

## Review

# Constructivist education with Media: Using *FIGHT CLUB* to teach existential counseling theory

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Accepted 09 September, 2012

**Existential counseling can be difficult to teach due to the philosophical concepts of the theory, despite its popularity as a counseling orientation. The constructivist teaching method provides an active way for students to evaluate counseling orientations within the context of their own worldviews, and counselor educators are shown how to help students to understand and synthesize existential concepts by using media. A detailed explication of *Fight Club* provides a method for helping educators assist students in grasping the philosophical underpinnings of existential counseling theory in a concrete manner.**

**Keywords:** existential, philosophy, media, theory, counseling

## INTRODUCTION

Constructivist teaching practice is rooted in the idea that knowledge is co-constructed by both the teacher and the student. Each bring their own way of understanding the world, influenced by culture, language, and life experience, to the classroom. The challenge the constructivist teacher faces is how to guide the student through a creative process where information can be gained through active dialogue and an examination of personal epistemology. Constructivist approaches depend on students "actively constructing their own knowledge rather than passively receiving information transmitted to them from teachers and textbooks" (Weimer, 2002, p. 11). Systematically providing information to help students create an internal structure for organizing what they are learning, a concept known as scaffolding, is a useful way to understand the process of learning within this context. Cognitive development becomes an essential first step in knowledge construction so that students can become adept at answering higher

order questions and using inductive methods of reasoning (McAuliffe and Lovell, 1997; Montgomery, Marbley, and Kurtines, 2000). This is accomplished through a variety of methods, including Socratic questioning, group discussion, limiting hierarchical relating, and encouraging autonomy within the class structure.

The Socratic Method relies on logic and specificity and allows students to become aware of flaws in their reasoning without being shamed by the teacher (Overholser, 1993). Questions are designed to motivate students to find the answers on their own so that they can learn to think independently because information must be applied rather than merely recalled. Socratic or systematic questioning is also useful because it is designed to be held in a public forum; it is open to scrutiny yet dependent upon the community (Reed and Johnson, 2000). Students are taught to think critically, to find the basis for their beliefs and adequately support them through facts (Dewey, 2005).

Critical thinking demands autonomy and, as such, can mark a shift in traditional classroom expectations where students are told what to think, what to do, and how to behave, which is usually a reflection of the larger world in

which they live (Heidegger, 1962). In a constructivist environment, the teacher eschews the traditional position of authority responsible for defining truth in favor of being responsible for the process itself. Helping students become active participants in their own learning can be challenging when teachers are confronted with students' resistance and desire for passive learning. However, empowering students to take responsibility for their own learning can lead to a rich, texturally dynamic classroom experience while critical thinking skills will serve students well in all other areas of their lives.

Every culture of people has its specific way of understanding others and engaging with one another (Bruner, 1990). Students' personal cultures are shaped by their experiences, thoughts, and feelings. Therefore, it is imperative that educators help their students construct personal meanings from their own experiences rather than force their assumptions and judgments. Group discussion that allows students to examine the basis for their beliefs can help create a safe environment where critical appraisal of belief systems and the co-construction of knowledge is an end result.

Applying constructivist teaching methods to a counseling theory class provides a unique opportunity for students to evaluate orientations within the context of their own worldviews. This style of teaching gives students the chance to actively explore various counseling theories and interventions and be better able to choose a starting point for their own professional work that is complementary with their inherent beliefs in the nature of change and transformation. Having a personal connection with the material helps students to specifically apply a lens to their work that reflects their own intuitive way of helping. For these reasons, the constructivist approach to this essential course is an effective way to make the material come alive for students in a previously unattainable way.

Of all of the counseling theories included in graduate programs, the existential orientation is perhaps one of the most difficult to teach. Existential philosophy is a key contributor to many counseling theories, and many theories parallel each other. For students unfamiliar with philosophy, the concepts can seem obscure and ponderous, and teachers can struggle to find concrete ways of presenting the orientations. In reality, existential philosophy is compatible with many constructivist assumptions and can be successfully presented in this style of instruction. Existential counseling is grounded in the understanding that experience is subjective and that unique perceptions must be respected by the therapist (Harris, 2001). The existential nature of Gestalt therapy is compatible with the feminist perspective that gender roles and other aspects of society are not fixed truths but are rather cultural interpretations of the nature of men and women (Hare-Mustin, 1987). Existentialism allows for individuals to name their own experience and deal with

the task of becoming more personally responsible, a principle echoed in constructivism. Both orientations build upon an understanding of cognitive development, the nature of reality, and the effects on society at large.

Because of existentialism's focus on subjective reality, it is important that students understand the variations of counseling applications when using this theory. Existential counseling theory is quite personal, and therefore, it is fairly diverse. "The goal of [existential] counseling is to help clients make-meaning of their lives" and so students must initially learn how "to make *their* own meaning" in relation to existential theory (Edger and Meyer, 2010, pg. 17). Therefore, a set formula of existential counseling is not offered in this article. Rather, existential themes are the focus.

By engaging students in dialogue, instructors can begin to help students grasp difficult concepts in a meaningful way. Using film is a powerful means to help students understand archaic philosophical existential ideas within the context of modern life. *Fight Club* (Linson, Chaffin, Bell, and Fincher, 1999), the popular cinema version of Chuck Palahniuk's novel, is an ideal vehicle for teaching existential principles in a way that is immediately thought provoking and entertaining, ensuring student participation and dynamic discussion.

*Fight Club*, directed by David Fincher, is the popular 1999 movie based on Chuck Palahniuk's best selling 1996 book. Starring Brad Pitt, Edward Norton, and Helen Bonham Carter, the movie offers a gritty commentary on the state of contemporary society and a gender-specific alternative to existential alienation by contests of brute strength and anarchist fantasies of freedom. It focuses on an unnamed protagonist, played by Edward Norton, who becomes disenchanted with his soulless, work-focused existence. His perceptions of reality and his role as a man in modern society are challenged when he meets Tyler Durden, an alter-ego character who represents all of the vitality, freedom, and masculinity he lacks. The film illustrates several key existential issues in a way that is relevant for those of college age, which makes it a visceral, lively teaching tool for counselor educators.

As part of a counseling education curriculum, counseling theory is a fundamental course that helps novice counselors examine their basic assumptions about life and the nature of change. Becoming aligned with a specific theory in turn offers students particular interventions to use with clients. Inexperienced counselors are encouraged to work from a specific theoretical orientation in order to fully ground themselves in a framework that will provide structured ways of conceptualizing client problems and treatment goals. This is often a challenging process for counseling students and educators alike since it requires the bridging of theory and practice and making abstract concepts meaningful in real life counseling scenarios. As with other courses, the use of films in counseling theory courses

can bring a much needed experiential element to the classroom (Collin, 2006; Koch and Dollahide, 2000; Villalba and Redmond, 2008), giving students a tangible grasp of how different orientations guide therapeutic processes. This article presents a specific lesson plan for using the film *Fight Club* to bring existential concepts alive and assist students in exploring related counseling orientations.

### The Film

This complex movie shows one man's journey from alienation to authenticity, interweaving subtexts related to identity and gender. Edward Norton's character, an anonymous office employee (henceforth referred to as 'E') first experiences signs of disenchantment with his materialistic, emotionally empty life when he loses the ability to sleep. His insomnia leads him to visit his physician, where he responds to his doctor's relative unconcern about his condition by telling him, "I am in pain." His doctor tells him to attend a support group for men with testicular cancer in order to see "real pain." He visits a building which houses several support groups for varying ailments, and he finds himself fascinated by the raw emotion expressed and thrilled with the reality of impending death that many group members are facing. He meets another habitual attendee, Marla, who notes that people "really listen to you" when they think you are dying. Themes of death meet with the ultimate meaninglessness of life when Norton's character meets Tyler Durden, a handsome and hip fellow passenger on a plane, when traveling for business. Durden immediately focuses E's attention to his own inauthenticity by reflecting back to him E's attempts to engage in shallow small talk and win admiration by being clever. This expands to include a discussion of E's obsession with Ikea furniture as a misguided attempt to feel successful and therefore look good in the eyes of others. E is immediately drawn to the stark reality embodied by Tyler. When his condominium is destroyed by fire, he contacts Tyler and begins to share a dilapidated home with him on the outskirts of their city.

E is led to experience reality stripped of its illusions when he engages in a physical fight with Tyler, at Tyler's urging. The deconstruction of life down to the basic elements of adrenaline, fight-or-flight responses, and physical pain, shifts E out of his disconnection and alienation to a sense of truly being alive. His former priorities begin to fade as he and Tyler set up a club for men who regularly converge to challenge one another in physical contests of strength, stamina, and force. This becomes the place where E finally feels a sense of meaning in his life. Discussions ensue about the inherent emptiness in contemporary lifestyles, the absence of fathers in the American family reflecting God's disinterest,

and facing the reality of death. They embark on a series of capers designed to undermine society that escalate into a long range plan labeled "Project Mayhem."

Marla completes the character triangle when she phones E in a self-acknowledged cry for help, telling him she has overdosed on anxiety medication. E admires and identifies with her, as he realizes she is striving towards authenticity yet is deeply flawed. E continues his transformation towards freedom as well as reconnecting with his humanity through relations with others. Tyler remains outside such relations and a struggle ensues when E attempts to stop the large-scale project Tyler has instigated. The final plot twist reveals that Tyler is an aspect of E's psyche rather than a separate individual, which leads E to the integration of his fragmented identity.

### METHOD OF INSTRUCTION

According to the Council for Accreditation in Counseling and Related Programs (CACREP), counseling theory courses as part of a marriage and family, school, or community (mental health) counseling curriculum must result in student comprehension of a "variety of models and theories" related to each type of counseling (CACREP, 2008). Students must also be prepared to apply interventions tailored to specific populations and problems. These standards require counselor educators to teach multiple theoretical orientations and their corresponding interventions so that counselors can make informed decisions when working with diverse clients. Instructional methods that help students to truly grasp the details of theories and to translate theory into practice are essential in order to facilitate the development of counseling skill. The following explanation will systematically outline the process of using film to teach philosophical concepts and the relevance of *Fight Club* in learning existential concepts.

It is important for instructors to be thoroughly versed in the material prior to student exposure. Repeated viewings and the simultaneous creation of an outline of fundamental concepts illustrated in the film and in what scenes they occur is recommended. A general introduction to existential philosophy and the concepts of authenticity, death and non-being, aloneness and relatedness, existential angst, personal responsibility, and meaning making should start the teaching segment. A brief review of such philosophers as Kierkegaard, Husserl, Heidegger, and Sartre will help students to place existentialism in its proper historical and philosophical context.

Next, the film is introduced and the structure for class processing is presented. Students are divided into groups of three to five. Each group is asked to choose one of the themes or concepts identified during the previous

introduction to existentialism, which they will look for as they view the film. Students are told to view the film using an existential lens, recording their designated identified themes as well as how they are illustrated in the film while viewing. Students are informed that breaks will occur during viewing of ten minutes each, during which time they can discuss themes and ideas that have emerged thus far. Students are told that after the film is viewed groups will be responsible for presenting their findings in an informal manner to the class as a whole. Due to differing course schedules and the breaks planned during viewing, it may be necessary to break up the showing of the film into two consecutive classes. Educators may stop the film at various points of the feature depending on what existential themes are the foci of elaboration for a particular class. For example, if the existential theme is authenticity, the film break could occur after E has a conversation with Tyler on the plane. Explanation of each existential theme and the representation of that theme throughout various parts (or film breaks) of the film are included in the Instructional Content section of this paper.

Once students have viewed the film, time is made for them to finalize and organize themes and concepts. These are written on the blackboard by the instructor while students present them to the class at large. Concepts can be explored in detail in order to ensure student comprehension at this time, and examples missed by the students can be introduced by the instructor. The next important aspect of the film discussion is how such concepts are illustrated. This provides the instructor with a springboard from which discussions of symptom presentation and counselor identification of existential issues in clients can be launched. It is through the method in which existential issues are personified that students can connect theory to practice. The teaching segment should conclude with a review of the specific counseling theories that draw on existential themes, such as Perls' Gestalt, Frankl's Logotherapy, and Roger's Humanistic orientation. Educators may also incorporate role playing to practice exploring existential issues during counseling sessions.

### **Instructional Content**

Specific instructional methods for using film when teaching existential concepts have been provided. The basic course structure can be applied to different theories and content as well. The specific existential concepts and principles that can be taught using the particular film *Fight Club* will follow.

### **Authenticity**

From an existential perspective, authenticity has two sides. The first side, which fits the common definition of the term, is the concept that individuals are true to who they really are. That is, they do not conform to what everyone else expects them to be and are true to their needs and wants. In existential philosophy this concept has an added dimension, which speaks to the complicated nature of such ideals as truth, freedom, and autonomy. This second side of authenticity is the realization that we live in a limiting world. Compromises must be made since we are inextricably linked to the consequences of the choices we make. To be authentic, individuals must adhere to both aspects of truthfulness, and that entails accepting that we are free to choose while simultaneously understanding that we are inherently limited by those choices. E's experiences elucidate the life struggle for living authentically. At the beginning of the story, E is consumed by the "they self," or *Das Man*. That is, E is living the life that he feels the world expects him to live and so he obsessively buys articles from IKEA to make his apartment the epitome of perfection, he conforms to a job he hates and loses himself in travel, not knowing where he is at any given moment, and, overall, he constantly conforms his behavior to others' expectations of what is socially appropriate. Consequently, E's complete conformity to the world he lives in is having detrimental effects on his life, inclusive of insomnia and a desire to die. Despite these symptoms, E is unable to understand or articulate the source of his disconnection and depression. That role is fulfilled by the charismatic and care-free Tyler Durden.

When E meets Tyler on the plane, he is intrigued by Tyler's confrontation of his conformity to social expectations. E asks what Tyler does for a living, a phrase that is quite often used as an opener when generating small talk. Tyler states, "Why? So you can pretend you're interested?" In this moment, Tyler illuminates and mocks the social expectation of small talk. Is E really interested or is he asking because that is what the world has conditioned him to do? In another encounter, E makes a joke about Tyler being an interesting 'single serving friend.' Tyler retorts by asking E if being clever works for him. In this exchange, Tyler illuminates E's defense against having true human interactions by using humor as a barrier to genuine contact. After E's condo is burned, E calls Tyler, and Tyler joins him at a bar. It is apparent that E needs a place to stay, though the social and cultural importance that is placed on self-reliance results in E not asking Tyler outright for a place to stay. "I should find a hotel," E states in the bar parking lot as they walk out. Tyler immediately confronts him by saying, "Just ask, man." He does not believe E's insistence that he had not thought to ask Tyler for help and persists until E formally asks Tyler

for a place to stay. In this exchange, Tyler demands E to engage in human interactions that are raw and true.

When analyzing E's and Tyler's relationship, it is apparent that E is only living to please the world and Tyler is living to please himself. Does this make Tyler authentic? Tyler is fully engaged in meeting his needs and wants. However, he does not appear to be aware of life's limitations. From an existential perspective, Tyler is ultimately not authentic because he lives fully to please himself, causing chaos around him without suffering the consequences, an impossible human feat. E is the bearer of Tyler's consequences, which enables E to understand what living authentically really means. This is illustrated in several places throughout the film, from Tyler's largely sexual relationship with Marla to E's friend Bob's death during a Project Mayhem mission.

By denying the inextricable link to the world in which E lives, Tyler can only be a figment of E's imagination.

### **Death and Non-Being**

According to existential theory, the inevitability of death renders life meaningless. In order to find meaning in the "average everydayness" of life, people feel compelled to suppress the knowledge of their mortality. The realization and acknowledgement of the inevitability of death, however, can serve as motivation to live more fully. E was able to do this through facing the fact of his mortality when he attended support groups for individuals who were dying of chronic illnesses. "Losing all hope was freedom," he stated, "Every morning I died, and every morning I was born again, resurrected." By facing his own death, E felt more fully alive in those moments. Of course, for E, this was only temporary because he returned to his mundane life, a life that he was barely living, and he was once again failing to fully live. Tyler exemplifies this existential concept to E in an extreme form. He threatens the life of a convenience store clerk, Raymond K. Hesel, by holding a gun to his head and telling him he is going to die. Tyler then asks the clerk what he has always wanted to do. After receiving an answer, Tyler tells the clerk that he will keep the clerk's driver's license and find him in six weeks to see if he is on his way to becoming a veterinarian, a goal the clerk set for himself. "Tomorrow will be the best day of Raymond K. Hesel's life," Tyler explains to E. By forcing Raymond to realize his finitude, Tyler urges him to live the life he truly wanted to live.

The facing of the finitude of human existence encourages individuals to make changes in many different ways. The denial of death enables individuals to ignore what is important to them, take life for granted, and deny the responsibility of owning their lives, among other consequences. The inevitability of death also reveals how, ultimately, every person is alone in the

world, since dying is an irrevocably individual process. This essential aloneness can lead to self-responsibility, since it is up to the individual to choose how he or she will live life. These paradoxes inherent in the human condition also serve as the foundations for existential angst.

### **Existential Angst**

Angst is a feeling that results from the knowledge of our own mortality. Angst is the expressed reaction to the realization of the helplessness of being human in a world that intrinsically limits our possibilities. When individuals make a choice, they essentially give up other choices. Freedom of choice is limited to action, not to those actions' consequences. Marla makes a conscious choice to seek E's attention and, in doing so, is emotionally abused and ultimately kidnapped by Tyler. In contrast to E's emotional disconnection prior to his enlightenment, existential angst provides the necessary tension and anxiety required to help E be fully alive. His angst is also fueled by the tension between the ultimate aloneness that comes with death, with self-responsibility, and the fact of being inextricably connected to the world. This tension is brought into bright relief as E tries desperately to save Bob's and later Marla's life.

### **Personal responsibility**

The reality of life "is that it is without excuse" (Sartre, 1957/1998, p. 55). We are constantly faced with the reality that we have to choose the kind of people we want to become, and this choosing never ends as long as we are alive. Even the avoidance to make a choice is a choice. In Marla's case, she chooses to be a victim through her choices of allowing Tyler to dominate her and through her suicide attempts. E stayed in a job he hated because he did not want to face the consequence of having no money and removing himself from the belongingness of convention. Tyler's consistently knew who he was and wanted to become, and he made active choices towards that goal. However, as mentioned before, he was continually free of consequences, which is an element that does not align with human reality. If Tyler suffered consequences, would the choices he made in the film differ? It is certainly an excellent question for class discussion.

### **Meaning making**

Self-responsibility requires self awareness and leads to the creation of an individual sense of meaning. The process of finding meaning has been approached in a

variety of ways by different existential philosophers. Viktor Frankl (1959/2006) described meaning as an ever-present construct in the world and proposed that suffering was the best vehicle for finding meaning while Sartre (1943/1984) pointed to the meaninglessness of life and, therefore, the need for individuals to make their own meaning. Throughout the story, E attempts to make meaning out of his interactions with others in his life. His relationship with Marla offers a helpful example of the quest for meaning. E is both attracted and repulsed by Marla and tries to come to terms with what that means for him in his life. In many ways, Marla mirrors E. She searches for authenticity and connection in the support groups, she latches on to E as E latches on to Tyler. Both try to find something in the other that they lack in themselves. In another sense, E admires Marla for her relative freedom of choice and nonconformity. Marla steals clothes from the Laundromat and sells them at resale shops. She takes Meals on Wheels dinners on behalf of women that have died from the unaware charity that continues to supply food for them. Marla knows the limitations of her life, and she exploits any advantages she has to the fullest extent. She refuses to adhere to social expectations for the sacrifice of her limited comforts in life. E is, on some level, attracted to her brazen behavior and constructs this piece of her personality in his ideal alter-ego, Tyler Durden.

### Gender and identity

The notion of how sexed identity can be socially constructed is not one that was explored in depth by early existential philosophers aside from Simone de Beauvoir. Later theorists such as Foucault, Irigaray, and feminist existentialists such as Mary Daly sought to understand gender relations from the perspective of power, cultural institutions, and political ideology. The film *Fight Club* provides many thought provoking depictions of gender relations and sexuality that are helpful in elucidating the existentialist translations of identity and self-in-relation to Other. For this reason, students should be asked to watch for illustrations of relational dynamics and gender differences during the film viewing.

As the person who challenges E's perceptions of success, meaningfulness, and autonomy, Tyler is the vehicle for E's enlightenment. He is seemingly free of societal constraints, a true self-made man. Tyler also represents E's culturally constructed fantasy of ideal masculinity. He exudes confidence and is fearless in his challenges to awaken people to the true meaning of life. His handsome, athletic build and fighting prowess represent the stereotypical ideal of sexually charged manhood. E eventually rebels against Tyler's lack of concern for others, and in this, Tyler's ultimate limitations are exposed. In a sense, Tyler is the extreme version of

the existential hero: completely independent and untouched by the events he sets in motion. The limitation, which E comes to realize is, as Hegel acknowledged, that personal identity is constructed *through* one's relationships with others (Diprose, 1994) and cannot be divorced from the context within which one lives.

E's journey from dissociation, meaninglessness, and alienation to an authentic and connected human being is made explicit during the course of the film. An essential step in this process is the reclamation of his masculinity, which is expressed through contests of physical strength and bravery in the fight clubs. Thus, E becomes more fully human and more fully a man as a result of his experiences. As evidenced by his care and desire for Marla, he has found a more balanced version of masculinity, which allows for interdependence and emotional connection with others rather than the stereotypical notion of the "strong, silent" man.

Marla, as Tyler and E's love interest, played an important role in E's process. Just as Tyler served as an instrument of enlightenment or freedom for E, Marla served as an instrument of integration for Tyler and E, who are in reality two manifestations of the same psyche. Existential philosophers such as Levinas have acknowledged the role of eros as instrumental, rather than an end in itself (Stella, 2000), as encounters with the Other bring to life the paradox of aloneness and intimacy that humans experience. Since sexual passion exists in a realm outside of the average everydayness of life it can therefore serve as a vehicle for the reunion of paradoxes and opposites (Dimen, 2003). Hence, it is largely through Marla that the conflicting aspects represented by Tyler and E merge into balance and allow E to be authentically in the world.

Marla is also a female response to the existential dilemmas presented in the film. She has freed herself from the conventional in her lawlessness (stealing clothes and food) and understands the ultimate emptiness of human existence. She expresses the tragedy of the human experience as reflected in the knowledge of our impending deaths that coexists with the perpetual *not* dying we experience throughout life. Marla is not without stereotypical aspects of traditional femininity, as she seeks connection with E in a dependent, weak manner. Despite the limitations in her character, she still serves as a role model for E and as a means through which he can find balance.

As with many existential concepts, sexuality is viewed by different philosophers in different ways, with no clear agreement on its role. Sartre, in particular, conceptualized all sexual behavior as a sadomasochistic power struggle, with the act of desiring automatically leading to the objectification of the Other (Dillon, 1998). Tyler's abusive behavior towards Marla is a reflection of objectification because he uses her for his sexual pleasure but gives nothing in return such as the

emotional intimacy she seeks from him. He also kidnaps her with the intention to kill her once he finds out that she is aware of the final plan for Project Mayhem. After E reclaimed his full identity was able to fully exist as an authentic man who created his own meaning in the world while simultaneously allowing himself to relate to others.

Along with illustrating gender dynamics, *Fight Club* offers commentary on the role of men in contemporary society. Tyler tells E that part of their alienation arises from the pervasive absence of their fathers. If, as Foucault (1978) posited, the family can be seen as a political institution that regulates gender-power relations, the rise of single parent families led by women could indeed have deeply felt ramifications. Seen within an existential lens, for males who have grown up without masculine influence, the abandonment by their fathers mirrors the larger lack of any kind of Divine presence within whose protection humanity might exist. Tyler tells E that their fathers are models of God, and since their fathers left, E must "accept the possibility that God does not like you, that he never wanted you. In all probability, he hates you." Tyler concludes with a rejection of God/fathers, saying, "We don't need them." However, as men, they cannot escape their identification with their fathers and therefore cannot escape God. This illustrates the existential position that 'man is fundamentally the desire to be God' (Joy, 2006, p. 103). Tyler is in fact trying to remake the world according to his vision, and Marla's mistreatment by Tyler can be seen as a reflection of his identification with a God who is modeled on an uncaring, abandoning ethos. His rejection of her can also be seen as a general rebellion against the mother, both because she is the only available parent to whom men's anger can be expressed and because it is the constraints of femininity that have boundaried men's world. Reclaiming power as a man allows E to step into the vacuum left by the absence of the masculine principle in his life.

## CONCLUSION

During *Fight Club* we see one man journey out of convention and stereotypical cultural limitations towards the existential ideal of an authentic, self-responsible person who is freely being-in-the-world in an honest, engaged way. The different aspects of E's psyche provide illustrations of different existential perspectives on sexuality, freedom, and God, as well as a fragmented sense of self. Viewing *Fight Club* as a contemporary story of one man's confrontation of fundamental existential issues provides a compelling and entertaining structure around which the instruction of existentialism can be organized. As counselor-educators help students understand existential counseling through media, it is important to bear in mind that educators are also co-

Learners of this process. Educators must allow for students' personal meaning-making of existential concepts. Because existential themes vary from one philosopher to the next, students must understand what existential counseling looks like through their personal experiences and perceptions and that is an achievement that is unavoidably individualistic.

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