Using Roald Dahl's Charlie and the Chocolate Factory To Teach Different Recruitment and Selection Paradigms
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This article makes a case for using Roald Dahl’s children’s fantasy and morality tale Charlie and the Chocolate Factory to teach recruitment and selection. It draws attention to its relevance in illustrating and explaining three different recruitment and selection paradigms: psychometric, social process, and fit. It argues that the use of this fantasy is particularly useful because its unusual nature causes students to approach the analogy in a critical fashion. Moreover, it offers a compelling approach that will stay long in students’ memories. The article begins with a discussion of different recruitment and selection paradigms, which is followed by a critical explanation of how the plotlines in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory map onto these paradigms. The article ends with specific guidance to recruitment and selection teachers on different ways of using the 2005 film version of the story in the management classroom.

Keywords: recruitment; selection; values; person–organization fit; psychometric; social process; Roald Dahl

Many authors have discussed the role of films as teaching resources (e.g., Bumpus, 2005; Champoux, 1999; Huczynski & Buchanan, 2004).
The films advocated are as diverse as the concepts taught, with for instance *The Dead Poets Society, The Magnificent Seven, The Arturo Sandoval Story,* and *12 Angry Men* used to illustrate a range of concepts from risk taking and leadership, influencing strategies, and effective communication (Bumpus, 2005; Champoux, 2001; Huczynski, 1994; McCambridge, 2003; Serey, 1992). These films all depict actors portraying either real or fictional people in scenes that appear socially real to an audience of management students. But using films as a teaching resource does not mean limiting oneself to social realism films; one can also use fantasy, animated films, or any type of fable and fairy tale (Bruhn & Chesney, 1996; Champoux, 2001; Klenke, 2002). Indeed, as we will argue, there may be advantages in using such films, as they prompt critical evaluation, give “permission” for the audience to “play” with ideas, and live long in the memory.

This article looks at how one film adaptation of a children’s fantasy, Roald Dahl’s *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory,* might be used in the management classroom to teach the subject of recruitment and selection. Although written as a morality tale for children involving a trip around a fantastic chocolate factory, this story can also be interpreted as a study of a factory owner’s recruitment of a successor, with the factory acting as an assessment center to explore the weaknesses of the potential apprentices. In addition to the recruitment of a successor, the story also explains how the factory’s workforce was recruited. In relating these stories, Dahl unconsciously references and critiques the main recruitment and selection paradigms. In this article, we explain these paradigms and then critically show how the various recruitment storylines in Dahl’s *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* map onto them. The article ends with guidance on how teachers can use these ideas in the classroom with specific reference to the latest film adaptation of the book that was released in 2005.

**Teaching Recruitment and Selection**

Recruitment and selection features on the curricula of many management courses include organizational behavior, human resource management, specialist recruitment and selection courses, and management itself. The traditional and well-established approach to teaching recruitment and selection is to focus on the psychometric paradigm (Schmitt & Chan, 1998). This paradigm considers recruitment and selection from the perspective of the organization and shows how good selection decisions should be made (i.e., selecting the person who best fits the selection criteria). The curriculum typically includes legal issues in staffing, economic/labor market issues, recruitment activities, testing and selection, validity generalization, new employee orientation, internal movement and placement of employees, and
employee retention. In essence, this approach to recruitment and selection assesses individuals against the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) required for performance in the post. The paradigm is that of a rational decision-making process operated by the employer. It is an important and deeply entrenched paradigm, and many aspects of it are enshrined in law.

Two paradigms compete with the psychometric paradigm in the recruitment and selection literature. The better established of these is the social process paradigm that emerges out of social psychology. This paradigm is primarily concerned with understanding recruitment and selection as a social process rather than as a series of obstacles to be overcome (Herriot, 1992, 1993; Iles, 1998). It is primarily concerned with the development of the relationship between the successful applicant and the employer during the recruitment and selection process. This process is seen as particularly important in the formation of working relationships because it occurs during a period when the new recruits are particularly attentive and sensitive to cues about what are appropriate behaviors at their new employer. Because it does not purport to offer an alternative to how staff should be selected, it has not replaced the psychometric paradigm at the core of the recruitment and selection curricula. Instead, it is commonly used as a critical adjunct to explore the impact of the psychometric process.

The second alternative to the psychometric paradigm is the emerging domain of person–organization fit (PO fit). Primarily, this field is concerned with the relationship between employees and employers, but it has always had a foothold in the recruitment and selection processes, and it has been suggested that it could become a competing paradigm (Bowen, Ledford, & Nathan, 1991; Levesque, 2005). From its base in interactional psychology, PO fit considers the interaction between people and environmental factors and thereby avoids one of the greatest problems with the psychometric approach—namely, that it focuses on recruitment and selection from the organization’s point of view and largely ignores the perspective of the applicants. By looking for a “fit” between applicants and organizations, the PO fit approach has the potential to treat the two sides of the recruitment encounter even-handedly. It does this in two ways. First, it recognizes that both parties make decisions and must do so from informed standpoints (Bowen et al., 1991). Second, the goal is to achieve a “fit” that has to be right for both parties. Although the other two paradigms would also hope to achieve this goal, in the PO fit paradigm, it is paramount and therefore selectors would be compelled to create opportunities for applicants to properly assess the nature of the job and the organization to which they are applying. It is too early in the lifecycle of the PO fit approach to recruitment and selection for it to have supplanted the psychometric paradigm in curricula, let alone in law. The relative newness of the subject means that few textbooks have included the paradigm, and therefore, the resources available to management educators are very limited indeed.
A summary of the assumptions underlying each of these paradigms can be found in Appendix A.

INDUSTRY AS ASPIRATION

Roald Dahl is considered to be one of the greatest modern writers of children’s stories. Perhaps the most well known of all Dahl’s stories is *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, which has the structure and intent of “a morality fable” (Schultz, 1998, p. 3). *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* was first published in 1964. The book has sold more than 13 million copies worldwide and has been translated into 32 languages (*About the DVD*, n.d.). The book’s continuing popularity has been confirmed by the release and success of a second film adaptation of the book in 2005 (Grey, Zanuck, & Burton, 2005).

The story of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is a particularly apposite story for use in management education. Dahl’s story was inspired by his visits as a youth to the Cadbury Company, a chocolate manufacturer, for whom he acted as a taste tester on new lines of chocolate. Dahl commented that he fantasized that one day he would invent a product that would delight “Mr. Cadbury” (Schultz, 1998). The story of *Charlie and Chocolate Factory* mirrors this fascination and thus presents industry as aspiration.

The story triumphs the ambition, achievements, and values (e.g., innovation and honesty) of the factory owner, Willy Wonka. Since its publication, the name of Willy Wonka has become a byword for innovation, and the chocolate factory is the epitome of a successful but unconventional work environment and organizational culture, as the following example illustrates. In an article on the success of the company behind the Internet search engine Google, Elgin, Hof, and Greene (2005) write:

> At Google, much of the magnetism is also generated by a zany culture perfectly synced to the geek lifestyle. Engineers are encouraged to spend the equivalent of one day per week on their own pet projects. When they’re not staring into their computer monitors, Google employees will often gather for roller-hockey games in the underground garage or race remote-control blimps through their cavernous offices. Free perks range from gourmet meals at the company cafeteria to bathrooms equipped with digital toilets, where the seat temperature and bidet pressure can be controlled with a remote. “They have created a Willy Wonka effect,” says James E. Pitkow, CEO of Moreover Technologies Inc., whose former company, Outride Inc., was purchased by Google in 2001. “Engineers want to work on the coolest problems with the smartest people.” (p. 28)

**CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY: A FANTASTIC PLOT**

*Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* tells the story of Charlie Bucket’s tour, with four other children, around Willy Wonka’s chocolate factory.
During the tour, the children are whittled away until just one, Charlie, remains. Wonka announces that through this process of elimination, Charlie has won the opportunity to learn how the chocolate factory runs and to take over its management and ownership: “I have decided to make you a present of the whole place. As soon as you are old enough to run it, the entire factory will become yours” (Dahl, 1997, p. 162). With this action, Willy Wonka reveals that his intention in opening the factory to the children was an elaborate recruitment and selection exercise to find his own successor. The book, therefore, can be viewed as a fictional, single-company case study of leadership succession. As we will show, despite being written more than 40 years ago, it offers an opportunity to examine many contemporary recruitment and selection issues.

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory cannot be claimed to be a realistic portrayal of industry or of a recruitment and selection process. Nonetheless, as a teaching device, its fantastic style is one of its strengths. The extreme nature of the situation and of the characters not only openly appeals to readers’ imaginations but also encourages a critical approach to the issues being portrayed (e.g., recruitment of a senior executive, selecting for fit, assessment center decision making, approaches to innovation, unorthodox organizational cultures and values) rather than to the accuracy of the portrayal of organizational life. This curtails criticism as to whether this is a realistic portrayal of the selection process or of problems in relating to the characters. Rather, this heightened involvement promotes contradiction, and similar to the use of satire in film, this distortion of norms, as Champoux (1999) notes, “highlights the foibles of a society or a person, compelling the reader or viewer to see the satirist’s criticism. Good satire presents the familiar and the common with a fresh, diverting perspective” (p. 210). The same attributes could be claimed to support the use of Dahl’s morality tale.

VERSIONS OF CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY

Before looking in detail at the recruitment and selection issues in the story of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, we must first acknowledge the different sources available to management educators. First, there is the original book that was first published in 1964 and has remained in print ever since. Second, there is the first screen adaptation of the book, titled Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory (Margulies, Wolper, & Stuart, 1971), which was released in theaters in 1971 and is now widely available on DVD. The screenplay for this first adaptation was written by Dahl himself, and he added an important subplot around the “everlasting gobstopper” that greatly added to the recruitment and selection applicability of the story. The second screen adaptation of the book was released in theaters in 2005 and became available on DVD at the end of the same year. Directed by Tim
Burton, this adaptation (Grey et al., 2005) developed the fantasy element of the story and moved away from the more traditional factory environment of the first film.

Table 1 shows the recruitment themes and paradigms referred to in the book and the films. The strengths and weaknesses of these sources are discussed later, but as illustrated in the table, the richness of the 2005 film adaptation’s coverage of the social process and fit paradigms coupled with its recent release mean that it is the version that we recommend using.

**Recruitment and Selection Issues in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory**

Before moving on to explain how the story of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* might be used in the management classroom, we shall highlight some of the main recruitment and selection issues in the story.

**CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY AND THE PSYCHOMETRIC PARADIGM**

As described earlier, the conventional model of personnel selection focuses on assessing applicants’ KSAs against those needed to perform the job well. It is a rational model that assumes that jobs are relatively stable and that ability to perform a particular grouping of duties in a prescribed way is paramount; selectors should eliminate any factors that are not directly and measurably related to job performance or that create adverse impact (Schmitt & Chan, 1998).

Wonka’s selection model is based on the idea that the incumbent succeeds through ingenuity, innovation, creativity, and nontraditional work practices, thereby challenging the notion that jobs are relatively stable; the only thing that is stable is the constant need to innovate. The nature of the leader’s job is completely at his or her discretion. The leader is portrayed as an entrepreneurial inventor with very few internal constraints. Given this profile, he argues that almost anyone would be able to do the job:

> There are thousands of clever men who would give anything for a chance to come in and take over from me, but I don’t want that sort of person. I don’t want a grown-up person at all. A grown-up won’t listen to me; he won’t learn. He will try to do things his own way and not mine. So I have to have a child. . . . I decided to invite five children to the factory, and the one I liked the best at the end of the day would be the winner! (Dahl, 1997, pp. 162-163)

If a child without any knowledge of work could do it, then anyone could. Wonka is concerned that the “magic” of his enterprise not be lost and that his spirit lives after him: “I want a good sensible loving child, one to whom
I can tell my most precious sweet-making secrets—while I am still alive” (Dahl, 1997, pp. 162-163). In this way Wonka reveals the nature of his KSAs: He wants someone with particular terminal values (i.e., end states values), such as a belief that life should be fun and work should be “magic,” and instrumental values (i.e., ways of behaving), such as ingenuity, creativity, and

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Recruitment themes</th>
<th>Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory (Margulies, Wolper, &amp; Stuart, 1971)</th>
<th>Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (Grey, Zanuck, &amp; Burton, 2005)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Recruitment as marketing</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Golden tickets as an information gathering device</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Partial (reports in newspapers)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Everlasting gobstopper as selection test</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Factory processes as assessment center (AC)</td>
<td>✓ (except for Charlie)</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection “tests” targeted at individuals</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of the selection of squirrels</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>×</td>
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<td>Values interview</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Partial (very brief)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job offer discussions</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oompa-Loompa recruitment</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>×</td>
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<td>Rejection of job offer</td>
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<th>Recruitment paradigms</th>
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<td>Psychometric</td>
<td>Values interview</td>
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<td>Social process</td>
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<td>Children ignore Wonka’s advice</td>
<td>Charlie’s rejection of job offer</td>
<td>Willy Wonka gains a family</td>
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<td>Fit</td>
<td>Oompa-Loompa recruitment</td>
<td>Charlie’s return of the everlasting gobstopper</td>
<td>Oompa-Loompa recruitment</td>
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<td>Charlie’s rejection of job offer</td>
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common sense. His mistake, from a psychometric perspective, is his failure to link these KSAs with performance in any convincing way.

An important consideration in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is that the children do not know that they are applicants for the role of factory manager. This is a crucial and deliberate ploy in Willy Wonka’s approach to recruitment and selection, for he uses ignorance to allow the children to behave as they normally would, free from the impression management techniques adopted by job applicants (Dipboye, 1992). Wonka has just 1 day to assess the values of five children. His approach is an assessment center with activities or experiences tailored to expose the values of each applicant. The principle underlying the design of Wonka’s tests of personal values appears to be the idea that you need to place individuals in situations in which they cannot manage the impression they create and instead are driven by their natural urges and drives. The diversity and richness of the Chocolate Room trigger Augustus’s greed. In the Inventing Room, the Great Gum Machine reveals Violet’s disobedience. The squirrels in the Nut Room tempt Veruca and surface her spoiled nature. Mike’s obsession with television is fed in the Chocolate-Television Room. Only Charlie does not appear to have an activity designed specifically for him.

In the 1971 film, however, Dahl does not allow Charlie to win so easily. It is not sufficient for him to survive the tests designed for the other children; he has to demonstrate his value congruence actively. Charlie’s test is the Everlasting Gobstopper and the money that could free his family from poverty. These tests have clear decision criteria (swelling up and turning purple, returning the Everlasting Gobstopper, etc.) and thereby prevent the exercise of subjective judgment. Wonka only employs the briefest of interviews to confirm his assessment of values:

“How I love my chocolate factory,” said Mr. Wonka, gazing down. Then he paused, and he turned around and looked at Charlie with a most serious expression on his face. “Do you love it too, Charlie?” he asked. “Oh, yes,” cried Charlie, “I think it’s the most wonderful place in the whole world!” (Dahl, 1997, p. 161)

The leading nature and superficiality of this question are unfortunate from a selection perspective, but it confirms Wonka’s interest in understanding Charlie’s values.

An important feature of Wonka’s approach is the integration of the recruitment and selection phases. The high-profile nature of the search for the Golden Tickets gives Wonka vital information on each of the applicants that allows him to design the assessment activities that are chosen for each child. This aspect of the process is illustrated well in the 1971 film, as a television news reporter is present to interview each lucky winner soon after the ticket is found. These interviews reveal much about each individual child, so much
in fact that Grandma Georgina is able to describe each of the first four winners as a “nasty little beast who doesn’t deserve it” (p. 39).

Wonka’s use of prior information and his customization of selection to each applicant run counter to much selection advice. Instead of treating everyone in the same fashion, his “multiform” approach treats each child in the way best suited to him or her. It seeks an understanding of each individual against each of the selection criteria and chooses recruitment and selection methods that are best suited to each person. Wonka takes this model to the extreme, by assessing each applicant using a different activity dependent on each applicant’s character or personality. Importantly, although Wonka is prepared to select different selection tests for each individual (or more accurately, he chooses environments that will particularly appeal to each of the children in the hope that their “true” nature will be revealed), he does not alter the selection criteria; a fun-loving child who will do things his way. Therefore, Wonka does treat every applicant in the same way in the sense that all are assessed against the same selection criteria. Where Wonka’s selection differs from the uniform approach is that it accepts that there may be occasions when it is necessary to use different selection tests to assess the applicants. However, it is important to note that in some countries this unequal treatment of applicants will be deemed unlawful. In the United States, for example, the Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures states that having different selection tests for different applicants for the same job constitutes disparate treatment and may be deemed an illegal employment practice.

Wonka’s “multiform” approach to selection is informative because it is clear that it can only work when the selector has some prior knowledge about the applicants. For example, had Wonka not known about Violet’s chewing-gum obsession, he might not have shown the children the Great Gum Machine. Wonka’s integrated approach to recruitment and selection gave him the opportunity to observe candidates shortly after the moment of application (i.e., on finding the Golden Ticket), when their guard was down and emotions were running high. Organizational selectors are unlikely to have such an opportunity. However, in “real” recruitment and selection situations, the idea of a multistage approach for personnel assessment in which selectors gather data at a preliminary stage to inform the development of tests later on in the process might be possible, although in many circumstances the cost of doing this would probably be prohibitive.

Willy Wonka refers to a second type of job that he has had to fill: the squirrels in the Nut Room. Wonka explains why he employs squirrels rather than Oompa-Loompas:

Oompa-Loompas can’t get walnuts out of walnut shells in one piece. They always break them in two. Nobody except squirrels can get walnuts whole
out of walnut shells every time. It is extremely difficult. But in my factory, I insist upon only whole walnuts. Therefore I have to have squirrels to do the job. (Dahl, 1997, p. 121)

We are left to imagine a selection process that would have focused on the ability to extract walnuts from their shells intact. This skill-centered approach contrasts sharply with the value-centered approach used for the factory manager, but both appear to sit comfortably within the psychometric paradigm of selector-centered selection, thereby demonstrating the robustness of the psychometric paradigm for different types of jobs.

**CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY AND THE SOCIAL PROCESS PARADIGM**

The social process issues in the story are handled in ways that are sharply contradictory to the guidance in the recruitment and selection literature. Perhaps the strongest example of social processes in the story relates to the way that the “failed” children are handled once they transgress. This behavior is captured in Wonka’s reaction to the children when Charlie and Grandpa Joe spot them leaving the factory. Grandpa Joe comments on Augustus, “He used to be fat! Now he’s thin as a straw!” (Dahl, 1997, p. 158). Wonka laughs away this outcome. Charlie spots Violet leaving back to her normal size, but purple in the face. “‘So she is,’ said Mr. Wonka. ‘Ah, well, there’s nothing we can do about that’” (Dahl, 1997, p. 159). Charlie observes Veruca leaving covered in rubbish. The last mischievous child to be seen leaving is Mike Teavee. He is “ten feet tall and thin as a wire” (Dahl, 1997, p. 160). “They’ve overstretched him on the gum-stretching machine . . . he’s very lucky. Every basketball team in the country will be trying to get him,” Wonka responds (Dahl, 1997, p. 160).

Wonka’s amusement at the consequences of his selection tests on the four “failed” children appears most callous. The effects are completely objectionable in their disrespect, pain, and unethical treatment of the “applicants.” Moreover, they could also have strongly deleterious effects on his business. It seems, therefore, that this is one aspect of the fantasy that has no applicability to contemporary recruitment and selection. However, there is more here than first meets the eye.

The four obnoxious characters that Dahl creates are caricatures. They symbolize those negative features of children that Dahl found particularly loathsome (Treglown, 1994). These caricatures parody the brashness, greed, rudeness, selfishness, and disobedience of modern children. And the sad fate of each “nasty little beast” is simply its just desserts. The fitting nature of the unpleasant outcome is meant to teach both the child and his or her parents more appropriate ways of behaving:
The punishments are meant to fit the crime and we are left feeling that those horrible children and their equally obnoxious parents will come out better and wiser after the treatment. At least, Mr. Willy Wonka assures us that they will. (Eccleshare, 1997, p. 168)

Applying this aspect of the story to contemporary recruitment and selection, Wonka would have us develop a process in which the unsuccessful applicants learn about themselves and the reasons for their failure. The goal of this information is to help the person change his or her behavior and to “improve.” In practice, most organizations adopt a very different strategy and provide just a short and vague letter that politely rejects the applicant (Heneman & Judge, 2005). This approach is adopted because of the perceived increased likelihood of appeal or legal remedy; the more information the organization gives the rejected applicant, the more hooks there are to hang an appeal on (although, of course, if an appeal were made, all of this information would be available to the rejected candidate). The effect of Wonka’s approach is that the children and their parents know that they themselves caused their own downfall by disobeying Wonka’s instructions and warnings. Years later, when they hear that Charlie is running the factory, they will understand why it was not them and possibly learn something about their own character. Perhaps Wonka’s lesson for contemporary recruitment and selection is that success or failure should not come as a surprise to the applicant. The process itself should make it clear to both parties, with decision criteria that are transparent to both sides, who is successful, who is not, and the reasons why.

CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY AND THE PO FIT PARADIGM

As mentioned earlier, Willy Wonka’s approach to recruitment and selection sits squarely in the psychometric paradigm: He adopts a one-way approach to the encounter in which the “applicants” are tested and rejected without them even knowing that they are involved in a selection process. Although he may check that his successful candidate is happy with being selected [“How I love my chocolate factory.... Do you love it too, Charlie?” (Dahl, 1997, p. 161)], this hardly qualifies as a two-way process in which both sides access the suitability of the other. Moreover, Charlie’s initial rejection of his offer in the 2005 version of the film demonstrates that he has failed to address all of Charlie’s needs.

There is another recruitment and selection episode in the 2005 film: the recruitment of the Oompa-Loompa workforce. On a safari in the jungle to find new flavors, Wonka encounters a village of very unhappy people who live by eating green caterpillars and worship the cocoa bean. He offers them the opportunity to come and work in his factory, for which he offers
warmth, safety, and payment in cocoa beans. They are delighted to accept his offer. This is a merger between the two bodies, with each one having something to offer the other: A fit is achieved.

This episode is instructive because it demonstrates the difficulty in genuinely achieving a fit in the information and power asymmetries (Billsberry, 2007) of recruitment and selection. In this fantasy, the Oompa-Loompas are shown as being delighted with their lot. They happily do the work of Wonka and appear to revel in their simple existence. However, we are told that they cannot leave the factory or otherwise they will die in the chilly weather. They are also subjected to Wonka’s dangerous experiments. This creates the impression that Willy Wonka may not have been as open about working conditions in his factory as he should have been when he persuaded them to become his workers. If they had known that they would become imprisoned laboratory rats, they may not have been so keen to uproot themselves from Loompaland.

The Application of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* for Teaching Recruitment and Selection

Each of the three different sources (book and two film adaptations) has its strengths and weaknesses as a device for teaching recruitment and selection paradigms. The book is short, quick to read, and beautifully written. However, it is aimed at children, and some students may question its relevance on these grounds. From a recruitment perspective, some important themes are less obvious or not included. There is no selection test for Charlie to pass, and there is an immediate acceptance of the offer, which weakens the coverage of the social process and fit paradigms.

In many ways, the 1971 film adaptation offers the best portrayal of the psychometric paradigm with the inclusion of the everlasting gobstopper subplot, which gives Charlie the opportunity to demonstrate his values to Wonka. The 1971 film also has the benefit of Slugworth’s appearance on the scene whenever a golden ticket is discovered, thereby giving Wonka the opportunity to find out about the background of every lucky winner. But from a recruitment and selection perspective, this version of the film suffers by the omission of the selection stories about the Oompa-Loompas and the squirrels in the Nut Room. Also, the film ends quite abruptly with the offer of the factory to Charlie as soon he voluntarily surrenders the everlasting gobstopper, and little play is made of the development of a relationship between the two main characters.

Although it may not cover all the relevant themes, we recommend using the 2005 film adaptation of the story. The main weakness from a recruitment and selection perspective is the missing selection test for Charlie; he
merely has to survive the tests for the other children. To compensate, the film shows how the Oompa-Loompas were recruited, and also, Wonka explains why he recruits squirrels to work in the Nut Room. In addition, the filmmakers have added a twist at the end when Charlie rejects the offer of the factory when Wonka refuses to allow Charlie’s family to come to the factory with him, which provides material relevant to the social process and fit paradigms. It is interesting that in resolving this impasse, Charlie offers to accompany Wonka on a visit to his father to resolve their long-standing separation. Not only does this exchange show the development of a relationship between the two players, it also demonstrates how the two sides of the recruitment exchange are prepared to move to accommodate the other. On a more practical note, this film was only recently released, and the use of the earlier film will inevitably lead to questions about why the more recent film is not being used.

Prior to viewing the film, we recommend that students are introduced (or reintroduced) to the three recruitment and selection paradigms (see Appendix A) and given instructions to find examples of these paradigms when they watch the film. In this story, Wonka’s approach to selection is based on putting irresistible temptation in the way of “applicants” and seeing how they react. This surfaces their values and gives Wonka the insights he needs about each person; as mentioned earlier, personal values are at the heart of the selection process. This is an unusual approach and quite different to that advocated by most recruitment and selection experts. Consequently, we recommend that students also be introduced to the concept of values before viewing the film. If there is sufficient time, students might be asked to complete the card-sort version of the Organizational Culture Profile (O’Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991), which asks people to sort 54 different values in order of importance to themselves. However, if time is more limited, the shorter, Likert-type-scaled version by Sarros, Gray, Densten, and Cooper (2005) will still provide a useful introduction and a richer language with which to discuss value-led selection. A major concern with the use of values in personnel selection is their hidden nature and their reliability and validity. There are also interesting issues connected with people’s privacy and adverse impact. To what extent do selectors have the right to probe into people’s values?

VIEWING OPTIONS

Time, technology, and copyright constraints will shape how the film is shown. If time in the classroom is limited, the most natural approach is to ask students to view the film on their own time. If this approach is adopted, we recommend giving students some questions to guide their viewing (see Appendix B for an example).
An alternative approach is to show extracts from the film in the classroom. We recommend the use of the following scenes to highlight the key recruitment and selection themes (all scene numbers and timings refer to the DVD release of the film):

- Scene 5: 12:57–16:02 Announcement of the Golden Tickets
- Scene 23: 1:08:41–1:13:42 Veruca’s demise in the Nut Room
- Scene 29: 1:32:24–1:36:29 Willy Wonka offers the job to Charlie

Management educators who have the opportunity to show the whole film are encouraged to follow Huczynski’s (1994) recommendation of dividing the screening into sections to prevent students losing sight of the purpose of the viewing. We have divided the film into five sections that correspond to the main recruitment and selection issues. We recommend pausing the film in these places and using appropriate discussion questions to focus students on the key points:

- Sequence 1: Scenes 1–12; 36 minutes 31 seconds; from the start until the entry to the factory
- Sequence 3: Scenes 16–21; 46:15–1:06:43; end of the Oompa-Loompa story to the demise of Violet Beauregard
- Sequence 4: Scenes 22–27; 1:06:43–1:29:03; Willy Wonka’s childhood, the Nut Room and the demise of Mike Teavee
- Sequence 5: Scenes 28–31; 1:29:03–1:43:53; from the demise of Mike Teavee until the end of the film

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

The following questions are suggested to stimulate discussion on the main recruitment and selection issues in the film. The activities that follow prompt more in-depth consideration of the issues when management educators have more time to devote to the film. Postgraduate students should be encouraged to relate the questions and activities to their own experience.

**Psychometric Paradigm Discussion Prompts**

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of Willy Wonka’s “Golden Ticket” approach to applicant attraction?
- What selection tests is each child faced with?
- Critically assess Willy Wonka’s selection tests.
- How does Willy Wonka’s selection of a successor compare to his selection of workers in the Nut Room?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of using individualized selection tests?
- What are the strengths and weakness of hiring for a specific job as opposed to hiring a “whole person” who will grow and develop into a role?
• Are values and/or personality important in hiring for a specific job?
• What are the critical limitations of recruiting someone solely based on their value congruence with the owner?
• What are the conditions when a value-led approach might be appropriate?
• Is it ethical for Wonka to test people without their knowledge?
• If the “applicants” knew they were applicants, would their behavior change?
• Is Wonka’s approach to recruitment and selection legal?

Social Process Discussion Prompts
• To what extent is Willy Wonka’s approach to recruitment and selection an “obstacle to clear” rather than part of the nascent relationship between Willy Wonka and his factory manager?
• What does Charlie’s initial rejection of Willy Wonka’s offer tell us about the effectiveness of Willy Wonka’s approach to the social aspects of recruitment and selection?
• What role, if any, do the songs performed by the Oompa-Loompas after the demise of each child play in the recruitment and selection process?
• What right does a failed (or successful) applicant have to know why someone else was hired (or not hired)?

Fit Paradigm Discussion Prompts
• To what extent do the Oompa-Loompas make an informed decision about their future?
• Is the deal between Willy Wonka and the Oompa-Loompas equitable?
• Did Willy Wonka take advantage of the Oompa-Loompas for his own gain?
• Compare the Oompa-Loompas to immigrant labor. Is Willy Wonka an exploitative owner?
• To what extent can the Oompa-Loompas be considered an exploited workforce?
• How could Willy Wonka have designed a fit paradigm approach to the recruitment of his factory manager?
• Is PO fit a good approach to selection?
• Is PO fit a “backdoor” for unfair discrimination?
• What does liking a candidate have to do with whether he or she can do the job or his or her PO fit?
• How would a minority group member react to a selection decision (by a majority group member) based on “the one I liked best”?

Other Discussion Prompts
• Describe the culture of Willy Wonka’s chocolate factory.
• To what extent does Willy Wonka’s approach to recruitment and selection mirror the culture of his organization?
• How important are the founder’s values in an organizational culture?
• Compare the values of Charlie Bucket and Willy Wonka.
• What impact will Charlie Bucket have as factory manager?
• Will the “ghost” of Willy Wonka haunt successors to the role?
• If one of the other children had been successful, what impact do you think this would have made on the Chocolate Factory?
• How does Willy Wonka’s approach to recruitment and selection accord with your own experience as (a) an applicant and (b) a selector?
• What lessons can be drawn for “real” recruitment and selection from Willy Wonka’s “fantasy” approach?

Activities

In addition to the previous discussion prompts, we suggest some activities that might be useful for more in-depth consideration of the issues:

• Compare Willy Wonka’s approach to the recruitment of a factory manager to the managerial selection of a factory manager in a “real” chocolaterie.
• Ask students to design a selection test to reveal someone’s values. This exercise might be followed by discussions on the nature of values and impression management during recruitment and selection.
• Start a campaign for the rights of Oompa-Loompas. Depending on resources, time, facilities, and so on, students might be asked to produce an Oompa-Loompa declaration of rights, a list of issues for collective bargaining, a charter for a trade union, or even a fully fledged liberation movement. This activity should provoke a lot of discussion on labor process issues, the nature of work, and workers’ rights.

Further ideas for activities can be found in Ryan (1993). Although these activities are designed for using Charlie and the Chocolate Factory with children, many can be easily adapted for use with management students [e.g., write an “Oompa-Loompa”-style song (followed by discussion that compares this approach to the way that “real” applicants are handled), produce a Golden Ticket, response journals, quizzes, personality profiles, create your own invention, and conversations].

STUDENT REACTION

We piloted this material in an in-company two-day “Effective Interviewing” workshop that we ran for managers about to embark on recruitment and selection. We allocated the first two hours of the workshop to this film and used it to introduce different ways of thinking about recruitment and selection to our delegates (N = 8). Prior to the workshop, we sent the delegates a DVD of the 2005 version of the film and asked them to watch it before attending the workshop. They were sent some viewing notes and were asked to pause the film at key moments and to note down their answers to some questions (see Appendix B). During the workshop, we showed the four scenes mentioned earlier to refresh memories and ignite discussion on the purpose of recruitment and selection and the role of the interviewer. The delegates worked in pairs; each pair informally presented their answer to a designated question, and these expanded into group discussions on the following topics: What sort of person are we looking for? How do we know if someone should
be appointed? Are “we” making the decision? What impact do we as inter-
viewers have on the interviewees? Although this session lasted just 2 hours,
it was continually referenced in discussion throughout the workshop.

Talking to delegates individually after the workshop, all were supportive
of the use of this film and thought it worked well. There was a very high
level of engagement with the material during the workshop. The material
worked particularly well for the issue of applicants’ reactions to selection
and the associated social processes. Two of the delegates said they were
very skeptical when they received the DVD in the post but admitted that
once discussion in the workshop got underway, they could see the relevance
and were engaged with the activity.

This material has also been tested with student audiences by a colleague
in Mumbai, India. His audience was two classes (N = 159; i.e., groups of 77
and 82) of first-year MBA students taking a Human Resource Management
elective. He reports that the session was “a grand success” and that his “learn-
ing objectives were well met” (Z. Mulla, personal communication, February
13, 2007). His students were asked to rate the session on a scale of 1 (very
dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). Of the students, 141 supplied feedback, with
37 (26%) rating it a 5, 70 (50%) rating it a 4, and 34 (24%) rating it a 3. No
students rated the session less than a 3. The average of all students was 4.02
(Z. Mulla, personal communication, July 30, 2007).

Conclusion

The story of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory has been presented, along
with accompanying exercises, as a teaching resource. Although the story
could be considered to be a lateral and unusual choice, it is also one that
demands engagement and debate. Charlie and the Chocolate Factory func-
tions as a device that will encourage exploration of recruitment and selection
paradigms as well as the practicalities of recruitment and selection.
Ultimately, the objective of introducing such unconventional material to
students is to facilitate a deep level of processing, develop a critical aware-
ness, and retain the lessons in students’ memory.

Appendix A

Recruitment and Selection Paradigms

The assumptions underlying the three recruitment and selection paradigms
included in this article are summarized below. The outlines of the psychometric and
social paradigms are from Herriot (1993). The PO fit paradigm is based on Bowen
et al. (1991), Kristof (1996), Levesque (2005), Schneider (1987), and Schneider,
Psychometric Paradigm

- People do not change very much
- They possess attributes that can each be objectively measured independently of each other
- Individual attributes predict work performance
- Individual differences are the biggest single source of variability in performance
- Jobs do not change very much
- Jobs consist of a specific set of tasks
- Job performance can be measured in terms of output and value
- Job tasks require specific attributes
- Selection is by the organization of the applicant
- The main purpose of selection is to predict job performance
- The best performers are the most suitable employees
- The better the selection, the better the performance

Social Process Paradigm

- People are constantly changing
- How they view themselves is crucially important
- The self-perceptions are subjective and interdependent
- Work behavior is part of a process that involves social interactions and perceptions of their consequences
- A job is a changing set of role expectations and relationships
- These can often be negotiated by the jobholder
- Selection is by both parties of each other
- The selection procedure is a social process in which a relationship is formed and developed
- It involves information exchange and negotiation

PO Fit Paradigm

- Organizations, jobs, and the business environment are constantly changing
- As is the relationship between employees and employers
- It is impossible to predict the future with any degree of success
- Organizations need employees who grow and develop with them
- The fit between employees and employers influences how people grow and develop with the changing organization
- An employee’s fit is influenced by interactions in a large range of domains (e.g., job, profession, work/life balance, values, supervisor, team members)
- The complexity of PO fit means that it is usually not possible to isolate the specific factors contributing to prolonged high performance with any degree of success
- The interaction between people and work environments is the biggest single source of variability in performance
- The prime focus of selection for both parties is finding a relationship that is mutually beneficial
- There is no fit between the parties if it is not in the best interests of either party
- Employers seek to recruit “whole people”
- Employees seek an employer where they will thrive
Appendix B

Viewing Notes

INSTRUCTIONS

Before attending your Effective Interviewing course, please watch the film *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. It is important that you watch this film because the workshop facilitators will base initial group discussions on this film.

Watch the film, pausing after the following sequences. After each sequence, think about the associated question and note down your response.

Sequence 1: Scenes 1–12; 36 minutes 31 seconds; from the start until the entry to the factory
- Imagine yourself as the winner of a Golden Ticket. What are you feeling as you approach the factory?

- Is this a good deal for the Oompa-Loompas?

Sequence 3: Scenes 16–21; 46:15–1:06:43; end of the Oompa-Loompa story to the demise of Violet Beauregard
- What do you make of the way that Willy Wonka and the Oompa-Loompas react to the fates of the misbehaving children?

Sequence 4: Scenes 22–27; 1:06:43–1:29:03; Willy Wonka’s childhood, the Nut Room, and the demise of Mike Teavee
- Imagine that you are Willy Wonka and you have to recruit more squirrels. How would you assess whether a squirrel had the skills to be effective?

Sequence 5: Scenes 28–31; 1:29:03–1:43:53; from the demise of Mike Teavee until the end of the film
- Why did Willy Wonka fail in his first attempt to recruit Charlie?

References


