution towards a social reality for children is likely to be substantial and shows little sign of receding or slowing down. The dimensions of organizational readiness identified in this paper offer a theoretical construct that – by way of the examples provided – reveal insights about children's anticipatory expectations about work and organizational life. In sum, they contribute towards a wider cultural milieu that can help teachers, parents, children and management educators (amongst others) to be aware of organizational readiness and the ways it might develop.

The next steps in developing the construct further would be to use it to be more reflective and ask further critical questions about the building blocks of organizational readiness. These questions might include: What are the dominant messages and themes about organizational life being translated to children? What assumptions do they encourage about what it is to do work and be managed and work in organizations in the 21st century? The dimensions we propose would also allow us to investigate further the tools of organizational readiness and the means by which these building blocks are being translated. In this sense, they would enable us to consider in more detail whether organizational readiness is occurring in ways that we, as parents or as educators had not even yet considered. Moreover, they provoke us to consider the very sites of organizational readiness – i.e. where the development of organizational readiness is pre-dominantly taking place. For instance, are 21st century

children learning about organizational life by themselves – alone in front of screens – uncritically and unreflectively rather than as part of communities as they would have done in the past? Just as importantly, however, it allows us to consider alternative spaces where organizational readiness could take place in the future – spaces which might encourage critical reflection or more pessimistically merely create even more docile bodies.

The theoretical construct developed can also provide a language for further investigating the builders of organizational readiness. That is, who is actively creating these tools and shaping these narratives. For decades within Disney studios, from 1937-1977, a group of men – often referred to as 'Disney's nine old men' – wrote, directed, produced and voiced their classic animations (Canemaker, 2001). Moreover, only one woman has ever directed (in fact co-directed) a classic Disney animation – Jennifer Lee was the co-director of Frozen. What are the implications of the make-up, the background of these builders on the types of narratives and tools being produced? It is essential to question the composition of these teams to understand the cultural significance of what is being translated.

Finally, we believe that this construct can help us further explore the architects of organizational readiness and to more thoroughly understand the institutional forces which are shaping the organizational readiness of young children. Disney studios have been a dominant force as a cultural tool through film but are there alternative visions (such as Japan's Studio Ghibli we mentioned earlier) which offer alternative visions of organizational readiness to children.

In this sense then we also hope to have contributed a paper that provides an adrenaline shot to the docile body of the reading and watching audience – so that when individuals experience

cultural tools as seemingly innocuous and as innocent as animations, they might critically

reflect on the content. So that when, for instance, they witness a Chihuahua and a kitten

interacting on the streets of New York (in Oliver & Company [1988]) or a fox and a bunny

rabbit working together (in Zootopia [2016]), they see it as family entertainment, of course;

but also consider the assumptions around work, and around organizational life that the

animations are making. In doing so, we hope to encourage a wider consideration of the

content and context of organizational readiness and the alternative ways that it can be

imagined and understood in the cultural influences that surround us.

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Appendix One

General coding themes

1) Number of characterizations of traditionally defined work

2) Gender of individual(s) characterized in traditional work
   - Male
   - Female
   - Undefined

3) Type of traditionally defined work

- Routine manual (laborer, cleaner, field picker)
– Man
– Woman
– Undefined

- Skilled manual (a tradesperson- plumber, carpenter, builder)
– Man
– Woman
– Undefined

- Professional worker (doctor, lawyer etc)
– Man
– Woman
– Undefined

- Business owner/manager
– Man
– Woman
– Undefined

- Sales/shopkeeper/vendor/seller of goods
– Man
– Woman
– Undefined

- Armed forces/warrior/protector/assassin
– Man
– Woman
– Undefined

4) Characterizations of non-traditional work

- Childcare
– Man
– Woman
– Undefined

- House (or garden) work
– Man
– Woman
– Undefined

- Royalty
– Man
– Woman

- Undefined

- Slave/forced labor
- Man
- Woman
- Undefined

- Show business/Celebrity/actor/actress
- Man
- Woman
- Undefined

- Sportsperson
- Man
- Woman
- Undefined

- Wizard/witch/magical person
- Man
- Woman
- Undefined

- Criminal/outlaw/thief
- Man
- Woman
- Undefined

Appendix Two

Specific Themes- marked as M and F to denote gender involved on each characterization.

- Apprenticeship

- Forced/slave labor

- Crying in work

- Pay discussed/identified

- Working in teams

- Laughing at/enjoying work

- Violence in work
- Manipulation/deception
- Complimenting others' work
- Concern over fellow workers
- Humor in work tasks/role
- Romanced pursued in/through work
- Appearance changed for job
- Doppelganger effect
- Death in job
- Training/skills development
- Profiteering/capitalist spirit
- Changing jobs discussed
- Child labor
- Boredom
- Illness at work, mental or physical
- Scared/frightened in work
- Domination
- Accentuating the positive
- Moral guidance
- Quitting Job
- Workplace bullying