

## “Jerry Maguire”: Final Analysis Paper

“You had me at hello.” This infamous quote was said by the character of Dorothy Boyd, played by Renee Zellweger, in scene between her and the character Jerry Maguire, played by Tom Cruise, in the movie Jerry Maguire. This movie not only contained one of the most recognized romantic quotes but countless human interactions between the main character and those around him. He grows before the viewer’s eyes from a manipulative snake, crumples and rebuilds himself into a proper member of society. This paper will demonstrate the connections this movie has to communication implications. The way that this will be established is by explaining the different relationships within the film, show how Jerry identifies and perceives himself, identify verbal and non-verbal cues throughout the film, recognize the uses of mass media communication, and lastly explain how Jerry Maguire could have improved his communication skills throughout the movie.

In this film there were 2 main close relationships. There are romantic relationships and friendships. In both of these relationships there are examples of those that work and ones that are terminated due to different factors. An in depth description and strategies for these relationships can be seen in Chapter 9 (Alberts) of the textbook. The first of these relationships are romantic relationships. The first example of a romantic relationship that is show in the movie is that between Jerry Maguire and his fiancé Avery. Their relationship showed relational maintenance strategies in the beginning when Avery expresses a complete honesty policy and is open about everything with Jerry. Jerry Maguire seemed uncomfortable with Avery’s interaction with him even though they were engaged. This lack of intimacy is more evident during Jerry’s Bachelor’s party where he is shown a video of past lovers who talk about how self-centered he is and his inability to be alone. This was foreshadowing to the intimacy problem of Avery and Jerry since intimacy is such an important thing “a lack of intimacy in a relationship can be a much bigger problem. It generally means that a couple is not close, they do not show affection to one another, or maybe they do not even talk” (Young). The relationship with Avery ended brutally as Jerry canceled their engagement due to all of their differences but this opened the door to a more welcoming relationship of Jerry and Dorothy. Jerry and Dorothy’s relationship followed the Knapp and Vangelisti’s stages of relational development leading to commitment. This relationship did result in a marriage but it was almost terminated by the lack of intimacy and

openness that Jerry had towards Dorothy. This was later fixed by an act from Jerry expressing how much he truly did love Dorothy, showing her that she was different from any other person he had been with. The other types of relationship shown in this movie were the ones between Bob Sugar and Rod Tidwell. The first relationship was with Bob Sugar, who was the mentee of Jerry who in the end turned against him and fired him. He then backstabbed Jerry and took all of his clients except one. This friendship is an example of deception within a friendship. The second relationship is the one between Rod and Jerry that started as a work relationship but this ended up being the strongest relationship in Jerry's life, which is proven by the line said by Jerry to Rod before one of his last games "I missed ya. What can I say? You're all I've got" (Jerry Maguire). The relationship between Jerry and Rod along with that of Dorothy and him were the strongest and most lasting of the entire movie.

Jerry Maguire displays two identities throughout the progression of the movie. The first is his dynamic identity (Chapter 3, Alberts) which changes throughout. This identity is that of being a "shark in a suit". This identity is one that he realizes he has due to a mishap with a hockey player he represents that has constant concussions due to his need to play a certain amount of games because of his contract. While in the hospital the son of this hockey player asks Jerry to stop making his dad keep playing and when Jerry doesn't give him a straight answer the young boy merely says "fuck you" to Jerry. It is then that Jerry's identity changes from one which he thought to be the correct way to go about his life and goes into the path to find himself. This is when he finds his fixed identity (Chapter 3, Alberts) which has always been there. This identity is that of a loyal, caring individual that will do whatever he needs to do to assure the happiness of others. He finds this about himself and he changes his snake like actions and starts going back to his roots, the things that his mentor Dick Fox taught him. The next thing is perception (Chapter 4, Alberts), the perception that Jerry Maguire goes through is in 3 phases. The first phase in the movie is when he starts off as a powerful "shark" who doesn't realize how truly unhappy he is until a child points out how cruel he is. This perception of himself makes him hate himself and as he puts it he "hated his place in the world". From there he goes to his second phase which is when he tries to change for the better and ends up losing everything. In this phase he starts feeling sorry for himself and even questions Rod's commitment to him due to what a loser he perceives himself to be. This transcends onto the third phase in which he picks himself up and, like a phoenix, rises from the ashes to become a happier and better version of himself.

In the movie Jerry Maguire, Jerry is a master in manipulation when the movie begins. He uses his verbal cues in an instrumental way (Chapter 5, Alberts) as a mean to get what he wants. This is mainly seen when he is talking on the phone with all of his clients after being fired. The way he speaks to each one is by appealing to their interests and relationship with him in order to get them to feel sympathy and get what he wants. He attempts to use Ethos to adhere to his audience but due to just being fired he has no credibility. This is seen as a pivotal moment in the film due to his need to truly relate to those he talks to since he no longer carries power with his verbal communication. The next pivotal moment in his verbal communication is when he talks to Rod after his career changing game, as they are embracing each other Rod is thanking him and in an act of selflessness Jerry says “you did this”. This is one of the first times that Jerry uses his language in a personal way and expresses self. Jerry also uses nonverbal language very differently in the beginning of the movie, and he learns to express himself more progressively in a nonverbal manner as the movie continues. During the beginning of the movie it is seen that Jerry does not feel comfortable with Ray, this has to do with Jerry’s kinesics (Chapter 6 Alberts). This is important because most people are comfortable with children due to their innocence and unquestioning acceptance of others. For someone as powerful and independent as Jerry to feel uncomfortable with a child when he interacts with adults all day is suspicious. His discomfort might be due to the fact that you cannot control or manipulate children, they are as real as it gets therefore he could not help but feel uncomfortable. This interaction changes towards the very end of the movie where Jerry and Dorothy are walking in a park interacting with Ray the same way they were when they first met. In this scene Jerry is comfortable, happy and warm. He is also comfortable with how close Ray is to him which has to do with proxemics. The non-verbal interaction between Ray and Jerry comes in full circle from the beginning of the movie, all the way to the end and it is evident that Jerry is finally satisfied and his verbal and non-verbal cues have evolved.

Jerry Maguire used several forms of mass media communication, even though in 1996 mass media was very different. The main way to communicate with other people was through land lines. The first real example of mass media in the movie was the mission statement that Jerry typed and gave to all of his coworkers expressing his heartfelt beliefs of what the company should stand for. This was a good use of mass media communication, but it hurt his end goal of “getting paid” since this is what resulted in him getting fired. A mission statement such as the

one that Jerry wrote was not meant for the workplace since it puts down all of the company's current work ethics and standards. His beliefs became contradictory to those of the company and he then publicized that through this manuscript. The next example of mass media is his attempt to contact all of his clients through land lines. This would have been much easier a few years later with the help of new media (Chapter 14 Alberts) such as the internet and virtual conferencing systems such as Oovoo. Instead he was only able to use one line at a time which hurt him. It was his focus on only one client and dedicating that gave Jerry and Rod the opportunity of a lifetime. During one of the final games which Rod played he injured himself and miraculously came back to life after being unconscious. Since this game was the one before the finals everyone was watching, Rod miraculously getting better and egging the crowd on was a great use of mass media communication and was ultimately the moment that brought him the sources that lead to "getting paid".

There are many situations in which Jerry Maguire could have used better communication. There are 3 situations which can be referenced as examples of poor communication and interaction that could have been easily improved. The first situation is the dramatic scene in which Jerry left his job and with him took a gold fish and Dorothy. In this scene Jerry acts abnormal and screams around the office "who's gonna come with me" after several minutes of begging Dorothy is the only one who finally stands and leaves with him. Jerry could have communicated a lot more professionally in this scene since he made other feel uncomfortable and left a bad taste in the mouth of his former coworkers. The Mitchell Organizations states that when terminated one should "Write to your allies who have helped you along the way. Thank them for their support. Doing so in writing creates a win-win situation." This would have been a more adequate way to leave rather than begging for the support of former coworkers. Jerry should have gotten his things said his goodbyes and left quietly and if anything he should have written a letter to corporate if he felt his means of dismissal were unnecessary. The second situation that could have used improving is his communication with Rod Tidwell. During the scene where Rod and Jerry scream at each other in Rod's locker room bathrooms due to his refusal to comply with Jerry's request to "dance" Tidwell mentions that the screaming fit they just interacted in was the first time him and Jerry really talked. This is due to the escalation of the situation making that pivotal moment a forced resolution. Jerry could have improved his communication skills during this portion by showing Rod how much work he was

really doing for him, working non-stop and working without pay. By Jerry putting all his cards out on the table from the beginning their communication would have been more open and they would not have had to wait until an escalated argument to truly express their feelings. The last situation in which Jerry could have improved his communication skills was his interaction with Dorothy when he found out that she loved him. Instead of telling her his true feelings, that he merely cared for her a lot, he went forth to tell her he loved her and proposed all for the sake of keeping her happy and in his life.

In conclusion Jerry Maguire was an inspirational movie about a man that fought off his own demons along with the world pushing him down. In this movie Jerry had failed relationships such as those with Bob Sugar and Avery and has successful ones such as those with Rod Tidwell and Dorothy Boyd. Jerry also came to the realization that he was a “shark in a suit” and strived to go back to his fixed identity of being a good man. His perception of himself also changed in three phases throughout the film, ultimately leading him to become a much happier and better person. The verbal and non-verbal communication he used also progressed from those of an awkward man to a loving new father. Jerry also had his ordeal of helpful and hurtful mass media communication usage. Lastly Jerry could have improved his communication skills in many scenarios but ultimately he came out strong. Jerry Maguire came out a winner and even with all of his trials, tribulations and times he was close to giving up he pushed through, came into himself and truly become a role model character.

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