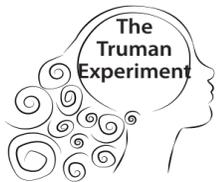


# Graduation inspires risk taking attitude



BY ELIZABETH NECKA  
Columnist

After graduation, you stay friends with approximately 15 percent of the people you thought you'd stay friends with in college. Supposedly. A friend threw that statistic at me, but I can't seem to find any authoritative source to enforce its validity. But 38.9 percent of facts are made up on the spot, right?

Still, he got me thinking. Why am I going to such-and-such themed party on a Friday night to make small talk with people who I probably won't keep in touch with? I should be spending time with the people I care most about, trying to strengthen those relationships so I am confident in their sustainability. It's not that I don't

care about the other people or that I don't appreciate our shared experiences — these experiences changed me and shaped me into the person I am today. But with the time bomb

of graduation ticking, I can't help but weigh the pros and cons of every social decision I make so I effectively can savor my time here.

Psychologists would say I am experiencing poignancy — simultaneous positive and negative emotions. This deliberate social decision process is well explained by socioemotional selectivity theory, which suggests that as people anticipate and approach endings, we increasingly become aware of time's passing and force ourselves to focus on the present, what we value most and those activities from which we derive the greatest meaning.

When we have a seeming abyss of a future ahead of us, we become curious, focusing our attention on gathering new information, making new friends and learning about the social environment around us, until some sort of definite ending is reached. Poignancy, then, is a combination of positive effects as you realize that having limited time means you successfully have advanced through life (or in my case, my college career) and negative effects as you experience the constant nagging of "this could be the last time." Although

poignancy is evident most in older adults nearing the end of life, the experience was documented in college graduates in a 2008 article in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.

My poignancy also has caused me to be riskier in my social behaviors. To the friend afraid to express her feelings to the guy she's into, to the friend anxious about telling off her roommate off for "borrowing" her things and to the friend nervous about warning his girlfriend of the potential struggles she'll face if she pursues a certain career, I say this: Why not? My echoing words of advice lately have been "What do you have to lose?"

At this point in the game, any social faux pas will be short-lived and fade from importance in a month. When I think back on my high school self, I don't care that the guy I liked said, "no," I am proud that I asked him out. I don't care that I cried as I hugged my friends at senior awards night, I appreciate that I let myself feel those emotions so

genuinely.

Perhaps I am taking more risks because I am aware of my mortality, so to speak — my mortality as a college student. As we become more aware of our own mortality and more conscious of our

Every day I spend here means one less I have left to spend, so I might as well take a few risks and be choosy with my free time.

impending end, we engage in more risk-taking behaviors as a way to increase our self-efficacy, or that "I-can-do-this" feeling, and ultimately our self-esteem, according to Terror Management Theory. We also act in such ways that affirm our values. For me, although it might be risky to be vulnerable while crying in front of friends, I value being genuine, so it is worth it. I probably shouldn't divulge so much of myself in my columns, but the excitement of being able to take the risk of sharing myself and the increased self-esteem I gain from being able to confirm my own values, fits with Terror Management Theory and my constant awareness of graduation's proximity.

Sure, it's over-used, but I think the Dead Poets Society had it right on — *carpe diem*. Seize the day. Every day I spend here means one less I have left to spend, so I might as well take a few risks and be choosy with my free time. That's what's going to inspire the feelings of poignancy in me. When I graduate, those risks might pay off and those friendships (hopefully more than 15 percent) might last. So why not?



Photo courtesy of rottentomatoes.com

From left, Sweat Pea (Abbie Cornish), Rocket (Jena Malone), Baby Doll (Emily Browning), Blondie (Vanessa Hudgens) and Amber (Jamie Chung) strive to escape their mental institution/whorehouse.

## 'Sucker Punch' sends viewers home sore



BY KEN DUSOLD  
Staff Reviewer

What is there to say of a film that pathetically borrows from "Avatar," "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon," "Harry Potter," "Inception," "The Lord of the Rings," "Showgirls" and "Shrek?" There is actually more to say about "Sucker Punch" than there is space for, but not a single word is positive.

"Sucker Punch" is the latest work from director Zack Snyder, whose previous films include the ancient Greek-themed, CGI-driven "300" and the dark comic book adaptation of "Watchmen." This newest project is Snyder's first attempt at writing an original screenplay for a feature film. The result is dismal.

The film focuses on the attempts of five institutionalized girls trying to escape their sad existence in a mental hospital/bordello and unfolds in several imagined spaces. We are first introduced to Baby Doll (Emily Browning) in a darkened and gothic version of 1960's Vermont. Following some traumatic events, Baby Doll is committed to an insane asylum where she might be lobotomized. The audience is not originally

sure of her predicament as the story cuts to a completely different world we assume is playing out in Baby Doll's mind.

This dream is set in a brothel, in which the girls are owned by sleazy whorehouse proprietor Blue Jones (Oscar Issac, who also plays a disgusting orderly in the insane asylum). Deciding they need to fight for their freedom, Baby Doll leads the other girls in an impossible escape plan without being killed.

To steal needed items for breaking out of the asylum, Baby Doll must distract their targets by dancing. Her dance, as she calls it, is her "fight." Each time she dances, we are removed from the brothel

and dropped into various video game-like sequences in which the girls must accomplish a mission to make it to the next level of their plan. Beyond this, very little is explainable without becoming lost. Do we care whether the girls achieve their mission or survive? No. These dreams within a dream merely are opportunities for Snyder to blast his audience with

more computer-generated special effects than George Lucas has room for in his head and the film should allow.

Indeed, if a viewer does not have macular degeneration prior to entering the theater, they will not be so lucky when they leave. Snyder throws everything at the audience, from constant sword-slashing and explosions to machine gun fire and fire-breathing dragons. There are ogres from "The Lord of the Rings," but

who knows what they have to do with the story. Also from "Rings," Mt. Doom is placed in the middle of Harry Potter's Hogwarts. After the samurai-themed first battle and the World War I-inspired tripe, the

migraine forms and one wonders if this is what a lobotomy feels like.

Equally unforgivable is the one-dimensional and grotesque use of characters, disgustingly awful treatment of the actors and clichéd dialogue about fighting for freedom. The actresses who star in the film are given absolutely nothing to build on in regards

to development. Names like Sweet Pea (Abbie Cornish), Rocket (Jena Malone) and Blondie (Vanessa Hudgens) suggest that Snyder either has a lack of creativity or misguided thought. Truly insulting is the portrayal of German soldiers as literal machines and a hint at the ruin of the Catholic Church when a priest is shown selling Baby Doll to the house of ill repute as punishment for her sins. Neither of these personifications is necessarily new to film, but they still are childish and rude. Alienating entire populations of people for the sake of moving forward a story — which has nothing to do with those people — is shameful.

Only sympathy is appropriate when considering the actors. Through the majority of the film, the starring actresses are dressed in garments most likely made from used children's clothing. While watching Browning run around in a school-girl outfit, one questions whether the story is derived in part from Snyder's perverse fantasy.

The writing is atrocious at best. It lacks any substance and someone always seems to be speaking, as if only to fill the air. Even when the screen turns to black, there remains a voice speaking from this trash Snyder wants us to think is a script.

Rarely do films sink so low as to reflect badly on the industry, but hopefully "Sucker Punch" is in fact rare.

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