POP CULTURE AND PEDAGOGY: TAKING UP SCHOOL DOCUMENTARIES IN TEACHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Reid L. Adams: Pop Culture and Pedagogy: Taking Up School Documentaries in
Teacher Education
(Under the direction of James Trier)

In the forward to *Reading Television*, Fiske and Hartley (2003) write that

television programs "constitute a gigantic empirical archive of human sense-making,

there for the taking, twenty-four/seven" (p.xviii). In addition, this "gigantic empirical

archive" also includes fiction films, video games, documentary films, commercials,

news media, radio, Internet, and many other forms of mass-produced visual media

found in popular culture. In this dissertation I explore a particular piece of this

contemporary archive. I suggest pedagogical projects based on a cultural studies

analysis of "school docs," a particular genre of documentary films that I have defined

and catalogued. This genre includes such documentary films as: *Hoop Dreams*

(1994)*, Mad Hot Ballroom* (2004), *OT: Our Town* (2002)*, Stupid in America* (2006),

Waiting for Superman (2010), and *The War on Kids* (2009). The pedagogical

projects that I conceptualize are intended to explore issues and topics relevant to

teacher education coursework; specifically issues and topics associated with the

teaching of Social Foundations of Education. In this dissertation I: (1) discuss how I

have become interested in the intersection of popular culture and teacher education;

(2) define and discuss the "school docs" genre; (3) discuss how documentary films

and fiction films have been taken up pedagogically by academics; (4) describe the

context for which the projects in this dissertation have been conceptualized; (5)

discuss a theoretical framework for analyzing school docs; (6) Describe the

processes and procedures for collecting and analyzing school docs; and (7) suggest

pedagogical projects based on my analysis of selected school docs.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This dissertation is an inquiry into the pedagogical uses of *poplar culture texts.* The term *popular culture text* is in reference to Fiske's (1989b) notion of the term. Referring to the unlimited source of commodities produced and consumed in the process of culture as" texts," Fiske (1989b) writes, "[B]y text I mean a signifying construct of potential meanings operating on a number of levels"(p. 43). This includes cultural artifacts like clothing, books, television, film, and video games. In this dissertation, I will mainly use the term in reference to visual (film, television) texts. The primary visual texts taken up in this dissertation are film and television documentaries about schooling and/or education[1]; a genre of films I refer to as *school docs.* The results of my inquiry are illustrated in two detailed chapters, each of which conceptualize and explain a detailed pedagogical project based on my cultural studies analyses of these documentary films and television shows. The pedagogical projects are designed to cover various issues and topics related to teacher education; specifically those covered in Social Foundations of Education courses.

My initial interest in the pedagogical uses of film evolved while enrolled in a Cultural Studies of Education course in my doctoral program of studies. More

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[1] By *schooling*, I am referring to a wide range of *processes* that occur in educational institutions (teaching, learning, extracurricular activities) whereas the term *education* is more in reference to the systems and structures of education (schools, school systems, colleges and universities) that support and maintain these processes.

specifically, I became interested in how popular films could be taken up in the work I was doing as a graduate assistant instructor in several pre-service teacher education courses (Social Foundations of Education, Introduction to Teaching, Elementary Social Studies). During the doctoral seminar, popular fiction films were taken up and read as visual texts and used in parity with academic articles and book chapters. Films were chosen based on the professor's initial *reading*[2] of the film and its potential articulation of concepts and ideas relevant to weekly seminar discussions. After reading both the written and visual texts, seminar sessions involved articulating various concepts and ideas found in the written texts with scenes from the visual text. Before I explain the activity any further, I will briefly explain what I mean by *articulation.* I am referring here to what Hall (1986) describes as "the form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions" (p. 53). This "linkage" is not necessarily a given, nor is it "absolute and essential for all time." Furthermore, Hall explains, "The so-called 'unity' of a discourse is really the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be rearticulated in different ways because they have no necessary 'belongingness'" (p. 53). Hall contends that what "matters" in an articulation is "a linkage between the articulated discourse and the social forces with which it can, under certain historical conditions, but need not necessarily, be connected" (p. 53). Our particular method of articulating various ideas, concepts, and theory included referencing particular

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[2] While the term "reading" is generally used in reference to written texts, I am using it throughout this dissertation in a broad sense to include a variety of "popular culture texts" including films (Fiske, 1989a). Explaining how even a very abstract "popular culture text" can be "read," Fiske (1989a) writes, "Like all texts, [even] *beaches* have readers. People use beaches to seek out certain kinds of meaning for themselves, meanings that help them come to terms with their off-beach, normal lifestyle. As with other texts, these meanings are determined partly by the structure of the text itself, partly by the social characteristics and discursive practices of the reader…" (p.43).

scenes and dialogue found in the films we were assigned with relevant passages

from the written text. This approach required close readings of both written and

visual texts and proved very helpful in coming to understand abstract concepts and

ideas. For instance, one activity involved choosing scenes from movies we read

during the course of the semester and articulating them with relevant ideas and

concepts found in Debord's (1977) book, *The Society of the Spectacle.* Choices of

films included *I Heart Huckabees* (2005), *The Matrix* (1999), and *Network* (1976)*.*

The activity involved taking extensive notes on the written academic texts and

finding moments in the film that connected to or resonated with these notes and

passages. Our articulations began with a written description of the moment in the

film we identified, followed by direct quotes from relevant passages in the written

text. We often provided direct quotes from the film as well. Finally we explained how

the scene could be interpreted through that passage. The articulations we shared

were discussed during subsequent seminars and online discussions. The following

is an example that was given by the professor of how scenes from the film *The*

Matrix (1999) could be used to articulate certain passages from Debord's (1977),*The*

Society of the Spectacle:

> **Debord and *The Matrix***: Debord's thesis 21 is, "So long as the realm
> of necessity remains a social dream, dreaming will remain a social
> necessity. The spectacle is the bad dream of modern society in chains,
> expressing nothing more than its wish for sleep. The spectacle is the
> guardian of that sleep." This thesis resonates with the purpose of the
> Matrix program, which is to keep all the humans in the "pods" asleep
> and dreaming of the unreal "real" world; in effect, the Matrix has
> created a "bad dream" for people in that what people are dreaming is
> an expression of "nothing more than [each dreaming being's] wish for
> sleep." We explicitly see the physical "chains" of the Matrix in the
> scene in which Neo is freed from the apparatus—these physical chains
> are the tubes that plug into each human in the pod (along the spine

and into the brain). The mental "chains" comprise the dreamworld that the Matrix generates for each human in the pod and the Matrix is also the "guardian" of the sleep each human always experiences. (Example used with permission of seminar professor)

Unique in our approach to the work I have described is what Lister and Wells (2001) refer to as "the search to understand the relationships of cultural production, consumption, belief and meaning, to social processes and institutions" (p. 61). In other words, this method allowed us to conceptualize ideas and concepts presented in the texts within the context of *popular culture*. I am equating popular culture here with mass culture. That is, commercial culture that has been "mass produced for mass consumption" (Storey, 2006; p. 6). It is also important to understand how "culture" is being used here. According to Fiske (1995) culture is the "social circulation of meanings, values, and pleasures, to the process of forming social identities and social relationships, and to entering into relation with the larger social order in a particular way and from a particular position" (p. 323). Culture is therefore a process, or in Stuart Hall's (1997) words, "it is participants in a culture who give meaning to people, objects, and events" (p. 3). Popular culture represents everyday life in this process. It is the culture of the "here and now" (Fiske, 1995; p. 334). Commodities (clothing, films, billboards) produced in mass culture are often most associated with the term, but it is the process, not necessarily the products, that make popular culture so interesting. Fiske (1989b) points this out by describing popular culture as a "site of struggle", one that "focuses upon the popular tactics by which [the forces of dominance] are coped with, are evaded or are resisted" (pp. 19-20). This particular view of popular culture acknowledges the existence of dominant "culture industry" (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972) beating the drum of capitalism, but

"contrasts sharply with the more traditional perspective that culture is something static and contained" (Hytten, 2011; pp. 205-206). By this I mean to say that popular culture is not just culture that has been "imposed upon a powerless and passive people by a culture industry" (Fiske, 1989b, p. 19). Again, this differs from earlier explanations of how popular culture operates. For instance, Horkheimer and Adorno (1972) conceived of a "culture industry" that utilized a "standardized mode" (p.124) of producing entertainment commodities that are wrought with "unending sameness" (p. 106). They argued that this mode of production ultimately controls the ways in which their products are consumed by the masses. In short, the culture industry "makes the individual illusory in its products," (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972; p. 124). In this model, there is little the masses can do but sit by idly as they are duped into cultural submission. This particular way of theorizing the structures of mass culture connotes the subordination of peoples in a society to the authority of dominant culture. It is a totalizing theory, where even resistance to dominant culture is seen as a form of subordination.

In this dissertation, I am taking up a less totalizing theory of how popular culture functions. For instance, my work draws from Fiske's (1989b) notion that, "The people, the popular, the popular forces, are a shifting set of allegiances that cross all social categories; various individuals belong to different popular formations at different times, often moving between them quite fluidly" (p. 22). Furthermore, "There can be no popular dominant culture, for popular culture is formed always in reaction to, and never as part of, the forces of domination" (p. 43). In other words, popular culture is about a process of "using *their* [the culture industry's] products for

our [the consumers'] purposes" (p. 36). As to where popular culture resides, Fiske (1989b) notes that it "is to be found in its practices, not in its texts or their readers, though such practices are often most active in the moments of text-reader interaction" (p. 43).

This particular way of looking at popular culture, specifically Fiske's (1989b) notion of the "text-reader interaction," gave me an opportunity to explore and articulate social theory in a more creative and interesting way than other approaches. As I began to explore the literature and look for other ways that popular culture texts could be taken up, I began to notice how educators and schooling are represented in our media-saturated culture and how this intersected with work I had done as a public school teacher, and the work I was currently doing as a graduate student. After several seminar discussions regarding visual representation theory, articulated through scenes and topics found in popular feature films about teachers and students, I began to reflect on my own identity as an educator, and the emerging identities of the students I taught in our teacher education program. I began to take a closer look at how educators and students are represented in popular school films and television programs and the complexity of how the professional identities of educators are constructed through various social practices, including these films. However, this idea gradually gave way to another as I began to narrow my focus of inquiry to one particular type of film about schools. That is, I became interested in documentary films. My interest in fictional films about school led to my current interest in *documentary* films focused on schools, teachers, and students, and how these documentaries might be used in my own professional

pedagogical project to address a wider range of issues and topics. And while I am still interested in the nuances of how popular culture texts work to co-construct the identities of educators, further observations and analyses of the documentary films I discovered have shed light on a wider range of critical issues and topics relevant to the work I do as a teacher educator and academic.

CHAPTER II: SCHOOL DOCS

In this chapter I will discuss the school doc genre. In the event that a reader of this dissertation might also want to take up any of the documentaries I have catalogued, I will also provide examples of the types of issues and topics represented in the films. The topics I identify are those relevant to various aspects of teacher education. Before I discuss what a "school doc" is, I will give a brief explanation regarding how I originally "stumbled" upon them.

As I have mentioned, some of the films taken up in the Cultural Studies course previously discussed included what Trier (2001) refers to as "school films." He defines the *school film* as a movie "that in some way---even incidentally---is about an educator or a student" (p. 127). This includes popular fiction films such as, *To Sir With Love* (1966), *Stand and Deliver* (1988), and *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* (1982). Of particular interest to me was the way that educators and students were represented in this genre of films. The relevance of these films to my own identity as an educator and student, along with how they might be useful in my own work, became the impetus for further exploration of the genre.

While researching various school films for use in my own practice and scholarship, I began to notice a considerable number of documentary films about teachers, students, and other issues related to education. As I searched for, gathered, and viewed these documentary films I discovered there were probably

enough to qualify them for a separate category, or sub-genre, of "school films." I have since come to refer to this sub-genre of "school films" as *school docs.* I define a school doc as a documentary film or documentary television show focused primarily on issues related to public or private education. The term documentary is used here in reference to films and television shows that represent the actual world we live in, as opposed to fiction films and television that represent the imagined world of filmmakers. The school doc genre does *not* include *trigger films.* A *trigger film* is an educational documentary produced with the intent of being shown to students in schools. The focus of trigger films is often social and health issues or issues found in character education curricula. For instance, trigger film topics may include topics such as cheating, alcohol abuse, teen pregnancy, or sexual education. For someone looking for more information on "trigger films," Ellsworth and Whatley (1990) provide a critical analysis of the genre. Unlike trigger films, school docs are documentaries intended for general viewing audiences – i.e., they are shown in theaters or air on television. Besides the exclusion of trigger films, I have established four basic criteria for the documentary film's content focus, and a documentary film must meet one or more for inclusion in this genre. This includes documentary films that focus primarily on: (1) teachers and students; (2) public and/or private schools; (3) extra-curricular activities and school programs; or (4) post-secondary education. So far, this definition and criteria have allowed me to catalog close to one hundred documentaries in the genre. My *Appendix* provides a working list of school docs I have identified at this point. I have viewed all of the films in this table, either on DVD, streaming them online, or in a theater setting. The genre

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includes documentary films such as: *Être et avoir* (2002); Oscar winning *I Am A Promise (1993)*; *Indoctrinate U (2007);* Eric Wiseman's classic *High School (1968); Frontrunners (2008)*; *Hard Times at Douglass High: A No Child Left Behind Report Card (2008);* and recently released, *Waiting for Superman* (2010). I will provide a brief review of several examples to illustrate how and why these particular films have "made the cut." Each film I am using as an example here meets at least one of the four criteria established for the school doc genre. In many cases the films meet more than one standard for inclusion. My discussion of these school docs is a limited summary of the films and is intended only to introduce the genre and provide insight into how I have chosen them for inclusion. Closer readings of school docs can be found in my discussion of how they can be taken up pedagogically.

The French documentary film, *Être et avoir* (2002), is a prime example of a film that meets several criteria for inclusion in the school doc genre. The film documents one academic year of a rural one-room schoolhouse in Auvergne, France. The film follows the daily work of George Lopez, the school's only teacher, and about a dozen of the school's students. The students in the film range in age from four to twelve. Without the use of narration or noticeable interview questions, the filming process appears non-obtrusive as the daily activities of Lopez and the children are documented. Much of the film takes place inside of the school's one classroom or playground, but we are also given a glimpse into the personal lives of students and their families. In the classroom, viewers bear witness to a range of social and academic phenomena specific to the context of their school. Many of these phenomena may appear familiar to those who have taught in the classroom.

Students struggle with the rigors of the academic curriculum, friendships are tested in the daily social interactions of the children, and Lopez struggles with having to say goodbye to students moving on to another school. Outside of the classroom, the film follows the students to their homes where they are shown completing homework assignments with their family and completing household chores. Lopez is also shown contemplating the end of his career as an educator, and the film reveals the emotions and anxieties he experiences during the process. The film's style makes it appear simple but there is plenty of "action" occurring throughout. Contrary to what we often see in feature fiction film, the action in this documentary is not accompanied by digital effects, explosions, or fake blood.

As I mentioned, *Être et avoir (2002)* meets several criteria for inclusion in the *school doc* genre. First, the film is focused on a particular school in rural France. It also documents the work of a particular teacher, George Lopez, and the educational experiences of his students. Perhaps most salient is the actual teaching represented in the film. For much of the film, the camera silently documents the pedagogical practices of Lopez. Because of the particular nature of the school, *Être et avoir* (2002) also offers a glimpse into the history of education in France and can be read as a representation of the institution of schooling. As is evident, *Être et avoir (2002)* meets at least three of four criteria I have established for this genre of films. This is not to say that I am privileging school docs that meet more than one criterion. The examples I am using here have been chosen because they allow me to point out the nuances of how the films may be considered. Films that only meet one criterion may be just as useful and engaging as a film that meets all four. Meeting more than one

criterion only means that a film may be taken up in several ways to address more than one issue.

The Academy Award winning documentary, *I Am A Promise: The Children of Stanton Elementary* (2005), is another good example of a school doc. The film documents the schooling experiences of teachers, students, administrators, and parents at an urban elementary school in Philadelphia, PA. As the story unfolds the camera often returns to follow the school's principal, Deanna Burnley, for explanations of how funding, school policies, and the level of poverty students face interferes with the school's mission. Filmmakers were given access to students' homes and individual classrooms in the school. In both cases, the film offers viewers a glimpse into the context of urban schooling. Like *Être et avoir* (2002), *I Am a Promise: The Children of Stanton Elementary School* (2005) also meets several criteria for school docs. Perhaps the most obvious criterion met by *I Am a Promise: The Children of Stanton Elementary School* is the particular focus on a school, Stanton Elementary. The school is central to the telling of this story and becomes somewhat of a character itself. The work of the school's principal, Deanna Burnley, is also a key feature of the film making this documentary suitable for inclusion. *I Am a Promise: The Children of Stanton Elementary School* (2005) is also a commentary on urban schools in Philadelphia, the institution of schooling, and policies related to education. Individual teachers are not necessarily the main focus of the film but we do see several candid examples of teaching in an urban school. Other criteria met include the film's representation of individual students at Stanton Elementary.

Further analysis of the film could lead to links with other school doc criteria, but those mentioned here are clearly enough for inclusion.

In the classic documentary, *High School (*1968), Frederick Wiseman examines Northeast, a large, mostly white, middle-class high school in Philadelphia. Shot in classic cinema verite[3] style, *High School* ventures into just about every location and facet of Northeast to document life as it unfolds in the high school. Viewers are introduced to several teachers and administrators in the film who seem to fit many stereotypical representations of teachers and administrators in popular culture; that is, the film offers an example of the conservative disciplinarian, the "cool" teacher, and the boring inept teacher reminiscent of Ben Stein's character in the classic school film, *Ferris Beuller's Day Off* (1986). Many of the scenes in the film are shot in these teachers' classrooms and provide viewers with multiple representations of teaching styles. In this film, teachers are seen struggling with students, students are struggling with teachers, and administrators seem to struggle with everyone. To some extent, everyone in the film seems to struggle with school as an institutional force.

High School (1968) has come to represent the authoritarian nature of schooling and falls into a category of school docs that tend to focus on school as an institution. Because of the amount of time spent in classrooms, the film can also be read as a representation of teaching practices. Like examples used thus far, *High School* may include several criteria for school docs, but the film's specific focus on

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[3] Cinema verite refers to a style of filmmaking used in observational documentaries. In this style of documentary there is little, or no, intervention by the director during filming. According to Bill Nichols (1991), "Such films cede 'control' over the events that occur in front of the camera more than any other mode" (p. 39). In short, the action is captured as it happens from a "fly-on-the-wall" perspective.

the school as an institution, and its controversial representation, earns it a spot in this particular genre of documentary film.

Indoctrinate U (2007) is somewhat of an anomaly in the genre because it is one of only several school docs I have found so far that focus on higher education. Indoctrinate U is a documentary that explores the idea that many professors at colleges and universities across the United States censor students' free speech in their classrooms. The film's overall message is rather obvious in its title. The film takes the viewer across the United States to expose violent protests at UC Santa Cruz and San Francisco State, the "persecution" of conservative student organizations at California Polytechnic Institute and the University of Tennessee. Subject matter for the film also includes a close look at cultural politics at the University of Michigan and Yale. Duke and Columbia University are also the focus of scrutiny in the film and represented as forces of ideological indoctrination. The film's subject matter and argument definitely encourages engagement, but its focus on higher education as an institution and the ways in which individual students and professors are represented qualify Indoctrinate U (2007) as a unique school doc.

The examples of school docs I have provided here should give the reader a better sense of how I have defined the genre, the criteria for choosing them, and a glimpse of the process I have used and will continue to use to expand the genre. Next, I will provide an overview of the genre for those who wish to take up school docs themselves.

School Doc Genre Survey

Before continuing with this section I first want to re-cap certain processes, analytical maneuvers that have brought me to this point. To begin with, I have discovered, collected, and catalogued films that are now included in what I have define as the *school doc* genre. In doing so, I have had to make certain distinctions regarding which films belong in the genre and which films do *not* belong. To do this, I have differentiated school docs from "trigger films" and "school films" (Trier, 2001) and provided a working definition of the term *school doc.* During all of these processes I have analyzed the films in terms of how they might be taken up pedagogically in education courses, which now brings me to a juncture where I will discuss the genre, and individual school docs, in more detail.

This section represents one more tier of analysis in my dissertation and is intended to provide the reader with a descriptive analytic overview of the genre and is also intended as a reference for academics in the field of education who may also want to take up school docs with their own students or in their research. To do this, I provide a survey of the school doc genre by applying a topic-centered approach to my analysis and discussion. By this, I mean that I will discuss the genre by highlighting how a selected group of school docs take up various education-related topics. My discussion includes a brief summary of the documentaries, and, perhaps more importantly, how the topic is represented. As evidence of further analysis, I have chosen to include examples where the same topic is addressed by more than one school doc and highlight how they represent that topic differently. In some instances, though, there is only one school doc that addresses a given topic.

Highlighting how the topics are represented, and how they are represented differently, is an analytic maneuver intended to offer the reader of this dissertation a better sense of the nuances and complexity of the genre. In addition, academics looking to take up school docs in their own practice should find this maneuver especially helpful in determining which school docs might fit better than others in a given pedagogical project. For example, if one were looking to pair an academic text critical of zero-tolerance drug and gun policies in schools with a school doc that addresses the same topic or issue, knowing how the school doc represents the topic or issue would be an important factor in planning and developing the project.

The topics, and how they are represented, have been identified through repeated analyses of the documentaries, and are those I believe academics in education might introduce to students in various undergraduate and graduate level education courses. The examples I have selected for this section of my dissertation represent a wide range of education related topics and should give the reader of this dissertation a better sense of the genre's broad pedagogical potential. By choosing to discuss a select group of school docs and topics in this section, as opposed to discussing them all, I am not privileging any one topic or documentary over another. With close to one hundred school docs included in the school doc genre, providing summaries of all of them, and discussing an analysis of the ways in which a wide range of topics are represented in them, would easily constitute an entire dissertation. That is beyond the scope of this section. It is also beyond the scope of what I have set out to do in this dissertation, which is to introduce and discuss the genre and describe how school docs can be taken up in detailed pedagogical

projects that I have conceptualized for use in a Social Foundations of Education course in teacher education.

So far in this section, I have discussed what analytical maneuvers have brought me to this point and I have discussed the structure and purpose of this section. I will now provide a brief survey of the genre by discussing nine selected education related topics and their corresponding school docs. The topics I have chosen to highlight are: (1) No Child Left Behind; (2) School Funding; (3) Charter Schools; (4) Teaching Evolution; (5) Medicating Students; (6) School Gun Violence; (7) Arts Education; (8) Racism; and (9) School Sports. Table 1 provides a list of school docs discussed in this section along with the corresponding issue or topic taken up in the film.

Arts Education	Charter Schools	Medicating Students	No Child Left Behind	Racism
• *Class Act* (2006) • *OT: Our Town* (2002)	• *The Cartel* (2009) • *Flunked* (2008) • *The Lottery* (2010) • *Stupid in America* (2006) • *Waiting For Superman* (2010)	• *Medicating Kids* (2001) • *Race To Nowhere* (2010) • *The War On Kids* (2009)	• *Hard Times at Douglass High: A No Child Left Behind Report Card* (2008) • *The Texas Miracle* (2004)	• *Prom Night in Mississippi* (2009) • *The Prep School Negro* (2009)

Table 1 – School Docs and Corresponding Issues/Topics

School Funding	School Gun Violence	School Sports	Teaching Evolution	
• *Corridor of Shame: The Neglect of South Carolina's Rural Schools* (2006) • The *Cartel* (2009)	• *Bowling for Columbine* (2002) • *The Killer at Thurston High* (2000)	• *Class C: The Only Game in Town* (2008) • *Hoop Dreams (1984)*	• *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed* (2008) • *Judgment Day: Intelligent Design On Trial* (2007) • *Scopes: The Battle Over America's Soul* (2006).	

Table 1 (continued)

School docs that address the No Child Left Behind Act

The school docs, *Hard Times at Douglass High: A No Child Left Behind Report Card* (2008) and *The Texas Miracle* (2004) both address the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The documentaries are similar in that they both focus on how schools struggle to meet the strict accountability standards associated with the law and the lengths they will go to in order to meet them, but they differ in how the story is told. First, The *Texas Miracle* addresses NCLB indirectly by documenting the fallout from a scandal in Houston, Texas where principals and district officials were accused of falsifying high school drop out rates to meet strict accountability standards set by the district's superintendent. By stating that the documentary addresses the law "indirectly," I mean that both President George W. Bush and Secretary of Education Rod Paige used the district in question as the national showcase for accountability and the model for NCLB. Bush also used the school as a model of education reform when he was campaigning for his first term as

president. Before being appointed Secretary of Education, Rod Paige had served as the district's superintendent and was responsible for implementing the strict standards; standards that were eventually incorporated into NCLB. By telling this particular story, the message of the film is that many of the strict standards set forth by NCLB are unrealistic, and that, in order to meet them, schools must resort to cheating. Whereas *The Texas Miracle* (2004) looks at an entire school district, *Hard Times at Douglass High: A No Child Left Behind Report Card* (2008) focuses on one particular school, Douglass High in Baltimore, Maryland, a low-income, high minority inner-city school. The documentary focuses on several aspects of Douglass High to provide a context for debates surrounding NCLB. These aspects include academic and social struggles that students face in an urban public high school including, poverty, violence, teen pregnancy, under-qualified qualified teachers, and high dropout rates. The main focus of the documentary is on how administrators and teachers at Douglass High struggle to meet the strict guidelines set by NCLB given this context. Ultimately, Douglass High fails to meet the NCLB standards and is overtaken by the state. Like *The Texas Miracle* (2004), *Hard Times at Douglass High* (2008) also examines the impossibility of meeting NCLB standards, but does so by focusing more on how the social conditions of the school, and the context of the community it serves, affect this. In sum, the documentary constructs a message that meeting the strict guidelines set forth by NCLB is virtually impossible if you play by the rules, especially if your school is the very type targeted by the law. The students at the center of the dropout controversy who are featured in *The Texas Miracle* (2004) share similar social, economic, and racial characteristics as those

featured in Hard Times at Douglass High: A No Child Left Behind Report Card

(2008). As a result, both school docs' message seems to confirm the other.

Academics looking for a visual text that explores how NCLB intersects with race and

social class will find both of these school docs of interest.

School docs that address school funding

The school docs, *Corridor of Shame: The Neglect of South Carolina's Rural

Schools* (2006) and The *Cartel* (2009) directly address school funding, but represent

the topic in different ways. *Corridor of Shame: The Neglect of South Carolina's Rural

Schools* documents evidence used in a court case where a number of school

districts in South Carolina sued the state over the use of local property taxes to fund

schools. It examines this policy critically by focusing on the deplorable conditions of

a number of public schools located in economically depressed areas along the

state's Interstate 95 corridor. The conditions documented in the film are used as

evidence for how current school funding policies in South Carolina lead to an

unequal education for students living in economically depressed areas within the

state. The documentary goes into several schools where principals and teachers

point out leaking roofs, raw sewage seeping into hallways and classrooms, cold

classrooms, snakes in bathrooms, and outdated library books. Teachers, parents,

and administrators featured in the documentary tie each of these issues with the

academic performance of students and the lack of opportunity they have in their

respective districts. In sum, the documentary argues that, in order for students in

these areas to succeed, more funds are drastically needed and South Carolina must

change its school funding policy in order for this to occur. *The Cartel* (2009), on the

other hand, argues that additional funding is not the answer to poor academic performance, at least not in New Jersey where, according to the documentary, more money is spent per pupil than any other state in the United States. In fact, the documentary suggests that an "explosion of education spending" has occurred and perhaps schools in New Jersey might actually be overfunded, or at least these funds are being misused by local school boards and politicians to line their own pockets, the pockets of teachers' unions, and those of private contractors and administrators; what the film refers to as a "cartel." Unlike *Corridor of Shame: The Neglect of South Carolina's Rural Schools* (2006), which presents an argument that more funds are needed to provide students an adequate education, *The Cartel* (2009) blames low academic performance on the mishandling of funds, and presents charter schools as one the best solutions to improving public education, arguing that they offer an alternative to a corrupt public school system and would not require the current level of funding that is provided.

School docs that address charter schools

School docs that address the topic of charter schools include: (1) *The Cartel* (2009); (2) *Flunked* (2008); (3) *The Lottery* (2010); (4) *Stupid in America* (2006), and (5) *Waiting For Superman* (2010). This category of school docs is somewhat unique in that charter schools are represented in much the same way. That is, in each documentary, charter schools represent the solution to low academic performance and villainous teachers unions. There is simply no critique of charter schools and the only examples used in the documentaries are ones that are doing well. A simple explanation for how each of these school docs can be read might read like the

following statement: Our current public school system is broken, American students are being out-performed on standardized test measures by students from other countries, teachers unions protect bad teachers and stand in the way of "real" reform that might change this, and charter schools are the best solution to fix all of these problems. These five school docs do differ somewhat in the amount of attention given to charter schools. For instance, *The Lottery* (2010) focuses solely on the topic by following four African-American families from Harlem and the Bronx who enter their children in a lottery for one of few spots at one of New Your City's most successful charter schools, the Harlem Success Academy. Unlike other school docs in this category, this documentary also focuses a bit more on race. It offers statistics on the academic achievement of minority students, and suggests that charter schools offer them their only chance for a better future. As opposed to race, *Waiting for Superman* (2010) invokes social class as a factor in the need for charter school reform. Commentary in the documentary suggests that traditional school models served working and middle-class students well in a by-gone blue-collar economy, but now that many manufacturing jobs have been shipped overseas and agricultural jobs are dominated by immigrant labor, these same students now need a more academically rigorous education to fit in to a more white-collar economy; as if it were acceptable to offer them a mediocre education before. This particular aspect of the documentary might segue way into a discussion regarding the intersection of social class reproduction and the charter school movement. *Waiting For Superman* (2010) is similar to *The Lottery* (2010) in that it also follows several families who have entered their children in charter school lotteries, although the families are more

racially and economically diverse. They also represent areas other than New York

City. In *The Cartel* (2009), *Flunked* (2008), and *Stupid in America* (2006), charter

schools play a less prominent role than in the previous school docs, but are

nonetheless featured as solutions to other issues that are raised in the

documentaries. As I mentioned in my previous discussion of *The Cartel*, charter

schools are featured as innovative educational reform and the obvious solution to

funding issues, teacher's unions and a broken education system. *Flunked* (2008)

offers a similar critique of the public school system and represents charter schools in

much the same way. In this school doc, principals and leaders from the featured

charter schools all discuss the success of their schools while pointing out specifically

how this success is achieved without the need for teachers unions, district

bureaucracies, or increased funding. In other words, the success of these schools is

used to substantiate arguments that frame the documentary. *Stupid in America*

(2006) is similar to *The Cartel* and *Flunked* but uses more of a capitalist viewpoint

frame the issue, arguing that, because there is no competition, the public school

system operates much like a monopoly and, as a result, gets away with providing a

mediocre "product" to students. To this end, *Stupid In America* (2006) argues for a

school system that offers students a "choice," similar to how private businesses

operate in a free market capitalist system. Charter schools are represented as one

of these choices. Unlike the other school docs in this category, this school doc also

presents state funded vouchers for private school as an answer as well as hinting at

the privatization of education. Again, what makes the latter three school docs

different from *The Lottery* (2010) and *Waiting For Superman* (2010) is that they are

not solely about charter schools. Rather, charter schools are represented as a solution to other issues that get more attention in the documentaries. Because the school docs in this category *only* focus on successful charter schools, they might also be used to open up a discussion, or exploration, about what is *not* being said about them.

School docs that address teaching evolution

The following school docs focus on education policy related to controversies surrounding teaching evolution, creationism, and intelligent design in public schools: (1) *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed* (2008); (2) *Judgment Day: Intelligent Design On Trial* (2007)*; and* (3) *Scopes: The Battle Over America's Soul* (2006). For academics looking to place the topic in an historical perspective, the school doc *Scopes: The Battle Over America's Soul* (2006) may be of particular interest. This documentary tells the story of the famous 1925 Scopes "Monkey Trial" where John Scopes, a high school teacher from Tennessee, was arrested in for presenting Darwin's theory of evolution to students in his class. The documentary is largely informative and presents some rather obscure background information about the trial that might prompt a richer discussion about the origins of the controversy. For instance, information about the relationship John Scopes had with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is explored which lends itself to questions regarding the motivations Scopes may have had in pressing the issue of evolution. *Judgment Day: Intelligent Design On Trial* (2007) also documents a legal battle over the teaching of evolution, but focuses on a more recent case where the teaching of intelligent design was being argued in court. The documentary is about the 2005 Kitzmiller v. Dover

Area School District court case in which eleven parents sued the Dover Area School District over a school board requirement that intelligent design be presented as an alternative to the theory of evolution. As in the Scopes trial, the ACLU is involved in the case and helps the plaintiffs successfully argue that intelligent design is a form of creationism, and promoting it in public schools violates the First Amendment of the Constitution. In telling the story of this court case, *Judgment Day: Intelligent Design On Trial* (2007) also explores the motives behind the development of intelligent design theory and why this was encouraged over creationism. This aspect of the film might be taken up to discuss how the topic has evolved from the original Scopes trial. *Judgment Day: Intelligent Design On Trial* (2007) features players and arguments from both sides, each providing an example of the various angles from which the topic is approached, but in the end, the documentary sends a more powerful message about what constitutes science.

The school doc, *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed* (2008) differs significantly from the other two school docs in this category by casting significant doubt on Darwin's theory of evolution and promoting intelligent design as a viable alternative. The documentary contains an obvious agenda by giving a disproportionate amount of camera time to advocates and experts of intelligent design who help construct the documentary's argument that they are being persecuted in an atheist conspiracy to keep God out of science and classrooms. Instead of providing clear definitions for what intelligent design is, and constructing arguments based on that definition, the documentary focuses almost entirely on how the topic is treated unfairly by academics, schools, and scientists who discredit the theory. There is even the

suggestion that Darwin's theory of evolution has ties to the efforts of Nazi Germany. For academics looking for a visual text to take up in discussions with students about the evolution/intelligent design debate, the obvious slant in *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed* (2008) could prove useful by illustrating a wider range of arguments within the debate.

School docs that address medicating students

There are three school docs that address the topic of medicating students: (1) *Medicating Kids* (2001), (2) *Race To Nowhere* (2010), and (3) *The War On Kids* (2009). Each of these documentaries addresses one particular aspect of this topic, the dramatic increase of students who are being prescribed medication for Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit Hyper-Activity Disorder (ADHD). Each documentary approaches the topic differently. As the title suggests, *Medicating Kids* (2001) focuses solely on the topic of medicating school aged children, while *Race To Nowhere* (2010) and *The War On Kids* (2009) address the topic in the context of larger arguments about schooling. *Medicating Kids* (2001) presents the case of four different students who have been diagnosed with ADD or ADHD and prescribed, or are encouraged to prescribe, medication to treat it. The documentary looks at how each student and family deals differently with the issue, presenting two cases where students show dramatic behavioral and academic improvements after being diagnosed and medicated. The third family chooses not to accept the diagnosis or medication and explores other options for helping their child. The fourth family struggles as the student refuses to take the medication against his mother's wishes and continues to have trouble at school academically and socially. While pointing out

that the statistics on ADD and ADHD diagnosis and treatment is alarming, this particular documentary suggests that, in some cases, medicating kids is the right thing to do. The families and students who choose not to accept the diagnosis or medicate themselves wind up appearing either naïve or unwilling to face reality. *The War on Kids* (2009) approaches the topic of medicating students in a drastically different manner. Arguing that schools have become increasingly authoritarian, this documentary suggests that medicating students for ADD and similar diagnoses is merely a way to control students, a practice that amounts to "psychiatric abuse." Experts interviewed in this section of the documentary also argue that diagnosing students with ADD and prescribing them medicine like Ritalin and Adderoll allows schools to view students as the problem while avoiding a critique of irrelevant and boring curricula. In addition, *The War on Kids* suggests that the condition (ADD, ADHD) itself is suspicious, and that students being treated for it are often those who question teachers and authority. Unlike *Medicating Kids* (2001), this documentary offers no upside to medicating students. *Race To Nowhere* (2010) touches on the topic briefly, but frames the topic differently than the other two school docs in this category. The larger argument made in *Race To Nowhere* is that students are being pushed too hard to achieve academically, and when they do, it often never translates into the type of success that is used to justify the stress and anguish endured along the way. In one section, the documentary features commentary from several students who have been prescribed drugs such as Ritalin and Adderoll to enhance their academic performance. They describe how they need the medicine to focus on the overabundance of work they are assigned. These same students also

discuss how many of their friends who have not been diagnosed with ADD or ADHD are able to get the drugs easily at school and take them illegally in order to study. This particular section is used as an example of the lengths that both students and parents will go to in order to accomplish what the documentary claims to be unrealistic and irrelevant academic goals. In short, *Race To Nowhere* (2010) represents medicating students as somewhat of a necessary evil, given the overly demanding academic expectations of parents, teachers, and schools.

School Docs that address school gun violence

The school docs, *Bowling for Columbine* (2002) and *The Killer at Thurston High* (2000) both address the issue of gun violence in schools and each focuses on one specific case. *The Killer at Thurston High* (2000) focuses on a 1998 school shooting incident at Thurston High School in Springfield, Oregon and *Bowling for Columbine* (2002) focuses on the more widely publicized 1999 school shooting incident at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. The documentaries differ mainly in how blame is sought and assigned for each incident. This is largely the result of style. One, *The Killer at Thurston High* (2000) resembles an editorial news piece, while the other, *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), follows what appears to be a more predetermined narrative and takes more liberties with featured facts. In *The Killer at Thurston High* (2000), blame for the shooting ultimately rests with the shooter, although the documentary explores the killer's home, social, and school life at great length to suggest there are factors that might explain why a fifteen year old would kill both of his parents and go on a shooting rampage at his high school. Factors such as the family's willingness to own guns, the mental state of the killer,

and his interest in violent video games and gothic rock music are presented as contextual evidence for how the shooting might be explained. Ultimately, there is no direct statement in the documentary regarding who or what might be to blame, but by choosing to explore certain factors, and not others, there is reason to believe that they are focused on to explain the crime. *Bowling for Columbine* (2002) is actually critical of documentaries like *The Killer at Thurston High (2000),* suggesting that focusing on issues such as music lyrics and video games to explain gun violence in schools is narrow minded and misses a larger point*. Bowling for Columbine* (2002) offers a wider and more critical lens for examining gun violence in schools by examining American culture. The Columbine school shooting incident is used as the primary example to highlight the issue. In this documentary, Michael Moore, the director, explores factors such as, Columbine High's proximity to a Lockheed Martin Weapons factory, the bombing of Iraq that was occurring at the same time as the shooting, fear tactics used by the media, and the accessibility of firearms. Focusing on these factors, the documentary constructs a message that America is simply a violent and fearful society that loves its guns. This, not video games and scary music lyrics, is used to explain why two high school boys would go on a shooting rampage in a high school in the suburbs and kill their classmates and themselves. Like *The Killer at Thurston High*, *Bowling For Columbine* does seek and offer answers for *why* the shooting may have occurred and who might be to blame, but unlike *The Killer at Thurston High*, it offers a more definitive answer; that is, we are all to blame.

School Docs that address racism in schools

The school docs, *Prom Night in Mississippi* (2009) and *The Prep School Negro* (2009) both address racism in American education. *Prom Night in Mississippi* (2009) tells the story of two traditions in American schools, prom and racism. It is a story that one might assume occurred during the Jim Crow era, when schools were racially segregated. Astonishingly, the story told in this documentary occurred fifty-three years *after* Brown v. Board II (1955) required that schools be de-segregated "with all deliberate speed." Prom Night in Mississippi (2009) documents a Mississippi high school's *first* racially integrated prom that occurred in 2008. Until that point, Charleston High School, in Charleston, Mississippi had a tradition of segregated proms that dated to back to 1970, when black students were finally integrated into the school fifteen years after forced integration became law. When black students were first integrated, white parents refused to allow an integrated prom. This began a long tradition of two segregated proms organized by white *and* black parents, one for white students and one for black students. *Prom Night in Mississippi* (2009) documents events leading up to the prom, and, through the voices of students, parents, and town residents, provides a historical and sociological snapshot of how this phenomenon has evolved and how it has lasted for so long. In footage where students, parents, and other Charleston residents offer insight and commentary, the film shows that, while they might be having an integrated prom, real change comes slower than one might expect. For instance, one telling film segment features a white student with his identity concealed and his name changed. In this scene, the student remarks on the absurdity of the segregated prom and the controversy that has

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emerged from impending event. The young man explains that his identity has been concealed out of fear that his parents would "disown" him if they knew he felt so strongly about the issue. According to the student, his parents are racist and disapprove of the integrated prom. The footage captured and used in *Prom Night in Mississippi* (2009) features a true cross-section of the population in Charleston, MS. An interesting component of this footage is how the combination of these scenes exposes some of the ways that racism works across generational and color lines. In a part of the country where racism is often thought of in terms of how southern whites view blacks, *Prom Night in Mississippi* (2009) constructs a story that implicates everyone in the racist tradition of segregated proms and questions whether the spirit of Brown v. Board of Education has been truly realized in the south.

　　While Prom Night In Mississippi (2009) constructs a story with direct references to school desegregation and suggests schools have more work to do to realize the goals of Brown v. Board of Education, *The Prep School Negro* (2009) addresses desegregation indirectly and constructs a story that complicates the value of desegregation. *The Prep School Negro* (2009) tells the story of an African-American student's experience attending Germantown Friends School (GFS), one of America's most prestigious private prep schools. The student is Andre Lee, the documentary's director and narrator. The school's Community Scholars Program gave Lee, who lived in one of Philadelphia's poorest urban neighborhoods, a full scholarship to attend GFS when he was fourteen years old. The scholarship, established in response to church bombings during the civil rights movement, is

given to minority students from low-income families who show outstanding academic potential. Using Lee's experience at GFS, *The Prep School Negro* (2009) documents the way he and other students in similar situations struggle with their racial identity as they negotiate two worlds, the school and the neighborhoods and families they come from. They tell a common story of trying to fit in with the majority population at their school while fitting in less and less with family and friends from their neighborhoods. For instance, a student interviewed in the documentary explains that in his school he knows he is always viewed as "a real black" by the way his white counterparts treat him, but back home he is considered "a white boy" because of his academic success at an elite private school. Lee refers to this phenomenon as "psychological homelessness." This particular aspect of the documentary is what really differentiates it from *Prom Night in Mississippi* (2009). By this I mean that *The Prep School Negro* (2009) indirectly challenges certain assumptions about racial segregation addressed in *Prom Night In Mississippi* (2009) by exploring the burden minority students often face for "acting white" (Buck, 2010)[4]. I am referring to assumptions regarding the ways minority students have benefitted from forced integration.

School docs that address arts education

      Class Act (2006) and *OT: Our Town* (2002) are examples of school docs that both address public school arts education. There are similarities and differences in how these two school docs address arts education. They both highlight the way

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[4] "Acting white" is a pejorative term that refers to prejudices students of color face from their ethnic peers when they are successful at school. Stuart Buck (2010) suggests there are links between the rapid pace at which schools were desegregated and the disapproval of academic success among African-American students from the black community.

students benefit from arts education, but biggest difference is that *OT: Our Town* (2002) illustrates the befits by telling the story of a high school theatrical production and the students who produce and perform the play, whereas *Class Act* (2006) focuses primarily on the career of a particular arts educator to construct a message about the benefits of arts education in public schools. There is more "telling" of the benefits in the latter, and more "showing" in the former. *Class Act* (2006) is a documentary film about the storied career of a well-known drama teacher and the funding crisis of arts education in public schools. Set against the backdrop of No Child Left Behind, this school doc addresses the disappearance of arts education from the classroom and what is at stake if nothing is done. The story of Jay Jensen, an extraordinary high school drama teacher from Miami, is used to illustrate why the arts should be saved, funded, and expanded. *Class Act* (2006) constructs an argument for saving the arts through interviews with Jensen and testimonials from several of his better-known celebrity students (Andy Garcia, Desmond Child, Roy Firestone). Jensen is known as "the teacher of the stars." They each describe the influence that Jensen had on them when they were students of his in high school and how their success is tied to his influence and a well-funded arts program. One of the most compelling interviews comes from, Bernard Nusbaum, a hair transplant surgeon and former arts student of Jensen's recruited for the film. In a series of interviews, intertwined with commentary from Jensen on the skills and lessons gained from school arts programs, the doctor carefully explains the similarities of hair transplant surgery and the arts. It is certainly easier to make the connection between participating in high school drama clubs and the success of media

celebrities like Andy Garcia and Roy Firestone, but the surgeon's articulation stands as one of the most compelling arguments for saving the arts, not Jensen's storied career. Jensen's biography is a major storyline in *Class Act* (2006), as the documentary highlights a number of contributions he has made to the arts in his career. Among his contributions are the donations he has made to fund public school arts programs and his advocacy work in campaigning for arts funding. In many of the interviews with Jenson, he explains the disappearance of arts funding and discusses the benefits of the arts for students to make his case.

What are missing are examples of public school arts in action where students illustrate the benefits. This is where *OT: Our Town* (2002) differs. *OT: Our Town* (2002) addresses theatrical arts in an urban high school, with no budget for the arts. In this way, the success of what happens in this play makes the case for why it *should* be funded. The setting for the film is Dominguez High School in Compton, California, better known for its winning basketball team than the arts. *OT: Our Town* (2002) tells the story of the school's first theatrical production in twenty years. The production is "Our Town", a play written by Thorton Wilder in the nineteen-thirties. The play, broken into three parts, tells the story of three "average" character's "average" life, as depicted in their day-to-day activities. Initially, the students resist the idea of this particular play. It makes sense, though; the all white middle class town of Grover's Corner, NH is a world away, literally and figuratively. Ultimately, the play's director helps the students connect to the idea of the play by having them perform and updated version. In the updated version the idea is to use the three themes (Love, Marriage, Marriage) in "Our Town" and related it to their lives, in their

town. The majority of the footage includes students using these themes to discuss their own lives in Compton. As the film shows, love, death, and marriage are universal, but understood in very different ways. Throughout the film, students show a great deal of reflection and expose themselves in ways that give them ownership over the play. For me, the original performance of "Our Town" in this documentary speaks to the complicated ways that some students may interpret the official curriculum and knowledge transmitted in schools. That is, it helps articulate what happens when the curriculum represents the values and lives of others. *OT: Our Town* (2002) illustrates the benefits of the arts by documenting the ways that students make it more relevant to their lives.

School docs that address school sports

The documentary film *Hoop Dreams* (1994) is perhaps one of the most well-known and written about films in the entire school doc genre. The documentary chronicles the lives of two young African American boys and their families as they pursue their dreams of making it into the National Basketball Association (NBA). *Hoop Dreams* documents both the social and emotional implications of possessing extraordinary basketball talent when you are a young African American male from a poor or working class urban family living in a society where high school and college sport has become a corporate sponsored spectacle. The contrast between the education of affluent white students and poor minority students becomes very apparent after the two boys are recruited straight from the basketball courts in their respective inner-city Chicago neighborhood to an affluent, mostly white school in a neighboring suburb. One important message that is constructed in this documentary

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is that urban schools fail African American males, but sports offer hope. For the most part, *Hoop Dreams (1994)* is about basketball dreams and the ways that young African-American males are exploited by corporate and high school sports, but the absence of any real critique of how these boys are exploited educationally, by way of basketball, is what I find most compelling and why I believe academics might want to take it up pedagogically with education students.

　　Class C: The Only Game in Town (2008) is also a documentary film focused on high school basketball, but a few aspects of this school doc make it quite different from *Hoop Dreams* (1994). Instead of focusing on urban students and schools, *Class C: The Only Game in Town* follows five girls' basketball teams representing five rural towns in Montana as they each try to make it to the league championship game. The film can be read as a statement on the changing nature of rural America and the intersection of education, social class, and local economies. As the title of the film suggests, these changes seem to have left the highly competitive basketball league as "the only game in town." Fans of their respective town's school are ardently supportive of the teams, almost obsessed, and the message constructed suggests that the hopes and dreams of each town rest on the shoulders of these young female basketball players. As one of the coaches in the film says, "these communities live and die through these kids." In different settings and contexts, both of the school docs discussed here also tell the story of hopes and dreams dominated by the prospect of using high school sports as a means of social mobilization. Questions regarding whether academic success is still considered a means to living

the "American Dream" surfaces and provides a good example of one way this school doc could be taken up with education students.

As the previous examples illustrate, the school doc genre includes documentaries that cover a broad range of topics and issues related to education. The examples I have chosen also show that these issues and topics are represented in multiple ways. These nuanced representations offer academics looking to incorporate school docs into undergraduate or graduate level education courses an opportunity to facilitate specific types of discussions around certain topics and issues related to education. A more expansive list of school docs and the corresponding issues and topics taken up in them can be found in Appendix B.

CHAPTER III: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

I begin this review by discussing what a selected group of academics in the Field of Education have written about how they have taken up popular fiction school films. I have chosen work that, I believe, represents how visual texts (film, television) can be taken up in various ways to gain a more nuanced perspective of the social and cultural context of education. I then provide examples of academics in the Field of Education who have written about how they have taken up documentary films, in particular. Due to the rather small number of academics who have actually discussed their use of documentary films, I also provide examples from other fields.

How School Films Have Been Taken Up By Academics in the Field of Education

Asserting that there has been disappearance of "civic education and public engagement," Giroux (2002) argues that "film provides one of the few mediums left that enables conversations that connect politics, personal experiences, and public life to larger issues" (p. 7). This particular argument suggests that films, and other popular culture texts for that matter, can be taken up for their pedagogical nature, or what he refers to here and elsewhere (Giroux, 2004) as "public pedagogy." According to Giroux (2004), films

> work pedagogically to legitimate some meanings, invite particular desires, and exclude others. Acknowledging the educational role of such films requires that educators and others find ways to make the political more pedagogical. One approach would be to develop a pedagogy of disruption that would attempt to make students and others more attentive to visual and popular culture as an important site of

political and pedagogical struggle. Such a pedagogy would raise questions regarding how certain meanings under particular historical conditions become more legitimate as representations of the real than others or how certain meanings take on the force of commonsense assumptions and go relatively unchallenged in shaping a broader set of discourses and social configurations. (pp.78-79)

Films, in this instance, are presented as part of a larger public dialogue and set of experiences that suggest films cannot be dismissed simply as commodities. Instead, films can be taken up for the potential they have to uncover democratic relations, ideologies, and identities (Giroux, 2002). In other words, films can be read in a process of analyzing society and culture. With regards to the types of films discussed in this dissertation, those representing classrooms, teachers, and students can be taken up in various ways to analyze education in the context of popular culture. In what follows, I provide examples of academics in the Field of Education that have written about how they have taken up school films with their students. There are academics that only write about school films but do not include how they have been taken up with students nor do they suggest ways that they can be taken up pedagogically, but I have chosen to focus on those that do, as this represents the type of work undertaken in this dissertation.

As a first step in coming to understand how meaning is constructed in school films, Trier (2001, 2002, 2003a, 2006, 2007, 2010) has analyzed school films in the spirit of Hall's (1997) thesis on representational practices. Using this approach, Trier has taken these films up in his work as a teacher educator and written about his students' experiences with the films. After analyzing various school films, he discusses how they are used in his own practice to help pre-service teachers articulate ways they have come to understand educational issues. Students are

encouraged to examine how school films and other representations of teaching

construct their emerging identities as teachers. For instance, in the article "Teaching

theory through popular culture texts" Trier (2007) discusses how he has used the

school film *Dangerous Minds* (1996) to introduce theories of how representation

works in popular culture and the relationships of these to actual teaching. In another

example, Trier (2002) describes how he has taken up the school film *Disturbing*

Behavior (1998) to help pre-service teachers articulate Pierre Bourdieu's (1984)

concept of 'habitus' and think about it in the context of their future classrooms. The

point of the activity, according to Trier (2002) was to

> problematize their tendency to *not* think in terms of *relations* between
> what goes on in the classroom and what goes on in society. Put
> another way, rather than conceptualizing the classroom as a social
> field where multiple discourses intersect –economic, cultural, linguistic,
> social, racial, gender discourses, and so on, very often to negative
> effects for many students – many prospective teachers often tend to
> view the classroom as a narrow site or space where they must manage
> and control their students. (p. 241)

Similar to the work I described in my introduction, students were given academic

texts to use in conjunction with particular scenes from the film. Trier chose scenes

that he had analyzed in terms of how they articulated topics and issues discussed in

the academic texts chosen for the activity. In seminar discussions, the author

describes how students were able to discuss the theoretical concept within the

context of the film. As a result, his students were able to give "many examples of

seeing the relationship between economic and cultural capital being played out in

the schools they were placed in" (p. 250).

Another good example of how school films can be taken up with students can

be found in Trier's (2003) account of a pedagogical project he designed and

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implemented where selected passages from Michel Foucault's (1977) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* were paired with Jenny Gore's (1998) chapter *Disciplining Bodies: On the Continuity of Power Relations in Pedagogy* and the school film, *The Paper Chase* (1973). The goal of the project was to have students discuss complex theory regarding the function of power in teaching and develop a discourse around this topic for how they reflected on teaching observations. The project was designed for teachers involved in the clinical intern portion of their teacher education program of studies. Trier (2003) found that "soon after they began observing in classrooms, they inevitably began to articulate a number of concerns related to the issue of 'power'" (p. 546). Trier noticed, though, "the articulations [in the essays] rarely included the term 'power'" (p. 546). After analyzing the sub-text of the student essays, he "designed a project that would engage students in exploring the role that power played in the classrooms and schools where they were observing" (p. 546). Specifically, Trier wanted to "introduce students to a theoretical framework that they could take up to think critically about what they were observing in classrooms" (p. 546). As I mentioned, he coupled readings from and about Foucault's (1977) work with selected scenes from *The Paper Chase* (1973) that he felt articulated what was presented in the academic texts. Students viewed the film and wrote reflective essays through the lens of the selected readings Trier assigned. After discussing their own reading of the films, Trier (2003) shared his own readings of key scenes to focus the students' attention on specific articulations of power.

After guiding students through this project, Trier (2003) found that the students were able to engage critically with both texts. Many came away from the

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project with a reconceptualized view of their role as teachers and were able to articulate this knowledge in a way that showed a complex understanding of the theoretical component of the project. He writes:

> By the end of the semester, they were engaged in seminar discussions of 'disciplinary power', of relations of power, and of techniques of power. They were deconstructing the power relationships embedded in the professional practices of their cooperating teachers, as when they problematized the use of marginalizing labels, and they also articulated critiques of system-wide practices, such as that of tracking. Most importantly, they explained how the discourse of power that they had begun to acquire would play an important role in shaping their own teaching practices, both during their student teaching and when they became full-time teachers. (pp. 555-556)

Working with a similar group of prospective teachers in their clinical internship, Trier (2001) has also used school films to have students "explore [the] relationship between the personal and professional lives of teachers" (p. 131). The idea for the project came after the topic emerged during the busier portions of the student teaching internship. In this activity, teachers used school films to articulate issues "related to societal expectations and perceptions of what it means to be a teacher" (p. 133). These issues caused his students to be concerned about the balance they would be able to maintain between teaching and their lives outside of school. He states early on that these types of activities are intended to "engage preservice teachers in a critically reflective practice" (p. 127). Drawing on Zeichner (1990), Trier notes that critical reflection "involves not only focusing one's attention inwardly, on the more technical aspects of teaching" (p. 127). It also includes focusing "outwardly" on the social and cultural context of teaching.

In this project, Trier (2001) had students watch films that represented the professional lives of teachers and school films that also represented the personal

lives of teachers. According to Trier "Many school films primarily represent only the professional lives of teachers, with few personal life scenes in them" (p. 131). Also, there are some school films that "deal almost exclusively with a teacher's personal life." In addition, there are school films that "move back and forth between scenes of a teacher's professional life and his or her personal life" (p. 131). *To Sir, With Love* (1967) *and Dead Poets Society* (1989) are examples of films that Trier (2001) claims focus primarily on the teacher's professional life. *This Is My Father* (1998) is an example he offers of a school film that focuses mainly on the personal life of the teacher, and *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1969) is an example of a school film that falls into the latter category, films that switch back and forth. He notes that in school films where teachers' professional lives are the main focus,

> the teacher is the central figure, and nearly all of the action takes place in or around the school, or in some kind of relation to the school affairs. When we do see the teacher outside of school, we usually see him or her engaged in activities directly relate to teaching, such as grading papers or visiting the home of a student. (p. 132)

After assigning the film, *To Sir, With Love* (1967) and having students focus on the representation of the teacher's personal and professional life, Trier (2001) notes that students produced "a variety of readings" (p. 132). The following is one such reading from this project. In this reading, the student has watched several school films that mainly depict the professional life of the teachers. She writes that these films

> are all the same—the teacher comes in, gets rid of the textbooks, and uses his [or her] charisma and "gift" for teaching to save kids who are heading nowhere. The problem with this is that real life teaching can't be like that. Teaching isn't about saving people, though I guess that does happen sometimes. . . . [However,] films like this probably cause the average American to think that a teacher should be some super

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teacher ready to give up his [or her] life for the profession. Nobody expects this from other professionals. . . If you have to have a "gift" to be a teacher, then why bother being in a [teacher training] program? I love teaching, but I don't know if I have some special gift. What I do know is that I work hard trying to learn as much as I can in order to be the best teacher I can be. (in Trier, 2003; p. 133)

Trier notes that the student "touches on a number of important issues related to societal expectations and perceptions of what it means to be a teacher." He interprets her response as an assumption that "films have an effect on shaping what might be called 'the Public Imagination'" (p. 133). He also identifies her reading as "oppositional," in that the student identifies the film teacher's "gift" for teaching as something unattainable in real life. "In opposition to the gift image of the teacher, she offers her own view of how one becomes skilled in one's profession" (p. 133). And finally, Trier (2001) notes that this student's reading "implies that it would be detrimental to 'give up' one's personal life in order to live up to the cultural model of the 'super teacher'" (p. 133).

Throughout the article Trier shares other readings from students and notes the variation in the ways that students can read the same film, depending on what they might be dealing with personally and professionally in their teacher education program. According to Trier (2001), the students' readings of these school films, like the example I have shared here, "are valuable for pre-service teachers to make because when they eventually do become full-time teachers, they will inevitably be in situations where they will be expected to make personal sacrifices as teachers" (p. 138).

Mitchell and Weber's (1999) book, *Reinventing Ourselves as Teachers: Beyond Nostalgia* is another good example of how school films can be taken up with

prospective teachers. In this text, they *suggest* various activities and analyses based on how they have read certain films. An important part of their reading of school films revolves around the idea that the concept of teacher is actually a "cumulative cultural text," an idea presented in an earlier book titled, *That's funny, you don't look like a teacher: interrogating images and identity in popular culture* (1995). According to Mitchell and Weber (1999), "A cultural text extends beyond the notion of written and oral texts to include artifacts [sic], social activities, and people – all of which can be interpreted or 'read'" (p. 166). As for the "cumulative cultural text" of teacher, they write:

> A multitude of teacher images feed into the popular culture into which we were born. These images overlap, contrast, amplify, address, or confirm each other as they compete for our attention. The cumulative cultural text of 'teacher' is a massive work in progress that embraces the sub-texts and counter-texts of generations of paintings, memoirs, novels, cogs, toys, movies, software, stories, photos, and television (p. 167).

With this concept as their anchor, Mitchell and Weber (1999) explore how representations of teachers in popular culture can be taken up to help teachers explore their professional identities as educators. One way that they suggest using these texts is to have students do "close readings" of school films to "unmask and use the contradictory images, clichés, and stereotypes" found in them. To unmask these stereotypes, they suggest that students "interrogate them in terms of the codes and conventions that govern their use" (p. 181). They explain "knowing these conventions makes it easier to recognize and expose them through close readings" (p. 181). The point in all of this is to have prospective teachers recognize the ways that certain codes and conventions "contribute to the generic structure" of, say, the

teacher hero representation, a representation they claim is "all the more evident when contrasted with those few image-texts that reveal the 'dark side' of teaching" (p. 181). As an example, they point to the school film, *Waterland* (1992)*.* In their reading of this school film, Mitchell and Weber (1999) find that Waterland (1992) "[presents] dark images of teachers who are destroyed while teaching with little or no hope held out for their joyful return to teaching. These types of films, according to Mitchel and Weber (1999), "serve as counter-texts to countless images of teachers as heroes devotedly working and winning against the odds" (p. 181). This approach to reading films is suggested for what they refer to as a "Self Study" of teachers and prospective teachers. My reason for including this aspect of their work, as opposed to discussing at length how they have read various films, is to illustrate a unique example of the ways that academics have taken up school films. Instead of merely offering their readings, they analyze them for the pedagogical potential they hold, and offer theoretically grounded ways that others can take them up with their students.

Mary Reeves (1999) is another academic whose work provides an excellent example of how academics in the field of education might take up the reading of Hollywood teachers in their own classrooms, either to model a dialogic pedagogy for prospective teachers or to engage them in a critical dialogue about the social foundations of education. I find her work interesting because of her intentional use of student voice. She points out:

> Recent criticisms of studies of popular culture's representations of reality and their meanings and significance have highlighted the importance of broadening such studies to include the thoughts and

words of members of the intended audience for whom the researcher presumes to speak. (p. 64)

In her book chapter, *School is Hell: Learning With (and from) The Simpsons* (1999), Reeves describes a process in which her research participants formed discussion groups to analyze and discuss the representation of schools, teachers, and students in the animated television series, *The Simpsons*. Reeves (1999) explains that during one session, she had students focus primarily on how teachers and teaching were represented in an episode titled, *Lisa's Substitute*[5]. In this episode, Miss Hoover, Lisa's teacher, contracts Lyme disease and has to leave school. The school scrambles to find a substitute for Miss Hoover while the principal, Mr. Skinner, desperately tries to hold the attention of the students in Lisa's class with various pedagogical "tricks." Just when it seems as though the class is going to implode, in walks the substitute, Mr. Bergstrom (played by Dustin Hoffman), dressed like a cowboy, pretending to shoot his guns into the air. Using his cowboy costume and fake guns, Mr. Bergstrom is able to win over the hearts and minds of the students immediately. He teaches "from the hip" and invites the students to engage in critical discussions about ordinary objects in the classroom. Under the care of their regular teacher, Miss Hoover, the class is almost always represented as rather stale, and the students, especially Lisa, are never able to showcase their true brilliance. Miss Hoover always uses lesson plans and enacts a very traditional approach to teaching. Lisa ends up falling in love with Mr. Bergstrom after he shows sincere appreciation

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[5] Lisa Simpson is one of the main characters in the animated series, *The Simpsons*. She is an extremely intelligent eight-year-old little girl who plays jazz saxophone, practices Buddhism, is a vegetarian, and often takes up various social and political causes in her hometown. Dupes and incompetence surround Lisa, and she is represented as somewhat of an "outlier" in a town that doesn't care and a school that does not challenge her intellect.

and encouragement for her interest in the arts and sciences, something Miss Hoover never does. Lisa is devastated, however, when she walks into the classroom one day, only to find Miss Hoover erasing Mr. Bergstrom's name from the chalkboard. The following dialogue occurs:

> MISS HOOVER: You see, class, my Lyme disease turned out to be psychosomatic.
>
> STUDENT ONE: Does that mean you're crazy?
>
> STUDENT TWO: No, it means she was faking it.
> MISS HOOVER: No, actually, it was a little of both.

Miss Hoover then opens her desk to find the lesson plans she left had not been touched during her absence. Upset, she asks the class, "Well, what did he teach?" Lisa replies, "That life is worth living!" and runs out of the classroom. Lisa eventually catches up with Mr. Bergstrom before he leaves and begs him to stay. He explains, "That's the problem with the middle class, Lisa. Anybody who really cares will abandon you for those who need it more. I'll tell you what, whenever you feel like you're all alone and there's nobody you can rely on, all you need is this." He hands her a note and leaves. She opens the note and reads, "You are Lisa Simpson."

Instead of offering her reading of this scene, Reeves (1999) discusses the various readings that students in her discussion group presented. She offers the following dialogue that occurred between three students after watching the episode as an example of the multiple readings a text can undergo:

> CHUCK: Obviously she's [Miss Hoover] got the drill down. She prepares lesson plans, she plans everything out but it doesn't help. All of the built in mechanisms that are part of the regimentation of the system that are supposed to improve the quality of education, apparently the comment is being made that they don't really help that much.

BEN: I think, sort of, the ineffectiveness of teachers like Miss Krabapple and Miss Hoover are a lot more clearly pointed out when you have somebody to contrast them with. When you see Mr. Bergstrom, he was always among the students, either, of course he was walking up and down the rows playing the guitar and then he was in the center with everybody's desks turned toward him. But Miss Hoover's classroom was much more static. She had a clearly defined space behind her desk, and the students were in their desks, in rows, and didn't leave those.

SARA: I guess, the whole thing about the opposite of love is not hate; it's indifference. And you know, Miss Hoover is pretty indifferent… The indication that you get is that she'd rather be doing something else (Reeves, 1999; p. 72).

By presenting this dialogue between her students, Reeves (1999) illustrates the *various* ways that representations of "good" and "bad" teaching can read in the same visual text. For instance, she points out that Chuck's reading indicates his understanding of Miss Hoover in light of how the "system" is structured. In other words, the representation of the teacher, Miss Hoover, is a representation of the school system. She is a victim, unwilling to embrace an alternative pedagogy that would possibly move her into the category of "good" teacher. Bad teaching is giving in. Reeve's points out that Ben's reading of Miss Hoover is in relation to her aloofness. Her physical distance from the students is cold and that her classroom is neatly ordered. Ben frames the representation of Miss Hoover in terms of how it differs from Mr. Bergstrom. Miss Hoover is ineffective because she is *not* Mr. Bergstrom. And finally, Reeves (1999) points out that Sara's reading of Miss Hoover takes on a more personal manner. For Sara, Miss Hoover lacks the ability or desire to love and, therefore, chooses to be indifferent. Bad teaching is giving up. One of the interesting points illustrated in this example is the nuanced reading of this

particular episode. Reeves points out early in the chapter that most of the

participants in her discussion groups offered *preferred* readings of *The Simpsons*'

overall subversive use of parody when representing schools and teachers. Her

example illustrates the types of negotiated readings that can occur when students

are allowed to engage in a dialogue about school films as opposed to only be

exposed to the closed readings of academic. It also illustrates the rich discussion

that occurs as a result, which can only add to the depth of understanding students

will take away from such activities.

The body of work I have included in this review represents a fraction of the

literature on popular films about schools. Again, what I have chosen to include here

represents the type of work undertaken in this dissertation. That is, it illustrates

practical examples of "the potential that school films have for inviting pre-service

teachers to experience situations vicariously and for engaging students in examining

their assumptions, beliefs, and knowledge about a range of educational issues"

(Trier, 2001; p. 129).

How Documentary Films Have Been Taken Up By Academics

For this section, I have searched numerous digital research databases for

journal articles, books, dissertations, books, and book chapters in order to find

literature regarding how academics in the Field of Education have taken up

documentary films pedagogically. These databases include: (a) "Academic Search

Premier," (b) "Communication & Mass Media Complete," (c) "ProQuest," (d) "Journal

Storage" (JSTOR), (e) "LexisNexis Academic," (f) "Education Full Text," (g)

"Education Resources Information Center" (ERIC), and (h) "Google Scholar." During

this process I searched for terms and phrases such as: "cinematic pedagogy," "documentary film and education," "film and education," "school documentaries," "school films," "representation and schools" and "documentary films," just to name a few. I also included non-academic searches of these terms on "Google" and "Google Scholar" in an effort to find course syllabi from education courses where academics have taken up documentary films in their practice.

I find it interesting that this search yielded very few results regarding the pedagogical use of documentary films in the Field of Education. I find this interesting given the amount of literature focused on how education scholars have engaged with fictional films about schools, teachers, and students. Most of what can be found deals primarily with how documentary film is taken up by elementary, middle, and high school teachers (Barry, 2009; Ellsworth, 1987, 1988, 1991; Ellsworth & Whatley, 1990; Maynard, 1970; Stoddard, 2009;). I will briefly discuss three examples of this and move on to a more detailed account of literature that discusses how academics, both in and outside of the field of education, have discussed the pedagogical use of documentaries with undergraduate and graduate students.

As an example from the k-12 category, Richard Maynard's (1970) work looks at how documentary films can be used in high school social studies education. He discusses his own practice whereby he and his students use the holocaust documentary *Night and Fog* (1955) with Stanley Kubric's *Dr. Strangelove* (1964) to explore U.S. foreign policy. Another example is an article where Bernice Barry (2009) discusses how documentary films can be utilized in elementary education to teach non-fiction writing techniques. In her practice, documentary films are shown

and discussed as one example of a non-fiction text. Students are introduced to the textual features of documentaries and, according to Barry (2009),

> [documentaries] provide clear, often simple models to show how information can be organized or sequenced to help audience/ reader understanding. They also provide the additional scaffolding of visual and aural elements, often making it more obvious why particular language features are being used. (p. 76)

She also notes that the documentary genre is especially appealing to her because, unlike many written texts in the curriculum, the choices available for documentary films offer "diverse material, including examples made by young filmmakers and writers from many different backgrounds and cultures" (p. 77). With regards to this, Barry suggests that educators select documentaries with content that will best match the interests and local contexts of one's own students. And finally, Jeremy Stoddard (2009) has studied the ways documentaries have been used in public school social studies education by looking at the "ideological implications" of using documentary films to teach controversial historical events.

Perhaps the most critical work done with documentaries and K-12 education comes from Ellsworth (1987, 1988, 1991) and Ellsworth and Whatley (1990). This body of work takes a careful look at trigger films shown in public schools. I should note here that the films Ellsworth and Whatley discuss in their analyses are quite different than what I am defining as school docs, but their work in the area is still worth mentioning due to the nature of their analysis. The films they have chosen are based on various social, health, and character issues often found in public school curricula. As I have mentioned in my description of the school doc genre, trigger films are produced for the purpose of being viewed by students in elementary

through secondary school as part of public school curricula. In one particular study, Ellsworth (1991) compares classical educational documentaries to propaganda and social issue documentaries of that same era. Her work looks at the similarity of representational forms in the two genres and how audiences were "positioned" during their reading of the films. Ultimately, she concludes that students are encouraged to "pledge allegiance" to the "ideological projects of the curriculum" (1991; p.41). Ellsworth and Whatley's (1990) work also looked at the relationship between visual representations and the way knowledge was constructed in the media texts they analyzed. They concluded that many of the visual representations found in educational media privileged certain ways of knowing over others. They argue that the images, which may at first appear disinterested and objective, tend to anchor the film's content to particular meanings. The meanings, according to the authors, are linked to unequal power relations found in a long history of institutionalized racism, sexism, and class discrimination. In essence a "hidden curriculum" was being taught alongside the film's obvious educational focus. I use Ellsworth and Whatley's work here as an example of how documentary film has been discussed critically in the Education literature. What is missing from this particular body of work is how educators can actually take up individual films in their work with students. For instance, in her analysis of classical educational films, Ellsworth (1991) does provide examples from individual films but uses these films to offer an overall reading for the trigger film genre. Ellsworth (1991) qualifies her lack of specific pedagogical suggestions for "confronting" (p. 62) this curriculum by alluding to the individual contexts of classroom practices. She does suggest that

educators consider the trigger films they use by confronting "their own implications in the paternalistic project of education" (p. 62). I will now discuss what academics in the Field of Education have written about how they have taken up documentaries pedagogically.

In the article, *Teaching social class through alternative media and by dialoging across disciplines and boundaries,* Pepi Leistyna and Debra Mollen (2008) discuss how they have taken up the documentary *Class Dismissed: How TV Frames the Working Class* (2005), which was made by Leistyna. In the article, Leistyna first discusses why he made the film and offers a few examples of how he has taken the documentary up with undergraduate college students in a teacher education program. Mollen also discusses how she has taken up the documentary with her college students. Leistyna explains that the idea for the documentary came while he was developing a course in a teacher education program called "Language and the Media." According to Leistyna, he "was able to find fantastic multimedia materials that take up racism, patriarchy, heterosexism, and other such oppressive practices that any teacher education program… should expose students to [but] there was virtually nothing that addressed social class and representation" (p. 21). He explains many students in his Adult Education and English-as-a-Second Language courses often had "romanticized ideas about economic life in the United States" (p. 21). Making this documentary was a way of addressing these ideas. The final product looks at how news media represent labor as well as how the working class is portrayed in film and television. In sum, *Class Dismissed*: *How TV Frames the Working Class* (2005) wound up being a critical analysis of how "corporate-managed

media have constructed their own tales about the lives of everyday people" while ignoring the reality of the economic conditions of the working class. The goal in making the documentary was, according to Leistyna, "to engage the public [and his students] in how corporate-driven images reinforce stereotypes that serve to justify the inequities inherent in capitalism's class structure" (p. 21).

In the second half of this article Mollen discusses how she has taken up *Class Dismissed*: *How TV Frames the Working Class* (2005) in undergraduate and graduate multicultural counseling and psychology courses. In each course, she hopes "to stretch the boundaries of student thinking, help them develop metacognitive awareness, instill them with a passion for activism and social justice, and develop and hone the ability to evaluate media critically and contextually" (p. 22). According to Mollen, students view the documentary later in the course, after they "have explored with some depth constructs such as *blaming the victim* and *the myth of the meritocracy* as mechanisms by which the status quo is created and perpetuated" (p. 22; emphasis in original). Because her students have this information and discourse, she finds they are better able to see and appreciate "the rich panoply of examples the documentary offers" (p. 22). Part of Mollen's technique for taking up the documentary involves using "reaction logs" where students can "record their affective responses and reactions" (pp. 22-23) to the film and the discussions surrounding it. She uses students' responses in the log as one way to "evaluate the effectiveness of the film as a teaching technique" (p.23). Although she does not give specific examples of students' reactions, Mollen does note that students' reaction logs have "revealed that the film is powerful and provides

significant means to address and critique depictions of class on television" (p. 23).

She reports how students have come to appreciate the use of *Class Dismissed* and

how "it relates to other course materials and areas of analysis, particularly around

gender, race, and sexual orientation" (p. 23). By this, she means students are able

to use the film to help articulate the idea of "overlapping identities and the ways the

effects of oppression multiply" (p. 23), which is the "emphasis" of her multicultural

counseling and psychology courses.

In the last section of the article, Leistyna discusses a project where students

do "group investigations" of three of Bill Cosby's popular television shows, *The*

Cosby Show and *The Cosby Kids,* and *Fat Albert.* This particular activity came about

after one of Leistyna's students provided a very oppositional reading of *The Cosby*

Show, in which the student stated:

> I watched the show in the early 90's on Moroccan TV and I was
> impressed by how every one in America can have a successful life if
> they make that choice. I admired also how Cosby got along with white
> Americans and how both races live in harmony. I was definitely
> convinced that America is a land of justice and opportunity for all hard
> working people. Even when I moved to USA, this conviction didn't
> change until I found myself, after several years, in an endless cycle.
> Cosby's picture is far from reality. He played representational politics
> successfully to promote the ideology that all Americans can succeed if
> they work hard and that social barriers don't exist. (p. 24)

In the activity that was developed after this statement, one group was assigned *The*

Cosby Kids and *Fat Albert,* two other television programs produced and directed by

Bill Cosby, and asked to "analyze the images of ghetto life starting with the show's

theme song 'Gonna Have a Good Time'" (p. 24). A second group "is responsible for

looking into the economic realities that existed during the run of *The Cosby Show.*"

The third group is assigned transcripts from an interview Bill Cosby did with Oprah

Winfrey. During this interview Cosby argued African-Americans were mostly responsible for how they are understood by others, a comment that was met with a good deal of backlash from the African-American community. This group's task was to "compare Cosby's comments about how African-Americans are responsible for their own predicaments to the economic conditions that racially subordinated communities face" (p. 24). Each group put together reports of their findings and presented their findings to the class. The topic of these reports centered around the "representation and the ideology of Bill Cosby and the impact that his public work might have on people's perceptions, personal politics, and public policy" (p. 24). Leistyna explains he has used this activity several times and notes that it has been "met with great success." His students come away from the project "able to understand the need for nuanced, realistic images and the problems that arise when television depictions are so discrepant from the lives of the people whose stories they seek to tell" (p. 24).

In the article, *Popular film as instructional strategy in qualitative research methods courses,* Saldana (2009) discusses an action research project whereby he began using films, fiction and documentary, as part of his teaching practice in a graduate level qualitative research methods course for education scholars. In his work Saldana does not engage the films in a critical manner but rather focuses on "how the medium might function as an ancillary teaching and learning strategy" (p. 247). By this I mean that he takes the films' "messages" at face value and analyzes them for how they might serve purposes beyond entertaining. Saldana's rationale for the use of documentary film is based on student enthusiasm and a film's capacity for

"clarifying new conceptual information" (p. 247). For instance, he suggests using the

feature documentary *Super Size Me* (2004) as an example of basic research design,

The Laramie Project (2002) for discussing interview techniques in research, and *An*

Inconvenient Truth (2006) to explore the idea of correlation in qualitative research.

His students' enthusiasm and willingness to engage with these documentaries is

attributed to the popularity and social relevance of the two films. Overall, Saldana

(2009) presents the pedagogical use of documentary film as an example of "how the

cinematic arts can be used to teach as well as entertain" (p. 260). I find Saldana's

(2009) work useful in making a case for why documentary film texts may resonate

with students in ways that written texts alone cannot. His work is also an example of

the specific uses of documentary film in a pedagogical project.

Again, the previously mentioned works serve as examples of what I found

while searching for what academics in the Field of Education had written about the

pedagogical uses of documentary films. I will now discuss what academics in other

fields have written about the pedagogical use of documentaries in post-secondary

settings. My search yielded results in several fields and subject areas: (a) Sociology

(Defronzo, 1982; Tipton & Tiemann, 1993); (b) Geography (Aitken, 1994; Gold &

Revill, 1996); (c) Anthropology (Godwin, 2003); (d) Communication Studies (Foss,

1980); (e) Recreation, Leisure, and Sport Management (O'Bannon & Goldenberg,

2008); (f) Multicultural Studies (Devlin,1999); (g) Women's Studies (Hotelling &

Schulteis, 1997); (h) Film and Literature (Dyer, 1987); and (h) English Writing

Composition (Jeremiah, 1987). I will discuss several of these, focusing primarily on

examples where the author has written about how these documentaries have been, or can be, taken up pedagogically.

In the her article, *Rural America in Film and Literature,* Joyce Dyer (1987) discusses a course where she encompasses several forms of mass media, including the use of documentaries. The course, Rural America in Film and Literature, begins with students reading several classic short stories with rural settings. Next, students examine newspaper articles about farming and other topics dealing with rural areas. After watching two fiction films about contemporary life on farms, Dyer (1987) has students view *Dairy Queens,* a twenty-seven minute documentary about three female farmers from Minnesota. The documentary "provides specific information and poignant commentary" about farm life in Minnesota, the American Agriculture Movement, and various conflicts famers have had with the government. Dyer (1987) believes the documentary ended up having a bigger impact on the students than the two fiction films they viewed. "These real women in some ways moved students even more than Jessica Lang and Sissy Spacek had. The sweat on their foreheads was real" (p. 56). The course concludes with students reading contemporary novels about rural life and listening to segments of the radio show "Lake Wobegon Days." Dyer's rationale for using documentary film, as well as the other forms of mass media, in the course is that rural America is often mythologized in popular culture to "create simple answers to the complicated problems" facing farmers and others who live there. The goal of her course is to have students give up the myth and adopt re-conceptualized views of life in rural America. I have included Dyer's (1987) article in this review because her rationale for the use of the documentary in this project is

similar to the goals I have in mind for using documentaries in teacher education. That is, teaching, like rural America, has also become mythologized in popular culture.

In *Teaching With Movies,* O'Bannon and Goldenberg (2008) use information gathered in an earlier study of theirs to synthesize and suggest how documentary films could be used in recreation, leisure, and sport management courses. After reviewing surveys from educators in their field who used documentaries in their practice, the authors systematize their conception of how the films can be used. They offer practical ways the films can be used to explore and expand upon concepts discussed in coursework. In some cases the authors provide hints of critical readings but much of this is mentioned briefly in their conceptualization of how the film could be used. For instance, they suggest using the documentary *Born Into Brothels (*2004*)* to explore concepts such as diversity, leisure behavior, and family. Recommendations are made with regards to "framing" the movie for undergraduate college students in the courses they mention. Framing the film involves asking students questions about the nature of play, entitlement, and opportunities for leisure activities in poverty stricken areas. In all, the authors discuss a total of thirteen documentary films including the school doc *Mad Hot Ballroom* (2004). In each case they provide descriptions of the films, suggest specific scenes to use, offer sample questions to use with students, and they suggest concepts that can be explored in each film. The approach is systematic and straightforward.

Milford Jeremiah's (1987) conference paper, *Using Television News and Documentaries for Writing Instruction*, is another account of an academic who

discusses the pedagogical uses of documentary films. As the title suggests, Jeremiah describes a process in which documentary films can be taken up to teach various writing skills. He offers several reasons for using documentary films. First, he notes that today's "students are more visually and auditorily [sic] oriented" (p. 4) than before. Next, he suggests the use of documentaries and television "would allow for skills integration in the writing process" (p 4). The "skills" he mentions are: listening, speaking, and thinking. Jeremiah (1987) also argues there is a "link between the world of television [and documentary films] and the written word," and that this link could have motivational affects. He suggests this "link" would be especially useful with "reluctant writers" who "often fail to understand that all of their favorite [documentaries] begin with 'the written work'"(p. 4). Jeremiah argues the "underlying message" this link sends to students is that "even in today's 'video world,' one must become proficient in the use of the written language" (p. 4).

As for how a documentary film can be used specifically, Jeremiah (1987) suggests an activity where students in a post-secondary writing class would write persuasive essays based on their viewing of the documentary. In this activity, the instructor would introduce a specific writing skill (information or persuasion) and follow up this discussion with the presentation of a documentary in its entirety. While watching the documentary, students are asked to produce an outline of the film. After writing outlines, students are then assigned an essay to write based on the outlines they have constructed. He does not offer a specific example of a documentary to use, but does suggest criteria for choosing one. First, the documentary should "address one item or issue" (p. 5). In addition, the documentary

"should focus on either information or persuasion of the major content" (p. 5). As for why these criteria are important, Jeremiah argues "the structure and content" of these types of documentaries "seem to mirror the practice of essay writing" (p. 8). He notes several ways for how it "mirrors" the process. First, narrators in these types of documentaries usually "introduce the programming within a general framework, a type of 'big picture' or overview of the topic" (p. 3). Next, "the overview is confined to the dimensions of an introductory paragraph from which a thesis may be explicitly/implicitly stated." Third, evidence in these types of documentaries is often presented "by way of examples, anecdotes, facts, statistics, and expert testimony" (p. 4). And finally, documentaries usually conclude with some form of "summary statement." In sum, the elements (introduction, argumentation, support, summary) found in the structure of documentaries illustrate specific writing skills. The documentary, as a whole, serves as a visual example of the type of writing Jeremiah has in mind for the final product of this activity.

Hotelling and Schulteis (1997) discuss how and why they use the controversial documentary *Paris is Burning* (1990) in an undergraduate Women's Studies course. The authors describe their own pedagogy as one focused on "challenging normative representations of identity" (p. 129). For these educators, this involves the use of controversial documentary films as a way of questioning how we come to understand race, class, gender and sexual orientation. In the case of *Paris Is Burning* (1990), the film provides students taking their course with visual representations of race, class, sexuality and gender that they might not otherwise see on their own. The film is about the Black and Latino gay and trans-gendered

community in New York City. By providing examples of how students engaged with the film and their reactions, either resisting or embracing the text, the authors illustrate the immediacy of film and the range of emotions brought forth by visual images. The authors report some students taking the course were actually brought to tears while viewing the film, some students began to see how gender and sexuality is constructed, and one student resisted the film altogether and was given space to share his reading of the film and bring in related texts to support his reading of the film. On a related note, I stumbled upon another interesting discussion of the film *Paris is Burning* (1990) while researching this article. I bring this up because I believe it helps to illustrate the contested nature of visual representations and how one's reading of a given film will differ from context to context. Apparently the use of *Paris is Burning* (1990) in college classrooms is not as limited as one might think and it has been the subject of scrutiny from critical educators (hooks, 1996). bell hooks (1996) is very critical of how race, gender, and sexuality is represented in the film. The basis of hook's argument is that the film serves as an example of how culture often becomes hijacked by forces of domination. Unlike most documentaries of this time, the film was produced in Hollywood. On top of that, the director of the film is a young, blonde, white female from Beverly Hills. Combine this with hooks' analysis of the film's content, and it becomes rather clear why she finds the representation of femininity in the film to be based on "a sexist idealization of white womanhood" (p. 217). Again, I add hook's work here as an example of the contested nature of documentaries and an example of how documentary films can be studied.

Chapter IV: Teacher Education

In this chapter I will describe the context for which I have conceptualized the projects described in latter chapters. This discussion includes what a selected group of academics have written about a specific approach to teacher education and social foundations of education.

The pedagogical projects discussed in this dissertation are part of what I consider to be a critical approach to teaching Social Foundations of Education (SFE) in a teacher education program of studies. Before I proceed, though, I will explain what I mean by *critical,* a term that educators often attach to aspects of their work without explaining what it actually means within the scope of that work (Lankshear, 1997). Lankshear (1997) contends, "There are… two necessary aspects to any critical orientation" (p. 43). The first is that there must be an element of "evaluation or judgment" (p. 43). This is based on the term's association with the word "critique." Next, there is "the requirement of knowing closely and 'for what it is,' that which is being evaluated: the object of evaluation or judgment" (p. 43). So, when I say that my approach to teaching SFE is "critical," I mean that the topics and concepts covered in a SFE course become the objects of careful analysis. The analysis becomes the basis for how those topics and concepts are evaluated and judged. Broadly, the topics and concepts I am referring to are taken up while exploring questions regarding the purposes of education, *whose* interest schools serve, the

relationships between culture, society and education, and *what* knowledge is valued

in school (Strouse, 2001). My goal is to help prospective teachers develop skills of

critical analysis necessary to consider these broad questions, and also to help

develop dispositions towards teaching that lead to more transformative outcomes for

students. Outside of the SFE context, I am referring to what is often described as

"social justice teacher education" (Zeichner, 2003; p. 25). I will explain this moniker

as well. According to Zeichner (2003), the term has been used rather ambiguously in

the literature but has generally come to describe "social reconstructionist-oriented

teacher preparation programs" (p. 25). These are programs that have evolved from a

long tradition of educational reform beginning shortly after the Great Depression.

Conceived of in direct opposition to the social injustices of capitalism,

reconstructionist programs are focused on schools and teacher education as part of

a larger social amelioration project (Liston & Zeichner, 1991). This original project

involved teachers and teacher education programs playing a critical role in "planning

for an intelligent reconstruction of U.S. society where there would be a more just and

equitable distribution of the nation's wealth, and the 'common' good would take

precedence over individual gain" (Liston & Zeichner 1991; p. 26).

Part of the ambiguous use of the term, social justice, may be a result of how

the concept is taken up in analysis. As a result, its usage has been called into

question as to how it is being applied to teacher education. According to Zeichner

(2003), "most school of education programs claim to have social justice orientations

but say very little about what they mean by the idea of social justice" (p.xvi). He

describes three main categories of theories about justice. The first are "distributive

theories that focus on the distribution of material goods and services" (p. xvi). The

next category includes "recognition theories that focus on relations among

individuals and groups within the institutions in which they live and work" (p.xvi). And

finally, there are "theories that attempt to pay attention both to distributive and

relational justice" (p.xvi). Zeichner (2003) explains that his own work as a teacher

educator is guided by a concept of justice that includes distributive and relational

theories of justice along with theories explaining social relations, each of which are

fore grounded in the notions of "fairness" and "dignity."

As one of the early progressive supporters of social reconstructionist

movement in teacher education, Harold Rugg (1931) argued that the "standard

pattern of teacher education taught that the school was to pass *on* the social

heritage, it was not to appraise the social order, let alone try to change it" (p. 22).

When one considers the scholarship examining the socially reproductive nature of

schooling (Anyon, 1980; Aronowitz, 2004; Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Willis, 1977), it

appears this pattern is continuing and much work still needs to be done. With

regards to how teacher education may be implicated, Liston and Zeichner (1991)

argue:

> prospective and practicing teachers bring to the classroom implicit and
> unarticulated assumptions, beliefs, and values about the social context
> of schooling. This social knowledge (that is, teachers' knowledge and
> beliefs about the social, political, and historical context of schools and
> communities around them) tends to be inadequately addressed in most
> accounts of teacher knowledge, is rarely examined in teacher
> education curricula, and is awkwardly handled in the prominent models
> for cultivating reflective teaching and action in teachers. (p. 61)

Furthermore, Song (2006) argues that teacher belief systems act as "an organizing

framework that establishes patterns of meaning, determines views of right and

wrong, and guides decisions regarding curriculum and instruction" (p. 483). This is related to other research showing how deficit thinking about students from outside of the cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic mainstream often leads teachers to set lower standards for them and provide less rigorous instruction than they might for other students (Delpit, 1995; Finn, 1999). In this case, *deficit thinking* refers to the way teachers are often conditioned to believe that students who lack specific social and cultural capital do not possess the cognitive and social abilities to be successful in school. In other words, deficit thinking occurs when students' academic and social struggles in school are accounted for by focusing on what they lack, as opposed to what assets they possess. An example of this might include a teacher setting lower academic standards for students based on their limited English language proficiency, or setting lower standards for students from poverty due to an assumption that they are "at-risk" for academic failure. This particular aspect of teacher beliefs is important to my study of school docs because popular culture texts often represent the lives of students from poverty in negative light, with little critique of the social structures that perpetuate poverty.

The construct of teacher beliefs is messy though. Gee (1996) explains that, as part of an evolving set of discourses, teacher beliefs are part of an "identity kit" (p. 127) that indicate their own social class membership. This presents quite a challenge for teacher educators hoping to foster the types of dispositions in pre-service teachers needed to meet the needs of *all* students. That is, research shows that, while student populations are more socially and culturally diverse than ever, the teaching population has remained predominately white and middle-class (Banks &

Banks, 2007; Sleeter, 2008). The students they will teach will continue to come from diverse social and cultural backgrounds, challenging them to work with an unfamiliar demographic (Banks & Banks, 2007).

One suggestion to address this issue is to help pre-service teachers begin to "perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 1970/2000; p.35). Liston and Zeichner (1991) add that one of the aims of teacher education should be to help teachers make and give reasons for pedagogical decisions based partly on a "greater understanding of the social and political context of schooling" (p. 39). Of course this is no easy task when one considers that, in the current educational climate, student "success" on standardized tests and other quantifiable measures that ignore these contexts have come to define the purposes of schooling (Michelli & Keiser, 2005).

For prospective teachers to gain the types of sociopolitical insights that Liston and Zeichner (1991) discuss in their work, teacher educators will need to help them recognize, respect, and reflect on the social, political, and cultural context of their future students. Darling-Hammond (2008) argues, "Developing the ability to see beyond one's own perspective, to put oneself in the shoes of the learner and to understand the meaning of that experience in terms of learning, is perhaps the most important role of universities in the preparation of teachers" (p. 343). To do this, Bartolome (2004) calls for curricula in teacher education programs to include various "ideological postures" (p. 116) in order for pre-service teachers to explore their own in light of those that may be foreign to them. In other words, expose prospective teachers to "alternative explanations for the academic underachievement of

minorities, to the myth of meritocracy and how such theory works to explain and justify the existing social (dis)order" (p. 116). Others (Banks, 2004; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1992) have suggested that pre-service teachers become aware of their own privilege in light of the structural disadvantages that many of their future students may experience. The logic behind such calls are predicated on the idea that a better understanding of one's own social and cultural identity might disrupt the types of dispositions and beliefs that would prevent new teachers from enacting a social justice pedagogy. Cochran-Smith (1995) suggests that one way teacher educators can help students do this is through the telling of their life stories against those of the "Other." She writes:

> In order to teach in a society that is increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse, prospective teachers need opportunities to examine much of what is usually unexamined in the tightly braided relationships of language, culture and power in schools and schooling. This kind of examination inevitably begins with our own histories as human beings and as educators; our own experiences as members of particular races, classes, and genders; and as children, parents and teachers in the world. It also includes a close look at the tacit assumptions we make about the motivations and behaviors of other children, other parents, and other teachers. (p. 500)

I will add here that the use of documentary films, as pedagogy, is one way to have pre-service teachers explore alternative and unfamiliar narratives and engage in the type of critical reflection inherent in the activity Cochran-Smith (1995) suggests.

The goal, though, involves more than just reflecting for the sake of reflection, where one's disposition may be the only thing affected (Liston & Zeichner, 1991; Villegas, 2007; Zeichner, 2009; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Villegas (2007) reminds us that teaching for social justice "cannot be reduced to a disposition—as teacher education critics erroneously assume" (p. 372). She goes on to describe social

justice teaching as "a broad approach to education that aims to have all students reach high levels of learning and to prepare them for active and full participation in a democracy" (p. 372). To do this, Liston and Zeichner (1991, 1996) argue that teacher educators need to go a step further than just having students "reflect" and assume that everything is all right. They note, "When this is the case, further reflection becomes groundless – that is, they [student teachers] lack a substantial basis for discerning what will count as good reasons for educational decisions" (Liston & Zeichner, 1991; p. 38). Instead, they argue, our aim as teacher educators should prepare teachers who are

> able to identify and articulate their purposes, who can choose the appropriate instructional strategies or appropriate means, who know and understand the content to be taught, who understand the experiences and cognitive orientations of their students, and who can be counted on to give good reasons for their actions. (p. 39)

To do this, pre-service teachers will need to "understand existing barriers to learning that children and youth from low-income and racial/ethnic minority backgrounds consistently encounter in school" (Villegas, 2007; p.372). Other research (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005) shows that to do this, teacher educators need to help students gain knowledge about the ways that students' social contexts affect the ways they learn, understand the curriculum they teach "in light of the social purposes of education" (p. 10), and develop better understandings of the content they teach related to the context of their students' lives.

What much of the literature I have reviewed here indicates is that, to provide for a more equitable schooling experience for children, teacher educators need to find creative ways to help pre-service teachers develop dispositions that will lead to

transformative pedagogies. The pedagogical projects that I am suggesting in this

dissertation work toward the goals suggested by the previously mentioned scholars

(Bartolome, 2004; Cochran-Smith, 1995; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1992; Darling-

Hammond, 2008; Liston & Zeichner, 1991, Zeichner & Liston, 1996, Zeichner, 2003).

That is, by exploring the ways schooling and education are represented in popular

culture, teachers are involved in a process of critical reflection. As far as the context

context for the projects, I suggest that a social foundations of education course

might be an appropriate setting for taking up many of the issues discussed in this

section. In the following section I will provide a selected review of literature

pertaining to Social Foundations of Education. In this review, I will discuss a

framework for a Social Foundations of Education course that is consistent with the

goals for teacher education highlighted in the work detailed in this section.

Social Foundations of Education

As I have mentioned, the pedagogical projects that I have conceptualized for

this dissertation are intended for a Social Foundations of Education (SFE) course in

a teacher preparation program. In this section, I will clarify what I mean by SFE by

providing a selected review of literature in the field.

Since its origins – as a field of study- at Teachers College in the 1930s, SFE

have played some part in teacher education programs throughout the United States.

According to Gottlieb (1994), the founders of the field "were not as concerned with

teacher education as an academic field/professional field as they were with the

conditions of society at large and their belief that teachers could affect those

conditions" (pp. 4-5). As a point of reference for this statement, she notes a passage

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in the introductory chapter of Harold Rugg's (1931) seminal SFE text, *Readings in the Social Foundations of Education* that reads:

> Any effort to understand the work of the school must begin with the fact that it is most emphatically and unequivocally a social institution … Organized education cannot be understood in terms of its own traditions and procedures. It is always a function of time, place, and circumstance. In its basic philosophy, its essential purposes, and its program of instruction, it inevitably reflects in varying proportion the experience, the conditions, the hopes, the fears, and ideals of a particular people or cultural group at a particular point in history. (in Gottlieb, 1994; p. 5)

According to Gottlieb (1994), "This view of schooling and society was shaped by the experience of economic depression." As a result, "Schooling was seen as the means by which social injustice could be redressed and the evils of capitalism corrected" (p. 5). This particular passage also implies that prospective teachers need "to study the cultural substrata on which all educational processes must ultimately rest" (Butin, 2005; p. 6).

But how has this 1930's vision of SFE translated into teacher preparation coursework in the current era, one where the discourses of education are shaped more by a neoliberal discourse of curriculum standardization, high-stakes testing, and the mechanization of teaching? One notable difference is the actual terms applied to such courses. By this I mean the disappearance of the word *social* in describing the type of course or field of study. As an example, Bauer, (1992) points out how "the use of the name '*Foundations of Education'… is employed throughout the CLSE [Council for Learned Societies in Education] standards"* (p. 7). This particular example is powerful given the significant voice that CLSE has in the field. The other notable difference is the "introductory" status these courses have been

assigned in schools of education. These courses are now often seen as "the

primary, introductory survey course often called *Introduction* to *Education* or

Foundations of Education" (Bauer, 1992; p. 8; emphasis in original). The problem

with this perception is that it

> reveals an image of a foundational course as the initial introductory
> course in a program of teacher preparation, one which is not perceived
> as substantive but rather as an overview of the field of teacher
> preparation and career development, one which consists largely of a
> smattering of ideas which cover the gamut of information deemed
> necessary by someone considering the pursuit of certification as a
> classroom teacher. (Bauer, 1992; p. 7)

Furthermore, Bauer argues that, from the discourse used in his examples, "One

does not get the impression…that foundational study is anything but the initial,

overview or 'basement' component of a preparatory program" (p. 7). Drawing

comparisons to courses such as "foundations of reading" and "foundations of math,"

Bauer (1992) notes that they are "usually designed to provide an overview of the

domain knowledge and skill which is about to be entered" (p. 8).

Edmundson and Bushnell Greiner (2005) offer several potential motives for

the relegated status of SFE. First, they argue there are some teacher education

programs that have "become bound by state and federal measures to standardize

pedagogy" (p. 159). The problem is that this "seemingly belies the need for the

questioning, ethical, and democratic stance taken in foundations courses" (p. 159).

 Here, I would like to make a distinction about the type of teacher education

course I have conceptualized for the pedagogical projects I suggest in this

dissertation. It is a distinction between the use of the term *Foundations of Education*

(FOE)*,* and what I mean by *Social Foundations of Education.* Such a distinction, I

believe, is necessary given the framework for teacher education that I have described in the previous section. The biggest difference lies in how the terms position ways that students will be engaged in their coursework. The former term, according to Tozer and Miretzky (2005), is "more akin to 'fundamentals' and 'basics'…[which] was really an introduction to teaching *practice*, rather than an effort to use foundational disciplines to study school and society" (p. 5; emphasis added). According to Bauer, (1992), the use of the latter term

> is much more in line with the intentions of those who, in the 1930's, originally conceived of SFE [sic], a name which clearly had different connotations than today's 'foundations of education' with its connotation as an 'overview' of a program of study. (p. 12)

Given my use of the term SFE, I might provide students with the following statement on a syllabus to describe the type of course I have conceptualized for enacting the pedagogical projects in this dissertation:

> The Social Foundations of Education course is an exploration of analysis of the underlying issues within contemporary educational policies, practices, and theories. It is an attempt to ground the day-to-day realities of the classroom within larger philosophical, historical, anthropological, political, legal and sociological contexts. Such an interdisciplinary perspective will allow students to begin to reflect upon the structures and practices of American education and provide a foundation from which to continue becoming reflective and critical educational practitioners. (Butin, 2005; p. 203)

In short, the framework for SFE I have provided connotes an exploration into "the layered contexts of our educational process" (Butin, 2005; p. xiv). This does not mean that I believe the "practice" of teaching is absent from how I frame this type of course. On the contrary, this framework is grounded with "an assumption of the importance of *praxis* – that is, the integration of theory and practice" (Provenzo,

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2005; p. 59). I will now give a brief account of how one academic has used such an approach with teacher education students in a SFE course.

Consistent with the framework I have described for how I conceptualize SFE, Provenzo (2005) contends, "the main purpose of the social foundations of education is to assist students in understanding the connections between the educational system and the larger social, political and cultural forces at work in American culture" (p. 59). In his book chapter, *Making Educational Research Real: Students as Researchers and Creators of Community-Based Oral Histories*, Provenzo (2005) discusses a project that was undertaken as a professor in the social foundations where his students created "oral histories of their local communities" (p. 59) by having students conduct interviews with various community members. In one of these projects, students interviewed teachers who had emigrated from Cuba. The "oral histories" the students created centered on the political nature of their teaching and provided students with a meaningful context in which they could broaden their understanding of pedagogy. Provenzo (2005) suggests, "The idea of students as oral history researchers is consistent with the activities tradition of the founding leaders in the field of Social Foundations of education, such as William Heard Kilpatrick and George S. Counts. Furthermore, by using such an approach to SFE, "students become more politically and socially aware of the communities in which they live" (p. 59). The overall goals for the projects that I am suggesting in this dissertation are very similar, but I believe that the "communities in which [students] live" can be expanded to include popular culture in general.

CHAPTER V: RESEARCH PROCESSES, PROCEDURES AND ANALYSIS

In this section I will discuss the *reconnaissance* stage, the processes, of my research along with a theoretical framework for my analysis of school docs. By *reconnaissance* I am referring to the information gathering processes involved in my preliminary investigation of school docs. Similar to how the term is used in military discourses, this process involved locating information about school docs, gathering vital information about the films, and ascertaining the strategic elements of them for the project at hand. Before explaining this stage, though, I will explain the theoretical framework of my analysis. I explain this framework first because much of the work undertaken in the reconnaissance stage of my project involved using this theoretical lens.

Theoretical Framework for Analyzing School Docs

Durham and Kellner (2001) make the point that "culture today is both ordinary and complex, encompassing multiple realms of everyday life" (p. 3). This involves the production and consumption of school docs and other popular culture texts. As part of the process of culture then, school docs can be considered a "space of interpretation and debate as well as subject matter and domain for inquiry" (p. 3). The domain of inquiry in my project is the school doc film genre. As an under researched area in educational studies, my analysis of the genre helps shed further light on how schooling is represented in popular culture and how these texts may be taken up by educators to shed additional light on critical issues in education.

In a "broad" sense, I have undertaken a *Cultural Studies* analysis of the

school doc film genre. By "broad" I mean to imply that Cultural Studies, as a field, is

very complex and has no "singular and strict set of disciplinary protocols" (Lister &

Wells, 2001; p. 63) when it comes to methods for conducting research. Of course

this does not imply a lack of rigor. It means that one's method of analysis will vary,

given the phenomena one is studying and the purpose of inquiry. In the case of this

project, the phenomena are school docs, and the purpose of my inquiry into these

popular texts is to highlight and conceptualize their use in a critical pedagogical

practice. In other words, the pedagogical projects I conceptualize for this project are

based on my analysis of school docs.

This analysis of school docs is based on Stuart Hall's (1980, 1997)

articulation of how representation works with visual images and his understanding of

"encoding/decoding" practices. Because this is a cultural study, Hall's (1980, 1997)

notion of representation and encoding/decoding is useful as a reference for analysis

because it articulates specific ways culture operates. Hall's usage of the term

directly addresses the contested nature of meaning and works well with how the

term culture and popular culture has been used in this proposal. First I will explain

Hall's (1980, 1997) understanding of these concepts, then I will describe how these

understandings apply to my analysis of school docs and the pedagogical projects I

conceptualize.

 Primarily, meaning is constructed through communication and we

communicate through the use of language. According to Hall (1997), "language is

one of the 'media' through which thoughts, ideas, and feelings are represented in

culture" (p.19). But how are our thoughts, ideas, and feelings *represented* and how is meaning constructed? First, *signs* and *symbols* represent our thoughts, ideas and feelings. These include sounds, visual images, objects, and written and spoken words. They are used to express ourselves to others. The way these signs and symbols are represented connects meaning to them. For us to be able to make meaning of them we must rely on a system of concepts and images that we have in our own minds. It is a system because it involves the organization, arrangement and classification of concepts and mental images and the way we establish connections between them. In other words, things in the world exist and they somehow correlate with the concepts and images we have in our heads. For instance, if someone shows us a picture of a bird, we know that the picture itself is not really a bird. We know that it is a bird because the image correlates with our notion of bird. It is the same if someone says the word. Whether the sign is visual or spoken, we still have to have our own concept of bird for it to make sense. This particular process is particularly evident in the ways that we form concepts and images of abstract things. Hall (1997) uses the concept of war as an example. We cannot touch war, but we can conceptualize war by making use of our "conceptual maps." Hall refers to these as "mental representations" without which "we could not interpret the world in meaningful ways" (p. 17). We are able to communicate our thoughts and ideas with others because "we share broadly the same conceptual maps and thus make sense of or interpret the world in roughly the same ways" (p. 18). To make sense of the world we must also have a shared language, not just a shared conceptual map. This is the point where representation is most important because it (representation) is the

"link between concepts and language which enables us to refer to either the 'real' world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people and events" (p. 17). A common language enables us to make connections between the signs we use to represent our thoughts and ideas and the conceptual maps we have to interpret and make sense of them. In other words, we possess codes that allow us to translate our thoughts and ideas into language and codes that help us interpret, or decode, the signs and symbols used to represent the world. As a result, representational practices become a very important part of language and of culture in general. It is a key process in the "circuit of culture" (Du Gay, 1997, p. 2).

Of course many of the signs and symbols used in language carry certain meanings and can be represented in numerous ways, but the importance of the visual image as a representational practice cannot be overstated. It is by shear volume that the visual image deserves special attention and is why I will focus my discussion around the ways it is used in the cultural process. We now live in a society where the technological capacity to transmit visual images is colossal. Try to go one day without coming into contact with a visual image produced by hand, by machine, digitally or any other "artificial" means. It is virtually impossible. According to Hall (in Jhally, 1997) the "the image has become the privileged sign of late modern culture" (direct quote from video). As a result, we are inundated with visual representations, images of the world in which we live and try to make sense of through the processes of culture. Now I will discuss a theory of how representation can be approached. It is an approach that allows us to study and analyze the way in which visual images are used to convey meaning in the cultural process. It is also an

approach that creates space for ways representational practices might be taken up in one's pedagogical practice.

Historically, three different approaches have been used to describe how representation works in language. According to Hall (1997), these include "reflective", "intentional", and "constructivist" approaches. In the reflective approach, language operates like a mirror or re-presents what we already know to be accurate or "real." That is to say, it depicts the "true meaning of something as it already exists in the world" (p. 24). The intentional approach is quite the opposite. This approach argues that the speaker, the person responsible for the representation, imposes his or her own meaning through language. In the study of film and television this might be a screen playwright, a director, or the producers. The intentional approach also assumes that language is representative of that which we are trying to attach meaning. In other words, the representation stands in for something else much like a politician stands in and acts as a voice of his or her constituency. Both of these approaches imply that meaning is given to something. Each of these approaches leaves little room for a reader, viewer, etc. to negotiate the meaning of what is represented. In modern poststructuralist cultural studies, both of these approaches are seen as limited and narrow.

Hall (1997) challenges the notion that an image represents meaning that is already present or fixed in some way. By analyzing the various approaches to explain how representation works and how meaning is construed in language, Hall's asks, "whether these things do have any one essential, fixed or true meaning against which we could measure, as it were, the level of distortion in the way in

which they're represented" (p. 7). The third approach Hall suggests is a "constructionist/constructivist" approach to understanding representation. This approach recognizes the "public, social character of language" (p. 25) and challenges the notion that things have meaning in themselves, or that individuals and powerful social structures can use language to fix permanent meaning to things. We are warned in this approach to differentiate between the "material" world and the "symbolic practices and processes through which representation, meaning and language operate" (p. 25). The material world refers to that which we can see and touch in our daily lives, where people and things exist. The constructionist approach acknowledges the material world but argues that it does not convey meaning. The system of language that we use to "represent" our thoughts and ideas is actually what conveys meaning. A system of language is, of course, a system employed by social actors who are actively trying to construct and communicate meaning about the world in which they live. How meaning is constructed and how representations are understood depend on the cultural, social, and intellectual knowledge of the viewer, the social actor.

The notion that there is always the possibility that there is a distortion between what is depicted as real and what we believe to be real indicates meaning cannot be fixed and that there will always be contestation (Hall, 1997). But we do see images, the material world is present and those images (representations) are real. It is the semiotic form that the image takes that becomes contestable. For instance, the popular television show *Boston Public* provides the viewer with numerous visual images of teachers working in an urban high school. By

themselves, the visual images we see of the teachers and students are just that, images of teachers and students. Something is definitely there, but what is there, the teacher and student, begin to take on meaning in the ways they are represented in the events that unfold throughout the show. Ways in which the teachers and students engage with other characters, events, and places constructs a narrative of what it means to be a teacher and a high school student, at least within the context of the story being told. Problems arise when patterns of representation occur at a rate in which meaning does seem to become fixed to the images we see. This is particularly evident in the ways that teachers, students and the institution of school have been represented in popular culture.

Stuart Hall (1980) takes this point up further in his discussion of encoding and decoding practices and the ways social actors can approach the onslaught of visual representations in the daily reading of cultural texts such as film and television. Hall (1980) acknowledges that there are dominant forces at play in the process of culture and that there are "intended messages" in representational practices. He offers a number of ways that viewers can "read" these texts and interpret the message. Each of these, I believe, speaks to the various approaches to representation discussed earlier and illustrates the contested nature of culture; most notably, the process in which individuals and groups actively engage with dominant social structures in the construction of meaning.

We can either accept these texts, along with their representations, as they have been intended, we can negotiate their meaning, or we can oppose their message and offer an alternative reading. These are referred to as "preferred,"

"negotiated," and "oppositional" readings (Hall, 1980). If we think of the way that mass media outlets operate we can see how this process occurs. For instance, if we watch the news we are aware that there are messages conveyed in the story being told. The use of images, spoken language, and so forth are used to tell a story. The producers, writers, etc. have chosen to "tell" the story a certain way which represents their way of understanding it. There is a "preferred meaning" (Hall, 1997, p. 228). A "preferred reading" of this text requires that the viewer accept the various representations that were chosen to tell the story. This happens when the views represented in the story are so prevalent that it just seems natural to read it the way it was represented. The views that we accept without question are those that are "dominant". They are dominant because they "represent definitions of situations and events that are 'in dominance', (global)" (Hall, 1980, p. 137). According to Hall (1980):

> The definition of a hegemonic viewpoint is (a) that it defines within its terms the mental horizon, the universe, of possible meanings, of a whole sector of relations in a society or culture; and (b) that it carries with it the stamp of legitimacy – it appears coterminous with what is 'natural', inevitable', 'taken for granted' about the social order. (p.137)

We see, in this process of representation, the power of mass media outlets to fix meaning to certain events, objects, people and so on if unchecked and unchallenged. Another way to approach the same type of text would be to take up a "negotiated" reading. In this approach, one does accept the overall story, the grand narrative if you will, but negotiates the story within a personal or specific context. As Hall (1980) states:

> Decoding the story this way involves a mixture of adaptive and oppositional elements: it acknowledges the legitimacy of the hegemonic definitions to make the grand significations (abstract), while, at a more restricted, situational (situated) level, it makes its own ground rules – it operates with exceptions to the rule. (p. 137)

In other words, the viewer/reader accepts certain aspects of a story while disagreeing with other aspects based on his or her situation. Hall (1980) uses the example of how workers may "read" a news story regarding the passing of an "Industrial Relations Bill" that limits workers' ability to strike. If the news story is represented as part of a larger economic debate over "national interest," the worker may take up the dominant view that accepting lower wages will help the overall economy, but the worker may disagree as to whether or not they would actually oppose the bill because of their own financial or social situation.

An "oppositional" reading of a text would run counter to the dominant viewpoint encoded in representational practices. In this case, the viewer/reader is aware of the preferred reading but rejects the ways the events, people, and ideas are represented. The viewer/reader rejects all of what is represented. This often occurs as a result of the reader's particular social and cultural context. It does not however mean that one can tell exactly what this context might be simply by analyzing the way someone has read a particular text.

To summarize, Hall (1980) suggests three theoretical positions for the reader of a text; preferred, negotiated, and oppositional:

- Preferred Reading: the reader shares and accepts the text's code. The *preferred reading* (a reading which may or may not have been the result of any conscious intention on the part of the author) is reproduced. In this case the code seems 'natural' and 'transparent';

- Negotiated Reading: the reader shares a portion of the text's code and broadly accepts the preferred reading. The reader sometimes resists and reworks the code it in a way that reflects his or her own position, experiences and interests;

- Oppositional Reading: in this case, a reader's social and cultural context places them in opposition of the preferred meaning. Even though the reader opposes this code, they do understand the preferred meaning. They just do not share the text's code themselves and reject this reading.

What this all means for school docs is that their meaning is always open and "polysemic" (Hall, 1980; p. 170); that is, multiple meanings are possible. Part of my analysis and interpretation of the various films, the "decoding," also considers the context of production, a "moment" (Hall, 1980) in the process of meaning making. Hall (1980) referred to different phases of the Encoding/Decoding model as "moments." John Corner (1983) describes several of these. The first involves "the institutional practices and organizational conditions and practices of production" (p.266). The second moment is what Corner (1983) refers to as the "moment of the text" (p.267). This moment involves "the... symbolic construction, arrangement and perhaps performance... The form and content of what is published or broadcast" (p. 267). Of course, to complete the circuit, the findings of my analysis also represent what Corner (1983) calls the "moment of encoding", that is, 'the moment of reception [or] consumption... by... the reader/hearer/viewer" (p. 267).

To conceptualize pedagogical projects around the use of school docs I first analyze the films based on Hall's (1980, 1997) "encoding/decoding" model and his thesis on representation. The first step in deciding which films to use for this project included an initial viewing/reading of several school docs, paying close attention to

the film's content. My familiarity with the films afforded me the luxury of already having an idea as to what issues of social class and education were referenced in their content. So, based on the content and my familiarity with school docs, I was able to gather enough information to determine, initially, whether or not a film might be useful to address issues I have chosen for this project. From this point I began a deeper analysis, whereby the context of the film was considered in an effort to illuminate "moments" of meaning making found in the encoding/decoding process. This point of the analysis is crucial because it provides evidence for articulating preferred, negotiated, and oppositional readings of the films; the first step in conceptualizing projects around school docs. My second step was to locate the films within the historical, material, and cultural contexts from which they are produced and consumed. Each of these contexts represents a stage of encoding, a moment to be discovered. One such moment is the context in which the film is viewed. In other words, where do we meet the image in culture and how do we engage with it? Is the film available to rent as a DVD? Are these films available for viewing by large audiences? Is the film part of a television series? Other moments include, but are not limited to, how the film is advertised and presented, who funded the film, interviews with filmmakers and characters, and data regarding the financial success or failures of a film. Now I will discuss, in detail, how I have gathered this information and how this information was used to analyze the school docs I list and discuss in this dissertation.

Processes and Procedures

In this section I will discuss the processes and procedures used to discover, acquire, and analyze the films mentioned in this dissertation. There were several resources and processes used during these stages that are worth explaining in the event that a reader of this dissertation wishes to take up school docs, or other film texts, in his or her work with prospective teachers.

Before deciding which films would be included in the school doc genre and analyzed further in my dissertation I undertook a bit of *reconnaissance*. The first step in this process involved actually *finding* the films, which happened initially by accident. As I have mentioned previously, I also have an interest in, and have taken up in my own practice, what Trier (2001) calls "school films." While seeking out these particular films, through two particular resources (Netflix, Internet Movie DataBase), I began to discover the films that I have come to refer to as *school docs*. These two resources, along with several others, represent the "starting point" of my research. For those unfamiliar with either of these resources, I will provide a brief explanation. I will also discuss several other "minor" resources that I used during this stage of my work.

Netflix is an online DVD rental service where one can search for films based on the title, genre, director, actor/actress, topic, or several other queries. Once a movie has been chosen, the DVD is delivered in the mail and can be kept for an unlimited amount of time. This is a very important feature, given the number of times I have needed to view many of the documentaries I have catalogued. Multiple viewings are a way to, first, analyze the film to see if it is indeed a school doc and

are also a way to get a better sense of the ways it may be taken up. By this I mean that certain topics or issues may not be as salient upon an initial view as others. For instance, the school doc, *Resolved* (2007) is clearly about Paulo Freire's (2000, c. 1970) thesis on "banking education" because there are direct references to his work, but a second viewing might uncover additional topics such as urban schooling or access to extracurricular activities. Another advantage to using Netflix was the number of films I was able to analyze at once. Depending on your individual contract with Netflix, one can have up to three DVD's at a time, which obviously lends itself to a more efficient means of selecting and eliminating films. Netflix also provides a service called "Watch Instantly" which is available for select films, and this feature allows for instant viewing on your computer. Combined, these two features provide access to a large number of films in a relatively short amount of time. Another unique feature of Netflix is that once a search has been successfully conducted, the service provides a "recommendation" list for other films that bare some resemblance to the one searched for and located. In several instances, I was "recommended" documentary films about students, teachers, and education while searching for "school films" (Trier, 2001). For instance, while searching for the school film *Basketball Diaries* (1995), a popular *fiction* film about prep school basketball, the documentary film, *Hoop Dreams* (1994), was recommended. Similar to the "recommendation" feature being prompted during my search, *Hoop Dreams* (1994) and other films about high school basketball were also listed in a section titled "More Like This." As the title implies, this feature provides a list of films with similar content. With the aid of these unique features I began actively searching for documentary

films about schools, teachers, and education. I subsequently rented, viewed, and analyzed many of the Netflix "recommended" films that I have now catalogued as school docs.

Another valuable resource used in my *reconnaissance* and analysis of school docs is the Internet Movie Database (IMDb). IMDb is an online film and television database, where one can search for information related to actors/actresses, directors, genres, and production aspects of films. IMDb also provides information such as plot summaries, movie quotes, reviews, awards won, and other valuable information needed to search for films and conduct the type of contextual analysis needed for close readings of school docs and other films. In many cases, IMDb provides external links to a film's "official" webpage where even more information can be accessed. One interesting aspect of the "official" webpage is that there are often "trailers" one can view to get a better sense of the content and plot of the film. Similar to the feature provided by Netflix, IMDb also offers recommendations of movies with similar content. Combined, Netflix and IMDb are virtually limitless in their capacity to search for and gain information about all kinds of film and television. IMBd was recently purchased by Amazon and now has a feature whereby one can purchase films found in the database directly from the website. Each of these features is worth mentioning due to the time saved searching for, acquiring, and analyzing the school docs presented in this dissertation.

Of course, Netflix and IMDb are not the only film resources available online. I have also made use of several online search engines (Google, Yahoo, Bing) and various websites (PBS, Amazon, Media Education Foundation, TV Matters) to

search for and gather information about films I analyzed and subsequently collected. The PBS (Public Broadcast Service) website is especially worth noting. The PBS website has become somewhat of a clearinghouse for many independent documentary films featured in their televised POV (Point of View) programming. Their website features a number of independently produced school docs, as well as others, that have been shown in theaters as well as those shown exclusively on the network's POV program line-up. Due to the "educational" aspect of PBS, there was often an abundance of contextual information about the documentary films or television shows that I was able to use in my subsequent analyses. For instance, there was quite a bit of background information provided for the school doc *The First Year* (2001). This included statements from the director, as well as the teachers featured in the documentary. Another interesting, and helpful component of the website that supports the POV programming is the "educators" section. In this section, one can access free lesson plans designed to support topics covered in many of the documentaries. For instance, they feature a high school social studies lesson plan titled, San Francisco in the nineteen sixties. This lesson plan incorporates the documentary film *Following Sean* (2005), the story of a little boy who grew up in a "hippy" household in San Francisco in the late nineteen sixties. The lesson plan suggests using clips of the documentary in its historical context and asks students to conduct a video interview that reflects modern times. Many of the lesson plans they have designed resonate with the types of projects I am suggesting in this dissertation. Although the lesson plans featured on the POV website are intended for K-12 students, their existence brings up a very interesting point. That is,

PBS has embraced the pedagogical nature of documentary films and serves as an excellent resource for how they might be taken up pedagogically.

Besides PBS, I have also "discovered" school docs by searching the websites of production companies specializing in documentary films focused on social issues, most notably Point Made Films, Zeitgeist Films, and Learning Matters TV. I am also fortunate to have tapped into another valuable source, and I would be remiss if I did not mention the friends, colleagues, students, movie store clerks, producers, and directors that have served as a resource for this portion of my research on school docs. One of the interesting aspects of working with documentary films and other popular culture texts is that, once I mention the topic of my work, someone has inevitably seen or heard of a film that they feel might fit into the genre, ones I may have overlooked. This has happened on a number of occasions during casual conversations, trips to the video store, and while using films with students in classes I have taught. Another interesting aspect of my work is that I have had the opportunity to meet and/or speak with several directors and producers of films (*I Am A Promise: The Children of Stanton Elementary, Hard Times at Douglass High: A No Child Left Behind Report Card, The Prep School Negro, The Junior High School, Prom Night In Mississippi*) included in the school doc genre. In each of these cases, the director or producer has given me access to their films that I may not have had otherwise.

Over the course of a year, I conducted multiple searches using the aforementioned resources. As a result, I found close to one hundred films that initially looked like they may fit into the emerging genre of school docs. I became

obsessed with renting and viewing these films, while simultaneously inquiring as to

whether they might be taken up in ways that fiction films have been taken up

pedagogically by academics. Since I was able to keep the movies for longer periods

of time than your local rental store allows using Netflix, and able to access them

instantly online, I viewed most films several times, initially, and took detailed notes

about scenes I found relevant to issues raised in teacher education and scenes that

related to academic texts I have read in my graduate program of studies. These

scenes, I felt, could possibly be juxtaposed with other "texts" to expand the meaning

of a given issue in educational discourses (e.g. social and cultural capital).

According to Cohen (1999), this is an example of "intertextuality", the idea that "one

text always alludes to another" (p. 127). For instance, after renting the school doc,

Resolved (2007), I began to note specific scenes, moments in the film, that

represented issues found in an article I have used in an introductory teacher

education seminar, *Teaching for Social Justice, Diversity, and Citizenship in a*

Global World (Banks, 2004) as well as issues raised in the seminal text, Pedagogy

of the oppressed (Freire, 2000, c.1970). As I took notes on various scenes, the

dialogue between characters in the film and the overall narrative shed new light on

how I understood Banks' (2004) notion of "unity" and "diversity" in social justice

education and Freire's (2000, c.1970) idea of a "banking" style of education.

According to Cohen (1999), his method of analyzing films begins with the

assumption of "intertextuality." That is, they are read in relation to what else has

been written or discussed in the intellectual history of ideas. After watching and

taking notes on these documentary films, I began to purchase and/or rent ones that

spoke to critical issues in education, and/or ones I found either compelling (e.g.

Bowling for Columbine), pleasurable (e.g. *Etre et avoir*) or disturbing (e.g. *Hard*

Times at Douglass High: A No Child Left Behind Report Card).

After acquiring the films, either by purchasing them or gaining access through

other means, I began to make use of several other valuable "tech" resources/tools.

These include: 1) DVD Copy, 2) Handbrake, 3) IMovie, 4) Fast Video Download, and

5) QuickTime Player. These various *media applications*[6] share one important

function in common; in one way or another they allowed me to capture and/or isolate

various scenes from the films in order to analyze them more thoroughly. I will explain

this by providing two examples of how these were used in my analysis.

A good example can be found in how I used several of these applications

while analyzing the school doc, *OT: Our Town* (2002). *OT: Our Town* is available, in

its entirety, on the website YouTube[7]. To capture the film in a format that could be

viewed "offline", I used *Fast Video Download* (FVD), a free media application that

allows you to download video found on websites like YouTube to your computer.

The advantage to having it on your own computer is that you no longer need online

access for viewing and you can then manipulate the video for your purposes. Once

the video, in this case *OT: Our Town* (2002), was downloaded, I then used the

application, QuickTime Player, to view the film again. QuickTime Player is a free

media application that allows you to play audio and video files on your computer.

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[6] The term *media application* refers to specific computer software that is designed to help one perform
certain tasks related to the use of digital media.

[7] YouTube is a website where users can upload and view videos for free. Often, movie production
companies provide trailers and clips from their films as a means of promotion. In some instances, an
entire film can be viewed.

After taking further notes on the movie, I then transferred the video to IMovie, a

media application that allows you to edit video files for various uses. IMovie allowed

me to isolate scenes I had noted for further analysis, scenes that spoke to various

issues and topics raised in the film. In this case, I was able to "cut" a scene out of

the film and create an individual media file for that particular scene. The benefit of

this function is that it allowed me to access that particular file/scene, say a one to

five minute clip, without having to watch, or search through, the entire movie. This

function is also very useful pedagogically, as it allows one to show smaller segments

of a film or specific scenes if time does not allow for watching and entire film in class.

The second example includes how I used several media applications in my

analysis of the school doc, *Hoop Dreams* (1994). This film is not available online and

had to be rented, and then subsequently purchased in DVD format. In order to

parcel out scenes from this film, I used two media applications not discussed in the

previous example. Once I determined which scenes I wanted to isolate, I first had to

"copy" the DVD to my computer. To do this, I used a software application called DVD

Copy; a media application that allows you to copy DVD files directly to your

computer. This process is often referred to as "ripping". Once the DVD, in this case

Hoop Dreams (1994), had been copied, or ripped, to my computer, I then had to

convert the new video files into a format that was compatible to the viewing and

editing applications, QuickTime Player and IMovie. To convert the new video file to a

suitable format I used *Handbrake,* a media application that allows you to convert

files from one format to another, depending on your need. Once the files were

converted I used the same process described in the previous example. That is, I

viewed the movie with QuickTime, transferred the new file to IMovie, and subsequently "cut" scenes out to analyze them closer. This obviously saved me quite a bit of time because it enabled me to instantly access a scene, or scenes, from a school doc instead of wading through the entire documentary to find the scene again. Being able to parcel out specific scenes is also useful for developing pedagogical projects. By this I mean that there is often not enough time to view a school doc in its entirety during a single seminar, but being able to screen specific scenes allows students to analyze particular aspects of the film and have instant discussions about them afterwards. It also allows one to develop what Trier (2003a) calls "video-compilations," which are video clips that have been edited together. A "video-compilation" can be used to discuss a particular issue by editing together scenes from multiple school docs. An example of this might be the representation of teachers, where a "video-compilation" could provide students with an overall picture of how they are represented in popular culture.

What I have described in this section should give the reader of this dissertation a better idea of the processes and procedures that were undertaken during my ongoing exploration of the school doc genre as well as those undertaken during the analysis of specific films that are used in the pedagogical projects I suggest in the following chapters. It should also provide the reader with specific information they might need to take up these projects as well as develop their own.

CHAPTER VI: SPREAD(AGOGY) OF THE OPPRESSED

In this chapter, I will discuss a multiphase pedagogical project intended to introduce pre-service teachers in a Social Foundations of Education (SFE) course to Paulo Freire's (1970/2000) concept of "banking education" through analyses of the school doc, *Resolved* (2007). The main purpose of this project is to provide students in a SFE course with the opportunity to reflect, critically, on the structures and practices of education by grounding the day-to-day practices of teaching within the larger social and cultural context. Ultimately, the goal is to involve them in a process of reconceptualizing their views of pedagogy.

Situating the Project in a SFE Course

In an article discussing the role of SFE courses, Ryan (2006) states, "Teacher candidates need to be familiar with the critical discourses of social foundations" (p. 12). This includes, among other things, "exploring the sociological aspects of education" and developing "an understanding of how instructional methods are shaped by these [sociological] forces" (p. 12). In other words, it is important for students to reflect, critically, on how their future decisions as teachers "maintain and/or disrupt the status quo in teaching and society" (Zeichner, 1996; p.58). Similar to Ryan, Zeichner argues that this can be done by "deliberately focusing student's attention on particular kinds of issues connected to their everyday teaching that raise questions of equity and social justice" (p. 58). The project I am

suggesting here, with its emphasis on Freire's most influential work, is one approach

to doing this. That is, Freire's thesis on schooling is a result of the kind of analysis

the aforementioned teacher education scholars (Ryan, 2006; Zeichner, 1996) and

others (Butin, 2005; Kincheloe, 2010) suggest. With specific regards to the use of

Freire's work in SFE, Canestrani and Marlowe (2004) include Chapter Two of

Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the *written* text used in this project, in

their anthology of *critical* readings for SFE courses. Canestrani and Marlowe (2004)

believe this reading, along with others in their anthology, can serve as "a platform for

discussion and debate that may be used by instructors to increase student

knowledge of pedagogy and to provide authentic opportunities for potential teachers

to think critically about teaching and learning" (p. x). Following Canestrani and

Marlowe (2004), Butin (2004) argues that students in SFE courses can "frame

[contemporary] educational issues differently" and "think carefully and critically about

socially consequential, culturally saturated, politically volatile, and existentially

defining issues within the sphere of education" by "examining past educational

practices or thinkers"(p. 218). Paulo Freire is credited with being one such "past

educational thinker" whose work addresses these issues (Burbules & Berk, 1999;

Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003; Kozol, 1970; Giroux, 1988; Gottesman, 2010;

McLaren, 2000; Slater, Fain, & Rossatto, 2002). I will provide examples of how

Freire's work addresses these issues in my review of his work and contributions. My

point is that the study of Freire in a SFE course is certainly reasonable, and actually

recommended in some cases (Canestrani & Marlow, 2004).

 First, In order to set up my discussion of this project, I will provide a *selected*

literature review regarding the relevance of Freire's work to SFE and teacher

education courses and to this particular pedagogical project. I have chosen a

selected review because, due to the breadth and depth of Freire's work and

contributions to the field of education, a full review is well beyond the scope of this

chapter, and quite frankly, this dissertation. Similarly, Schugurensky (1998) notes

that trying to encompass Freire's contribution in a short chapter or article is

"extremely difficult" due to the variety and volume of his work and "also because this

corpus of work is not necessarily exempt from modifications and even

contradictions" (p. 17). Schugerensky notes

> Freire was always open to challenging, new ideas, to self-criticism, and
> to reconsideration of his assumptions, his arguments and his
> language. His original approach, rooted in the tenets of progressive
> education, Marxism and liberation theology, was later enriched by the
> contributions of post-colonial theory, feminism, critical race theory and
> post-modernism. His production, then, was dynamic. It has a general
> coherence but, as it reflects Freire's own evolution, it has changed
> substantially during his lifetime. (p.18)

In the sections that follow this review, I will introduce the school doc,

Resolved (2007), and explain how it can be taken up, pedagogically, to explore

Freire's (1970/2000) critique of "banking education." Before I explain the relevance

of Freire's work to SFE, though, I will briefly discuss his background in order to

contextualize the example of his work (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*) suggested for

this project. I will add here that I suggest providing a similar contextual discussion of

Freire for students engaged in the project I am suggesting in this chapter. I will

explain this further in my discussion of the sequential activities of the project.

Teaching Freire & *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in Social Foundations of Education

Freire was a Brazilian educator whose status as a "progressive" educator

came to fruition in the late 1950's after he published a report for the Second National

Conference on Adult Education titled, "Education of Adults and Marginal

Populations: The Mocambos Problem." Peter Lownd (2010), a scholar at the Paulo

Freire Institute, explains that this report:

> proposed that adult education in the Pernambuco Mocambos had to
> have its foundation in the consciousness of the day-to-day situations
> lived by the learners; educational work toward democracy would only
> be achieved if the literacy process was not about or for man, but with
> man. This attitude heralded that a more progressive segment of
> Brazilian society was ready to break with the archaic, authoritarian,
> discriminatory, elitist traditions, which had for centuries enslaved the
> Brazilian poor.
> (http://dmnierweber.iweb.bsu.edu/teachingguide/Freire%20bio.html).

A few years after this publication, Freire became involved in several of

Brazil's popular education movements, one of which allowed him to put into action

the ideas presented in the latter report. Working to help a group of poor sugarcane

croppers improve literacy and raise social consciousness, he found that the most

efficient literacy method involved using words and themes derived from their daily

lives. On top of this, he also saw that a similar approach helped to free the workers

from some of the fatalism that characterized their thoughts on the oppression they

suffered. In short, the workers began talking about problems in *their* community and

began to plan actions that would help to alleviate them. With the success of this

program, Freire was invited by the president of Brazil to implement a national literacy

program for Brazil. At the time, only those who were functionally literate could vote,

so the goal was not only literacy, but also a means to nurture more engagement

from politically and socially marginalized populations. As one would imagine, this posed a threat to the dominant ruling class (Gadotti, 1994). According to Lownds (2010), "the landowners were threatened by the possibility that the peasants would organize into leagues, become literate and swell the ranks of the voters" (cite). Nonetheless, the program was successful, only short-lived. A year later, the government was overthrown in a military coup d'état and Freire's work was now considered subversive by the new government. As a result, he was arrested and imprisoned and later forced to live in exile (Gadotti, 1994). While living in exile he published his first book, *La educación como práctica de la libertad* (Freire, 1969)*, which was followed by *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, published in English in 1970 while working at Harvard University as a visiting professor. Both books were directly influenced by his experiences in Brazil as an educator who worked with the poor and disenfranchised, and as a child who experienced hunger as a result of his parent's economic struggles (Gadotti, 1994;). Speaking to the credibility these experiences add to his work, Donald Macedo (in Freire, 2000) writes:

> Freire's denunciation of oppression was not merely the intellectual exercise that we often find among many facile liberals and pseudo-critical educators. His intellectual brilliance and courage in denouncing the structures of oppression were rooted in a very real and material experience. (p. 12)

The rest, as they say, is history. For a more detailed biographical account of Freire's life and work, see Moacir Gadotti's (1994) book, *Reading Paulo Freire: His Life and Work* or Freire's (1996) own account, *Letters to Cristina: Reflections on my life and work.*

Today, Paulo Freire is one of the most well-known *progressive* educators in the world, considered to be both a philosopher and theoretician of education, never separating theory from praxis" (Gadotti & Torres, 2010;). His work "continues to represent a theoretically refreshing and politically viable alternative to the current impasse in educational theory and practice in North America" (Giroux, 1988; p. 108). Along with his influence on education scholars, his work has also been taken up "in literary theory, cultural studies, composition, philosophy, research methods, political science, theology, sociology, and other disciplines have used it as well" (Kinchloe, 2004; p. 70). Kinchloe (2004) adds, "In this context, Freire has constructed what it means to be an educator, as he upped the ante of what professional educators need to know and do" (p. 70). With regards to his biggest impact on the field of education, and the relationship of his work to SFE, Freire has been credited with being the "inaugural protagonist" (McLaren, 2000; p. 141) of what is often referred to as *critical pedagogy,* described by Sullivan (1987) as "a broad educational venture which self-consciously challenges and seeks to transform the dominant values of our culture"(p. 63). Similarly, Berbules and Berk (1999) explain that the primary concern of critical pedagogy "is with social injustice and how to transform inequitable, undemocratic, or oppressive institutions and social relations" (p. 47) and credit Freire as "The author who articulated these concerns most strongly" (p. 51). With regards to how Freire viewed critical pedagogy, they add:

> For Freire, Critical Pedagogy is concerned with the development of *conscienticizao*, usually translated as 'critical consciousness.' Freedom, for Freire, begins with the recognition of a system of oppressive relations, and one's own place in that system. The task of Critical Pedagogy is to bring members of an oppressed group to a critical consciousness of their situation as a beginning point of their

liberatory *praxis.* Change in consciousness and concrete action are linked for Freire; the greatest single barrier against the prospect of liberation is an ingrained, fatalistic belief in the inevitability and necessity of an unjust status quo. (p.51.)

In many respects, to know critical pedagogy is to know Freire. Bigelow (1990) argues that it is important for SFE educators to provide coursework for students that allow them to "learn the validity of critical pedagogy." Doing so, he explains, offers students an opportunity to "understand and critically evaluate the origins of school content and processes in social context" (p.446). My purpose here, in linking Freire to critical pedagogy, is to illustrate why the study of Freire's ideas are relevant to SFE. In short, Freire's relevance to SFE is due, in part, to the relevance of critical pedagogy in SFE coursework.

As I mention in my short biographical review, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970/2000) has had an impact on the field of education, but the ideas presented in this text have had the greatest impact on critical pedagogy. For example, Darder, Baltodano, & Torres (2003) argue that Chapter Two of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* "truly captures the essence of Freire's contribution to the field" (p. 24). They add:

> Freire's critique of the traditional banking concept of education along with a discussion of authoritarian teacher-student interaction represents one of the most powerful critiques of schooling. His discussion of the historical nature of knowledge – including the false duality between theory and practice – and the need to transcend the 'problem-solving' approach in order to engage students in a 'problem-posing' pedagogy became an important point of departure in the articulation of critical pedagogy. (p. 24)

Donald Macedo's (in Freire, 2000) introduction to the 30th Anniversary Edition of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* serves as a good example of the potential that

introducing this text has for providing students a theoretical lens with which they

might recognize and interrogate issues of social justice and equity in education. As I

mention in Chapter One, this is a specific goal for the type of SFE course and

approach to teacher education I describe. He writes:

> Reading *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* gave me the critical tools to reflect on, and understand, the process through which we come to know what it means to be at the periphery of the intimate yet fragile relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. (Macedo, in Freire, 2000; pp. 11-12)

As this example illustrates, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is a text that has had a

lasting impact in the field of education, and the ideas found in it have been used

worldwide in projects ranging from public school classroom to grassroots literacy

programs to national educational policies (Glass, 2001). Because of the centrality of

Pedagogy of the Oppressed to this project, I will briefly discuss the impact the book

has had on the field of education.

After reading an advanced copy of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Jonathan

Kozol (1970) wrote a letter to the editor in *The New York Review of Books,*

encouraging engagement with the ideas found in Freire's book. In the letter he

writes:

> I am writing to you because I believe Freire's ideas to be directly relevant to the struggles we face in the United States at the present time, and in areas far less mechanical and far more universal than basic literacy alone. In the past year Freire has addressed himself often to an analysis of the degrading qualities of public education in the United States and, while he has been obliged to abstain from direct political involvement during his visit here, he has engaged in extensive conversation with many of us concerning the nature of the problems we now face. (pp. 53–54)

Kozol, it seems, had found an ally in his critique of the injustices found in public

education in the United States. That is, when looked at together, the ideas presented

in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* obviously resonated with the account of educational inequalities Kozol (1967) wrote about in his first publication, *Death at an Early Age: The Destruction of the Hearts and Minds of Negro Children in the Boston Public Schools.* Soon after Kozol's (1970) letter to the editor, Freire's work began reaching wider audiences and received similar praise. In an examination of the historical reception of Freire's work, Gottesman (2010) notes a 1972 *Washington Post* article written by Colman McCarthy as an example of the "effusive praise" (p. 379) Freire began receiving after *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was published in the United States. The article states:

> It is fitting that Freire is becoming known in the United States. Little oppression is found here in comparison with the severity of northeast Brazil, but we share a common culture of silence. Wealth, not poverty, is making objects out of most of us: who can count of, let alone actively resist, all the outrages? Freire speaks of an 'invisible war' against the common citizens. He referred to Brazil but the front lines are here too. (McCarthy, in Gottesman, 2010; p. 377)

Today, Freire's ideas and influence can be found throughout the field of education, and *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* has become "a mainstay in education courses" (Gottesman, 2010; p. 378) that espouse a social justice mission. "For radical education scholars in particular, Freire has become the touchstone voice in the field—scholarship espousing social justice is almost always in conversation with his critical educational approach" (Gottesman, 2010). Since the publication of the English edition in 1970, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* the text, has achieved iconic status in social justice teacher education programs. After examining the curricula of 16 schools of education around the country, Steiner and Rozen (2004) found that *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970) was one of the most frequently assigned texts in their SFE courses. I will now provide a summary of the main ideas found in this text, as these ideas represent some of his most important contributions to the field of education.

In an article discussing Freire's legacy and the buzz generated by *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Schugurensky (1998) offers a reason why this text has become so popular and why it has been used so often in schools of education. He writes:

> One of the main appeals of the book is Freire's development of a critical reflection about his own practices as an adult educator. Hence, methodological, theoretical and political concerns interplay constantly, and local experiences are, related to such universal themes as the relationships between individual consciousness and the social world, authority and freedom, and oppression and social change. (pp. 18-19)

I would agree with this assessment, and argue that these are some of the same reasons why I find *Pedagogy of the oppressed* to be an essential text in SFE and why I have chosen it for this project.

In the following section I will provide a summary of the school doc, *Resolved* (2007). I will then discuss the sequential activities I suggest for this project. They include:

1. Discovering Prospective Teacher's Initial Views of Pedagogy
2. Exploring Chapter Two of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*
3. Banking Education and Representations of High School Policy in the School Doc*, Resolved* (2007)
4. Spread(agogy) of The Oppressed: Articulating Freire With The School Doc, *Resolved* (2007)

In my discussion of these activities, I offer specific suggestions for how the documentary could be taken up by academics in a SFE course. In Activities 3 and 4, I offer close readings of various scenes from the film in terms of how they articulate concepts found in Chapter Two of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970/2005). I conclude with a brief discussion on other ways the film might be taken up to discuss issues other than "banking concept of education."

Resolved (2007)

     Resolved (2007) is a documentary film about two successful high school debate teams; one from Highland Park, an affluent, mostly white, high school in Dallas, TX with a history of success in academics and athletics, and the other from Jordan High, a culturally diverse, urban high school in Long Beach, CA. Unlike Highland Park High, Jordan High is recognized more for its basketball team and hip hop alumni (Snoop Dogg) than it is for academics. The Highland Park High debate team is funded through and endowment and travels extensively, competing on the national debate circuit whereas the team from Jordan High School, due to a lack of funding, is only able to compete in local and statewide competitions. The film follows both teams, each represented by two debaters. The two debaters representing Highland Park High are Sam Iola and Matt Andrews, both white. Sam is one of the nation's top ranked debaters and considered by his coach and parents to be a bit of a rebel in the debate world. That is, Sam rolls his own cigarettes, would rather read Foucault than his assigned text, and, despite being in the top one percent of high school debaters nation-wide, has below average grades. Matt is a sophomore at Highland Park High and the youngest member of the Highland Park debate team. Due to his prowess at debate at such a young age, Matt is known to his teammates as simply "the boy."

     The debaters representing Jordan High School are Richard Funches and Louis Blackwell, both African American. Richard is a tough inner-city kid who claims that debate was a way for him to escape a lifestyle that would have left him "in jail or dead" (*Resolved*, 2007). Along with attending school and participating in debate,

Richard also works long hours at a grocery store and heralded by his boss as having a strong work ethic. Louis is a bit of an eccentric at Jordan High School who prefers to make a distinction between himself and his classmates. He is a unique student who prefers punk rock music to hip hop, and, along with his musical leanings, claims that his participation in debate is another way to distinguish himself from the rest of the students at Jordan High School.

Resolved (2007) follows both teams for two seasons, 2005 and 2006, as they prepare for and participate in regional, state, and national *policy debate* competitions. Policy debate is, "A form of debate in which teams of two argue for or against a resolution that usually calls for a policy change by the U.S. Government" ("Debate Formats," 2010). During the 2005 season, Matt and Sam, the Highland Park team, compete in a number of national tournaments and ultimately qualify for the Tournament of Champions where they perform well enough to make it to the final round. They ultimately finish in a disappointing second place. In contrast, Richard and Louis, the Jordan High team, spend the 2005 season competing in local and regional California tournaments due to the lack of funding for debate at their school and their own limited financial resources. Their success in these competitions ultimately lands them a spot in the California State Championship where, in the last two rounds, they are the only public school debate team out of the twelve that remain. They ultimately make it to the finals and win the state championship.

In the first half of the film, the 2005 season, the storyline focuses mainly on explaining certain aspects of high school policy debate and introducing the two teams as they compete in various competitions. The more compelling narrative

evolves in the second half of the film, the 2006 season. At the end of the 2005 season, the Highland Park team dissolves after Sam graduates and Matt moves to another school to pursue debate more seriously. Matt transfers to Greenhill Academy, a private school with strong financial support for debate teams. The documentary then loosely follows the progress of Matt and his new partner from Greenhill Academy as they compete and make their way towards the annual Tournament of Champions. The Jordan High team remains in tact for the 2006 season and Richard and Louis are left with a new sense of purpose. That is, they set their sites on the Tournament of Champions (TOC), a competition for which they previously showed little interest and had few hopes of making due to financial restraints. Once Richard and Louis enter into their second season, the actual way that they debate becomes a central storyline to the documentary. That is, they adopt a new approach to policy debate that challenges theoretical assumptions regarding the current "acceptable" style of debate, a style know as "spreading."

Spreading, as a strategy and style, is introduced early in the documentary and explained through a series of clever visual aids and narration. According to the narrator (*Resolved*, 2007),

> This is the practice of speaking very quickly, so as to advance more arguments than one's opponent can answer, or cover. The mass of arguments advanced in a spread speech is sometimes referred to as 'the dump,' and the practice of speaking quickly, especially when done poorly, is call 'spewing.'

As the film illustrates, top debaters, such as the four featured in this documentary, can deliver information at a dizzying rate of up to 200 hundred words per minute. The flurry of words is unintelligible at times and full of jargon that only experienced

policy debaters can decipher. As one film critic commented, the spread style of

debate presented in this documentary

> is info-babble with all the rhetorical sway and oratorical persuasion of a livestock auctioneer or a stock market bidder. Forget the old-fashioned, logical line of fire and the emotional appeal that soothsayers and griots delivered to their audiences long before Socrates and Cicero. (Sippl, 2007; http://cinemawithoutborders.com/reviews/1306-greg-whiteley-s-resolved-leads-docs-at-the-laff.html)

In preparation for competitions, and in order to spread more affectively, debaters in

the film research large data sets and fill numerous plastic tubs full of information

relevant to impending debates. The data sets are usually found with expensive and

exclusive search engines. Teams garner as much information as possible from

these sources, often at expensive summer "debate camps." While one team, or

debater, is "spreading," the opposing team employs a related strategy called

"flowing", or "flow sheeting." According to David Snowball (1994), Director of Debate

at Augustana College,

> Flow sheeting refers to the skill of taking accurate notes during a debate. These records serve two functions: first, they allow you to construct effective speeches during a debate and, second, they allow you to reconstruct those speeches after the debate. This second function is essential if you want to avoid repeating your mistakes. You can't improve quickly if you pursue a style of flowing which merely allows you to get through a round but which doesn't help you to dissect arguments later and to generate new response strategies. (http://commfaculty.fullerton.edu.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/jbruschke/theory_and_practice_in_academic_.htm)

The flurry and intensity of handwriting involved in flowing almost rivals the flood of

words used while spreading. In one scene, debaters from the Highland Park High

team proudly show of the gnarly calluses formed on their fingers from the frantic

process. In short, opposing debate teams utilizing the spread and flow deliver and

record as much information in the debates as time will allow, a process shown first-hand throughout much of the documentary.

During the first debate season both teams conform to the "accepted" method of policy debate by utilizing the spread and, as a result, experience a great deal of success. Between the 2005 and 2006 seasons, though, the coach from Jordan High, David Wiltz, introduces Richard and Louis to the writing (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*) and ideas (banking style of education) of Paulo Freire. Inspired by Freire's words and ideas, Richard and Louis begin to openly challenge the current form of policy debate. According to the narrator, the two young men's fundamental claim is that "Instead of challenging ideas and pursuing active learning through dialogue, debate had become a contest of information processing" (*Resolved*, 2007). Based on this claim, Richard and Louis argue that the current form and structure of policy debate marginalizes students like themselves and serves no educative purpose. To right these wrongs, the two young men advocate for a transformative approach to debate where one's existing knowledge, based on real world experience, trumps "knowledge" gained from the mounds of lifeless information stored in the large plastic tubs debaters lug from competition to competition. In what is one of the more interesting aspects of how they present their argument, Richard and Louis actually enact the approach they advocate for in the very competitions that they critique, competitions that will qualify them for the TOC. As Richard and Louis openly challenge the establishment of policy debate in the second half of the film, scholars (Carlos Alberto Torres, Peter Lownds) from the Freire Institute provide occasional commentary and analysis related to Richard and Louis' argument.

As the 2006 season progresses, Matt's team from Greenhill Academy advances to the TOC using the traditional style of policy debate, but scant attention is given to their journey. It is Richard and Louis' struggle to change policy debate that becomes the main storyline. At this point in the film, Louis and Richard make the decision *not* to directly debate the topic of year[8], but, instead, focus on a more important issue, debate itself. In this particular storyline, "the fascinating intricacies of high school debate give way to the equally complex racial and class divide in American education" ("Synopsis," 2010). The two young men take their argument and approach on the road, competing in national and regional tournaments that ultimately qualify them for the TOC. Arguing issues of race, class, and gender, Richard and Louis' journey is filled with the emotional ups and downs of "kids from the *wrong* side of the tracks" (*Resolved, 2007; emphasis added)* trying to change a system from within. In short, their approach is met with both resistance and approval from those in the debate world, but "they have a chance" (*Resolved*, 2007). The documentary concludes with both teams' performance at the 2006 TOC. It's a build up that suggests both teams will ultimately end up in the finals, pitting two inherently different teams with ideologically different approaches to debate. In fiction films, this might be the case, but this documentary is a representation of an actual series of events. Richard and Louis make it all the way to the semi-finals but come up short after an emotional round. The Highland Park team does make it to the finals and Matt gets the championship he was expected to win.

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[8] The topic of debate in the 2006 season is: "Resolved: The U.S. federal government should substantially decrease its authority to, either detain suspects without charges, or conduct searches without probable cause" (Resolved, 2007).

Pedagogical Suggestions

In this section I will describe a pedagogical project based on my reading of *Resolved* (2007). It involves a set of sequential activities that include how *Resolved* (2007) can be taken up, along with *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970/2000) to help students reconceptualize prospective teachers' initial views of pedagogy.

Activity One: Discovering Prospective Teacher's Initial Views of Pedagogy

As I mention in my introduction to this chapter, the main goal of this project is to have students reconceptualize their views of pedagogy. Kincheloe (2010) offers good reason why this is necessary by arguing that prospective teachers often assume teaching is "a mere technical act with little connection to philosophical purposes, politics, social and cultural questions or epistemological perceptions of what constitutes knowledge." To compound this problem, "Many teaching methods courses and textbooks that are based on traditional forms of empirical research reduce teaching to step-by-step recipes removed from any consideration of pedagogical purpose that transcends the mechanical transfer of data from teacher to student" (Kincheloe, 2010; http://freireproject.org/critical-pedagogy-and-teacher-education). Gordon (2007) adds,

> Many of our students come to us looking for recipes, a bag of tricks
> that they can take with them and apply in their classroom. They
> assume that if they can just acquire these techniques and skills, they
> will be good teachers or at least survive. (p. 37)

In teaching both undergraduate and graduate level teacher education courses, I have found that prospective teachers bring with them many of these same beliefs and views. One explanation of the influence of these beliefs can be contributed to the twelve-year "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975). This refers to the

large number of experiences prospective teachers had as students before entering college. As a result of relying on this phenomenon, they are unlikely to recognize the limitations of their knowledge about teaching, and ultimately base their beliefs on a partial view of teaching. The first activity in this project is intended to uncover and expose these initial beliefs and views in order for students to begin analyzing and reconsidering what it might mean for them and their future students.

Step 1 – Constructing and Analyzing Images of Teaching

In keeping with the spirit of this dissertation, students would, first, be asked to provide their own visual representations of pedagogy by drawing a picture in class. A simple prompt such as, "Draw a detailed picture of teaching," would suffice. In order for students to engage in a deep analysis of their drawings, they should be encouraged to include as much detail as possible and draw on a variety of experiences (e.g. their experiences as students, popular culture) to construct their pictures. In a similar activity, Weber and Mitchell (1996) draw on research in the field of psychology and argue, "drawings provide people with a good opportunity not only to reflect their personal feelings and attitudes, … but also express the group values that are prevalent within their specific cultural environment"(p. 304). Furthermore, "Drawings offer a different kind of glimpse into human sensemaking that written or spoken texts do, because they can express that which is not easily put into words: the ineffable, the elusive, the not-yet-thought-through, the sub-conscious" (p. 304). The activity I am suggesting here is also intended to tease out what students might not be able to articulate in words.

Step 2 – Analyzing Images of Pedagogy

Next, students would be asked to analyze their own drawings and reflect on how they have represented pedagogy in a short written essay, paying close attention to every detail in their pictures. This could be assigned during the same class or as a take-home assignment, depending on the allotted time for seminars. In the following seminar, I suggest having students share their drawings with the rest of the class and discuss their written reflections. After sharing their own analysis, students should comment on each other's drawings to provide additional analysis. During this process, I suggest making a list of themes that emerge from both discussions. The purpose in making such a list is so that students may return to these drawings and themes at the end of this project and reflect on the degree to which their initial views of pedagogy have, or have not, changed. As I mention in Step 1, Weber and Mitchell (1996) conducted a similar activity in a study to explore teachers' beliefs and how their professional identities emerge. In this study, they observed, "the pervasive presence of classical, traditional images of teaching in the drawings, with a few notable exceptions" (p. 306). Due to the somewhat homogeneous pool of pre-service teachers in the United States (Darling-Hammond, 2005), my own experiences as a teacher educator, and what other scholars (Gordon, 2007; Kincheloe, 2010; Lortie, 1975) have noted about prospective teachers' views of pedagogy, I imagine a scenario quite similar to this. In other words, I would expect, or at least plan for, prospective teachers in a SFE course to construct traditional images of teaching that depict the more technical aspects of teaching along with images depicting them in an authoritarian role. I suggest that introducing them to

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Chapter Two of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970) is a step towards having

them reconceptualize these views, which leads me to the second activity in this

project. I will add that, for students whose drawings might depict a more progressive

representation of pedagogy, this project is still of value, in that it can serve to provide

them with the language to better articulate their views, as well as help these views

and beliefs evolve.

Activity 2 – Exploring Chapter Two of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970), Freire lays the foundation for a

view of "pedagogy" quite different from the views one might expect from the previous

activity by articulating pedagogy, not as a technique, but as a critical educational

process of "recognizing oppression, acting against it, [and] doing so in solidarity with

others who seek revolutionary change, and doing so continuously" (Gottesman,

2010; p. 381). Exploring this text in a "non-methods" course such as SFE, provides

an opportunity to address this issue (Gordon, 2007). By this, I mean that a broader

discussion of pedagogy could take place as opposed to, say, a discussion in

language arts or science "methods" courses where specific techniques and

approaches to enacting curriculum might be espoused.

As I mention in my review, it is important to avoid having students consider

Freire's work outside of the context in which it takes place (Aronowitz, 1993). To do

this, the first step I suggest in this activity would be to have students read and

discuss some sort of biographical information on Freire. Due to the influence of his

work, there are quite a few sources to choose from. For this activity, I suggest

assigning a short essay by Peter Lownds (2010) titled, *Freire's Life and Work: A*

Brief Biography of Paulo Freire. There are three reasons why I suggest this particular essay. First, it is accessible online and, therefore, students do not have to purchase additional materials. Second, it is a relatively short essay that students could read and discuss in a single seminar, which is what I suggest. Lastly, this essay focuses primarily on biographical information that takes place *before Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970), giving students a more immediate context for the text. In addition, Lownds, a scholar at the Paulo Freire Institute at UCLA, also makes several cameo appearances in *Resolved* (2007) where he provides information about Freire's work and commentary on the main storyline of the documentary. So, the first step in this activity would be to assign Lownds' (2010) essay to be read in class. After reading the essay, students would lead a discussion about what aspects of Freire's life stand out and which aspects might be most important to someone who became an educator.

After reading and discussing background information on Freire, students would then be assigned Chapter Two of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970/2000) and asked to write a one to two page response that will be discussed in the following seminar. Essentially, this chapter compares two different approaches to education, "banking" and "problem-posing," which are contrasted most vividly in a list found on page 73. But, of course, it is much more than this. I mention this because I am imagining a scenario where students might be inclined to pay too close attention to this aspect of the chapter in their written response and miss the implication of these two approaches to education. That is, both approaches imply something about the context, purpose, and effects of education; what happens outside of the

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classroom is as important as what happens in the classroom. They may also oversimplify Freire's arguments and only think of "banking" education as the type of classroom where lecture occurs, to which they might argue that certain disciplines require this type of approach. Similarly, they may equate "problem-posing" education with classrooms that are more student lead, which again, is an oversimplification of Freire's argument.

To help students understand this argument better and articulate the larger, conceptual context for Freire's argument, I suggest several in-class activities after they have read Chapter Two and discussed it in the following seminar. First, after discussing their responses to Chapter Two (Freire, 1970/2000), have students form groups where they will compare and contrast the following terms by providing a "banking" definition and "problem-posing" definition of each: 1) Students; 2) Teachers; 3) Student-Teacher relationship; and 3) Purpose of Education. In this activity I suggest having students use direct quotes from the text to defend their definitions. Next, have students explain what Freire means by the following: 1) Being "truly human" or "fully human;" 2) "Conscientizacao;" and 3) "Praxis." A thorough discussion of their results would follow.
Next, I suggest having students read the Chapter again and write a short essay that explains the extent to which Freire's ideas have impacted their education.

As I mention, each of these activities are intended to help students understand the larger, conceptual, aspects of Freire's (1970) argument and critique of education, but this may not be enough. As Freirean scholars (Aronowitz, 1993; Macedo, in Freire, 2000) and Freire (in Torres, 1986) himself have noted, though,

students might still be prone to reduce his ideas regarding pedagogy to a simple

"recipe," thinking of it in technical terms as opposed to something more akin to an

approach. For instance, Freire (in Torres, 1986) once said, "They don't understand

me. They don't understand what I have said, what I say, what I have written" (p. 23).

As a result of this phenomena, Aronowitz (1993) warns against "metonymic

readings" readings of Freire by noting, "Within the United States it is not uncommon

for teachers and administrators to say that they are 'using' the Freirean method in

classrooms" (p. 8). To this he argues that Freire's "pedagogy" was not necessarily a

"method" of teaching and that:

> a careful reading of Freire's work, combined with familiarity with the social and historical context within which it functions, obliges distinctions: nothing can be farther from Freire's intention than to conflate his use of the term pedagogy with the traditional notion of teaching. (pp. 8-9)

Instead, Aronowitz (1993) argues that Freire's pedagogy is a "radical democratic"

philosophy of education. It is "radical" because the goal was to enable marginalized

students to assert economic, political, and social control over their lives. This is,

again, the type of understanding that I hope students will come to at the conclusion

of this project, and what leads me to the third activity.

Activity 3 – Articulating Freire's Ideas With The School Doc, *Resolved* (2007)

Given that the same phenomenon Aronowitz (1993) and Macedo (in Freire,

2000) discuss is likely to occur in this particular phase of the project, I suggest taking

up the school doc, *Resolved* (2007), along with Chapter Two (Freire, 1970) to help

students move beyond these misunderstandings. Before I explain the steps of this

activity, I will explain why by pointing to one particular aspect of the film that I feel

might allow students to think "broadly" about Freire's ideas and pedagogy, in general.

As I mention in the previous summary, the main storyline in *Resolved* (2007) is Richard and Louis' challenge to the structure and practice of high school policy debate. One of the more unique aspects of their challenge, in terms of how the documentary can be taken up in this project, is that their argument is framed by the concept of "banking education," a key theoretical concept in Chapter Two of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970/2000). In framing their Freirean argument against the current approach to high school policy debate, Richard and Louis have taken Freire's (1970/2000) ideas about what happens in the classroom and applied it directly to their experiences in policy debate. They do this, first, by conceptualizing policy debate as pedagogical. This conceptualization is first articulated in a scene where Louis is interviewed, presumably by the filmmaker, and states, "The problem with debate is we're so focused on winning we can't realize the purpose of debate is not to win, but to *educate*" (Resolved, 2007; emphasis added). In other words, the topic or "resolution" being debated is akin to curriculum, and arguments for or against such resolutions are what is being "taught." Once conceived as pedagogical, the Freirean arguments in the documentary begin to take hold. My goal for this activity is to have students do the same type of analysis.

Here, I suggest having students analyze the documentary in terms of how high school policy debate, as represented in *Resolved* (2007), can be thought of in relation to Freire's (1970/2000) idea of "banking education." This serves two important purposes for how SFE students may benefit from the project. First,

exploring Freire's arguments in the context of high school policy debate, as opposed to the classroom with actual teachers and students, opens up a space where students can think about pedagogy in a broader sense. On the other hand, I do want them to think about these broad terms with regards to what they will do in their future classrooms, which brings me to the second purpose of this activity. In order for teacher education students to also analyze this film in a manner that seems more "practical" and applicable to their future work as educators, it may be necessary for them to also think of debate as something akin to teaching and the resolutions they argue as curriculum. Otherwise, one may find their students struggling to locate and examine the theory/practice link in this project. I will now explain the steps of this activity.

So, the first step in this activity is to have students watch the first half of the film in class and take notes on how high school policy debate can be articulated through Freire's ideas in Chapter Two. I am only including a portion of the documentary in this particular activity because, as I mention in my summary, the documentary is clearly divided into two sections, one where debate is described, not critiqued, and one where Freire's ideas are applied to a critique. Students will have read Chapter Two twice by this point and should be able to analyze and articulate, at least, some of Freire's ideas with the first half of the film. After viewing the film and taking notes, I suggest having students turn their notes into a written response to the first half of the film, which will be discussed at the beginning of the following seminar.

There are several scenes in the first half of the film that articulate Freire's arguments in Chapter Two that students might choose from in their analysis. Again,

these are scenes with no direct reference to Freire. For instance, there are several

scenes where the Highland Park High team is filmed preparing for the 2005 and

2006 debate seasons (later in the film we learn that Richard and Louis are also

critical of this process). In this collection of scenes, students are sitting in front of

computers, after school and during summer "debate camp," scrolling through page

after page of information found on search engines often associated with academic

scholarship. The debaters are typing, printing, and writing information from these

pages, information that they will memorize and use to construct their arguments for

the upcoming debate season. In some cases, students fill up to seven large plastic

containers with neatly organized files. Using information filed in these containers, the

debaters prepare their arguments in advance, based on a wide range of positions

their opponents *might* make. To form their argument, they simply regurgitate the

information they have gathered in these containers. This series of scenes articulate

several of the "attitudes and practices" (p.73) that Freire (1970/2000) felt

perpetuated a banking style of education. First is the attitude that "the teacher

chooses the program content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it"

(p.73). The team has already been told the topic they will debate. They have no say

in the matter and they "adapt" to the given debate resolution. Given that most of

them have little experience with the topic, debaters rely on the computer search

engines, the "banking" teacher if you will, because of the attitude that "the teacher

knows everything and the student knows nothing" (p.73). There is also no authentic

"communication" occurring. The computer (the teacher) cannot enter into dialogue

with the debaters; it "issues communiqués and makes deposits" (p.72) to the debater

as they sit passively in front of the screen. This resembles a practice where "the teacher talks and the students listen – meekly" (p.73). As they copy, type, write and memorize, the debaters "have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher" (p.73). From preparation to the actual competitions, the debaters "patiently receive, memorize, and repeat" (p.72) the information.

Another scene, the opening scene of the documentary, begins with students from the Highland Park High seeming to prepare for an upcoming debate. The scene transitions from student to student as they discuss various topics and arguments they might make. The scene cuts to an image of Sam looking down at what appear to be notes. He takes a deep breath, looks up, and begins speaking at such a rapid pace that his words are almost unintelligible. For the next sixty seconds the scene transitions back and forth to other Highland Park debaters doing the same. As they speak, the camera focuses on their feet rapidly tapping and their hands moving up and down. Being unfamiliar with high school policy debate, I find this scene to be fairly intense in terms of trying to comprehend how much these debaters are saying, what they are *actually* saying, and if they even know what they are saying. It is almost as if they have filled themselves with words and are now purging them as quickly as their bodies will allow. Of course, as the film progresses, you learn that success in debate comes from being able to deliver information at such a pace. I find that, similar to the portion of the animated scene I previously discussed (where the student's head is being opened and filled with large quantities of words by his teacher), this scene also helps to articulate Freire's (1970/2000) notion of how a banking style of education turns students "into 'containers,' into 'receptacles' to be

'filled' by the teacher" and the perception that, "The more completely she fills the receptacles, the better a teacher she is" (p. 72). I choose this passage because Freire is emphasizing the idea of the "receptacle," the "container," and the idea that they should be "filled." In the scene I have just discussed (the opening scene), the sheer amount of words being spoken and the intensity with which the debaters compete to say more and more words than the previous student make it clear that, like Freire's (1970/2000) "banking" teacher (p. 72), the debaters' success lies in being able to "*more* completely" (p. 72; emphasis added) deposit information. As I watched the scene, I found that, like an actual container or receptacle, I was attempting to control and organize the amount of information being dumped on me before it escaped. In scenes where opposing debaters are "flow sheeting," there is a sense that they are also being made the container, the "receiving object" (p. 77). They have developed a specific system for handling the large "deposits" of information. Their objectification, like Freire's student, is the result of a system that favors the quantity of content over the form in which it is delivered. "Based on a mechanistic, static, naturalistic, spatialized view of consciousness, it (banking education) transforms students into receiving objects" (p.77).

As these examples illustrate, the first half of the film includes several scenes that could be used to articulate ideas from Chapter Two of Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970/2000). After students have shared their own "reading" of the first half of the film, I imagine that there might be some students who wrestle with how any of the scenes articulate Freire's ideas. In that case, I suggest showing the aforementioned scenes and providing my readings of those scenes presented here.

Since mine is just one reading of these scenes, another option would be to provide one's own reading of these and other scenes to share with students.

Activity 4 – Spread(agogy) of The Oppressed: Articulating Freire With The School Doc, *Resolved*

The fourth activity I suggest for this project involves students watching the entire documentary and focusing on broader issues discussed in Chapter Two of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970/2000). Before I describe the activity I will provide close readings of several scenes from the second half of the documentary that I will want students to focus on in this activity.

For much of the second half of the film, Richard and Louis, along with scholars from the Freire Institute and the documentary's narrator, provide the viewer with direct references to Freire's (1970/2000) work. For instance, at the end of a scene where the Jordan High team is explaining the basis of their argument against the current style of debate, Richard and Peter Lownds (a scholar at the Freire Institute) introduce Freire for the first time in the documentary. Richard has apparently been asked by the interviewer about why he and Louis have decided to switch tactics and openly challenge the structure of policy debate:

> Richard: They showed us this guy named Paulo Freire (mispronounced), and we talked about the politics of domination.

> Peter Lownds: It's pronounced, Paulo Freire, yes.

At this point the interview sequence with Richard and Lownds transitions into a clever animated scene where the narrator provides more detail about the argument put forth by Richard and Louis. In this scene, the first specific

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references are made to concepts found in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

(Freire, 1970/2000). The narrator speaks as they animated portion of the

scene unfolds:

> In preparation for the 2006 debate season, Richard and Louis were introduced to the writings of this man (animated image of Freire appears), Brazilian philosopher, Paulo Freire. As an educator in Brazil, he criticized the state of education where students sat passively as teachers deposited information. He dubbed this form of education the 'banking method,' and he believed that poor students in Brazil, in order to rise above their impoverished state, needed to challenge the very way they were being educated. According to Richard and Louis, this 'banking method,' as criticized by Freire, is similar to the current practices of debate. Instead of challenging ideas and pursuing active learning through dialogue, debate had become merely a contest of information processing.

In this scene, the image of a student having his head literally opened and filled with

random ideas by a teacher appears as the narrator discusses the idea of students

sitting "passively as teachers deposited information" (*Resolved*, 2007). The entire

scene is cleverly constructed with images directly related to the narrator's

discussion. For students who may still be struggling to grasp the concepts found in

the text, this entire scene serves as a basic introduction for some of his larger ideas.

It does so by articulating ideas directly from Freire's (1970/2000) seminal writing. For

instance, in Chapter Two of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970/2000) uses

the concept of "banking education" (p. 72) as a critical metaphor for the system of

curriculum delivery he found prevalent in education, something he referred to as

"narration sickness" (p. 71). Similar to how the concept is explained in the

aforementioned scene, Freire defined banking education as "an act of depositing, in

which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of

communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the

students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat" (p.72). As a result, he argued, "the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits" (Freire, cite; p. 72). This particular passage from Freire resonates with the portion of the scene where the narrator is explaining Richard and Louis' argument that "debate had become merely a contest of information processing" (*Resolved*, 2007).

Another related concept articulated in *Resolved* (2007) is Freire's (1970/2000) notion that the banking style of education is "necrophilic" (p. 77), a form of oppression. Richard and Louis are also making the argument that the current style of debate is oppressive in much the same way. Freire explains, "Because banking education begins with a false understanding of men and women as objects, it cannot promote the development of what Fromm calls 'biophily,' but instead produces its opposite: 'necrophily'" (p. 77). Quoting Framm (in Freire, 1970/2000), Freire writes:

> "While life is characterized by growth in a structured, functional manner, the necrophilous person loves all that does not grow, all that is mechanical. The necrophilous person is driven by the desire to transform the organic into the inorganic, to approach life mechanically, as if all living persons were things. ... Memory, rather than experience; having, rather than being, is what counts. The necrophilous person can relate to an object — a flower or a person — only if he possesses it; hence a threat to his possession is a threat to himself; if he loses possession he loses contact with the world. ... He loves control, and in the act of controlling he kills life." (p. 77)

Freire uses the term, biophily, in reference to the *living* aspects of education and knowledge. In this context, Freire is associating biophily with what he believes to be the "true" spirit of education and learning, something a banking style of education disregards. On the other hand, the term, necrophily, is taken up by Freire to describe the oppressive nature of a banking style of education. Like the "necrophilous"

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person, a banking style of education gives preference to a "mechanistic" approach (p. 77). For Freire, the mechanistic approach to education "transforms students into receiving objects" (p. 77). Doing so is a form of "overwhelming control", which, for Freire, *is* oppression (p.77).

In *Resolved* (2007) there are several instances where scenes articulate Freire's reference to the terms, "biophily" and "necrophily." For instance, Freire's reference to these terms can be found in several scenes where Richard and Louis argue that the *living* aspect of debate has been replaced by a mechanistic approach. In one such scene, Richard emotionally states, "If its policy debate, lets argue. Lets not have a competition on who can say what the fastest. We have to look at it from a *real world* standpoint. Important issues are important." Like Freire's (1970/2000) argument that the *living* aspects of education are essential, Richard is making an argument that the *living* aspect of debate, the "real world standpoint," is essential if debate is to have any educative character. In a more powerful scene, Louis puts words to action during the TOC as he and Richard debate a resolution regarding the limits of federal government to detain citizens without arresting them and the limits of warrantless searches. Richard and Louis are claiming that racism, something they experience in their lives daily, must be addressed before the government can do these things in a just way. The other team uses the Civil Rights Act in their assertion that policies have already been enacted to address racism and that it is not relevant to the resolution. Holding back tears, and speaking at a rapid pace, Louis replies,

> You can't tell me that MLK solved racism because of all the shit I go through everyday and that's what we're arguing. We have a direct connection to this argument because we are not the direct benefactors of what they (the other team) consider the Civil Rights Act.

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Later in their argument, the topic of Coast Guard search and seizures arises. Richard asks the other team, "Alright, how do these search and seizures affect you and your partner?" The other team replies, rather awkwardly, "Well I own a boat." Their response stops there. The two debaters appear confused and their expressions seem to imply that their experiences boating have had little to do with run-ins with law enforcement. In their argument, Richard and Louis are referring to "all the shit" they "go through every day," as young urban black males, with law enforcement. In a related scene, Louis states, "We represent the people we're trying to solve this problem for."

The descriptions of scenes I have selected for this section show that many elements of the main storyline in *Resolved* (2007) resemble Freire's (1970/2000) description of, and argument against, the "banking" concept of education.

As I mention, this activity incorporates the entire documentary. I suggest, first, having students now view the entire film and provide their own reading of scenes that articulate Freire's (1970/2000) ideas from Chapter Two. As part of this assignment, students would be asked, again, to look for scenes that articulate Freire's notion of banking education. To show this understanding, I suggest having students refer directly to passages from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire (1970/2000). As a side note, I imagine that this type of assignment might prove difficult for students who have never engaged in this type of analysis and close reading of film and academic texts. Therefore, giving them a direct prompt from a passage from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/2000) might be necessary. The

following is one such example, and one that I feel might help them move closer to a

broader conceptualization of pedagogy:

Prompt – Consider the following passage and analyze the film in terms of how the

banking style of education can be conceived as "necrophilic," or "oppressive." In

addition, discuss whether or not Richard and Louis make the case that high school

policy debate is similarly oppressive.

Passage:

> Because banking education begins with a false understanding of men
> and women as objects, it cannot promote the development of what
> Fromm calls 'biophily,' but instead produces its opposite: 'necrophily.'
> (p. 77)

> "While life is characterized by growth in a structured, functional
> manner, the necrophilous person loves all that does not grow, all that
> is mechanical. The necrophilous person is driven by the desire to
> transform the organic into the inorganic, to approach life mechanically,
> as if all living persons were things. ... Memory, rather than experience;
> having, rather than being, is what counts. The necrophilous person can
> relate to an object — a flower or a person — only if he possesses it;
> hence a threat to his possession is a threat to himself; if he loses
> possession he loses contact with the world. ... He loves control, and in
> the act of controlling he kills life.

> Oppression – overwhelming control – is necrophilic; it is nourished by
> love of death, not life. The banking concept of education, which serves
> the interests of oppression, is also necrophilic. (p. 77)

A thorough discussion of student articulations would, obviously, be the goal of the

following seminar. In particular, I suggest bridging the idea that day-to-day decisions

made in the classrooms reflect a philosophy of education that has larger, contextual

implications for students with regard to equity and access in education. After

discussing this second analysis of *Resolved* (2007), I suggest having students work

in groups to answer questions that may help synthesize their understanding of Freire

and its relevance to the day-to-day activities in a classroom. Those questions are: 1) What might a Freirean Policy Debate/Classroom look like; 2) "Is the "banking" ever ok? If so, when and why?" 3) Can education still be a form of liberation when "banking" methods are used? Why or why not?

As a final phase of this activity, I suggest having students reflect on their articulations of Freire (1970) and *Resolved* (2007) and their answers to the latter questions by revisiting the drawings they produced in the first activity. At this point I suggest having students produce new drawings and discuss both in terms of their understanding of Paulo Freire's (1970). As I state in the introduction, the goal would be to have these drawings reflect a reconceptualization of their initial views. The new drawings and their reflections on them could serve as a way to gauge the level of reconceptualization that has occurred over the course of this project. Of course, these are only a few suggestions for how the school doc, *Resolved* (2007), could be taken up pedagogically. As viewers will discover, the documentary is complex and has the potential to be critically engaged on many levels.

Suggestions for Further Analysis

In this section I will suggest other ways that resolved might be taken up in a FOE course. These suggestions are not necessarily based on Freire's (1970/2000) ideas, but they may provide additional insight into those discussed in the film and in the activities I previously suggest.

Like many school docs, one way that *Resolved* (2007) could be taken up to have teacher education students explore the way that inner city high school students and suburban high school students are represented in the documentary. This could

be done using Stuart Hall's (1997) theory of representation and coding/decoding practices I discuss both theories in Chapter 1). As an extension of this exploration, students could refer to Trier (2001) and Bulman's (2005) discussion regarding the representation of urban and suburban students in "school films" (Trier, 2001). (I discuss Trier and Bulman's findings in Chapter 1). Using this work, students could then explore *Resolved* (2007) in terms of whether representations of students in this school doc challenge or reinforce those found in other popular culture texts (I discuss, with more detail, a similar process in the school doc project, *Representations of Urban Students in OT: Our Town*). In my own analysis, I find that Richard and Louis stray from some of those representations in terms of how the two young men's cultural context, is represented as more an asset than something to be "overcome." In fact, the context of their lives is central to their argument, an argument the film helps to construct. That is, using the spread in policy debate is akin to a "banking" approach to education, an approach that fails to take into account the lived experiences of the student (Freire, 1970/2000). Of course, this is only one reading of these representations. Students will bring their own readings to the discussion.

As I have shown, the school doc, *Resolved* (2007) has pedagogical potential for academics looking to engage students in a rich discussion about the work of Paulo Freire. I have also shown that there is potential to explore other concepts that may be covered in a FOE course. These are, again, only a few of the ideas that can be explored in this documentary.

CHAPTER VII: TEACHERS, WHO DO THEY THINK THEY ARE? EXPLORING THE "TEACHER HERO" FIGURE IN THE SCHOOL DOC. *THE FIRST YEAR*

In this chapter, I will discuss a multiphase pedagogical project conceptualized for prospective teachers in a Social Foundations of Education (SFE) course. The project I suggest is a self-study, where students explore visual representations of the "teacher-hero" in popular culture, one of the more prevalent clichés perpetuated by filmmakers. By self-study, I mean that the project engages students in a process where they are asked to intentionally and systematically inquire into "the connections between [*their*] prior knowledge, social context, origins of teacher knowledge" (Travers, 2000; p.1) and their emerging teacher identities. In other words, the project is designed to help prospective teachers build a more complex understanding of the way *they* have come to know *teaching*, and *teacher*. By exploring the "teacher-hero," students focus on how this particular representation works to shape and situate their emerging professional identities. I will explain why this particular representation has been chosen over others in more detail later in this chapter. The school doc *The First Year* (2001) and several other visual texts with representations of teachers are taken up to facilitate this process. In the activities that comprise this project:

1. Students will engage in close readings of the school doc, *The First Year* (2001) where they will answer a set of related questions intended to elicit responses related to their emerging teacher identities and knowledge of *teacher* and *teaching.*

2. Students will be introduced to the "teacher-hero" representation in popular culture.

3. Students will examine the "teacher-hero" representation in the school doc, *The First Year* (2001).

4. Students will discuss elements of *The First Year* (2001) with regards to how the understand "good" teaching.

Situating The Project in a Social Foundations of Education Course

Provenzo (2009) argues that there are certain "foundational questions" that need to be answered in SFE, and that some of these questions have their roots in cultural studies. The questions most relevant to this project include: "What is a good teacher? What is good teaching? What does it mean to be a good teacher? How do we define good teaching? What stories do we hear… about good teaching?" (p. 991). Furthermore, Brunner (1994) suggests "that teachers, especially prospective teachers, might benefit from the opportunity to examine the ways in which they have come to define their role as teachers—what it means to teach" (p. 68). Bayerbach (2005) suggests that one way to have prospective teachers in SFE courses understand the ways in which popular culture influences how they answer the previous questions is to "encourage them to examine their own views of teachers and teaching by considering how teachers are represented in various media." (p. 267). Furthermore, she argues, "Critical analysis of how teachers and students are represented in films can serve as a powerful activity in social foundations courses, providing an opportunity to reflect on a myriad of sociocultural issues relating to education" (p. 267). By "critical analysis," she is referring to "a process in which representations of teaching are examined within a social structural context to reveal unstated assumptions and interrogate hidden messages" (p. 270). The activities I

suggest in this project involve students doing this. Brunner (1994) and Trier (2001)

propose a similar approach and suggest that critical analyses of the stories of

teaching and learning in film can provide a "bridge" between the abstract concepts

found in academic texts about education and those concepts found in actual

teaching situations. Although the "teaching situations" found in the films Brunner

(1994) and Trier (2001, 2003) suggest are fictional, Trier (2001) explains that they

are powerful, "mainly by inviting us to experience [teaching] situations vicariously

through dramatic forms" (p. 129).

Bayerbach (2005), Brunner (1994), and Trier's (2001) logic includes the idea

that popular culture texts, such as school films and school docs, are intrinsically

pedagogical and play a critical role in "shaping the social imaginations" (Giroux,

1997; p. 300) of prospective teachers. This point is especially important to consider

in a SFE course, where prospective teachers have a limited frame of reference for

defining their future role as educators. As I mention in my discussion of SFE

courses, students are typically enrolled in a SFE courses early in their program of

studies and have had little, if any, field-based experiences in teacher education. As a

result, their knowledge of "teacher" and "teaching" is based, in large part, on what

Lortie (1975) refers to as their "apprenticeship of observation" (p. 61) as students or

from the accounts of teaching and learning they hear from others. Additionally,

these influences include the formulaic construction of teaching and learning in

popular culture. Along the same lines, Aronowitz (1989) argues that "the

technological sensorium that we call mass or popular culture" (p. 197) is a site where

personal and collective knowledge of the world around us is constructed. This

includes how we come to know *teaching* and *teacher.* As Mitchell and Weber (1999) suggest, "Critical interrogations of the popular images of teaching may lead in surprising directions. For one, we may discover images of hope that please in the most unlikely of places" (p. 139).

In the following section, I will provide a selected review of literature from academics that have discussed a particular representation of teachers in popular culture, the "teacher hero." With regards to Provezo's (2009) suggestion that pre-service teachers explore questions having to do with what constitutes "good teaching," I will focus on the "hero" representation of cinematic teachers, as this image is more prevalent than other representations and sets the highest standard of "good" teaching in popular culture. I will explain more about why I have chosen to focus on this particular representation in my discussion of the pedagogical project I suggest in this chapter.

Literature Review

In this section, I will provide examples of what a select group of academics in the Field of Education have written about the representation of "teacher-heroes" in popular culture, specifically visual representations found in "school films" (Trier, 2001). What is noticeably missing from all but one of the articles or book chapters I discuss are examples of how these films have been taken up with students in education courses or suggestions for how they might be taken up pedagogically. These omissions aside, I do find their work to be of value, in that they provide a decent overview of the "teacher-hero" representation in school films and they provide useful examples of the codes and conventions Hollywood uses to construct

this particular representation. I do include one example of an academic who suggests specific ways that a certain school film with a teacher-hero representation could be taken up with students in education courses. This particular article describes work similar to what I am doing in this dissertation.

Mary Dalton's (2004) book, *The Hollywood Curriculum: Teachers in The Movies*, (2004) might serve as a decent primer for someone unfamiliar with the school film genre or someone looking for an overview of how teachers are represented in these films. Her main argument in Chapter Two, Three, and Four of the book is that a "Hollywood Model" exists for how the "good" teacher and "bad" teacher is constructed. In Chapter Three, Dalton provides a critical review of other scholars (Ayers, Edelman) that have discussed the "good" and "bad" teacher in school films, mainly disagreeing with their readings of several school films, then analyzing them herself and offering her own reading. In this process, Dalton (2004) identifies and discusses "recognizable patterns" (p. 25), or codes and conventions, used to construct the good teacher in school films. She writes:

> Typically, he or she is an outsider who is usually not well liked by other teachers, while the bad teachers are typically bored by students, afraid of students, or eager to dominate students. The good teacher gets involved with students on a personal level, learns from those students, and does not usually fare very well with administrators. Sometimes these good teachers have a ready sense of humor. They also frequently personalize the curriculum to meet everyday needs in their students' lives. (pp. 25-26)

From this point, she offers examples from a variety of school films to make her point about each of these characteristics, but gives little in the way of analysis. For instance, her first example of the "outsider" convention is Mark Thatchery, the teacher in *To Sir With Love.* All that she has to say is that Thackery's outsider status

is due to him being "an engineer who is teaching because he has been unable to find a job in his field" (p. 26). From there, she moves on to several other cinematic teachers to make her point. There is clearly more to say, including the very obvious fact that Thackery is a well educated, middle-class African-American teacher in a predominately white, working class school. Dalton fails to explore the racial and social class aspects of his character or, better yet, how it intersects with his teaching experience. She repeats the same move in the following sections where she provides examples of several other well-known Hollywood teachers that fit the clichés she identifies in her former statement about how the good teacher is constructed. And again, instead of being an *analysis* of these teachers, her discussion includes one or two sentences about how and why the teacher meets the criteria she has laid out. I do, however, think that someone looking to take up the "good" teacher "bad" teacher theme could use her examples as a *starting* point.

Another text that serves as an introduction to Hollywood's "hero" teacher is Farber and Holm's (1994) book chapter, *A Brotherhood of Heroes: The Charismatic Educator in Recent American Movies.* In fact, the entire book, *Schooling in the Light of Popular Culture* (Farber, Provenzo, & Holm, 1994) serves as a *decent* overview of the school film genre. My interest for this project, though, lies more in their discussion of "hero" teachers, so I will focus my review on the one particular chapter. As the title implies, Farber and Holm (1994) analyze a number of school films in terms of how Hollywood constructs the "hero" teacher. They mainly provide short summaries of film plots and storylines of the teachers in the film to demonstrate how the "hero" teacher is constructed in each film. Their obvious point, like Dalton's

(2004), is to show that there is a formula for how this representation is constructed.

Using the school films, *Stand and Deliver*, *Lean on Me*, and *Dead Poets Society* as

their anchor, Farber and Holm (1994) describe how Hollywood teachers: are usually

male (hence "Brotherhood"); usually work in a bad school with bad teachers; usually

sacrifice as professionals and suffer in their personal lives; but ultimately end up

"saving" one or two kids while "losing" the others. In sum, they argue, "Many stirring

and upbeat moments of care and success in educational settings emerge from these

stories" (Farber and Holm, 1994; p. 155). What they don't do is suggest how these

examples of "upbeat moments of care and success in educational settings" might be

used with students in education courses. This seems like a missed opportunity as

their statement seems to imply that there is something useful that prospective

teachers might learn from these examples.

Other academics (Ayers, 1994; Farhi, 1999) have taken a similar approach to

discussing the "teacher-savior," and by similar, I mean that they provide mostly

broad analyses and summaries of character storylines and movie plots to make their

case. For instance, in his book chapter, *A Teacher Ain't Nothin' but a Hero:*

Teachers and Teaching in Film, Ayers (1994) begins with the following assertion

about school films:

> The movies tell us, to begin with, that schools and teachers are in the
> business of saving children – saving them from their families, saving
> them from the purveyors of drugs and violence who are taking over our
> cities, saving them from themselves, their own pursuits and purposes.
> (p. 201)

Ayers explains how most of the other teachers in these movies have given up on the students that do need to be saved. Fortunately though, there is always a hero teacher in the film, a "saint" to save them. According to Ayers:

> His job – and its always *his* job because the saint-teacher, and almost every other teacher in the movies, is a man – is straightforward. He must separate the salvageable from those who are beyond redemption and he must win them over to a better life, all the while doing battle with idiot colleagues, the dull-witted administration, and the dangerously backward parents. He is a solitary hero. (pp. 201-202)

From here, Ayers (1994) offers up his opinion about several well-known, and often cited school films: *Blackboard Jungle, Conrack, Teachers, Lean On Me, and Stand and Deliver*. He gives his personal opinion, by way of oppositional readings, in the summaries he provides and describes various scenes where "hero" teaching is portrayed in the films. Short of an in-depth analysis, Ayers finds that ultimately, "these popular teacher films are entirely comfortable with a specific common stance on teaching," which according to Ayers is "wrong." The sense one gets from Ayers remarks, especially that his reading proves they are "wrong," is that he is annoyed with the films and the teachers in them. He goes on to explain that good teaching is actually the exact opposite of what is portrayed in school films and seems to find no redeeming qualities in them, other than to point out what they are *not*. He claims that the danger of these types of films is that they do not aid in "liberating schooling from its single-minded obsession with control, obedience, hierarchy – and everyone's place in it" (p. 209). Ayers (1994) assumes that these films are taken at face value and is concerned that what accounts for good teaching in these films becomes dogma for teachers' expectations in "real" classrooms, and that this representation of teachers maintains status quo assumptions about what teaching should look like.

He writes, "Films on teaching fall in step… they are all about common sense and they immunize against a language of possibility" (p. 209).

In a much shorter text, *Hollywood Goes to School: Recognizing the Superteacher Myth in Film*, Fahri (1999) offers up a similar line of thought on the formula used to construct the teacher hero. He writes:

> The superteacher formula is fairly simple. Take on teacher, often male, ranging from someone who has 'different' ideas to someone who is an outright rebel. Give him an uncaring or unwilling administration, incompetent or lackluster coworkers, and students whom everyone else has given up on. With little assistance from anyone and teaching methods that are barely existent, the teacher is able to overcome the odds and quickly transform the class. Frequently the teacher, who has no personal life of his own, becomes something of a cult figure and proceeds to solve the students' problems. Along the way, the teacher alienates someone in a position of power, thus putting his job on the line. The students, of course, join together to pledge their support, because he has changed their lives forever. The end. (p. 157)

Similar to Ayers (1994), Farhi (1999) goes on to flesh out his points by referring to the storylines of a range of teacher films, many of which have been discussed at length elsewhere and found to represent teachers in the same way he is discussing them in this article. In other words, his analysis of these films sheds no new light on them. One interesting aspect of this article- although he does not elaborate on the idea- is that Farhi begins to look at the evolution of the "superteacher" over a thirty-year time span by comparing *To Sir With Love* to the newer version, *To Sir With Love 2.* Unfortunately, he only devotes one paragraph to this idea. His claim is that the teacher in the original version met the criteria- which he never states - of a "good" teacher, and that the teacher in the updated version has "changed" into the "superteacher." He offers several reasons for *how* the teacher has changed, but offers no insight

as to *why* the change has occurred. A contextual analysis of the political and

social milieu surrounding the release and production of each film would surely

have been a more interesting approach to examining the evolution of the

"superteacher myth." Nonetheless, his account of the superteacher formula is

worth noting, as it serves as a concise explanation of the "formula" and

discusses films that others can take up to explore the representation of

teachers.

In a more recent article titled, *Representations of Education in HBO's The*

Wire, Trier (2010) describes a pedagogical project he has designed based on

Season Four of the Home Box Office (HBO) series, *The Wire*[9]. In this article, as well

as most of the others he has written on the topic of school films, Trier does

something that the aforementioned scholars fail to do; he suggests ways that

academics might use popular culture representations with students in education

courses. I find this aspect of Trier's approach to be of particular importance because

it signals that popular culture texts are subject to multiple readings and that his

reading should not be privileged over those that students may construct. In the

article, Trier (2010) suggests having students analyze the storyline of the teacher,

Prez, in light of how the "teacher savior" model has been discussed. He suggests

using the following passage that Hynes (in Trier, 2010) wrote in direct response to

The Wire:

> We all know the Stations of the Cross for the inspirational-teacher film
> by now: the naive young teacher's disastrous first class; the staff
> meeting that devolves into a bitch session about unruly students,

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[9] *The Wire* is an HBO crime drama series set in Baltimore, Maryland. The series aired for five
seasons. Each season, *The Wire* focuses on a particular aspect of city life in Baltimore. Season Four
focuses on education, particularly one school.

pointless paperwork and the idiotic directives of the administration; the embittered veteran teacher condescending to the idealistic rookie in the teacher's lounge; a climactic confrontation that either threatens violence or delivers it; and a final, tear-jerking moment of redemption as the teach finally reaches the kids. (p. 183)

The goal is to use this passage "as a critical lens for structuring the groups' analyses" (p. 184). As an example of how this character can be read through the lens of Hynes' passage, Trier undertakes a similar analysis to discuss Prez, the "naive young teacher," who is beginning his career at an urban middle school in Baltimore. He first notes that Prez's mere presence as a new white teacher in a school where the majority of the students are African American "seems on the surface as though *The Wire* might present the kind of 'teacher savior' narrative told in such films as *Blackboard Jungle, To Sir With Love, Dangerous Minds, Lean on Me, Stand and Deliver, Freedom Writers, and The Ron Clark Story*" (p. 182). Upon deeper analysis, Trier found that Prez experienced many of the "Stations" that Hynes (in Trier, 2010) identifies in his description of the teacher-savior film narrative. For instance, he identifies a scene in one episode where Prez attends his first faculty orientation meeting "that devolves into a bitch session." As Trier explains, "The orientation is totally irrelevant to the gritty realities of teaching at Tilghman Middle School, and the teachers rebel by mocking the presenter and disrupting the orientation" (p. 183). Trier goes on to point out many of the other "Stations of The Cross" represented in Prez's character. He finds that overall, the scenes he describes in this article "reveal that the Prez storyline shares most of the clichés that Hynes described as making up the basic plot of teacher savior films" (p. 184). From that point he suggests students take up the entire season of *The Wire* to analyze

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whether or not he remains a "savior teacher." What Trier presents in this article is a "suggestion" for how a certain popular culture text – *The Wire*- can be taken up critically with prospective teachers. Trier (2010) does not attempt to close off the meaning of the text by providing a definitive reading, nor does he dismiss how others have read a similar text. In fact, he concludes the article by stating:

> One point that I want to make is that I am certain that many other ways of taking up the series can be conceptualized. Another point is that in having set myself the task of focusing mainly on the education storylines, of all that remains to be analyzed and articulated about season four, and I look forward to seeing published accounts of others' critical encounters with The Wire. What I hope I have accomplished is to interest readers enough in *The Wire* so that they will view it to discover if it has any possibilities for being taken up as part of their teaching. (p. 196)

As I mentioned in the introduction to this section, Treir's (2010) example represents the approach I have taken in the project I suggest in this chapter.

Before discussing this project, I will provide a summary of, *The First Year* (2001) in the following section. While I do offer some detail in this first reading, I will delve deeper into various scenes in the various activities.

The First Year

The First Year[10] (2001) is a Davis Guggenheim (*An Inconvenient Truth*, *Waiting For Superman*) documentary that follows five novice teachers (George Acosta, Geneviève DeBose , Joy Craft-Watts, Maurice Rabb, & Nate Monly) during

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[10] One of the more interesting aspects of this documentary is that, along with a shorter companion documentary titled *Teach* (2001), it is intended as a teacher recruitment tool. According to Guggenheim (2010), he made the two films "to address the tremendous need for qualified teachers in California and nationwide, to create awareness of the crisis, as well as inspire the next generation to become teachers" (http://www.davisguggenheim.com/). The companion film, *Teach* (2001), uses the same footage as *The First Year (2001),* but is shorter, uses one additional teacher, and is more upbeat and direct than the feature length documentary. According to the website that supports the documentary, "The short film, *Teach*, is the primary tool for [their] teacher recruitment effort. It was created for high school and college students who are about to make career decisions to give them a realistic look at the teaching profession" (http://www.pbs.org/firstyear/outreach/).

their first year teaching in public schools in and around Los Angeles, California. George Acosta is a thirty-one year old Latina who teaches an eleventh grade English and English as a Second Language class at Santa Monica High School in Santa Monica, California. Geneviève DeBose is a twenty-three year old African American woman who teaches sixth grade Language Arts and Social Studies at Gompers Middle School in South Central Los Angeles. Joy Craft-Watts is a twenty-seven year old white female who teaches History, Life Skills, and Art History at Venice High School in Venice, California. Maurice Rabb is a twenty-four year old African American male teaching kindergarten at 99th Street Accelerated School also in South Central Los Angeles. Nate Monley is a twenty-five year old white male who teaches Fifth-grade Bilingual Education at Ford Elementary in East Los Angeles, California.

The documentary is broken up into eight more sections that are framed by quotes from either the teachers or from students who become central to the storylines of the teachers. In each of these sections, the documentary tells individual stories in scenes that transition from teacher to teacher. The first section titled, "I have a problem with a student" sets the tone for the storylines of all five teachers, as the documentary focuses on how they each teacher tries to "solve" their "problem" over the course of their first year of teaching. Nate's "problem" is Juan, a fifth grade Latino student who has been exposed to gangs and violence outside of school. These issues spill over into school and the documentary focuses on Nate's efforts in and out of the classroom to develop a relationship with Juan before he is lost to the streets. Maurice's "problem" is Tyquan, a young African-American boy who suffers

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from speech issues. His other "problem" is getting Tyquan services to address his speech problem. In the documentary, Maurice devotes most of his time chasing down the school's speech therapist, advocating for his services with school officials and seeking alternatives for helping Tyquan. is having difficulties getting the speech therapist to follow up on his referral for Tyquan, an issue that persists throughout the year. Genevieve's "problems" are Vincent and Marvin, two middle school African-American boys who have issues with anger and have begun resorting to violence in her classroom and have become defiant to her. Genevieve struggles to find ways to help the two boys, including parent conferences and taking one to church. Much of the documentary focuses on how she works with the two boys, but it also focuses on her frustrations with not being able to motivate her class. Joy's main "problem" is Mike, a cocky white high school boy who, when first introduced, is being reprimanded for a hateful comment he made regarding homosexuals. Much of Joy's story centers on how she deals with Mike by devoting a large part of her life skills class to LGBT issues. Joy's other "problem" is that she has no permanent classroom and is considered a "traveling teacher." Little focus is given to this problem and it remains unsolved throughout the documentary. George Acosta's "problem" is that she is confronted with the fact that funding for her ESL class may be cut for the next school year because of a budgeting error. George, an experienced social activist, rallies her students around the cause. The documentary focuses on she and her class' efforts to secure the funding needed for ESL education. This effort includes writing letters to school officials and speaking out against the budget cuts at a school board meeting. In bits and pieces, *The First Year* (2001) provides insight into what

has motivated them to teach and offers glimpses into their personal lives, but by and large, the focus is on how they navigate one or two specific "problems" during their first year of teaching. They each experience varying degrees of success in solving them.

Who Do Teachers Think They Are, Heroes?

This pedagogical project involves four different activities, and I imagine a scenario where it might unfold over the course of four to five weeks, depending on how long and how often one's courses meet. As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the project is intended to be a self-study. I discussed that a self-study of this nature is a process, one where students systematically become aware of "the connections between [their] prior knowledge, social context, origins of teacher knowledge" (Travers, 2000; p.1) and their emerging teacher identities. The three activities I suggest in this project are meant to address each of these components. I will explain each of these activities in detail.

Activity One – A Close Reading of the school doc, *The First Year*

This activity involves having teachers take the first step towards examining ways that the image of the "teacher-hero" in popular culture intersects with their emerging professional identity and prior knowledge about teaching. By first step, I am referring to a part of the process where teachers interrogate *how* and *why* this image might be so appealing to them. To do this, students will engage in close readings of *The First Year* (2001) and answer questions about the film designed to elicit deeply personal responses. This first activity is meant to "provoke or jolt [them] into self-study" (Mitchell & Weber, 1999; p. 171). I have chosen *The First Year*

(2001) partly due to a statement the director made in a "secondary text" (Fiske,

1989) I discovered while researching contextual elements to use in my analysis of

the documentary where the director explains that he wanted to make a documentary

that would "portray the teacher's life as *heroic"*

(http://www.pbs.org/firstyear/production/, 2010; emphasis added). I took this as a

challenge and began examining it in light of the "teacher-hero" representation used

in popular fiction films. After doing so, I found that the teachers in *The First Year*

(2001) shared some of the features of their fictional counterparts, but in many ways

the documentary had constructed an image of the teacher-hero that bore a closer

resemblance to actual teaching, which is also why I have chosen it for this project. I

was looking for the hero in the hero in this documentary, which may have been why I

found it. But I did, and it was different. Recognizing this, I suggest not using this term

during the first activity. If students produce similar readings, the idea is to have this

discovery be more organic.

The first activity I suggest is to have students conduct a *close reading* of *The*

First Year (2001). By *close reading*, I am referring to a more robust analysis of the

film where students should be asked to view it more than once; first to gather an

overall impression of the film, and second to answer a more detailed line of

questioning that should be assigned along with the film. The following questions and

prompts are those I suggest assigning to students as part of their close reading. As

part of the close reading assignment, students would submit a short essay focused

on the questions that seemed to provoke the deepest and most critical thought. The

questions I suggest assigning are similar to questions that Mitchell and Weber

(1999; pp. 184-185) propose using to explore similar school films, but have been modified to focus students more on the teacher/teaching aspect of the documentary:

1. Discuss a scene or event in the film that you find emotionally compelling or gripping. What is it about that particular scene that elicits this response?

2. What teacher/teaching elements or scenes in the film do you find controversial or disturbing? Why?

3. Discuss scenes or elements in the film that characterize "good" teaching. Explain what exactly it is that makes the teaching "good."

4. What messages or ideas do you take away from this film and how might they relate to your future as an educator?

This line of questioning is worded in a way that will likely elicit answers reflecting personal elements of their emerging professional identity and knowledge by requiring students to "[m]ake note of things that stand out, puzzle, shock, please, trouble, enthrall, or amuse" (Mitchell & Weber, 1999; p. 184) them as they view and respond to the film. As a result, students' answers are more likely to reflect various assumptions, beliefs, and knowledge they have about real teachers and teaching. What are some of the beliefs that might influence how they read the film and respond to the prompts and question? For these particular questions, I believe students' existing perceptions of the *roles and responsibilities* of teachers might influence their answers. I will discuss several beliefs that teacher education scholars have identified in this domain and how they might influence answers.

Feiman-Nemser, McDiarmid, Melnick and Parker (1989) analyzed essays from preservice teachers at the beginning of a semester and found that their views about teaching were fairly simple: Teachers teach and students learn. They perceived teaching as telling. In this regards, students might be hard pressed to identify scenes

or elements of the film that characterize good teaching based on this belief. By this, I mean that there is little footage in the documentary of the teachers involved in didactic modes of teaching. As a result, students may be challenged to identify other aspects of the documentary to answer the question, which is not a bad thing considering a goal of this project is to have teachers reconceptualize their views of teaching. With regards to the question concerning "messages" they might take away from the film and how it "relates to their future teaching" students might identify other approaches to teaching depicted in the film and take away a message that they can enact a more dialogical pedagogy. This message might come from the lack of scenes depicting teaching as telling, and the identification of scenes where George's class became active participants in co-constructing the curriculum and their direct involvement in advocating for funding that save their ESL program.

Brookhart and Freeman (1992), note a study where entering teacher candidates tend to emphasize the value of interpersonal aspects of teaching and minimize the importance of the academic goals of schooling" (p. 50). This particular belif may have a strong influence on the prompt and question, *"Discuss a scene or event in the film that you find emotionally compelling or gripping. What is it about that particular scene that elicits this response?"* For this particular question, I imagine a scenario where students might be more apt to find scenes focusing on the personal relationship between the first year teachers and the students featured in their particular vignette emotionally compelling, or gripping. The likelihood of these scenes appearing in responses to this prompt has to do with findings from research on preservice teachers' perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of teachers. In

The First Year, relationships between teacher and student are given more attention than actual academic goals. In fact, the director of the film admits to focusing on this aspect to represent teaching as heroic. As a result of these beliefs, students might choose a scene from the final section of the documentary titled, "Laters." In one scene that might prompt a response to this question, Nate and Juan are alone together in the classroom and Nate is cleaning off his desk and prepares his room for the summer break. As Nate tells Juan that it is time to leave, he asks Juan if he will ever stop by and see him now that Juan will be in middle school. Juan smiles, shakes his head no, and just says, "laters" as he walks out of the door. In a subsequent scene, Nate gives Juan a hug after he walks across the stage during the fifth grade graduation, but as hard as Nate has tried to gain Juan's trust, the embrace shows a distance between the two that has yet to be overcome.

Why students might find this particular scene "emotionally compelling or gripping" is, again, related to their beliefs regarding the interpersonal aspects of teaching. First, the scene represents a unique relationship that has been building throughout the film. Nate has tried relentlessly to develop a trusting relationship with Juan in order to "save" him from factors outside of school. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, I believe that students may identify these scenes as emotionally gripping for what it does not show; that Nate was successful in his attempt to develop a trusting, loving relationship with Juan. If preservice teachers hold the affective aspect of teaching in such high regards, the failure of Nate and Juan's relationship is likely to solicit a response. I will explain. The scene with Juan and Nate appears to be building towards an all too familiar moment in popular culture

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where the teacher and "at-risk" student he has worked all year to save finally connect in an emotional scene. Then the moment arrives and Nate asks the question that will obviously prove whether or not he was successful in developing a solid relationship, but Juan simply smiles, shakes his head no, and tells Nate, "laters" as he walks out the door. It is a rather cold moment that may elicit sad emotions because success would have meant that a powerful relationship had been forged with a student that was depicted as being in need of love. As I mentioned, the entire film focuses on relationships so this scene is just one example that might be chosen. Again though, I imagine teachers might choose this scene over others because of emotions elicited by the coldness of the scene and "failure" of the relationship.

Noticeably absent from the line of questions I suggest are direct references to the teacher-hero image. Introducing the term before conducting their reading of the film may cause students to look for it specifically and fail to uncover reasons for why they might find it appealing or appalling. The goal is to have students discover it themselves. For instance, the answers I provided as examples make no specific reference to the teacher-hero, but they do indicate that certain elements of the teacher-hero image might be appealing and may have influenced my response and reaction to the scenes I discuss. That is, I acknowledge being sad that all of the teachers were not successful in "saving" their students from factors that make them "at-risk," and that I was most happy to see George have the type of success often represented in popular school films, the kind where the teacher's cause becomes the students' and they rally together in celebration at the end of the film. I also

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indicated that I applauded Genevieve's efforts to "find alternative ways of helping students," which is also a common device used in teacher-hero films. The process of identifying what might have influenced my answers is similar to what I suggest students do in the second part of this activity. I will explain.

After completing the close readings of *The First Year* (2001) I suggest devoting the next seminar to having students work in small groups where they discuss their close readings and essays with their peers. I also suggest that they be encouraged to engage in an activity similar to what I did in the previous paragraph. That is, I suggest having students share reasons *why* they responded the way they did and discuss *what* they may have learned about themselves as prospective teachers from how they responded. Even though this is a self-study, working with others in this activity will allow students to examine shared responses and those that differ from there's. Noting the benefit of this type of exercise, Mitchell and Weber (1999) argue that it amounts to an "autobiographical examination" that can result in "a deeper sense of the collective identity of teacher as well as some often unexpected insights into one's own individual history and identity" (p. 185). After working in groups, I suggest having students share what insight they gained from their close readings and group work in a class discussion, taking note of the similarities and differences in what motivated their answers. This is all information that can and should be used in subsequent activities.

Activity Two – Metaphors Be With You: Exploring the Teacher-Hero in Popular Culture

In this activity, students will be introduced to the "teacher-hero" concept to help them recognize they ways that their knowledge of actual teaching "is filtered through romanticized teacher images" (p. 185). To facilitate this part of the process, I suggest having students watch two short film clips that exemplify the teacher-hero in popular culture, one from the popular school film *Dangerous Minds* (1995), which students will analyze in Activity Three, and the other from a comedy skit that parodies the teacher-hero film. Each clip is less than five minutes and could easily be shown in one seminar, allowing for follow up discussions. Both are meant to set up a discussion about the teacher-hero representation in popular culture. In the clip from Dangerous Minds (1995), LuaAnne Johnson, the teacher, is inquiring into the life of one of her students, Emilio, in an attempt to understand why he was involved in a fight. The following dialogue occurs during a line of questioning about the fight:

Johnson: Yeah, you like to hit people?

Emilio: Yeah, I like to hit people.

Johnson: Why? You feel angry a lot of the time?

Emilio: So now you're gonna try and psychologize me? You're gonna try and figure me out? I'll help you. I come from a broken home, and we're poor. Okay? I see the same fuckin' movies you do, man.

Johnson: I would like to help you, Emilio.

Emilio: Thank you very much. And how would you like to do that? You gonna give me some good advice? Just say no? You gonna get me off the streets? Well, forget it! How the fuck you gonna save me from my life, huh?

I suggest using this clip for two reasons. First, it represents a typical storyline from a teacher-hero film, where a white teacher attempts to "save" an "at-risk" student from factors outside of school. The second reason pertains to the first, in that Emilio shows insight into Johnson's motives by pointing out that he has seen "the same fuckin' movies" that have likely influenced her idea of what constitutes "good" teaching, which includes "saving him from his life."

After viewing this clip, I suggest facilitating a short discussion meant to illustrate the prevalence of the teacher-hero representation in popular culture and examine some of its features. To do this, I suggest first having students come up with a list of the types of films Emilio refers to in the clip. With the school film genre being so vast, it is likely that students will be able to provide examples of contemporary school films as well as older films in the genre. If not, I suggest using examples found in the articles (Ayers, 1994; Dalton, 2004; Farber, & Holm, 1994; Farhi, 1999; Trier, 2010) I discuss in the literature review for this project. During this time, students should be encouraged to discuss what types of metaphors are constructed for teachers in these films. I imagine a scenario where teachers might come up with ones such as "savior," "super-teacher," "cowboy," "liberator," and "white knight," to name a few. After developing a working list of films, students would be asked to discuss what features these films, and the teachers represented in them, have in common. In other words, have students discuss features the hero-teacher as well as features of the context in which the heroic teaching takes place. The point in having them discuss both sets of features is to illustrate how factors such the students' race and socio-economic status relate to the codes and

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conventions used to construct the teacher-hero representation. For instance, students may notice that, in the list of films they develop, the teacher-hero usually works in an urban school with low-income minority students and attempts to "save" them from similar types of situations, such as gangs or teen pregnancy. Depending on the list they develop, and how familiar they are with the genre, they may also notice that the teacher-hero sometimes teaches in suburban and prestigious private schools, but that the "heroics" looks different in these contexts. Discussing these differences will allow students an opportunity to explore questions regarding whether "good" teaching might be defined differently depending on the types of students one teaches.

After watching the short clip from *Dangerous Minds* (1995) and discussing what students have noticed about their list of school films, I suggest showing them a short YouTube video titled, *Nice White Lady* (2011; http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVF-nirSq5s&feature=player_embedded). The skit, approximately two and one-half minutes long, is a parody of the stereotypical teacher-hero films I discuss in the earlier literature review, the same type that Emilio is referencing in the previous video clip. Before I summarize the video clip, though, I will explain my reasons for suggesting it in this activity. First, each scene in the clip parodies at least one stereotypical feature from the classic teacher savior films, which serves to re-emphasize features of the teacher-hero representation students produced in the first part of this activity and reinforce what they learned during the discussion. Second, the fact that the teacher-hero film was parodied on a mainstream cable network program re-emphasizes the prevalence of this image in

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popular culture. This aspect lends credence to statements related to popular culture's impact on students' emerging teacher identities. The third reason for suggesting this clip is due to it being a parody of a teacher film rather than an actual teacher film. In *Television Teaching: Parody, The Simpsons, and Media Literacy Education,* Jonathan Gray (2005) discusses the significance of using parody as a means to interrogate deeper meaning in media texts. He argues that

> parody can provoke not only a heightened form of criticism and analysis of a targeted media text, but also an intricate, specialized knowledge of the text and its grammar and ideology, and a tangible sense of control, or at least adept awareness, of the text's inner workings. (p. 228)

In addition, Gray states further that parody "offers the prospect that new meanings and understandings will be found (or created) within the targeted text" (p. 228). By paring this clip with the one from *Dangerous Minds* (1995), students are more likely to come away with a deeper understanding of both the conventions of the teacher-hero representation as well as the impact it has on how they understand teaching and teacher.

Nice White Lady plays out like a movie trailer for a typical school film, featuring what appear to be random scenes from a feature length film. The "nice white lady" in the skit is, lost most teacher-heroes, the new teacher at the inner-city high school. As the faux movie trailer begins, the narrator explains, "Inner city high schools are dangerous places, where your homework isn't about math; it's about staying alive." As the narrator speaks, African-American and Latino students sit on their desks while one student sharpens a knife and another polishes a gun. As the teacher walks in to the classroom, the narrator explains, "Only one thing can make

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these kids learn; a nice white lady." It cuts to another scene where her "incompetent"

colleague walks into her room drinking from a flask and tells her, "These are

minorities, they can't learn, they can't be educated." She replies, "With all due

respect sir, I'm a white lady. I can do anything." In the following two scenes she

finally "reaches" the students and the skit ends with the following line from the

narrator: "When it comes to teaching inner city minorities, you don't need books or

rules. All you need is a nice white lady."

After viewing this short clip in class I suggest having a dialogue with students

regarding the clichés presented in the video. After discussing the clichés, students

could then work in groups to generate their own list of clichés, codes, and

conventions associated with the teacher-hero and examine and interrogate the

unstated assumptions and hidden messages of this representation with regards to

how the "good teacher," or "good teaching," is defined in popular culture. The idea

here is for students to see how these assumptions are connected to what is

expected of them and what they may expect of themselves as future teachers. After

generating their list, I strongly suggest having students examine their list in light of

the answers they gave for question four in the previous activity that asks them to

discuss elements or scenes from *The First Year* (2001) that characterize "good"

teaching. After examining the list and their answers, students could discuss how

their ideas of "good" teaching resonate or differ from the list they constructed.

Activity # 4 – Representations of teacher heroes in *The First Year Minds*

According to Mitchell and Weber (1999), one of the most helpful ways to

analyze stereotypical representations of teachers is by having students "interrogate

the images in terms of the codes and conventions that govern their use" (p. 181). In this activity, students will use the list of teacher-hero codes and conventions they have developed in the previous activity, along with a passage taken from an article I discussed in the literature review that discusses them, and examine *The First Year* (2001) for how the teacher-hero is represented. As I briefly discussed earlier in this chapter, Davis Guggenheim, the documentary's director, stated that he wanted transform the way that people viewed education by making "a film that would simplify the issues and portray the teacher's life as *heroic"* (http://www.pbs.org/firstyear/production/, 2010; emphasis added). This "secondary text" (Fiske, 1989), as I mentioned, indicates the motivation of the filmmaker. In other words, it would not be too much of a stretch to think Guggenheim wants the documentary, or at least the teachers, to be read in a certain way. Taken a step further, I read Guggenheim's statement as a signal that he may have intended for this documentary to serve as a counter-text to other representations of teachers. This is precisely why I have chosen *The First Year* (2001) for this project. With Guggenheim's intent as I do, my goal in this activity is to have students analyze the documentary for how the "teacher hero" is constructed in this film, analyzing it through the codes and conventions used in popular fiction films. In other words, how does the teacher-hero in *The First Year* (2001) resonate or differ from his or her fictional counterpart? This particular aspect of their analysis is essential for the next activity.

To aid in their analysis, I suggest providing them with the following passage from Farhi's (1999) article, *Hollywood Goes to School: Recognizing the*

Superteacher Myth in Film, that explains how the teacher-hero formula in popular

culture:

> The superteacher formula is fairly simple. Take one teacher, often male [cliché #1], ranging from someone who has 'different' ideas to someone who is an outright rebel [cliché #2]. Give him an uncaring or unwilling administration [cliché #3], incompetent or lackluster coworkers [cliché #4], and students whom everyone else has given up on [cliché #5]. With little assistance from anyone and teaching methods that are barely existent, the teacher is able to overcome the odds and quickly transform the class [cliché #6]. Frequently the teacher, who has no personal life of his own, becomes something of a cult figure and proceeds to solve the students' problems [cliché #7]. Along the way, the teacher alienates someone in a position of power, thus putting his job on the line [cliché #8]. The students, of course, join together to pledge their support, because he has changed their lives forever [cliché #9]. The end. (p. 157)

In addition, students could use examples taken from the list of codes and

conventions *they* developed in the previous activity. After a brief review of their notes

and Farhi's passage, I suggest having students watch *The First Year* (2001) again,

using their notes and Farhi's passage to examine the documentary in light of how

the teacher-hero is represented. In this process, I suggest having students produce

a bulleted list of cliché's they identify with detailed descriptions of scenes that

articulate them.

As an example of how students may undertake this assignment, I will discuss

scenes from *The First Year* (2001) that articulate various cliché's found in Farhi's

(1999) passage describing the construction of the teacher-hero. After I have

provided examples, I will discuss how they could be used to facilitate discussions

related to the goals of this project. The following cliché's I have identified are those I

find more likely to situate what it means to be a "good" teacher. They are powerful in

that they are the ones that may appeal more to one's emotions.

Cliché #2 – Superteachers Are Those With 'Different' Ideas or Those Who Are Rebels

If any teacher in *The First Year* (2001) is represented as a "rebel" it is George, the high school ESL teacher. This particular representation of her plays out most vividly in two scenes, both of which seem to capture the image constructed in the documentary. The first is a scene occurs after George begins mobilizing her students to address the school board regarding the budget for ESL courses. In this scene, George travels to the state capitol for a teachers' union rally. After showing the union leader delivering a powerful speech to the crowd about teachers' rights and representation, the camera films George marching alongside other teachers, carrying a union placard. The other scene that articulates Cliché #2 takes place back in her classroom. In this scene, George shows an archived television news clip of a bus strike that she was involved in before she became a teacher. The video shows an interview with George where she discusses the unfair rate hikes imposed on the working poor and her solidarity with the bus patrons. Besides these specific scenes, George's rebel status is maintained throughout the film due to the "problem" she takes on during her first year of teaching. That is, along with her students, she openly challenges the school board's efforts to cut funding for ESL classes. In each of these scenes, as well as her overall story line in the documentary, her rebel status is represented by her challenges to authority. Her presence at the teachers' union rally represents a challenge to unfair labor practices. Her presence and interview during the bus strike represents her challenge to unfair treatment of working class

commuters, and her mission to advocate for ESL funding represents her challenge to socially unjust school funding policy.

Cliché #7 – *The Superteacher has no personal life of his own, and becomes something of a cult figure and proceeds to solve the students' problems.*

In *The First Year*, this particular cliché, or at least parts of it, is represented most by Nate and George. Because more "camera time" is allotted to Nate, I will discuss him at length here. Although the film does show Nate at a family reunion during one scene, the rest of the scenes of his life outside of school involve students, Juan in particular. For instance, in the section titled, "Who's Gonna Give Up First," There is a scene where Nate discusses Juan's home-life and gang affiliation with a school administrator. The scene begins with a camera shot of Juan kicking a soccer ball by himself outside of the office while Nate explains, "I call his house at night just to talk to him sometimes, to try to be a friend to him." The scene cuts back to the meeting between Nate and a school administrator where he learns that Juan's mother died when he was three and that his older brothers are both gangbangers, one of whom has been shot and the other killed. These phone calls obviously occur after school hours so Nate is likely spending time at home tending to school matters other than lesson planning. In the following section of the documentary, "Learning As I Go," Nate visits the home of one of his students whose name is never revealed. In this scene, Nate delivers the female student, who is apparently sick and has missed school, a present that the class made for her. While he is there, he takes the time to entertain the little girl with a static electricity trick. In the very next scene, Nate is at a family reunion and discussing teaching with his

aunts and uncles who also teach. The transition to the scene makes it appear as though Nate has stopped by the little girls house before he drove out of town to see his own family. In the following section, "What Does it Mean to Be Tough," Nate visits Juan's house in a scene where he describes Juan's home life as the camera pans through the house capturing images of Juan's siblings and his father. Nate narrates, "This life he has, these hard times he has. As hard as that is to swallow, he's a beautiful boy and he needs to know it." In the very next scene, Nate and Juan are filmed having lunch together at a neighborhood restaurant. And finally, the section, "The Kids look like my kids," ends with scene where Nate has gone fishing with Juan, Juan's father, and one of Juan's younger siblings. The scene is short, but Juan catches a fish and the family and Nate all appear to be having a great time.

Combined, these scenes articulate the cliché of a teacher who seems to devote little time to his own life, given that the only times he is shown away from the school, he is either visiting students houses, calling them at night, or taking them out for food and recreation. The one scene where he does devote time to himself, it appears as though he put his student first by stopping at her house on the way to his family's house. Once there, Nate can still only talk about teaching and education with his family. This is obviously prompted by a film crew on hand making a documentary about teachers, but it appears as though Nate is always thinking about teaching. On top of this, Nate is one of two teachers not featured at all in the sequence of scenes devoted to the teachers' lives outside of school. I am referring here to the sequence of scenes that show Genevieve moving away from home to her first apartment, and Maurice meeting with a loan officer. Combined, the scenes

with Nate that I have described also articulate the cliché in which his efforts outside of school are an attempt to "solve the students' problems." Although Juan's issues affect his schooling experiences, the "problems" that Nate is attempting to solve reach far beyond the classroom. As for whether he fits the cliché of becoming a "cult figure" because of his efforts, the documentary stops short. No one ever discusses how Nate's actions outside of school have been received, either by Juan, his family, other teachers and students, or administrators. It is left to the viewer.

Cliché #8 - *Along the way, the Superteacher alienates someone in a position of power, thus putting his job on the line.*

This particular cliché is articulated, somewhat, in the storyline of Maurice, particularly in the section, "Who's Gonna Give Up First?" In this section there is a scene where Maurice and Tyquan, the child with the speech issues, have been stood up once more by the school's speech therapist. In this scene, Maurice is in the office with the school principal trying to advocate for Tyquan's services. After explaining to the principal that the speech therapist has still not come to see Tyquan, she explains that the district is short forty-five speech therapists and states, "so in essence, we're kind of fortunate just to have one." In what appears to be a rather uncomfortable moment, Maurice explains, "He's guaranteed services by the state. If he's not getting them then the district definitely needs to be informed. But I don't know the politics." It is uncomfortable because Maurice seems a bit apprehensive of telling the principal something she is likely familiar with. The principal flashes a condescending smile and says, "I can call." Picking up on the principal's demeanor, Maurice then replies, "Can I call? Can it come from me?" The principal responds

rather abruptly, "No, I should call." In the next scene Maurice is filmed calling several local community agencies to try and find Tyquan help outside of the school. So, while Maurice hasn't exactly "put his job on the line," he has "alienated someone in a position of power [the principal]" by seeking services for Tyquan outside of the official channels. Had he actually called the district office himself, disobeying the principal's wishes, it would have been the ultimate act of "teacher-hero" insubordination. Instead, Maurice improvises by resorting to other means, although he is not able to get Tyquan any help from the other entities. There is never any indication of whether the principal ever called. This particular articulation of Cliché #8 could lead to a discussion with students regarding how to navigate the bureaucracy of schools, especially the bureaucracy that "supports" the allocation of resources for special needs students. Instead of this aspect of the "Superteacher" being read negatively, I find that Maurice's actions illustrate the type of awareness teachers must possess in an era of budget cuts and lack of resources for the various needs students bring to school.

Cliché #9 - *The students join together to pledge their support for the Superteacher because he has changed their lives forever.*

The most obvious example of this cliché is presented in George's storyline, although it lacks some of the dramatic affect often found in fictional films about teachers. In somewhat of a twist to this cliché, George initially pledges support for her students after the scene where she learns that funding might get cut for her students' ESL program the following year. Immediately after learning this news, the film sequence transitions to a scene where George is back in her classroom

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explaining this news to her students. She explains to them, "Classes you guys are in could be cut and not available next year. What would happen if they just put you in mainstream classes?" She is able to enlist their support based on her explanation of what this budget cut means for the program and their reactions to her questions regarding how they will be personally affected. Later in this scene, as the students begin writing letters to the school board as part of a writing assignment, she explains through narration, "I'm trying to get them to stretch their thinking a little bit and critique society so they can see what the real world is really like. I mean it's hard. Not all kids are ready for that and they resist me a lot." In a subsequent scene, George shares an archived news video of her being interviewed during a transit strike. I read this particular scene as one where she is trying to motivate her students to activism by providing an example of causes she has taken up in the past. Given that her students are primarily working-class and poor students living in a large urban city, her students are likely familiar with the "injustices" she is fighting against and might read this as another example of her solidarity with them. In a subsequent scene, George explains her motivation. "I've never seen my parents turn their back on people in need. Other people would have said 'well that's just their problem. I need to worry about mine'." I read this scene as the ultimate "pledge of support" found in Cliché #9. In her support for *their* "cause," the ESL students have "pledged their support" for hers. One has to wonder, though, whether or not she was also looking out for her own job, but given that her history as an activist is revealed throughout the documentary, her motives do appear rather altruistic. The culmination of this particular cliché is articulated in the final scenes with George and her

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students. After learning that the board has decided to find funding for the ESL program, George thanks the students for their support and tells them, "What you did made a difference and you should be proud of that." To which one student replies, "We should thank you for telling us about it."

Although this particular storyline offers a bit of a twist on Cliché #9, it is certainly worth discussing. I read this "pledge of support," on the part of both the students and George, as an example of teaching for social justice, an idea that has gotten little attention in the literature discussing the teacher-hero. Some academics that write about the teacher hero simply dismiss their actions as out of touch with "real" teaching and go on to accuse the celluloid educator of corrupting urban students' minds with white, middle-class ideology. While that might be an accurate reading of *some* teachers in popular culture, I suggest that this particular aspect of *The First Year* (2001) offers a rather positive view of the teacher hero. For instance, by pledging support for her students in this particular storyline, George's pedagogical decisions are based on her understanding of the "existing barriers to learning that children and youth from low-income and racial/ethnic minority backgrounds consistently encounter in school" (Villegas, 2007; p.372). In doing so, George's pedagogy represents the type of "critical reflection" that Liston and Zeichner (1991) identify in social justice teaching.

Activity Four - Wrapping Up The Project

As my readings of these various scenes illustrate, *The First Year* (2001) utilizes various teacher-hero cliché's, but the cliché plays out rather differently than it does elsewhere. Guggenheim may have succeeded in making a teacher-hero film,

but individually the heroes only appear to be partly superhuman, which may not be such a bad thing. In short, teaching may be represented as "heroic," but the teachers in this documentary are not typical Hollywood teacher-heroes. This aspect is important to note and could lead to a discussion with students about which teacher-hero clichés are actually attainable and which ones are useful in the day-to-day work of teachers.

After reading *The First Year* (2001) for the clichés, I suggest having them complete an activity similar to one they completed earlier. Here, they would be asked to reflect on which teacher-hero cliché's they identified in light of their responses to the first set of questions they answered in Activity One, specifically the question that asked them to discuss elements or scenes that characterized "good" teaching. I also suggest reminding them that those responses were based more on emotion and prior knowledge of teaching and that their new responses were more targeted. Given that aspect, I would encourage them to consider the implications of identifying teacher-hero clichés with characteristics of "good" teaching in *The First Year* (2001). The goal here would be to have them begin to think about how he teacher-hero image appeals to them and ways it might impact how they know teaching and what their expectations are for themselves as future educators. For instance, in question for of their original close reading of *The First* Year (2001), I imagine some students might have identified the social justice pedagogy George enacted with her students to be a characteristic of "good" teaching and identified the same scenes or elements of her storyline as articulating the "rebel" cliché. This might facilitate a discussion regarding what kind of rebel George chooses to be.

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Unlike the rebel cliché of the teacher-hero in other films, who often refuse to play by the rules, and simply challenge school procedures that hinder their unconventional pedagogy, George operates within professional boundaries as she challenges authority in defense of her students in the pursuit of social justice. Students could be asked which type of rebel might benefit their students most, or if being a rebel is actually a characteristic of "good" teaching. A student may also discover that they found Nate's willingness to spend time outside of school trying to help Juan to be characteristic of "good" teaching and then identified the corresponding cliché in their second reading of the documentary. Based on this students could asked to discuss the way that representations like this intersect with the expectations and perceptions the general public has for teachers. As prospective teachers move closer to full-time teaching, this is certainly a subject that will be of interest as they try to balance their time between the classroom and their lives outside of school. Is it possible to live up to the expectations put forth by Hollywood? Is "good" teaching defined by one's willingness to have no life outside of school, or does Nate's example show a balance? These are just two of many scenarios that might arise from how they responded in both activities.

Next, I suggest they work in small groups again where they would be asked to share discuss the clichés they identified with a partner and how the scenes they identified articulate them. In these groups, I imagine a scenario where students might identify the same clichés and articulate them through the same scene. In this case, students could discuss whether or not common features that tend to define good teaching. I also imagine a scenario where they may have identified similar

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clichés, but found that they appeared in different scenes. This could obviously lead to a discussion where students examine the myriad of ways that hero teaching can be defined. The final question I suggest posing is whether it is possible to be a teacher-hero as defined in the first year. If so, what about this particular kind of hero makes that possible?

As prospective teachers grapple with their emerging identities as educators, discussions and topics covered in this project might prove valuable in helping them come to terms with how their chosen profession intersects with expectations perpetuated in the larger social and cultural context. Of course, the activities I suggest for this project only begin to explore the pedagogical possibilities for taking up *The First Year* (2001). My reading of this film as a "teacher hero" text was intentional. Having only scratched the surface for what representations are present in this documentary, the possibilities of other types of readings are endless.

CHAPTER VIII: CONCLUSION

In the first six chapters of this dissertation, I discussed how I became interested in the intersection of popular culture and education and described how I "stumbled" upon what I would eventually come to refer to as the "school doc" genre. I began by describing course work I had done articulating critical social theory through close readings of popular fiction films, many of which were "school films" (Trier, 2001). In that discussion I described various cultural studies and media studies theories that informed that work and the work I would be taking up in this dissertation. I also discussed how my search for fiction films led to the discovery of a number of documentary films that took up issues and topics related to education, and I then proposed that these films, like fictional school films, might also be taken up pedagogically to address critical issues in education. In order to give the reader a sense of *why* I felt these documentary films held pedagogical potential, I then introduced the reader to the "school doc" genre. I did this by offering my own definition of school docs and by discussing specific criteria I used while cataloguing documentaries for inclusion in the genre. After discussing how I have defined school docs, I presented a brief survey of the genre. This move was intended to provide readers of this dissertation with a sense of the dynamic nature of the genre and to provide a resource for academics that might also want to take up school docs in their own practice. To demonstrate the dynamic nature of the genre, I highlighted twenty-

two different school docs that take up a wide range of issues and topics, those that might be addressed in undergraduate and graduate level education courses. Furthermore, I discussed how multiple school docs often took up the same educational issues and topics and I provided examples based on my analysis of how they differed with regards to how the issue or topic was represented. After discussing the pedagogical potential of the genre, I discussed how a select group of academics have taken up films *pedagogically*. This included academics in education that have taken up school films and documentaries pedagogically and academics from other fields that have taken up other types of documentary films in similar ways. I then provided a context for the pedagogical projects I would conceptualize in later chapters by discussing a view of teacher education and social foundations of education that is framed by social justice. Next, I discussed a theory of representation and encoding/decoding that framed my analysis of the school docs taken up in this dissertation. I then gave a detailed description of the various processes and procedures used in gathering and analyzing the documentaries I have catalogued and used in the projects I conceptualized. Finally, I gave detailed descriptions of two conceptualized pedagogical projects designed around different school docs, *Resolved* (2007) and *The First Year* (2001).

In the rest of this concluding chapter I will discuss what I have learned, "findings" if you will, from my extensive work with the school docs catalogued for this dissertation and I will also discuss future directions for my work with these films.

What I Learned

One of the goals of this dissertation was to examine the school docs I have catalogued for how they might be taken up in education courses; that is to say, to uncover the pedagogical potential of the genre. Having reached the end of this dissertation, I can say with confidence that the genre does indeed have the pedagogical potential I was hoping to uncover. Evidence of this potential can be found in several chapters. For instance, in Chapter Two I discussed my analysis of twenty-two different school docs and identified a number of topics and issues that are addressed in each of the films. This included topics ranging from school reform measures (charter schools) and education policy (funding and NCLB) to racism, the arts, and school sports. The collection of topics and issues taken up in the films I selected for this chapter, along with those taken up in the remaining school docs I have catalogued, illustrate the appeal that the genre might have for a wide range of academics teaching education courses. My analysis and discussion of the nuanced ways these topics and issues were taken up in school docs also illustrates the richness and dynamic nature of genre. By this, I mean that the variance in how education topics and issues are addressed provide options for *how* certain films might be taken up.

In Chapters Four and Five, I further illustrated to potential of the genre by detailing two pedagogical projects conceptualized for use with teacher education students in a social foundations of education course. Although I cannot make any claims to the actual success of implementing the two projects, I do claim they confirm my belief discussed in Chapter Two that documentaries in the genre *could* be used within a specific teacher education context, one that includes elements of

social justice and critical reflection. The evidence of this lies in the way that components of the projects articulate a discourse found in this type of teacher education. For instance, the overall goal of both projects is to have prospective teachers examine existing beliefs about teaching and reconceptualize various aspects of those beliefs. In the project designed around the school doc *Resolved* (2007), the goal was to have students reconceptualize how they understood pedagogy by examining the way the social context of schooling intersects with day-to-day practices of teaching. This project goal articulates Zeichner's (1996) notion that social justice teacher education should involve critical reflection where students are given opportunities to "become clearer about their personal and practical theories, and to critique them in light of different points of view" (p. 225). By intentionally taking up a school doc that articulates the concept of "banking education" through the story of two working class, African American teens, I believe that the project would be successful in have students critique their beliefs about pedagogy "in light of different points of view." Furthermore, the various activities in the project were intentionally designed to facilitate this type of critique. In addition to this project, goal of the project designed around *The First Year* (2001) was to have students reconceptualize their beliefs about what constitutes "good teaching." To do this, I designed a project that would have them examine a school doc that, depending on how they "read" the film, offered a counter-narrative to representations of good teaching in popular fiction school films. The projects were designed specifically to give students the tools to offer their own definitions of good teaching. This aspect of the project articulates Zeichner's (1996) suggestion to teacher

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educators that we "help [preservice teachers] see themselves as potential generators of knowledge about teaching" (p. 226). This project is intended to do just that.

So, with regards to whether I was successful in showing that school docs could be taken up to address critical issues and topics in a social justice teacher education course, I would say yes. The evidence lies in the projects as well as the analysis I provided in my survey of the genre. With regards to whether I have shown that the projects, or school docs, actually helped students reconceptualize their beliefs about teaching, I cannot since certain restrictions kept me from being able to study how students would interact with them. This is an obvious limitation to any claims I can make.

Before going any further I would also like to comment on certain pedagogical concerns that have come to light after reflecting on the projects detailed in <u>Chapter Five</u> and <u>Chapter Six</u>. The first concern is in regards to the readings I have provided for the school docs taken up in these projects. I have stated it elsewhere in this dissertation, but it is worth noting again, that I recognize the readings of the films I present in these chapters are my own readings. What I may not have stated directly is that the readings I present are similar to those that I would hope students would come to in their analysis of the films. Of course, doing so would help to meet the goals I outline and discuss in each project, which is to have students reconceptualize certain terms, topics, and issues; or at least complicate their current ideas with those they may not have considered. One way I have encouraged specific readings is by pairing selected academic texts with the film; a pedagogical process I

have discussed in detailed in this dissertation. Pedagogically, this presents somewhat of a problem if there are students whose readings differ from mine. In other words, if a student reads a school doc differently than I, the article or book chapter I have paired with it will do little to help them articulate that reading and their understanding of targeted topics and issues. As I discuss in <u>Chapter Four</u>, film texts can be read in many ways (preferred, negotiated, oppositional) depending on how one decodes the visual representations. As I discussed, the variance in how a film is read is partly due to one's social and cultural context. So, the likelihood of a different, if not opposite, reading of the film from mine is very possible. To help untie this knot, I now suggest structuring the projects so that there is a more "balanced" approach to the texts being paired with the documentary. I will provide a possible scenario from the project detailed in <u>Chapter Five</u> to illustrate this new insight into the projects. In this scenario, I imagine that there may be a student who develops an oppositional reading of the film *Resolved* (2007). For instance, this student may not buy in to the film's suggestion that the "banking approach" (Freire, 1970/2000) to teaching is oppressive, and they may also find that, given the structure of schooling today, this approach is necessary in many subjects and beneficial to most students. The problem with how I have structured the current project is that this student would have no text to help them articulate their reading of the film and *their* understanding of the term "pedagogy" and other topics and issues that are part of the project. To help balance this approach, I suggest also pairing the Freire (1970/2000) text with one from, say, E.D. Hirsch (2006), or a shorter text such as O'neil's (1999) essay, *Core Knowledge and Standards: A discussion with E.D. Hirsch* that explains Hirsch's

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Core Knowledge program. Each of these texts could offer a "counter-view" to the

Freire (1970/2000) text and be more likely to help the student articulate their

oppositional, or even negotiated, reading of *Resolved* (2007). This move does not

untangle the pedagogical knot completely, as I have still "nudged" students into

particular readings of the film by seeming to allow for a Hirsch-type reading of

Resolved (2007) or a Freire-type reading. While providing the additional text may still

be somewhat limiting in terms of how they can use the assigned texts to articulate

their own understandings of pedagogy and their reading of the documentary,

students would still be allowed space to explore the documentary and related topics

from a more relevant social and cultural context. In retrospect, this approach is in

closer alignment with the type of pedagogy Freire (1970/2000) espouses in the text I

originally hoped would impact the students readings.

   Now I will return to the previous discussion regarding my reflection and

assessment of the projects. Here, I will discuss a finding that suggests why I believe

the projects might be successful. This includes what I have learned about school

docs with regards to *why* and for *whom* they are made. First, I will discuss the *why*,

which is illustrated in how the films fall into a larger category of documentary films,

one that connotes a certain purpose. Then I will discuss an audience for whom these

documentaries are intended, which relates to why I think the projects might be

successful.

   After almost two years of collecting, viewing, analyzing, and writing about

school docs, one of the things I have come to realize is that, in general, they tend to

fall into a broader category of films referred to as *social issues* documentaries, ones

that "take up public issues from a social perspective" (Nichols, 2001; p. 163). In this type of documentary, "Individuals recruited to the film illustrate or provide perspective on the issue" (p. 163). Schooling and education, an overall characteristic of the genre, is without a doubt a "public issue," and as my survey of the genre and projects illustrates, there are distinct "social perspectives" evident in how these issues are represented. The school doc *Fear and Learning at Hoover Elementary* (1997), which tells a story of events that took place in a one California school after the passage of a law aimed to deny education to undocumented immigrants, is a good example. The filmmaker recruited students, teachers, and immigrant families for the documentary to offer particular "perspectives" on the consequences of the law. The purpose of the film, as well as other social issue documentaries, moves beyond attempts to "report" or provide "factual data." Ellsworth (1991) argues that, while the "political agenda" of social issue documentaries varies with regards to individual filmmakers, production companies, and historical context, the goal is "to solicit allegiance from the viewer in support of an interpretation about the social significance of an event, issue, or situation existing in the world outside of the film itself" (p. 46). To do this, various filmmaking conventions are used in an attempt to "write the viewer into the film's discourse as a member of a community called 'we'" (p. 46). Whether the "we" is defined in broad terms such as "humanity" or "the nation," or more narrowly as "the common citizen," Ellsworth argues that it "is always some form of 'We the People,' united by a social conscience that informs citizenship dedicated to the good of all people" (p. 46). *Fear and Learning at Hoover Elementary* (1997) is, again, a good example. The documentary features characters

representing opposing forces in the telling of the story. This particular convention is most likely intended to create a certain tension in the viewer, one that begs for some sort of resolve where the viewer is asked to choose a side. To perhaps influence one's decision on where to side, the two proponents of the law, the school librarian and a teacher, are represented as unusually fearful and ignorant of undocumented immigrants, perhaps influenced by myths about the "burden" they place on taxpayers. The negative representations of these characters make it difficult to sympathize with the arguments they make. On the other hand, the director features several school children to illustrate the force of opposition to the law. The students are portrayed as "normal," bright and loving children who care and think about issues similar to that of many American children. This particular representation makes it easier for most viewers to identify with them during the film. The portrayal of students, who are represented as "ordinary" and innocent victims of ignorance and fear, is most likely an attempt to establish empathy between the viewers and the children whose futures are in danger because of the law. By establishing solidarity with the children in the film, the viewer becomes part of the "we," which is "united by a social conscience" that informs their allegiance to the films message that the law is unjust.

The example of *Fear and Loathing at Hoover Elementary* (1984) is one of many examples that could be chosen to illustrate why the school doc genre falls into a larger category of films referred to as social issue documentaries. I believe that this finding is important for a couple of reasons. First, it is helpful to know "how" a film wishes to be read when analyzing them. This information alerts a reader of the

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text that the filmmaker will likely employ certain codes and conventions to solicit "preferred" readings and win allegiances to how they wish to represent the issue or topic. In other words, knowing that a visual text has been constructed to represent a given issue or topic a certain way allows one a point from which to start their analysis. I believe that he rhetorical function of these types of documentary films may invite a richer level of engagement with the text than other types of film. Next, I will discuss an important aspect related to social issue documentaries; that is, the intended audience.

In my discussion of social issue documentaries I described a process whereby filmmakers attempt to gain allegiance with the viewer by drawing them into a perceived community of "We the People, united by a social conscience that informs citizenship dedicated to the good of *all* people." Who gets to claim who "we" are is somewhat problematic, though, and is related to the intended audience. Ellsworth (1991) argues, "In the U.S. and Great Britain, the conscience of the [social issue] documentary tradition has entailed advocacy for the extension of 'the good' to all men and women, largely ignoring intractable divisions across race, class, and gender" (p. 46). She goes on to explain how social issue documentaries target audiences in "groups that are *already* unified into 'We the People' – those who have access and resources to participate in and influence that unity, namely white, middle class audiences." The goal of the film, then, is to show the viewer a world that is unfamiliar to them, one where social issues such as poverty, illiteracy, and discrimination exist. After taking the audience to this unfamiliar place, the social issue documentary employs "representational machinery" to "promote populist

feeling in order to encourage middle class audiences to recognize and agree that the

[issues addressed in the film] are social" (p. 47) and are somehow a threat to the

larger community. As a result, social issue documentaries imply that "extending

membership in "We the People' to all citizens is in the best interests" of the target

audience, particularly when membership is portrayed as "giving those who are

currently excluded the opportunity to adopt white, middle class, patriarchal values

and attitudes," assimilating them "into the unity as already defined by dominant

discourses" (p. 47.) These aspects of "intended audience" are important to consider

with regards to the "intended audience" of the projects I have suggested, an

audience of mostly white, middle class teacher education students. What this means

is that a given school doc will likely address preservice teachers as if they already

have a populist conscience, tapping into existing political and social ideologies.

Already having this conscience suggests that the issues addressed in the films are

not because of them or their ideals, "but rather, ignorance or misinformation" (p. 48),

which is corrected by attuning to the message of the film. This aspect of the genre,

the intended audience, might present challenges to the type of critical personal

reflection one may hope to solicit by using school docs, or other social issue

documentaries. Of course, to what extent critical reflection is affected remains to be

seen and will most likely be taken up in future work. In the following section, I will

discuss the directions I would like to take this future work with school docs.

Future Directions For My Work With School Docs

        The most obvious direction is to take the projects I have conceptualized in

this dissertation and enact them with students in the current Social Foundations of

Education courses I teach. I have "imagined" how students would respond to prompts and questions I suggest posing, which is of course based on how I imagine they might read a given school doc as well as what research has to say about how prospective teachers take up such issues. While I do feel that it is a useful exercise for the scope of this dissertation, it does limit my own understanding of the school docs to some degree. By this, I mean that being able to use actual students' reactions to these documentaries will no doubt uncover a host of different ways that they can be written about and taken up pedagogically; such is the beauty of resisting the urge to close off the meaning of a text by allowing student voice to guide the direction of future projects. Being able to analyze how students take up school docs and read them also deepens my understanding of them.

Another direction I hope to take with school docs is to further examine the notion of how "social issue documentaries" function as texts. By this, I mean that I am interested in exploring the impact that these types of films have on popular discourses surrounding schooling and education. I recently screened the school doc, Race to Nowhere (2010), at the university where I now teach and was surprised by the level of public engagement with the issues addressed in the film. Similar to the direction I mentioned previously, I would like to explore how the "public" interacts with these texts as well as how education students interact with them.

A final thought for where my work with school docs will lead concerns the vast potential a new research area like this poses. The topics taken up in the projects I describe in this dissertation barely scratch the surface of the pedagogical potential the school doc genre holds. This is also illustrated in the section where I provide a

survey of the genre. That section could be expanded into a book by including all of the school docs I have catalogued. Like that section, this type of text could serve as a valuable resource for other academics looking to take up visual texts with education students. There are several of these in the school film genre, but I have found no such guide or reference for school docs. Also, since I feel that I am the first to catalogue the genre, I feel compelled to be the first to publish what I have catalogued as well as discuss the myriad of ways that school docs can be taken up. What I have gathered so far represents a "giant empirical archive of human sense making" (Fiske & Hartley, 2003; p.xviii) that has had little exploration. Given that there is little, if any, literature discussing school docs and how they might be taken up pedagogically, my future as a scholar involves extending my work with school docs by diving head first in to this archive.

Appendix A – *A Working List of School Docs*

2 Million Minutes (2009)

A Class Divided (1985)

A Touch of Greatness (1964)

Accidental Hero (2000)

American High (2000)

American Kings (2009)

American Teen (2008)

Ballou (2008)

Being Human (2005)

Blue Eyed (1996)

Born Into Brothels (2004)

The Boys From Baghdad High (2007)

Boys of Baraka (2005)

Bowling For Columbine (2002)

Bye (2010)

The Cartel (2009)

Chain Camera (2001)

Chiefs (2002)

Class Act (2006)

Class C: The Only Game In Town (2008)

Corridor of Shame: The Neglect of South Carolina's Rural Schools (2006)

Discounted Dreams: The High Hopes and Harsh Realities at America's Community Colleges (2007)

Educating Peter (1992)

The Education of Shelby Knox (2005)

Être et avoir (2002)

Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed (2008)

*Fear and Learning at Hoover Elementary (*1997)

Finding D-QU: The Lonely Struggle of California's Only Tribal College (2009)

The First Year (2001)

Flunked (2008)

Foundation For Success (2008)

Free To Learn: A Radical Experiment in Education (2006)

Frontrunners (2008)

Getting In… Kindergarten (2007)

Go Tigers! (2001)

Graduating Peter (2001)

Growing Up Online (2008)

Hard Times at Douglass High: A No Child Left Behind Report Card (2008)

The Heart of the Game (2006)

High School (1968)

High School II (1994)

High School Boot Camp (2000)

Hineini: Coming Out in a Jewish High School (2005)

Hobart Shakespeareans (2005)

Hoop Dreams (1994)

I Am A Promise: The Children of Stanton Elementary School (1993)

Imagine a School… Summerhill (2008)

In 500 Words or Less (2009)

Indoctrinate U (2007)

Judgment Day: Intelligent Design On Trial (2007)

The Junior High School (1970)

The Killer at Thurston High (2000)

Left Behind: The Story of the New Orleans Public Schools (2008)

Live To Tell: The First Gay Prom in America (1995)

Living The Legacy: The Untold Story of Milton Hershey School (2009)

The Lottery (2010)

Mad Hot Ballroom (2005)

Medicating Kids (2001)

Misunderstood Minds (2002)

New Orleans Free School Documentary (2005)

Not as Good as You Think: The Myth of the Middle Class School (2009)

Nursery University (2008)

One Teacher (2002)

OT: Our Town (2002)

Paper Clips (2004)

Please Vote For Me (2007)

The Prep School Negro (2009)

Pressure Cooker (2008)

The Principal Story (2009)

Prom Night in Mississippi (2009)

Public Schools, Inc. (1996)

Race To Nowhere (2009)

Reborn*: New Orleans Schools* (2008)

Resolved (2007)

Rise and Shine (2007)

School Prayer: A Community at War (1999)

SCOPES: The Battle Over America's Soul (2006)

Small Steps: Creating The High School For Contemporary Arts (2007)

Spellbound (2002)

Stupid in America (2006)

Tales of a Golden State: The Mendez v. Westminster Story (2009)

Teach (2001)

The Texas Miracle (2003)

Wade in the Water, Children (2007)

Waiting for Superman (2010)

The War on Kids (2009)

Walking on Dead Fish (2008)

We Are The People We've Been Waiting For (2009)

Whatever It Takes (2009)

When Fried Eggs Fly (2006)

Who Will Teach For America (1996)

Wings of Evolution (2007)

With All Deliberate Speed (2004)

The Worlds Best Prom (2006)

Appendix B – School Docs and Corresponding Issue/Topic Taken up In Film

Alternative Education	Arts Education	School Choice
• *Boys of Baraka* (2005) • *Free To Learn: A Radical Experiment in Education (2006)* • *High School Boot Camp* • *Imagine a School… Summerhill (2008)* • *New Orleans Free School Documentary (2005)*	• *Ballou (2008)* • *Class Act (2006)* • *The Hobart Shakespeareans* • *Mad Hot Ballroom (2005)* • *Small Steps: Creating The High School For Contemporary Arts (2007)* • *When Fried Eggs Fly (2006)*	• *The Cartel (2009)* • *Flunked (2008)* • *The Lottery (2010)* • *Stupid In America (2006)* • *Waiting for Superman (2010)*
Early Childhood Education	**Education Policy**	**Evolution and Creative Design**
• *Etre et avoir* • *Getting in ... Kindergarten* • *I Am A Promise* • *Nursery University*	• *Corridor of Shame: The Neglect of South Carolina's Rural Schools (2006)* • *Fear and Learning at Hoover Elementary (1997)* • *Hard Times at Douglass High: A No Child Left behind Report Card (2008)* • *Tales of a Golden State: The Mendez v. Westminster Story (2009)* • *The Texas Miracle (2003)*	• *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed (2008)* • *Judgment Day: Intelligent Design On Trial (2007)* • *SCOPES: The Battle Over America's Soul (2006)*

Appendix B (continued)

Gay and Lesbian	Higher Education	International
• *Hineini: Coming Out in a Jewish High School* (2005) • *Live To Tell: The First Gay Prom in America* (1995)	• *Discounted Dreams: The High Hopes and Harsh Realities at America's Community Colleges* (2007) • *Finding D-QU: The Lonely Struggle of California's Only Tribal College* (2009) • *In 500 Words or Less* (2009) • *Indoctrinate U* (2007) • *Race To Nowhere* (2009)	• *Born Into Brothels (2004)* • *Être et avoir (2002)* • *2 Million Minutes* (2009) • *The Boys From Baghdad High (2007)* • *Please Vote For Me* (2007) • *Wings of Evolution (2007)*
Medicating Students	**Post- Hurricane Katrina Education**	**Race, Class, and Gender**
• *Medicating Kids* (2001) • *Race To Nowhere* (2009) • *The War on Kids* (2009)	• *Left Behind: The Story of the New Orleans Public Schools* (2008) • Reborn*: New Orleans Schools* (2008) • *Wade in the Water, Children* (2007) • *Walking on Dead Fish* (2008)	• *Blue Eyed* (1996) • *Born Into Brothels (2004)* • *Not As Good As You Think: The Myth of the Middle Class School* (2009) • *The Prep School Negro* (2009) • *Prom Night in Mississippi* (2009) • *Resolved* (2007) • *With All Deliberate Speed (*2004)

School Sports	Special Education	Violence and Delinquency
• *American Kings* (2009) • *Chiefs* (2002) • *Class C; The Only Game in Town* (2008) • *Go Tigers!* (2001) • *The Heart of the Game* (2006) • *Hoop Dreams* (1984) • *Walking On Dead Fish* (2008)	• *Bye (2010)* • *Educating Peter* (1992) • *Graduating Peter* (2001) • *Misunderstood Minds* (2002)	• *Being Human* (2005) • *Bowling for Columbine* (2002) • *High School Boot Camp* (2000) • *The Killer at Thurston High* (2000) • *The War On Kids* (2009)

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