

Fall 2007

Phenomenology, Film and Curriculum Theory: An Inquiry into the Intellectual Persona of Teachers

Tara Danielle Britt

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd>

Recommended Citation

Britt, Tara Danielle, "Phenomenology, Film and Curriculum Theory: An Inquiry into the Intellectual Persona of Teachers" (2007). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 520.
<https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd/520>

This dissertation (open access) is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies, Jack N. Averitt College of at Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu.

PHENOMENOLOGY, FILM AND CURRICULUM THEORY: AN INQUIRY INTO
THE INTELLECTUAL PERSONA OF TEACHERS

by

TARA D. BRITT

(Under the Direction of John A. Weaver)

ABSTRACT

Teachers have lost autonomy due to the restraints placed on them by local and state standards and standardized testing. I am concerned that teachers have lost sight of their purpose as intellectuals who guide students in the development of critical thinking skills. In this dissertation, I used film to examine teachers' abilities to think critically. I used the phenomenological perspective of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Vivian Sobchack to examine how teachers physically and mentally react to representations of teachers and teaching as selected films depict them.

I considered how the teachers' embodiment of film played a part in guiding them to deeper discussions about their experiences. I proposed that by offering teachers a space in which to regain their critical thinking skills, teachers could reconnect with their intellectual persona, affording them the opportunity to reposition themselves in the community as analytical thinkers who strive to meet the needs of their students while simultaneously compelling students to go beyond the imposed standards into their own spaces to explore critical thinking themselves. The questions driving this study were: 1) Are teachers able to think critically, specifically showing an awareness of their embodiment of film as it relates to themselves and their profession? 2) How does group discussion among peers encourage teachers to participate in critical pedagogy? and 3) Is

there evidence that teachers, at the conclusion of the study, show more active interest in their positions related to and the current state of education?

To investigate the questions, two teacher focus groups met four times to view films depicting teachers and education. Following each viewing, the participants discussed their thoughts for thirty minutes. The participants later wrote a reflective journal entry. The conclusion of this study demonstrated that the conversations took on the tone of critical discourse about education in terms of the topics discussed, such as situations related to anti-intellectualism and surveillance. In comparing the film worlds to their own worlds, the participants demonstrated that, through discussion and analysis, they were able to read the films phenomenologically as well as critically, pushing many participants toward the development of a critical pedagogy.

INDEX WORDS: Phenomenology, Film Studies, Curriculum Theory

PHENOMENOLOGY, FILM AND CURRICULUM THEORY: AN INQUIRY INTO
THE INTELLECTUAL PERSONA OF TEACHERS

by

TARA D. BRITT

BSED, University of Georgia, 1995

MED, Georgia Southern University, 2001

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

STATESBORO, GEORGIA

2007

© 2007

Tara D. Britt

All Rights Reserved

PHENOMENOLOGY, FILM AND CURRICULUM THEORY: AN INQUIRY INTO
THE INTELLECTUAL PERSONA OF TEACHERS

by

TARA D. BRITT

Major Professor: John A. Weaver
Committee: Missy Bennett
Debra Freedman
William M. Reynolds

Electronic Version Approved:

December 2007

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my parents. First, to the memory of my dear mother, Jackie Hanes, who always insisted on the value and importance of my education. Although she passed away before I completed my Master's degree, the memories of her support and encouragement have helped reinforce my drive during the darkest hours when I felt my self-confidence being etched away. Second, to the memory of my father, Daniel Hanes, who encouraged me during the first 2 years of this intense journey with support and love.

It is also dedicated to my loving husband, Will. At every pass, he has been a source of energy beyond my expectations. His relentless dedication has been invaluable. I could never express how grateful I am for the love and strong foundation he has provided for me during this process.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my extended family for their continued support as I pushed through the coursework and dissertation process. My sister, Terri Moreland, and my aunt, Kathy Ingram, especially deserve recognition for their understanding at the times when I just could not drive home to Atlanta to participate in family gatherings because I needed to read or to write. My mother-in-law, Anne Britt, also deserves appreciation for all of her encouragement and invitations to eat lunch. I love them more than they will ever know.

I would also like to express appreciation to the members of my “lunch crew,” Raymond Mendoza, Shannon Hinson, Hudak Hendrix, and Jean Powell, who sat through many 25-minute lunches where I rambled on about topics of which they had no prior knowledge and where I worked through ideas for my dissertation. Their many smiles, pleasantries, and hugs got me through some very challenging times. In addition to this group of colleagues, I thank Alison Goggans and Susan Jones for their never-ending abilities to be the sounding boards that I needed. Their guidance helped me through some difficult decisions and their examples of the true intellectual spirit inspired me. I truly appreciate and value all their friendships.

I am extremely thankful for the teachers who participated in this study. Without their willingness to share more of themselves than could ever be expected, my dissertation would be hollow. Their dedication to teaching and to their quest for excellence is exemplary. I am forever grateful to them all.

To the members of my dissertation committee, I extend my most humble and earnest thanks: Dr. John A. Weaver, for providing me with endless literature resources, prodding my intellect, encouraging me to approach my ideas seriously, and being a

mentor in the truest sense of the word; Dr. Missy Bennett, for helping to guide my research techniques, responding to all of my questions (big or small), and being willing to do anything to help me reach my goal; Dr. Debra Freedman, for inspiring this study with her own work, taking time to encourage me in my ideas early on when I first met her, and being the questioning voice in the crowd as well as the voice of reason; and Dr. William M. Reynolds, for opening my eyes to the true problems in education through his own contributions to the field of curriculum studies and through the countless hours of discussion in class and for encouraging me to articulate my thoughts within the context of the broader theoretical field. A million thanks to all. . .merci mille fois.

Finally, I want to express my heart-felt gratitude to Susan Humma for her limitless friendship and pain-staking efforts in the final editing of this large document. Only a real friend could spend countless hours listening and talking about a dissertation and then allow herself to be recruited to edit it. She will never know how much I appreciate her. She is one in a million.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	7
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	17
Impetus for This Study Involving Curriculum Theory	21
Standardization: The Limitation of Identity Formation	28
Standardization: The Imposition of Teacher Versus Student.....	32
Standardization: The Implementation of Surveillance	34
Standardization: Reconceptualization or Bust	37
Organization of this Dissertation.....	38
2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	40
Phenomenology	40
Situating This Study in Phenomenology	40
Visual Embodiment.....	43
Kinesthetic Embodiment	47
Perception.....	54
Film Studies.....	61
The Importance of Film.....	63
Situating This Study in Film Studies.....	70
Framing the Edit.....	72
Framing the Image.....	75
Framing the Perception	80

	Framing the Thought	84
	The Act of Viewing.....	88
	Taking in a Film	89
	Feeling Film	94
3	METHODOLOGY	100
	Introduction	100
	The Design of This Study.....	101
	Focus Groups.....	102
	Film Selection.....	103
	Data Collection.....	106
	Meeting Procedures	106
	Researcher Journal	109
	Analysis Procedures	109
	Limitations and Biases	111
4	MY FILM ANALYSIS THROUGH A PHENOMENOLOGICAL LENS...113	
	Introduction	113
	Why Use Film in This Study?	113
	My Personal Readings of the Films	115
	<i>Mona Lisa Smile</i>	115
	<i>Finding Forrester</i>	124
	<i>The Ron Clark Story</i>	131
	<i>The Browning Version</i>	137
	Conclusion.....	144

5	FOCUS GROUP ONE: DISCUSSION OF DATA.....	146
	Introduction	146
	Physical and Emotional Responses	147
	<i>Mona Lisa Smile</i> : Film Discussion.....	149
	<i>Mona Lisa Smile</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	151
	<i>Finding Forrester</i> : Film Discussion.....	155
	<i>Finding Forrester</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	156
	<i>The Ron Clark Story</i> : Film Discussion.....	158
	<i>The Ron Clark Story</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	161
	<i>The Browning Version</i> : Film Discussion.....	163
	<i>The Browning Version</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	166
	Anti-Intellectualism.....	167
	<i>Mona Lisa Smile</i> : Film Discussion.....	168
	<i>Mona Lisa Smile</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	169
	<i>Finding Forrester</i> : Film Discussion.....	171
	<i>Finding Forrester</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	172
	<i>The Ron Clark Story</i> : Film Discussion.....	173
	<i>The Ron Clark Story</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	175
	<i>The Browning Version</i> : Film Discussion.....	176
	<i>The Browning Version</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	178
	Surveillance	178
	<i>Mona Lisa Smile</i> : Film Discussion.....	179
	<i>Mona Lisa Smile</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	182

<i>Finding Forrester</i> : Film Discussion.....	184
<i>Finding Forrester</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	186
<i>The Ron Clark Story</i> : Film Discussion.....	187
<i>The Ron Clark Story</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	188
<i>The Browning Version</i> : Film Discussion.....	189
<i>The Browning Version</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	191
Language of Defeat	191
<i>Mona Lisa Smile</i> : Film Discussion.....	191
<i>Mona Lisa Smile</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	194
<i>Finding Forrester</i> : Film Discussion.....	195
<i>Finding Forrester</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	196
<i>The Ron Clark Story</i> : Film Discussion.....	197
<i>The Ron Clark Story</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	198
<i>The Browning Version</i> : Film Discussion.....	199
<i>The Browning Version</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	199
Positive Language and Hope for the Future.....	200
<i>Mona Lisa Smile</i> : Film Discussion.....	200
<i>Mona Lisa Smile</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	204
<i>Finding Forrester</i> : Film Discussion.....	205
<i>Finding Forrester</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	205
<i>The Ron Clark Story</i> : Film Discussion.....	206
<i>The Ron Clark Story</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	207
<i>The Browning Version</i> : Film Discussion.....	208

	<i>The Browning Version</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	209
	Evidence of Critical Thinking and Steps Toward a Critical Pedagogy	210
	<i>Mona Lisa Smile</i> : Film Discussion.....	211
	<i>Mona Lisa Smile</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	212
	<i>Finding Forrester</i> : Film Discussion.....	213
	<i>Finding Forrester</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	215
	<i>The Ron Clark Story</i> : Film Discussion.....	215
	<i>The Ron Clark Story</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	216
	<i>The Browning Version</i> : Film Discussion.....	217
	<i>The Browning Version</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	219
	Conclusion.....	221
6	FOCUS GROUP TWO: DISCUSSION OF DATA	223
	Introduction	223
	Physical and Emotional Responses to Film	224
	<i>Mona Lisa Smile</i> : Film Discussion.....	225
	<i>Mona Lisa Smile</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	229
	<i>Finding Forrester</i> : Film Discussion.....	231
	<i>Finding Forrester</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	234
	<i>The Ron Clark Story</i> : Film Discussion.....	235
	<i>The Ron Clark Story</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	236
	<i>The Browning Version</i> : Film Discussion.....	237
	<i>The Browning Version</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	238
	Anti-Intellectualism.....	239

<i>Mona Lisa Smile</i> : Film Discussion.....	240
<i>Mona Lisa Smile</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	241
<i>Finding Forrester</i> : Film Discussion.....	242
<i>Finding Forrester</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	243
<i>The Ron Clark Story</i> : Film Discussion.....	244
<i>The Ron Clark Story</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	248
<i>The Browning Version</i> : Film Discussion.....	248
<i>The Browning Version</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	250
Surveillance	251
<i>Mona Lisa Smile</i> : Film Discussion.....	252
<i>Mona Lisa Smile</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	255
<i>Finding Forrester</i> : Film Discussion.....	257
<i>Finding Forrester</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	259
<i>The Ron Clark Story</i> : Film Discussion.....	260
<i>The Ron Clark Story</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	261
<i>The Browning Version</i> : Film Discussion.....	261
<i>The Browning Version</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	264
Language of Defeat	264
<i>Mona Lisa Smile</i> : Film Discussion.....	264
<i>Mona Lisa Smile</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	266
<i>Finding Forrester</i> : Film Discussion.....	268
<i>Finding Forrester</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	270
<i>The Ron Clark Story</i> : Film Discussion.....	270

<i>The Ron Clark Story</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	272
<i>The Browning Version</i> : Film Discussion.....	273
<i>The Browning Version</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	274
Positive Language and Hope for the Future.....	275
<i>Mona Lisa Smile</i> : Film Discussion.....	275
<i>Mona Lisa Smile</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	276
<i>Finding Forrester</i> : Film Discussion.....	277
<i>Finding Forrester</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	278
<i>The Ron Clark Story</i> : Film Discussion.....	279
<i>The Ron Clark Story</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	280
<i>The Browning Version</i> : Film Discussion.....	280
<i>The Browning Version</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	280
Evidence of Critical Thinking and Steps Toward a Critical Pedagogy.....	281
<i>Mona Lisa Smile</i> : Film Discussion.....	281
<i>Mona Lisa Smile</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	284
<i>Finding Forrester</i> : Film Discussion.....	287
<i>Finding Forrester</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	290
<i>The Ron Clark Story</i> : Film Discussion.....	291
<i>The Ron Clark Story</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	293
<i>The Browning Version</i> : Film Discussion.....	294
<i>The Browning Version</i> : Film Notes and Journal Reflections	296
Conclusion.....	298
7 CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY.....	301

Introduction	301
Are Teachers Able to Think Critically, Specifically Showing an Awareness of Their Embodiment of Film as it Relates to Themselves and Their Profession?	302
How Does Group Discussion Among Peers Encourage Teachers to Participate in Critical Pedagogy?	305
Is There Evidence That Teachers, at the Conclusion of the Study, Show More Active Interest in Their Position in and the Current State of Education?	309
Additional Reflections by the Researcher	312
Anti-Intellectualism and Surveillance	312
Language of Defeat Combined with Positive Language and Hope for the Future	317
Evidence of Critical Thinking and Steps Toward a Critical Pedagogy	318
Possibilities for Future Research	320
REFERENCES	323
APPENDIX: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FORMS	331

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The curriculum field has experienced many changes in its relatively short life span since the 1800s and it continues to be in a perpetual state of evolution to this very day. Through the years, theorists have participated in battles of intelligence and opinion, pushing ideas that range from touting education for the masses to advocating education for the individual. Most members of the field of education have ridden the waves of change without many questions or much analytical thought. The shift toward critical examination of the curriculum field emerged in the early 1960's. The new frame of reference targeted the student rather than the teacher. Rather than looking into the "how" of education, theorists began to investigate the "why" of education. The link between society and the individual was examined while curriculum specialists began to consider allowing students opportunities to determine their educational desires in order to develop analytical skills, opening up avenues for creation in thinking. Even the value of the efficiency model in schools was questioned because of its diminished focus on the individual student. Indeed, theorists in the field were challenged to take up the practice of analyzing what constitutes curriculum, establishing what would become the predominant impetus in the various stages of reconceptualization.

Unfortunately, the original view of utilizing the curriculum field as a way to control what and how students learn continues, from my perspective, to dominate the classroom curriculum today. Despite the reconceptualization of the field of curriculum, there has not been a reconceptualization of curriculum in the classroom. There is a great divide between the theoretical world and the lived world, where teachers and students are

two groups of people who often experience many of the same situations but who in the same moment may also become vastly divided by their perceptions of those experiences. For example, both groups must spend time planning, creating, and executing activities related to learning. Both groups are subject to the rhythm of the school day set by the timetables of the administration, which often results in class periods that are too short or too long and breaks or lunch periods that pass in the blink of an eye. And while both groups reside in a central location within the school, sharing the same physical public space known as one facet of community, there is at this time a distance being felt like no other in recent history. In this context, I am referring to community as it is used by Sandra Nettles (1991) in her article “Community Involvement and Disadvantaged Students: A Review.” In this work, she mentions “*community* as the social interactions that occur in formal and informal settings within, and across, locales” (1991, p. 401). I would argue that the most notable shared experience between teachers and students is that they are evaluated by local, state, and national governing bodies. This process of formalized evaluation, a product of the social efficiency movement, is at the root of this breakdown in the community that was once shared between teachers and students. These evaluations, though intricately connected in the workings of education, incite the current separation that exists between teachers and students. The nature of the relationships between these two groups is suffering: the educational system that was once used to nurture the minds of the young could be considered now as a factory of regurgitation. This factory is one where information is given to teachers who are expected to deliver it in a manner so that the students achieve high scores on standardized tests. I believe the major contributor to this chasm lies in the authority that exudes from the imposition of

certain disciplinary curricula, also known as standards. “These sorts of objective evaluations are self-defeating because they serve to *limit* what we attempt to do rather than to expand it” (Childress, 2000, pp. 233-234). These limitations may exist not only in the guidelines themselves but more importantly in the fashion by which they are imposed. Such limitations are what we must strive to overcome so that the reconceptualization of the curriculum field as it is known by theorists today can become prominent ideology in classrooms as well, bridging the gap between academia and education.

To aid in the bridging of this gap, I propose that one focus of curriculum theory should be aimed at teachers and their identities. Many teachers in the system of public education are feeling largely attacked by the various restraints placed on their profession. A general atmosphere of defeat exists, and the spirit of education as it was once experienced in the community has been mostly extinguished. In this study, I will concentrate on a high school located in rural southeastern Georgia, under the pseudonym Pence High School, where teacher morale is very low and where there is little evidence on the surface of teacher autonomy. The active role of teachers as people who make a difference in the lives of students has transformed into a passive one of droid-like robots who push paperwork and dole out facts for students to memorize for their upcoming tests in the string of formal assessments that have become the hallmark of high school memories. There is no time during the school day for teachers to have meaningful conversations with one another about educational philosophies or to analytically reflect on how their roles are actually important to the education of our youth. Without these moments, teachers lose sight of who they are as people and as educators of the

community. In fact, the deficit of these experiences for teachers is filled by mountains of mind-numbing tasks that do away with any need to function using critical thinking skills. In this dissertation, I propose that by offering teachers a space in which to regain their critical thinking skills, teachers could reconnect with their intellectual persona, affording them the opportunity to reposition themselves in the community as analytical thinkers who strive to meet the needs of their students while simultaneously compelling students to go beyond the imposed standards into their own spaces to explore critical thinking themselves. The questions driving this study are: 1) Are teachers able to think critically, specifically showing an awareness of their embodiment in film as it relates to themselves and their profession? 2) How does group discussion among peers encourage teachers to participate in critical pedagogy? and 3) Is there evidence that teachers, at the conclusion of the study, show more active interest in their positions related to and the current state of education? Inspired by the work of Mary M. Dalton (1999) who examines the depictions of teachers in film and by Debra M. Freedman (2000) who examines how depictions of education in television affect pre-service teachers' perceptions, this dissertation is an inquiry into how teachers' critical pedagogies may be affected by films concerning teacher characters. Within this study, I offer teachers an exploratory space through their own bodies and through the body of film. I use the philosophical perspective of phenomenology to examine how teachers physically and mentally react to representations of teachers and teaching as selected films depict them. Although I am not as naïve as to think that my study will cure all the ailments of education, I do believe that it is an opening to important dialogues that may encourage teachers during a time when most feel extremely discouraged. Therefore, the questions that guide this study focus on

teachers' abilities to recognize and analyze their physical reactions to selected films about teacher characters. I will examine whether or not those physical experiences can lead to a greater propensity for analytical thinking. I am also curious to know how teachers will be affected by discussions of and involving critical pedagogy. A critical pedagogy is, as Ira Shor defines it, "habits of thought, reading, writing, and speaking which go beneath surface meaning, first impressions, dominant myths, official pronouncements, traditional clichés, received wisdom, and mere opinions, to understand the deep meaning, root causes, social context, ideology, and personal consequences of any action, event, object, process, organization, experience, text, subject matter, policy, mass media, or discourse" (1992, p 129). Will such discussions encourage teachers to leave passivity behind in favor of taking up an active role that moves beyond limitations of curriculum standards and standardized testing? This dissertation will be a recording of this journey into the minds and pedagogical practices of my colleagues in an attempt to understand and to encourage fellow educators to escape from the confines of standardization.

Impetus for This Study Involving Curriculum Theory

One of the most intimidating words for teachers and students alike is the word "standards." Camouflaged within the tenets of traditional curriculum, this word represents reduction: a reduction in teacher autonomy, a reduction in student interest, a reduction in the value of academic achievement, and most importantly a reduction in the intellect at large. "Standards" as a word indicates a minimum in education to which all teachers should all aspire and an "assault upon the academic freedom of America's schoolteachers" (Pinar, 2004, p. 182). However, standards are also a clever way for traditionalists to perpetuate classical education, an education that does not meet the needs

of students today. For most of us involved in teaching and learning, this minimum is actually a representation of “what *has* to get done” or “what needs to be *covered*” in all classrooms, at all times. “Standards” as an edict creates a glass ceiling against which teachers and students collide and, consciously or subconsciously, are numbly accepting or, at the very least, are rarely questioning. As teachers worry from day to day about teaching the standards and students worry about obtaining just the right amount of information so that they can pass copious tests, community between the two groups is lost, the journey of learning turned into a rat race to get to the cheese. The goal of standards “is linear, product-focused, and consistent with the social efficiency agenda that marked American education for the twentieth century” (Reynolds, 2003, p. 37). “Standards” is an expression imposed by bureaucrats and businessmen, not teachers or students, and it is used in an effort to *standardize* the minds and motivations of the masses.

I contend that standards are used to instill fear in those who must work toward being evaluated by benchmarks and bubbled-in answer sheets. Utilization of this word signifies an effort to anesthetize teachers and students in order to ensure the reproduction of the status quo. I agree with curriculum theorists who assert that standards assume that the information a child encounters can be regulated and sequentially ordered[.] [However, this notion is] based on such an archaic assumption, resulting in strategies that negate children’s exploration, invention, and play. Indeed, the purpose of many of these strategies is to prevent the integration of acquired information from a variety of sources into the

cognitive and emotional structures of an evolving personhood (Kincheloe in Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1997, p. 51).

Thus the imposition of standards is a direct negation of the reconceptualization of the curriculum field. Despite 30 years of theorizing and attempting to understand curriculum through disciplines such as history, philosophy, and literature, our teachers and students have felt little if no impact of such discussions and movements. This lack of impact exists to a degree because most teachers are not aware of any efforts to challenge traditionalist ways of education. Because teachers are so bogged down with menial tasks, such as attendance, parking lot duty, standardized testing, and staff development classes aimed at controlling student behavior, they have limited knowledge of the broader context of curriculum theory. William Pinar alludes to how the imposition of standards is not in the best interest of students or of the field of curriculum because these standards unfortunately

[amount] to academic vocationalism, a self-involved self-perpetuation of institutionalized, indeed, bureaucratized, conceptions of the schools subjects' educational significance as preparing students to become disciplinary specialists in the academic disciplines. [Standards are] *not* a conception of curriculum that directs school knowledge to individual's lived experience, experience understood as subjective *and* social, that is, as gendered, racialized, classed participants in understanding and living through the historical moment. (2004, p. 194)

Recent attempts at legislation such as No Child Left Behind demonstrate that those who live in the "land of the free" are within reach of the ones who would purport to know

what is best for teachers and students in relation to what and how much should be learned by randomly selected points of reference in time (Apple 2000). This edict is in supplement to standardized national testing programs, such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, the Stanford Achievement Test, and the Scholastic Aptitude Test. These tests determine such things as inclusion in special needs education programs and acceptance into college or university. In addition to these national assessments many states have implemented their own testing programs, such as in Georgia, where high school students also weather the End of Course Tests and the Georgia High School Graduation Tests. Of course, many states have articulated their own expectations of daily standardization to which students must adhere. For example, “[i]n July 1995 the Michigan State Board of Education adopted ‘model content standards for curriculum’ and related benchmarks” (Alexander, 2000, p. 106). In the state of Georgia, there have been recent critiques of the Quality Core Curriculum (QCC) that was instituted in 1985. Due to a lengthy study of the QCCs by the Phi Delta Kappa organization, a reorganization involving the refinement of what students should know is in the works. In the immediate future, teachers of core subjects will replace their guidelines from the QCCs with those of the Performance Standards.

Performance standards provide clear expectations for assessment, instruction, and student work. They define the level of work that demonstrates achievement of the standards, enabling a teacher to know “how good is good enough.” The performance standards isolate and identify the skills needed to use the knowledge and skills to problem-solve, reason, communicate, and make connections with other

information. Performance standards also tell the teacher how to assess the extent to which the student knows the material or can manipulate and apply the information. (GDOE, 2004, Curriculum Frequently Asked Questions section, ¶ 8)

This “isolation” of skills, however, only moves to reinforce the isolation of the individual. The problem with this way of thinking is that necessary skills (read “skills involved in completion of tasks”) are only identified and are never allowed time to develop. These Performance Standards also may serve to restrict teachers in the individualization of assessment according to the needs of each student because these standards “tell teachers how” to do their jobs precisely. In fact, the teacher is no longer required to think or to analyze student progress because these performance standards “tell the teacher” what to do and how to do it. There is direct evidence of this at Pence High School: many teachers are being asked to adhere to a pacing guide that dictates what to teach on specific days, to teach from identical lesson plans, and to use the exact same tests for all classes of the same disciplines. In fact, during the 2006-2007 academic year at Pence High School, a position was created and an administrator hired just to surveille and compare teacher lesson plans within departments and to determine whether or not the teachers’ plans were consistent with the existing pacing guides. Teachers who were not following the pacing guide were reprimanded and more closely monitored in order to synchronize what was taking place in individual classrooms on a daily basis. Just as Foucault describes, “*The examination also introduces individuality into the field of documentation.* The examination leaves behind it a whole meticulous archive constituted in terms of bodies and days. The examination that places individuals in a field of

surveillance also situates them in a network of writing; it engages them in a whole mass of documents that capture and fix them” (1979, p. 189). The requirement of documenting adherence to the pacing guide is being presented under the guise of equality for the students and for their preparedness on state tests. It is, of course, also a way to verify that those who are perceived as weak teachers will do what the administration feels is an appropriate and adequate job. Many times teachers are secretly identified by the administration as weak, and in my experience at Pence High School, the documentation mentioned above is used as evidence against weak instructors for the purpose of dismissal rather than as a tool for growth and development of individual strengths. Instead, it is more common for the administration to expect teachers to copy techniques and practices presented at workshops that demonstrate the latest and greatest “new” methods of teaching. However, cookie-cutter teaching does not actually solve the problems with student performance. Indeed, requiring teachers to think *less* is not a viable solution. This movement toward prescriptive teaching alienates teaching professionals and negates the need for any intellectual pursuit on the part of the teacher. According to Childress, “education that pursues numerical criteria of some sort or another faces irrelevance, because the criteria miss most of what makes people successful” (2000, p. 234). Evaluations that focus on producing students who can use discriminate pieces of information (traditional curriculum movements) as opposed to encouraging students to think critically (the reconceptualization of the field) ultimately undermines the teachers’ abilities to think critically as well. Doing so isolates teachers and students from the validity of experience and all but guarantees that the students will grow into citizens who meekly go about their private lives, never considering or

analyzing the world around them. As the practice of merely teaching to the standards breaks down the feeling of community within schools, teachers will slowly, and perhaps unknowingly, relinquish their personal relationships with students because of the demands that high stakes testing places on teaching discriminate pieces of information. Teachers seemingly have not and potentially will not recognize the loss of rigor in the educational process because they are blinded by threats regarding their own accountability according to the student results on state tests. However, rigor is the building block of higher order thinking skills and it also builds the relationships between teachers and students that creates an environment where the practice of challenging students to think critically is welcomed and celebrated. States all over the country are scrambling to meet the expectations of No Child Left Behind, but in doing so are handing over what little exists of local control and community between teachers and students. This is a drastic movement toward forcing teachers to conform to specific ways of teaching specific points of information that do not encourage critical thinking in either the teacher or the student.

The examples mentioned above are intended to be only representative of the trends of national and state involvement in curriculum and creation of standards. The intent is to highlight the silenced voice of teachers in the fate of the teaching and learning community, which is here used as both place and sense of relationship. They demonstrate the measureless control that groups exterior to education exude on educational policy making. Standards are being used as “an attempt to build an empire that is inherently flawed and unaware of the transitions taking place in the context of the broader society” (Reynolds, 2003, p. 40). Amongst all of these words in the form of

mandates, what is the true goal? What limitations are thrust upon teachers by policies propagated by outside forces? “The hidden message [in standards] is that anything that does not blend easily with the dominant way of doing things is secondary to it and needs to be learned with a codified, categorical neatness” (Wear, 1997, p. 74). It is up to teachers to identify ways to create spaces of freedom within the limitations of dominant standards. The challenge is to use “a critical discourse [about standards that] brings about an awareness that learning is not a neutral transmission of static knowledge but in fact consists of the production of social practices which provide students with a sense of place, identity, worth, and value” (Kasturi in Cannella & Kincheloe, 2002, p. 42). It is the intention of this study to offer teachers at Pence High School a space within which they can analyze their own motivations and critical pedagogies. Preceding this struggle, it must first be identified to what extent governmentally imposed standards assert limitations on teachers, perpetuating the goals of the traditionalists in the curriculum field while silencing reconceptualization. Through limiting teachers’ abilities to negotiate identity, through forcing distance between the positions of teachers and students, and through scrutinizing every move teachers make, standards are denying an education that encourages critical thinking in an uplifting environment.

Standardization: The Limitation of Identity Formation

I am a firm believer that our identities are developed from the experiences through which a person lives and the way in which a person perceives those experiences. Educational standards, which are usually imposed by those not directly involved in the processes of education, interfere with the procedure of identity formation in that these legislations dictate that every student engage in the same experience. Although equal

education for all is a reputable and necessary goal, the strict imposition of subject content down to timelines for teaching, procedures of teaching, and methods of assessment does not necessarily create a situation of equality. These types of mandates do not consider the interests of students or teachers, their previous experiences, or the manifestations of those miraculous “teachable moments.” By mandating what educators teach, how they teach, with what materials they are allowed to teach, educators become the tool of the government, a pawn in the game of replication. The joy of intellectual activity is mediated, if not dissolved, in the “what, when, why, how, and where” of the routine that now defines the day-to-day learning environment.

Concerning these administrative intrusions into the lives of teachers, traditional curriculum disguised as standards limits the development of identity because the nurturing community that once existed between teachers and students is mitigated by the administrative, obsessive focus on teacher accountability of student performance on standardized tests, which themselves place importance on categorized and classified bits of information that are presented as unrelated facts. The fact is that teachers have “the challenge of constructing a pragmatic process of meaningful, reciprocal communication that would help us reconnect our emotional and ethical investments with our work, our students, and each other” (Dimitriadis & McCarthy, 2001, p. 63). Indeed, teachers feel the effects of the implementation of standards as it pertains to their own formation of and perception of personal and professional identities. Teachers no longer have intellectual identities of which sharing ideas and knowledge is important because they view external pressures as usurping what control they do have on personal and professional identity formation. This is not, unfortunately, the first time in American history that a twinge of

anti-intellectualism has been in the air. Richard Hofstadter's work on the subject is well-known and respected. His book *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* was printed in 1962 as a historical timeline of various events and movements that led up to the state of affairs in the 1950's, but it certainly shows us how we arrived at where we are in American society today. Citing various ingredients such as McCarthyism, "suspicion of the life of the mind" (p. 7), the American obsession with the self-made man (such as Davy Crockett), religion, political ambition, and even education as part of the recipe for diluting the positive qualities of the intellectual, Hofstadter (1962) shows us that the diminished respect for the intellectual is not solely based in the recent tirades of a presidential administration who thinks that policies based on attack are the methods for repairing any and every problem. Indeed, Hofstadter points out that studies of nineteenth-century textbooks show that the underlying tone did not encourage youngsters to "form too high an estimate of the uses of mind" (1962, p. 306). In addition, even some of our greatest scientific thinkers, such as Thomas Edison and Josiah Willard Gibbs, have been marginalized in our history books in favor of highlighting self-made men who worked themselves from rags to riches. Clearly, the lack of emphasis historically placed on the intellectual life contributes to the teachers' current feeling of disconnect from their identities as intellectuals in American culture.

Therefore, teachers are charged with gathering together all aspects of their lives in order to demonstrate the multifaceted nature of the concept of who they are and who they can become. "One is oneself a shifting configuration of introjected as well as self-dissociated fragments of (past) others, in kaleidoscopic reconfigurations located in place and across time, structured in gendered, racialized ways" (Pinar, 2004, p. 54). Teachers

must make it their priority to place an importance on identity as it should exist aside from institutional mandates in order to afford themselves and their students the opportunity to participate in a reconceptualized curriculum field, validating each party's reality and (co)existence. Teachers should be encouraged to strive toward an educational philosophy of that like Martin Buber: they should not be required to "impose a self-evident formula upon" their students; instead, they should try to "[pose] questions which [force] them to find their own answers" and also should try to figure out "how to give the pupil a sense of his identity, of his organic unity, how to show him the way to responsibility and love" (Hodes, 1972, pp. 136-137). In keeping with the theories of the reconceptualization, educators, as life-long learners, have the duty of investigating their own identities so as to expand their personal critical thinking skills, which can then be applied in their classrooms with students. "The manner in which . . . [the student] manages himself and calculates and enters into the scene and compares himself, the way in which he adjusts the past for himself as background of his presentness" is the means to creating identity (Heidegger, 1999, p. 347). Teachers must model this process of understanding identity for their students so that they too adopt an introspective attitude about becoming. This is something that an adherence to "standards" might never accomplish. If teaching "is a matter of enabling students to employ academic knowledge [in order to] . . . to understand their own self-formation within society and the world," then it is up to teachers to ensure that every measure is taken to provide an environment in which students can do just that (Pinar, 2004, p. 16). A focus on the development of self in addition to the cultivation of the mind is something that is advocated in reconceptualization theories but which is still currently missing from our classrooms.

This absence in part is an element contributing to the divide that now defines teacher/student relationships.

Standardization: The Imposition of Teacher Versus Student

Standardization under the pretense of the implementation of standards as curriculum guidelines also embodies a false sense of “the teacher knows more than the student.” This extremely traditionalist point of view weakens the flame of reconceptualization and its link to intellectual and analytical endeavors. Because teachers know what “must be taught” according to the guidelines set forth by the governing body, the students’ current knowledge and experiences appear to be discounted. As a result, students see “schools as places where they [are] continually divided and sorted into meaningless categories” (Dimitriadis, 2003, p. 42). Ultimately teachers begin to lose their influence on students because the educational process as a whole devalues students as individuals who have experiences that shape them, despite the fact that “experiencing implies that one constantly learns new insights and feels and thinks new and interesting variations of old insights,” (Webber, 2003, p. 176). Indeed, teachers are, I suggest, so caught up in attending to what needs to be taught that they lose sight of the very informed world in which children live where “the central threat to childhood innocence lies. . . in the diminishing public sphere available for children to experience themselves as critical agents” (Giroux, 2000a, p. 43). Meaningful conversation gives way to documentation and the teacher is unable or unmotivated to ensure an educational environment where one’s perception of the world can be incorporated into classroom discussions. “As postmodern children gain unrestricted knowledge about things once kept secret from nonadults, the mystique of adults as revered keepers of secrets about the world begins to

disintegrate. No longer do the elders know more than children about the experience of youth; given social/technical changes . . . they often know less” (Kincheloe in Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1997, p. 46). Because of this fallacy of the omnipotent teacher, students mistrust teachers and in turn withdraw from forming meaningful relationships with them. Students also see how teachers are being manipulated by the demands of the administration as those demands relate to test scores and autonomy in teaching.

The important fact is that American adolescents have more sympathy than admiration for their teachers. They know that their teachers are ill-paid and they are quick to agree that teachers should be better paid. The more ambitious and able among them also conclude that school-teaching is not for them. In this way, the mediocrity of the teaching profession tends to perpetuate itself. In so far as the teacher stands before his pupils as a surrogate of the intellectual life and its rewards, he unwittingly makes this life appear altogether unattractive. (Hofstadter, 1962, p. 312)

Alternatively, reconceptualization attempts to disband this myth because it advocates for students to provide input into their own learning processes. It encourages teachers to think critically about what their students know and experience in order to attempt to guide student learning accordingly. Without reconceptualization there is limited support for the need of critical thinking skills because all curriculum and standards are spoon fed to teachers and to students. “As a result, a schism has grown between in-school and out-of-school culture, with unofficial curricula (e.g., rap music, film, etc.) and learning settings (e.g., community centers, churches, etc.) taking on increasing salience” (Dimitriadis, 2001, p. 7). According to some theorists of reconceptualization, the out-of-

school culture is something that the curriculum field must hold as valid and this strand of theorists challenges the use of culture and experience as a way to connect what students know to an academic value that must be reached through an analytical process that is investigative and reflective. Because the standards create a false sense of authority of teacher over student, rather than engendering a collaborative environment, students who are often not accustomed to subjecting to authority due to their changing roles at home do not readily accept the traditional notion of the teacher as the person in charge. In this era of reconceptualization, it is paramount to realize that “more open and egalitarian forms of interaction have replaced authoritarian, hierarchical parent-child [or, if you will, adult-child] relationships” (Kincheloe in Cannella & Kincheloe, 2002, p. 77). Indeed, the reconceptualization of curriculum theory calls on teachers to examine their own abilities to think critically and to adopt a critical pedagogy so that they may surmount the demands of standardization in an effort to expand rather than limit the space students are creating in the world.

Standardization: The Implementation of Surveillance

Consequently, standards limit teachers in that they attempt to surveille what teachers are doing in the classroom and to categorize what students know. Standards, which are seemingly an innocent mechanism to ensure that students know *something*, are in reality the governing body’s method to indoctrinate students with what they *want* students to know, regardless of the students’ interests or talents. “The exercise of discipline [in this case, standards] presupposes a mechanism that coerces by means of observation; an apparatus in which the techniques that make it possible to see induce effects of power, and in which, conversely, the means of coercion make those on whom

they are applied clearly visible” (Foucault, 1979, p. 170-171). Standards as an apparatus of surveillance limit the teachers’ freedom to acknowledge students’ access to knowledge, ways of experiencing knowledge, and validation of personal experiences as acceptable forms of knowledge and intellect. Within the confines of such a traditionalist curriculum focus, students will be expected to achieve the minimum, and the surveillants will be able to maintain control over the development of students’ identities and the distances between the subgroups that are initially created by those standards. These surveillants will also diminish the teachers’ senses so that as the path to true knowledge (i.e. critical thinking skills) begins to open, the surveillants can arrive with yet another form of accountability to deaden their minds and enliven feelings of resentment as well as anger. Reconceptualization, on the other hand, offers a space where surveillance can pose no real threat to the creativity and encouragement of analytical thinking because it values intrinsic motivational factors rather than extrinsic ones such as standards and testing. Dimitriadis and McCarthy assert that “the great task of teachers and educators as we enter the 21st century is to address pedagogically the radical reconfiguration of educational and social life brought on by the proliferation of multiplicity and difference” (2001, p. 115). Through attempting to understand curriculum rather than control it by methods and measurement, teachers can offer students a participatory engagement in knowledge rather than the observation of knowledge. Reconceptualization is like Wonder Woman’s invisible jet: it is subtle and undetectable from the outside, yet it has a powerful force. It is simply up to educators to address its offerings so that they may be stealthily incorporated into the classroom.

Surveillance in the form of standards also takes away from the teacher's ability to act professionally, as it cancels out any need for the teacher to take responsibility for creative and critical thinking as it could be applied to the presentation of the subject matter and the evaluation of student learning. Professionalism thus gives way to "the domestic supervision of the master [i.e. the governing body] present beside his workers and apprentices [in the form of standards and testing]. . . carried out by clerks, supervisors and foremen," also known as the teachers, local board, and school administration (Foucault, 1979, p. 174). In addition, the implementation of standards may be viewed as "professionalization agendas for teaching . . . [resulting in] the creation of conditions in schools in which professionalism is diminished or even systematically undermined" (Hall & Schulz, 2003, p. 370). Such initiatives as performance management and performance related pay are examples of the ensuing results of traditional curriculum disguised as the newest standards-driven movements. Clearly, due to the surveillance characteristic of standards, teachers are experiencing limited professionalism, in part because of the piecemeal notions of the dissemination of information and otherwise because of the government's need for the educational systems to be run like well-oiled machines. In the wisely chosen words of Herb Childress (2000), "Just pulling stuff off the shelf makes a statement to the kids in the class, a statement to which they respond in kind" (p. 97). At the cost of genuine and meaningful relationships between teachers and students, efficiency reigns supreme, making sure that as many students are served per teacher as is unbelievably possible. "Surveillance thus becomes a decisive economic operator both as an internal part of the production machinery and as a specific mechanism in the disciplinary power" (Foucault, 1979, p. 175) over those

teachers to control their day-to-day actions in the classroom. The limitations caused by the surveillance of teachers dictate all aspects of their careers and their abilities to create identity and ward off the impending distance shaped by the environment of government standards.

Standardization: Reconceptualization or Bust

Reconceptualization is the haven teachers seek from those who point fingers because it is supported by thinkers who believe in the value of understanding where education is headed and how it is affected by all aspects of society. These theorists model the importance of independently working toward a common goal of emancipated thinking from which teachers in the field should learn, not methods of teaching but methods of how to embrace theory in terms of practice. For example, Henri Giroux suggests that “rather than accepting the modernist assumption that schools should train students for specific labor tasks, it makes more sense in the present historical moment to educate students to theorize differently about the meaning of work in a post-modern world” (Giroux, 2000a, p. 179). Within the context of how reconceptualization affords teachers a space to regain professional and personal identities as critical thinkers, Giroux’s argument to encourage theoretical thinking in students demonstrates the manner by which it may take place. By reinventing the current curriculum while still presenting its general tenets, teachers can move beyond delivery of content into a mode of inquiry and rumination. Indeed, Giroux calls for pedagogy “to assert a politics that makes the relationship among authority, ethics, and power central...[and] that expands rather than closes down the possibilities of a radical democratic society” (2000a, p. 192). In doing this, we create “spheres available for children to experience themselves as critical agents”

(Giroux, 2000b, p. 43). I would add that teachers themselves also regain status as critical agents as well, as they lead the students in such an exercise of thought. An activity like this would only situate itself under the heading of a reconceptualized curriculum because its concentration values focused thinking for the purpose of learning to think. When educators consider the world in which they live to be the nucleus of the curriculum, then education will have arrived at a reconceptualization that includes the importance of the individual in the curriculum. “In the process of ‘knowing itself,’ or recognizing itself, the self must reconstruct its identity again and again, which means that education is about self-consciousness and self-reconstruction simultaneously” (Carlson, 2002, p. 72).

Organization of this Dissertation

What follows is the exploration of my perception of the field of education as it exists at Pence High School in rural southeast Georgia. Chapter Two is a collection on my thoughts as they intersect with readings from curriculum theory, the phenomenological perspectives of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and film studies. I discuss my understanding of how teachers’ identities may be affected by the role of the body in perception and how visual and kinesthetic embodiment may possibly help to shape the way teachers view themselves. I relate this to the experience of film spectatorship. These readings ground my mildly theoretical exploration in everyday living, lending to this study a practical application in the field of education. In addition, Chapter Two offers a discussion on film studies in order to uncover the importance of film and how I see its relation to teachers and to the field of education in general. In addition to its popular value as mere entertainment, I argue that film can be used to incite critical thinking. Within this study, this is an important element because I believe film offers a

neutral space within which teachers can analyze endless topics individually and as groups in order to regain their footing on intellectual ground.

Chapter Three focuses on the methodology of this study. I explain the climate of Pence High School as it currently exists as well as the organization of the focus groups derived from it, their functions, and their activities. I also include information on the films that were used during the study and why those specific films were chosen. There is also a brief synopsis of the focus group meetings, data collection and analysis, and limitations and biases. Chapter Four is my own phenomenological reading of the films chosen for the focus groups to view and it is also where I present evidence as to how I arrived at the importance of using focus groups in relation to the phenomenological reading of film. Chapters Five and Six each focus on the data analysis from the individual focus groups and how that data relates back to the ideas and literature discussed in Chapter Two. Chapter Seven is a reflection on the answers to the questions guiding this study as well as on my dissertation process, including proposals for future studies.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In order to explore my concerns about teacher identity as it is affected by anti-intellectualism at Pence High School, I use a phenomenological lens to examine teachers' experiences of film, which also necessitates a working knowledge of film studies. In this chapter, I explain my understanding of how the phenomenological philosophies of Maurice Merleau-Ponty enhance film viewing and how I view that to be an important link to intellectual stimulation. In addition, I discuss how my readings in film studies have shaped my perspective of the usefulness of movies.

Phenomenology

Situating This Study in Phenomenology

Through my readings in the doctorate program, I have gained an interest in the notion that each person has her/his own point of view from which the world is observed. An infinite number of factors affect what an individual experiences, and although a researcher could attempt to outline each and every aspect such as age, race, ethnicity, et cetera, in an effort to validate the 'why' of an individual's perception, I believe it is an impossible task to take into consideration every element that colors a person's reality. Rather than delving into that arena, my study focuses on the individual's initial physical response to experiences. I look to an account of an event as a point of departure for discussion. I base my interest in such accounts on Merleau-Ponty's suggestions that "the opinion of the responsible philosopher must be that *phenomenology can be practised and identified as a manner or style of thinking*. . . . It is a matter of describing, not of explaining or analyzing" (1958, pp. viii-ix). The use of phenomenology in this

dissertation is for the participants in this study to describe their experiences of film in terms of physical reactions. Such a study involving personal descriptions relies on the participants' willingness to pay attention to their bodies as visual beings that do not merely exist in time and space. Indeed, I would argue that in order for teachers to regain their sense of intellectual autonomy "we must begin by reawakening the basic experience of the world" which begins in the primitiveness of our physicality (Merleau-Ponty, 1958, p. ix).

In the most significant writing of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1958), *Phenomenology of Perception*, is a dedication to a strand of phenomenology that focuses on experience through embodiment and perception. Throughout this work, Merleau-Ponty insists on the importance the body plays in the everyday manner individuals have of perceiving the world. Although not a startling or extremely innovative discussion on the surface, what Merleau-Ponty reminds the reader as well as the fellow philosopher is that the means of discovering our experiences is through the body. My understanding of his ideas is that our environment, although it exists exterior to our bodies, is part of our bodily perception and understanding of the world. Rather than the environment encroaching in on us, we, in our bodily forms, go out toward it, and in doing so we become responsible for its active digestion. According to Vivian Sobchack, one of modern time's most important phenomenologists and film theorists, Merleau-Ponty "insists that existence is the lived, situated, always in motion, always unfinished character that *is* intentionality" (Sobchack, 1992, p. 39). Thus, in order to ingest our experiences into our continuously evolving being, we must be willing to accept the never-ending, in-progress characteristic of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological perspective. Phenomenology "offers an account of

space, time and the world as we ‘live’ them. It tries to give a direct description of our experience as it is” (Merleau-Ponty, 1958, p. vii). However, as an interdisciplinary thinker, Merleau-Ponty saw “no corner of human life [as] unmarked by the fact of our situated bodily perspective on the world” (Carman & Hansen, 2005, p. 14) and he challenged people to look in and beyond the essences of the world in which we live in search of meaning at each and every encounter. He believed that “it is our ‘bodily’ intentionality which brings the possibility of meaning into our experiences by ensuring that its content, the things presented in experience, are surrounded with references to the past and future, to other places and other things, to human possibilities and situations” (Baldwin, 2004, p. 10). Our bodies, then, do not solely determine our descriptions of our experiences: it is a challenge to separate context from experience. Nonetheless, the body is the primary receptor and recorder that will guide this study.

Phenomenology observes the natural attitude, which is the habit of being involved in everyday life. It “wishes to ‘see’ what our place, our life, our lived-experience *is*. We are to faithfully document our experience-of-the-world just as it gives itself to be” (Jardine, 1998, p. 22). I suggest that this mode of thinking about experience is the perfect complement to a study of how film affects perception. First, the simple process of viewing film is a total body experience. We see the images with our eyes, hear the dialogue and soundtrack with our ears, feel the emotions that the narrative evokes not only with our spirits but also with our skin, as the internal sensations provoke external reactions. All of these physical activities join together to create the experience. Second, as one experiences film and takes in the experiences of the film, the experience can alter one’s perception of the world and of one’s self. Let us turn now to an exploration of the

tenets of embodiment and perception. In these sections, I discuss their direct relation to the study of teachers and critical thinking as a means to overcome current limitations in the field of education.

Visual Embodiment

Embodiment is the meeting of the flesh with stimulants in the environment and is the manifestation of the mingling of the two. The body enters into the world containing in it biological and psychological functions that one cannot see but that are evidently there, and it is because of those unseen functions' fusion with experience that an individual establishes her/his point of view on the world. "Perception does not come to birth just anywhere. . . it emerges in the recess of a body," (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 9). The body functions as the conduit for one's perception, providing a space for perception to awaken and allowing it room to merge with existing reality. It is what presents to us the world and us to others. Merleau-Ponty asserts that "it is a fact that I believe myself to be first of all surrounded by my body, involved in the world, situated here and now. But each of these words, when I come to think about them, is devoid of meaning. . . Would I know that I am caught up and situated in the world, if I were truly caught up and situated in it?" (Merleau-Ponty, 1958, p. 43). In other words, it is a challenge for an individual to be truly cognizant of her/his body as it functions to present a person to the world and the world to that person. The body is, however, the major buffer and receptor of the world.

Because our bodies are so much *of* the world and *in* the world, are we able to become cognizant of them and *notice* them as participating in experience, yet still allow them to naturally participate? If our bodies function as our compass and our map, can they also work as our journey and our vessel? In this study, I use phenomenology to

investigate how teachers use their bodies in understanding their experiences and in negotiating the meaning of experiences. The phenomenological perspective aids in the examination of whether or not teachers can be caught up in a situation, yet recognize how their bodies contribute to their perception of a situation. Through this query, I hope to uncover how we recognize and discuss our bodily responses as they relate to our experiences and how they may be used to encourage critical thinking skills. Merleau-Ponty says that “knowledge and communication sublimate rather than suppress our incarnation, and the characteristic operation of the mind is in the movement by which we recapture our corporeal existence and use it to symbolize instead of merely to coexist” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964a, p. 7). If knowledge and communication play a supporting role to our bodies, rather than our bodies supporting our minds, then perhaps it is of worth to explore situations where body and thought are stimulated by an experience such as viewing a film in order to investigate how an individual can use the movement of the body as proof of the interaction of the two. What I investigate is the need for tuning into that symbolization. I attempt to make connections between how the body reacts during perception and its affect on the symbolic, as it may or may not drive toward critical thinking and away from coexistence. Watching film is obviously a visual activity, but how does one come to visually embody the experience of viewing film? I would suggest that visual embodiment involves the exchange between the eyes’ taking in of the film and its manifestation in various physical reactions to the film. Through spectatorship “visual contents are taken up, utilized and sublimated to the level of thought by a symbolical power which transcends them, but it is on the basis of sight that this power can be constituted” (Merleau-Ponty, 1958, p. 146). What the spectator sees in the film becomes

represented in the body. For example, one sees a physical confrontation on the screen and the body may react as if it is actually part of that conflict, unconsciously flinching or tightening. The body becomes a screen itself, physically playing out the experience of film as the eyes function as a recording camera of sorts. According to Merleau-Ponty “we are not, then, reducing the significance of the word [body], or even of the percept, to a collection of ‘bodily sensations’ but we are saying that the body, in so far as it has ‘behaviour patterns’, is that strange object which uses its own parts as a general system of symbols for the world, and through which we can consequently ‘be at home in’ the world, ‘understand’ it and find significance in it” (1958, p. 275). Thus phenomenology offers to the viewing of film a method through which the spectator can account for her/his visual embodiment. Phenomenology provides an understanding that our sense of sight is one way through which we embrace our experiences and which eventually allows us to create meaning. The information that we visually receive is turned into the symbolic and is in some way categorized into our comprehension of the world.

Sight as an embodiment of experiencing could prove a viable means through which teachers may access alternate ways of viewing themselves. Spectatorship has the potential of expanding points of view and, for a “visual being,” taps into the mind in a way that simple conversation or commendation cannot. An awareness of thought, of situation, and of environment may surface from a visual interaction with film. Merleau-Ponty would label this a type of consciousness. According to him, “consciousness is being-towards-the-thing through the intermediary of the body. . . and to move one’s body is to aim at things through it; it is to allow oneself to respond to their call” (1958, p. 159-161). So the teacher can use her/his eyes to assert self toward the viewing of film, and in

doing so radiates an embodied responsiveness to its contents and its representations of the world. As spectators, teachers' bodies will respond to the images they experience, resulting in an embodied response to the film. Merleau-Ponty also states that "when I move towards a world I bury my perceptual and practical intentions in objects which ultimately appear prior to and external to those intentions, and which nevertheless exist for me only in so far as they arouse in me thoughts or volitions...the ambiguity of knowledge amounts to this: our body comprises as it were two distinct layers, that of the habit-body and that of the body at this moment" (1958, p. 95). Within the context of film, the body moves toward the film with the eyes of the 'habit-body'. The images are received and 'the body at this moment' feels its physical reactions without any directed thought toward what is causing those sensations. In this study I propose the possibility of using this visual embodiment to provoke teachers to consider and discuss parallels and divergences between their film experiences and their professional experiences. Through their own eyes, I want to afford teachers the opportunity to critique their prior perceptions and the images of films, with hopes of opening up discussions that will allow them to survey their thoughts and actions. Curriculum theorist Kaustuv Roy also desires an outlet for teachers to find their way. He says we must "invoke their molecular multiplicities within the unifying category [of teacher], and enter the curriculum as a becoming to combine singularities or traits...[to engender] the teacher's struggle against the tendency toward molarization" (2003, p. 69). His Deleuzian based writings argue for spaces in which teachers may seek ways to meet the needs of students while realizing the varied perspectives they have to offer so as not to give in to the cookie-cutter, teacher-in-a-box personas. I suggest that film is this space in which teachers can explore and can

experience new ways of being. It is important to remember that “it is never our objective body that we move, but our phenomenal body, and there is no mystery in that, since our body, as the potentiality of this or that part of the world, surges towards objects to be grasped and perceives them” (Merleau-Ponty, 1958, p. 121). Included in what our phenomenal body participates is a way of kinesthetically experiencing the world. Our embodied experience of touch is just as susceptible to film as our visual experience since “the body belongs to its environment,” which is “the essential interconnectedness of sensitivity and motor response” (Taylor, 2005, p. 68).

Kinesthetic Embodiment

I am the absolute source, my existence does not stem from my antecedents, from my physical and social environment; instead it moves out towards them and sustains them, for I alone bring into being for myself (and therefore into being in the only sense that the word can have for me) the tradition which I elect to carry on. . . .

---Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 1958, p. ix.

Perhaps one might find it difficult to connect bodily actions associated with touch to the viewing of film. Clearly an argument against any kinesthetic activity taking place during spectatorship seems somewhat “sensible” but, as Merleau-Ponty once argued, “in face of the ambiguity of facts one must abandon the mere statistical noting-down of coincidences, and try to ‘understand’ the relation which they reveal” (Merleau-Ponty, 1958, p. 131). What I argue here about kinesthetic embodiment as it is evoked during spectatorship is that it can be understood by its relation of the body’s physical response occurring in the lived-world to the reality of the world presented in films. These film-induced bodily actions can act upon an individual as poignantly as those experienced in the lived-world. I am not suggesting that the body is somehow ‘tricked’ into an unauthentic response as it physically ‘takes in’ the movie; however, it is important to note

that “the senses and one’s own body generally present the mystery of a collective entity which, without abandoning its thisness and its individuality, puts forth beyond itself meanings capable of providing a framework for a whole series of thoughts and experiences” (Merleau-Ponty, 1958, p. 146). Hence, the body, as it physically experiences a film does so as an entire being, with all the senses open to receiving, yet not in ignorance of the film as a stimulus from which to glean ways of thinking and being. The relation of what the body experiences to the actual event is like a simulation of that event and as such is a form of reality to the spectator. Imagine times that you, the reader, have personally encountered kinesthetic reactions to film: perhaps you’ve stopped breathing, gritted your teeth, grinned, or tighten every muscle in your body. All of these physical responses are ones that people experience as a spectator and as living bodies in reality. Just as these physical manifestations occur as one participates in life, they occur during spectatorship, and each adds to the dimension of a person’s perceptions. Thus, the body’s kinesthetic activity solidifies the experience of the world as it is represented on film. “The whole operation takes place in the domain of the phenomenal; it does not run through the objective world, and only the spectator, who lends his objective representation of the living body to the acting subject, can believe that the [bodily action] is perceived” (Merleau-Ponty, 1958, p. 121). During the moment of being engaged in the film, the spectator does not question whether or not the moment is real, if s/he is *really* feeling the physical responses to the film, because in experiencing the situatedness that film encourages, there is no reason to question the phenomenon. I propose that within the realm of this body/mind communication lays an opportunity for critical thinking to emerge. I suggest that an exploration of the role that the body plays in

the experience of viewing films will affect one's perception of the movie and in turn affect the perception one has of one's self. Many times the body is ignored in favor of the mind because its functions are not consciously noticed. The two are seen as mostly separate entities; however, the body is the mind's initial foray into the environment and through it the mind can form a conception of the world. I believe that suggesting an audience consider the connection between their bodily reactions and their perception may lead toward a process of critical thinking. "Bodily existence which runs through me, yet does so independently of me, is only barest raw material of a genuine presence in the world. Yet at least it provides the possibility of such presence, and establishes our first consonance with the world" (Merleau-Ponty, 1958, p. 192). As such, the body acts as a receptor without the direction of the conscious mind but gives freely to that mind what it experiences. I want to examine how, after some discussion and reflection, the phenomenology of perception can contribute to a person's propensity to think critically.

What the body experiences, for example, while watching films are evidences of such an independent existence, and these physical evidences also prove the body's stance as our primary receptor. Such evidences include how an experience through film can affect the rate at which we breathe, perspire, swallow, blink, contract muscles, and vocalize. Before we are even able to acknowledge the action taking place on the screen, our bodies interact with it and then our thoughts are formed. It is as if "the body catches itself while being touched, and initiates 'a kind of reflection' which is sufficient to distinguish it from objects" (Merleau-Ponty, 1958, p. 107). Obviously the actual object of the film is not touching the viewer but the viewer's body is in action, receiving the experience and going through the motions of real, evoked emotion because the body feels

itself being stimulated by the content of the film. Although there is no actual contact, the reaction is authentic.

There is a relation of my body to itself which makes it the vinculum of the self and things. When my right hand touches my left, I am aware of it as a 'physical thing.' But at the same moment, if I wish, an extraordinary event takes place: here is my left hand as well starting to perceive my right. . . . Thus I touch myself touching; my body accomplishes 'a sort of reflection.' In it, through it, there is not just the unidirectional relationship of the one who perceives to what he perceives. The relationship is reversed, the touched hand becomes the touching hand, and I am obliged to say that the sense of touch is here diffused into the body—that body is a 'perceiving thing,' a 'subject-object.' (Merleau-Ponty, 1964b, p. 166)

From this lengthy yet important quote, one can relate how Merleau-Ponty's ideas of the body fit with the idea of the body's kinesthetic experience of cinema. Because the body has the unique ability to feel itself feeling, it is ultimately always attuned. As Merleau-Ponty says that the touching right hand feels the left and that the left can also feel the right, so too can the spectator feel the experience within the film and can allow that experience to affect her/him. The spectator as the one perceiving is thus affected by the physical experience of bodily perception itself as well as by the situational experience encountered during viewing. What this means is that a person who kinesthetically experiences something evoked by film, such as fear, which often manifests itself as a chill, embodies that as experiencing hair-raising during the film. In turn, the spectator may encounter that same situational fear at other times outside of film. For example, because of experiences I have had during films where people are being stalked at night on their way to their cars, I often find that when I am alone at night on my way to my own car I feel afraid and physically respond with the same chill and hair-raising action that takes place when I watch the situation in a movie. There is never any reason for me to be afraid other than the situation which I have experienced through film. Such a visceral

experience cannot go unnoticed or be left forgotten. Thus, the body feels itself feeling and acts kinesthetically, in the lived-world as well as in the spectator world. Sobchack describes the experience as a “sensuous experience of the movies: the way we are in some carnal modality able to touch and be touched by the substance and texture of images. . . to experience weight, suffocation, and the need for air; to take flight in kinetic exhilaration and freedom even as we are relatively bound to our theater seats; to be knocked backward by a sound; to sometimes even smell and taste the world we see on screen” (Sobchack, 2004, p. 65). Such a sensuous experience can only be perceived by the body and becomes part of the spectator. As these thoughts collect, it is the goal of this study to bring them to the forefront in the form of a discussion which will require critical thinking to take place. Through the teachers’ bodily responses to the films, we will examine the narrative of the films as well as the narratives of the teachers’ daily lives. By connecting the film world to the lived world, I hope to encourage teachers to compare and contrast experiences, leading to the type of questioning that evolves only from introspection. “Thus it is by giving up part of his spontaneity, by becoming involved in the world [in this case, the world of film] through stable organs and pre-established circuits that man can acquire the mental and practical space which will theoretically free him from his environment and allow him to *see* it” (Merleau-Ponty, 1958, p. 100-101). Upon seeing their environments through a new phenomenological perspective, I suggest that teachers will become increasingly aware of their options in negating the lack of autonomy and will use critical thinking skills to establish expectations in their classes that go beyond the standards benchmark and out into the world. Phenomenology offers teachers the space within which they can cast aside

standardized test scores in order to investigate the impediments and impetuses of student successes. Phenomenology paired with film studies offers teachers the means by which to reflect on and question what they experience through film as compared with their daily life experiences.

According to Richard Shusterman, “Merleau-Ponty’s notion of bodily intentionality defies philosophical tradition by granting the body a kind of subjectivity instead of treating it as mere object or mechanism” (2005, p. 163). This is valuable in this study because it grants credibility to the consideration of how teachers respond when they witness the trials and successes of the teacher-character on screen. Although there will be no direct observation or guarantee of discussion pertaining to kinesthetic viewing of the films, those bodily actions that take place will indeed be an integral aspect of the teachers’ experiences with the films they are asked to watch. The senses will play a significant part in how the teachers eventually interpret the meaning of the film for themselves, even though this aspect of spectatorship may be difficult to focus on due to its subtle characteristic. As Sobchack relates, “insofar as my lived body senses *itself* in the film experience, the particular sensible properties of the onscreen figural objects that sensually provoke me (the weight and slightly scratchy feel of a wool dress, the smoothness of a stone, the texture and resilience of another’s skin) will be perceived in a somewhat vague and diffuse way” (Sobchack, 2004, pp. 77-78). They are, however, not to be discounted or ignored because the body is a central element present and sensing in the viewing of film. “Even our most secret affective movements, those most deeply tied to the humoral infrastructure, help to shape our perception of things” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964a, p. 5). I anticipate that teachers will experience motor actions such as hair-raising

sensations, breath holding, sighing, and the like as they encounter the world present in film that either replicates their visions for the educational world or shatters them. “The motor significance of motivations [as it relates to] the particular readiness for the world that we have in our prethematic involvement with the world is a direct response to specific features of the world” (Wrathall, 2005, p. 126). As teachers see teacher-characters in films earn a student’s trust or see them stand up for intellectual beliefs, their responsiveness, I suggest, will come from their “prethematic” notions of what their current roles *are* versus what they *would like* their roles to become. “The phenomenological writers” argue that, according to Charles Taylor, “we are only able to form conceptual beliefs guided by our surroundings because we live in a preconceptual engagement with these surroundings, which involves understanding. Transactions in this space are not causal processes among neutral elements, but the sensing of and response to relevance” (2005, p. 38). I relate this in terms of my dissertation to signify that the teachers who participate in my study will come with preconceived notions of what they believe are the current affairs of education, formed by their situational understandings and experiences. However, the sensuous viewing of films about teacher-characters will open up for them dialogues that are relevant to their concerns in the field. I do not want to appear unrealistic in my expectations: I do not believe a revolution in the field will occur because teachers watch feel-good movies about teacher-characters. On the contrary, I simply seek an outlet for teachers to gain access to representations of teachers and to offer the opportunity for a provocative discussion among colleagues that may support them in their own intellectual pursuits. If teachers are able identify with or critique the teacher-characters, perhaps they can, through the embodied experience of

film, achieve a constant internal dialogue that encourages critical thought. In summarizing what Douglas Crimp terms as “identification across identities,” Laura Marks suggests that it “means that identities are never static but always relational, capable of creating links among different groups that *transform* those groups. At best, it is not only the single work but also the context of screening that invites viewers to experience multiple...possibilities and be drawn into the worlds that make them possible” (2002, pp. 89-90). What Marks says here about “creating links among different groups” in order to engender transformation strikes at the very desire of my project. If an analytical viewing of film followed by critical discussion can cause teachers to make the slightest change in the intellectual stagnation that seems to permeate the classroom, perhaps multiple aspects of the educational field may be challenged. Through kinesthetic experience, the body of the film invites the body of the viewer to participate in meaning-making. The “motor habit as an extension of existence leads on, then, to an analysis of perceptual habit as the coming into possession of a world. Conversely, every perceptual habit is still a motor habit and here equally the process of grasping a meaning is performed by the body” (Merleau-Ponty, 1958, p. 176-177). Indeed the body is our link to our environment and it affects how we perceive the world. Let us turn now to a discussion of the role of perception in this phenomenological investigation.

Perception

Merleau-Ponty (1964a) argues that perception is not “a simple result of the action of external things on our body” (p. 3) and that the body “is wholly animated, and all its functions contribute to the perception of objects” (p. 5). Thus a thing that is experienced is received by all parts of the body: its senses and its sense making abilities take in the

object as it is presented and fit it into schema based on its similarities to other objects already perceived. Perception is the sum of the parts that performs to bring the object into the realm of significance, into the reality of the perceiver. The object's foundation is in the visual and kinetic embodiment of the experience one has when perceiving. It does not exist in the absence of these two categories. To bring this all to life, the one perceiving must acknowledge these connections so that the perception may be incorporated into the being. "It is perceptual experience which gives us the passage from one moment to the next and thus realizes the unity of time. In this sense all consciousness is perceptual, even the consciousness of ourselves" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964c, p. 13). Such self-consciousness is a level of awareness that expands the analytical perspective of a person, which conversely may narrow one's focus as experiences occur in search of the essence of the event. "In order to really reduce an experience to its essence, we should have to achieve a distance from it that would put it entirely under our gaze, with all the implications of sensoriality or thought that come into play in it, bring it and bring ourselves wholly to the transparency of the imaginary" (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 111). Consequently in the same instant we must be near to and far from the thing being perceived so as to investigate it in its parts as well as in its whole. This state of being close and distant should be achieved before ultimately allowing the perception to be categorized. The film is distant, foreign as a technology, but in spite of its alien form is what can reveal food for thought to the viewer in detail. And although the experience of viewing a film may not seem like an experience of reality for some, the viewing itself is a real experience. "We never cease living in the world of perception, but we [do] go beyond it in critical thought" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964a, p. 3).

This is a key point in my dissertation: we should not accept what we see and experience as the ultimate perception. We must move beyond the surface through critical thinking. It is not enough to say that we have seen a movie but we must say that we have experienced through our bodies and our minds a perception that we have mulled over, which has affected us to our very core of being. For teachers, this statement poses multiple meanings, but specifically for this study, critical thinking about film may be a means to regaining the intellectual stimulation and rigor we wish for ourselves and for our students.

This phenomenological theory of perception is easily applied to the viewing of film. While watching a film, the spectator typically finds her/himself completely immersed in the spectacle at hand. The darkened theater and the cushiony seats, which are usually arranged at intermittent levels so that all that the viewer can see is the screen, help to create an atmosphere in which one can readily put personal life aside and can involve self with the storyline and characters of the world projected in front of the eyes. While viewing, the audience becomes part of the movie itself through the embodied experience that brings them into close proximity with the reality presented on the screen. (Of course, for some types of movies, this idea may not mesh well, as with the genre of fantasy.) At this point, the consciousness that exists for the viewer is normally only that of the movie world of which s/he becomes a part. The spectator often focuses on or identifies with, for one reason or another, a specific character and enters into a sort of mental relationship with that persona “without there being need to choose nor even to distinguish between the assurance of seeing and the assurance of seeing the true, because in principle they are one and the same thing—faith, therefore, and not knowledge, since

the world is here not separated from our hold on it, since, rather than affirmed, it is taken for granted, rather than disclosed, it is non-dissimulated, non-refuted” (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 28). Reality for the spectator is that which is being experienced at the moment. The spectator participates in the perception of the film-world as if it is her/his own through visual being and kinesthetic being, which are both always open to receiving stimulus in order to make sense and to find meaning. Not much consideration is given to the lived-world in reference to the film-world until after viewing has taken place. It is then that a distance is established in order for the viewer to condense the experience to its essence so that the movie-world becomes part of the consciousness of the lived-world. “In order to relate it to the life of consciousness, one would have to show how a perception awakens attention, then how attention develops and enriches it” (Merleau-Ponty, 1958, p. 31). This awakening, I suggest, occurs when the subject of the perception (in this case, the film) contains a primary link to an important element in the life of the perceiver (in this case, the viewer). After watching a movie where the subject is intimately connected to the viewer, the mind plays with what it has experienced, finds similarities and differences in it, contemplates how those mesh with other perceptions already established, and absorbs it all. I do not mean to imply that spectatorship is our sole input of reality but the merits of it are important because despite the fact that “we never cease living in the world of perception, . . . we [do] go beyond it in critical thought” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964a, p. 3). This point is key: we should not accept what we see and experience as the ultimate perception. We must move beyond the surface through critical thinking. For teachers, this statement poses multiple meanings, but specifically for this

study, critical thinking about film may be a means to regaining the intellectual stimulation and rigor we wish for ourselves and for our students.

Vivan Sobchack also brings an interesting element to this study. She identifies watching a movie as “an activity of visual being,” one that “is marked by the way in which significance and the act of signifying are *directly* felt, *sensuously* available to the viewer” (Sobchack, 1992, p. 8). “Visual being” in this sense means that the viewer exists predominantly through the stimulus that is moving before her/his vision. If the viewer is ‘caught up’ in the film, s/he will normally become enthralled with what s/he is watching and will for a time suspend most all thoughts about anything except the movie. At this point the function of vision becomes the mode of being and the mode through which other bodily receptive experiences are focused. Specifically, the viewer sees the world created within the film in a way that encourages seeing the inhabited world perhaps for the first time, or at least in some altered way. This “activity of visual being” empowers the body with the privilege of presenting a version of the world to the viewer that may differ from previous presentations. Through “visual being” in the object of film, the spectator has the prospect of extending the mind through the body into a space where exploration of the known and the unknown is possible.

A film is given to us and taken up by us as perception turned literally inside out and toward us as expression. It presents and represents *to* us and *for* us and *through* us the modes and structures of being as language, of being as a system of primary and secondary mediations through which we and the world and others significantly communicate, constituting and changing our meanings from the moment of our first lived gesture. Thus, in its modalities of having sense and making sense, the cinema quite concretely returns us, as viewers and theorists, to our senses. (Sobchack, 1992, p. 13)

This phenomenologist's perspective of film presents us with the connection between the viewing body and the film body that I hope to highlight in my dissertation. Sobchack bases her writings in the phenomenological notion that perception manifests itself in our bodily responses. In returning us to our senses, as film does, the spectator is legitimized in saying that s/he is a "visual being" who is responsible for ingesting and digesting whatever representations are flashed upon the screen. I suggest that as the body of the teacher experiences the body of the film, perception will be heightened through that experience, leading to thorough discussions of the film and of experience which evoke critical thinking. Through physically and mentally analyzing the themes communicated by films featuring educators, teachers will hopefully realize that they do not have to be ward(en)s of the state, that they can break out from their feelings of suppression, and that they can use their senses which have been awakened by film to improve their outlooks on their professional identities. As Sobchack relates, "insofar as my lived body senses *itself* in the film experience, the particular sensible properties of the onscreen figural objects that sensually provoke me (the weight and slightly scratchy feel of a wool dress, the smoothness of a stone, the texture and resilience of another's skin) will be perceived in a somewhat vague and diffuse way" (Sobchack, 2004, pp. 77-78). They are, however, not to be discounted or ignored because the body is a central element present and sensing in the viewing of film. It is at this point where a methodical phenomenological discussion of how the body's reactions contribute to perception will be paramount in my dissertation. The body feels itself feeling and acts kinesthetically, in the lived-world as well as in the spectatorial world. Sobchack describes the experience as a "sensuous experience of the movies: the way we are in some carnal modality able to touch and be

touched by the substance and texture of images. . . to experience weight, suffocation, and the need for air; to take flight in kinetic exhilaration and freedom even as we are relatively bound to our theater seats; to be knocked backward by a sound; to sometimes even smell and taste the world we see on screen” (Sobchack, 2004, p. 65). Such a sensuous experience can only be perceived by the body and becomes part of the spectator. These experiences are the ones that I propose will surface during my phenomenological investigation of how the body interacts with film and how that interaction might encourage individuals to think critically about their experiences and what those experiences can contribute to their daily lives.

Film can be a point of departure for such a movement. Movies are entertaining and moving. They can provide experiences that the audience might never know in the lived-world which influence future perceptions. In fact “we are motivated by some features of our perceptual experience that are not available for use in thought but that nevertheless dispose us (rather than cause us) to have the thoughts that we do” (Wrathall, 2005, p. 122). This disposition for thought is what I propose may lead to increased critical thinking, if the experience of film can be regarded for more than just ‘what to do on a Saturday night.’ For the teacher, the call is for film to be recognized as part of the lived-experience. S/he should strive to recognize the unity and disunity of the film-world experiences and the lived-world experiences. “The perceptual synthesis thus must be accomplished by the subject, which can both delimit certain perspectival aspects in the object, the only ones actually given, and at the same time go beyond them” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964c, p. 16). This ‘going beyond’ is the arena where critical thinking will emerge. Teachers in this study will be asked to take into consideration multiple

perspectives presented in the film-world. These teachers will hopefully, through group discussion and, later, self-reflective journaling, use what is presented in the films as a springboard for attaining empowerment in their own lives. As Merleau-Ponty states, “I never become aware of my own existence until I have already made contact with others; my reflection always brings me back to myself” (2004, p. 86). Surely teachers will become alive to their own stories, their own trials and tribulations through film and its presentation of teachers and will use the film-world as a channel through which to think critically about the perceptions of their lived-worlds. It may be that this project does not produce any outright, noticeable changes in teachers but it is my hope that “the viewer will experience the unity and necessity of the temporal progression in a work of beauty without ever forming a clear idea of it. Then, as now, this viewer will be left not with a store of recipes but a radiant image, a particular rhythm. Then, as now, the way we experience works of cinema will be through perception” (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p. 99).

Film Studies

For man becomes truly free only insofar as he belongs to the realm of destiny and so becomes one who listens and hears [Hörender], and not one who is simply constrained to obey [Höriger].

--Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 1977, p. 25

Following parallel to the views of Giroux (1993) who believes that there is value in the study of popular culture and its usefulness in education, I propose that film is the medium that teachers should explore in order to recapture their intellectual personas and to re-engage in analytical thinking which may reveal unseen paths toward fresh and energetic attitudes and critical pedagogy. This dissertation involves two focus groups composed of teachers who were asked to view and to discuss movies in groups, to journal individually about the impact of the movies on their identities, and to respond to specific

questions posed to them by me, the researcher. Although there will be more discussion in detail about the methods of this research in Chapter Three, it is important to note here that this is not a study focused in ethnography, biography, or autobiography. However, my interest does lie in what teachers have to say, specifically about how viewing film may or may not affect their pedagogies. I agree with Mary Dalton when she suggests “it is critical to ground the work at the individual level in analysis that examines the broader social context influencing that lived experience” (1999, p. 71) and with Kathleen Casey when she asserts that “the social relations of research are transformed when teachers are presented as subjects in their own right, not as mere objects of research. Teachers can be seen as authors of their own lives, and, in their roles as educators, as co-authors of their students’ lives as well” (1990, p. 301). In this study of how film affects teachers’ perceptions of themselves as educators, teachers will be observed as individuals and as part of a larger entity but in a way that allows for each one of them to grow.

To begin the process of investigating how teachers might explore the ideas of intellect and critical pedagogy as they may emerge from the viewing and discussing of film, I explore the theories of various film theorists, past and present, focusing mainly on the ideas of Stanley Cavell, Gilles Deleuze, Christian Metz, Jean Mitry, and Vivian Sobchack. Important to note is that I will be working from what Douglas Kellner (1995) terms as a “multiperspectival cultural studies” where my goal “attempts to avoid one-sidedness, orthodoxy, and cultural separatism by stressing the need to adopt a wide range of perspectives to understand and interpret cultural phenomena” (p. 97). Through the lens of various great theorists, I will cast a theoretical eye toward the idea that encouraging teachers to watch, feel, and discuss might just be the best way to ensure that

teachers never become the obedient robots of the standardized test driven world that politicians would have parents and society at large believe is the wave of the future. Let us turn now to film theory and a discussion on its merits in relation to my ideas about the possible benefits teachers may gain as spectators of film.

The Importance of Film

Stanley Cavell begins his book *The World Viewed* by asking the most simple of questions: “Why are movies important? I take it for granted that in various obvious senses they are. That this *can* be taken for granted is the first fact I pose for consideration; it is . . . a distinctive fact about movies” (1971, p. 4). He goes on to discuss the importance of film in comparison to other works of art, such as painting and music, and definitively asserts that those arts attract only those people who participate in the creation of them, whereas film attracts everyone (pp. 4-5). Cavell supports the need for his writing about film by pointing out that often times, because film is so commonplace or, more accurately, so woven into our everyday lives, the masses forget its impact on our existence. I would like to take this idea that films are taken for granted one step further and suggest that because of the general perception that the nature of movies is non-intrusive, teachers must simultaneously (1) immerse themselves to the point of losing themselves in the film and (2) recognize the affective temperament of film that grips them all the while and after viewing. The co-mingling of these two states, the unconscious and the conscious, is the first importance of film that I would have teachers note. I follow in the footsteps of many in urging for “critical readings” of films to take precedence over merely deciding if films are good or bad (J. Collins, Radner & A.P.

Collins, 1993, p. 2). While wearing the hat of “viewer,” we have much to learn about ourselves and others as we all are (re)presented through film and its varying messages.

However, as Cavell points out, “neither a romanticism of anonymity nor a romanticism of individuality is going to account for the power that movies have or have had for us” (1971, p. 8). This is why it is paramount that at times we toss away our hats and actively watch films with our body and our mind in order to benefit from the multiple meanings they have to offer each and every person who knowingly or unknowingly gains something from them. It is not enough to simply say that a movie was good or bad; instead, we must examine what power the movie has for us and how we can use that power to improve our lives. As Foucault states, “power is exercised rather than possessed” (1979, p. 26). In exercising our power we direct ourselves toward lives that make us happy, toward lives that we want to live. I believe that this is an extremely important concept for teachers especially. I hypothesize that through analytical viewings of film, teachers can perhaps take the sting out of the governmental bite of mandates such as *No Child Left Behind*, that they can practice critical pedagogy in their classrooms, and that they can relocate or reinvent their intellectual selves through what they read on the big screen. One must “in an emancipatory fashion. . . engage popular culture [specifically film] to question and unlearn the benefits of privilege, and to allow those who have generally not been allowed to speak to narrate themselves, to speak from the specificity of their own voices” (Giroux, 1993, p. 52). However, teachers cannot do this in isolation and this is the second importance of film that should be distinguished.

“The events associated with movies are those of companionship or lack of companionship: . . . the crowd at a movie comprises various pools of companions, or

scattered souls with someone missing” Cavell suggests (1971, p. 10). As is human nature, people seek to be together. Implied in this passage, however, is the idea that even as a participant in an audience, some still feel incomplete. Perhaps viewers are looking to recognize facets of self lost or unrealized in the movies they select to watch. Perhaps they are seeking a form of self-completion in the viewing of the film. For other viewers companionship is exactly what is needed in order to experience a sense of completeness. Cavell’s statement about the companionship and scattered souls seems to be an obvious outcome of film but it is an element of movie watching that often goes without notice. I will bring this component of film viewing to the forefront through the study of teachers viewing film in two focus groups in hopes that the teachers may not only benefit from their own reflections on film but may also benefit from others who are perhaps similar to their past, present, and/or future selves. What will be key to the discussions that take place is the individual and collective remembering of the film, “a procedure in *trying* to remember [will be] to find [the] way back to a characteristic mood the thing [will have left the viewer] with” (Cavell, 1971, p. 16). How film affects the viewer’s state of mind and body is an interesting and poignant topic that we will return to later, but the point I would like to make here now is that the phenomenon of movies themselves do actually cause viewers to participate in the experience of film altogether.

The aesthetic possibilities of a medium are not givens. You can no more tell what will give significance to the unique and specific aesthetic possibilities of projecting photographic images by thinking about them or seeing some, than you can tell what will give significance to the possibilities of paint by thinking about paint or by looking some over. You have to think about painting, and paintings; you have to think about motion pictures. (Cavell, 1971, p. 31)

Clearly, it is the analytical aspect of viewing film that is what makes film make a difference in the lives of those who do not just passively watch movies. Active viewing, analytical viewing, a viewing that reminds us “how mysterious these things [such as photographs] are, and in general how *different* different things are from one another, as though we had forgotten how to value them. This is in fact something movies teach us” (Cavell, 1971, p. 19). Consequently, I do not believe that these discoveries are best made alone. I believe that, as was the original intention of film, the gathering of companions who share common interests and who participate in discussion after viewing a film is necessary to precipitate an extended learning experience from movie viewing. I do not deny that one can learn from a film by merely watching it alone and then leaving the theater or turning off the television after it has finished. No, in those instances I am sure that there is some change in the viewer made, some small difference may be noted. Nonetheless, who can deny that they benefit more from a hearty and heart-felt discussion among peers about anything, especially the effects of film? As the researcher, I will be “the sociological critic who is alive to the aesthetics of the movies [but who] will not make the mistake of assuming that the effect of a film can be conveyed by recounting its plot, or that the repetition of a theme is necessarily a measure of its importance but [I] will still be concerned with those elements which [I believe] to be affecting or expressing ‘the audience’ rather than with what [I myself respond] to” (Warshaw, 2001, p. xxxix). The significance of the film’s plot or theme will become subordinate to its actual physical effects on the spectator, while at the same time maintaining its impact.

Despite such critics as Horkheimer and Adorno (1976) who say that “the man with leisure has to accept what the culture manufacturers offer him,” I would argue that

as viewers we should not spend our time critiquing the ills of such popular culture as film and its artists but instead should invest our time in being critics *of the* film itself in order to learn from what film has to offer (p. 124). Therefore, the film and its industry should not be considered as forcing itself upon the audience because the audience can (re)act intelligently by turning an analytical eye toward what the film has to offer through the plot, the theme, its characters, and its cinematography. The viewer must tease out what the film means to her/him. As Heidegger (1977) implicates, there must be “*poiēsis*” or “bringing-forth,” and in this case a bringing-forth of meaning (p. 10). “Bringing-forth brings hither out of concealment forth into unconcealment. Bringing-forth comes to pass only insofar as something concealed comes into unconcealment. This coming rests and moves freely within what we call revealing” (Heidegger, 1977, p. 11). In applying this to film, I propose that what is brought-forth from the film industry is, obviously, the film, but the film itself also carries the characteristic of bringing-forth because it creates meaning which is then interpreted or “unconcealed” by the viewer. The viewer then takes on—through the mere interpretation, through absorbing what was interpreted, through allowing that revelation to manifest itself through her/him—whatever has been revealed to her/him. This unconcealment may not bring itself forth in the same way to an entire audience, however. As Heidegger states:

For every bringing-forth is grounded in revealing. . . . Within its domain belong end and means [i.e. film and interpretation], belongs instrumentality. Instrumentality is considered to be the fundamental characteristic of technology [i.e. the industry of film and its making and projecting]. If we inquire, step by step, into what technology, represented as means, actually is, then we shall arrive at revealing. The possibility of all productive manufacturing lies in revealing. (1977, p. 12)

Indeed, looking into the face of technology, as Heidegger suggests, in order to use it as a means to a goal, is exactly what should be done with film as a technology of and in itself. Heidegger calls for “a free relationship to” technology, meaning that “it [is a relationship that] opens our human existence to the essence of technology”(1977, p. 3). Ultimately this appeal, as it encourages the freedom to deeply consider human existence, would result in reflective thinking and the making of connections between technology and humans and between the human reaction to technology and humans. The essence of film as a technology, I propose, is what it can teach us about others and ourselves. My study affords teachers the opportunity to come together as intellectuals as they watch and discuss films focused on the lives of teachers. Heidegger points out technology “as something neutral” which “makes us utterly blind to the essence” of it (1977, p. 4). The goal of this study is to un-neutralize technology and to bring to the surface its important uses as fodder for critical thinking. I purport that the assumed neutrality in the technology of film must be challenged by breaking it down, by examining the pieces so that the film itself becomes part of a process of analytical thinking that leads to reflection. To take film seriously as a form of technology is to begin the revealing of the essence of technology through which a free relationship may form. Using film to demonstrate the non-neutral qualities of technology would perhaps lead us not only to a place where we can question who we are and why but could also ignite an interest in critical thought about technology itself.

Heidegger also speaks of the standing-reserve. “Everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering” (1977, p. 17). These thoughts can easily be related to the

current situation of teachers in education as well as to film as a modern technology.

Teachers are a standing-reserve in that they are required to be knowledgeable about their content areas as well as informed about current practices in the field, despite their freedom to exercise at will their interpretations of their knowledge or pedagogy. In addition, teachers are a standing-reserve because they are on call to do whatever bidding the government or local administration beckons them to do. Teachers at large are set in storage when it comes to advising about state required curriculum, standards, and tests. Teachers are the old wives' tale come-to-life: good children are seen and not heard. I propose the group viewing of certain films and the ensuing discussions might offer teachers a space in which to realize that they are not obligated to maintain their silenced voices and that they can choose to pay attention to their bodily reactions to film as a means to break through the defeating feeling that being a standing reserve induces.

As for film, the standing-reserve discussed by Heidegger is perpetuated by its viewers, as film is often looked upon as mere entertainment at the push of a button. The film exists for consumption whenever the viewer calls upon it. Rarely is film recognized by the masses for its potential positive contribution to its viewers' intellectual development. Seen as a pastime, film viewing is limited to the flash and flare of Hollywood. However, if regarded as an educational force, film can extend itself into the minds of its viewers who will be challenged to create something from the viewing, a sort of inspiration for "poiēsis." "That challenging happens in that the energy concealed in nature is unlocked, what is unlocked is transformed, what is transformed is stored up, what is stored up is, in turn, distributed, and what is distributed is switched about ever anew. Unlocking, transforming, storing, distributing, and switching about are ways of

revealing” (Heidegger, 1977, p 16). The energy of film is suppressed by the general audience’s view of it as a standing-reserve. For a film’s energy to be uncovered, viewers must be willing to recognize its ability to transform energy within themselves through the film’s effects on their bodies during viewing and on their minds during and after viewing. Once such an exchange occurs between the viewer and the film, the film’s quality of standing-reserve is negotiated and technology’s stance as a means to an end is refuted because the technology becomes part of the extended creation of meaning.

Thus, the importance of film as a technology is an instrumentality that can positively contribute to the illumination of the spectator’s reality. The teacher can use film as a space to reacquaint with or to discover self. No longer can we regard film as merely entertainment: we must recognize its importance by not taking it for granted or at face value and in attempting to discover its instrumentality, teachers should realize that analytical discussion is paramount to the bringing-forth of what film has to offer. “If one understands cinema viewing as an exchange between two bodies—that of the viewer and that of the film—then the characterization of the film viewer as passive, vicarious, or projective must be replaced with a model of a viewer who participates in the production of the cinematic experience” (Marks, 2002, p. 13). As such, a reading of how film shapes our identities and our perception of reality is in order.

Situating This Study in Film Studies

My approach to film studies is like that of montage in film itself: a “creation of a sense or meaning not proper to the images themselves but derived exclusively from their juxtaposition” (Bazin, 1967, p. 25). What I mean by this is that my intention is to glean as much as possible from the works of important theorists, to take from each of them

something that I can adapt to my way of thinking as it pertains to teacher-viewers of film. The reader will not experience a mere regurgitation of information but instead will be introduced to a conglomeration composed by the juxtaposition of the various players in the field of film studies. “The meaning is not in the image [or in this case the words of the theorists as they write them], it is in the shadow of the image [which I suggest for the purpose of this study is the interpretation of the theories as they apply here] projected by montage onto the field of consciousness of the spectator [which is you, the reader]” (Bazin, 1967, p. 26). In other words, as far as it is within my abilities, I intend to base my ideas about how teachers might develop their “teacher identities” through film in discussing an assorted number of film theories that may or may not be traditionally viewed as directed toward the study of spectator analysis of film.

According to Samuel Weber, “ever since Plato, one of the most decisive purposes in the development of art, artifice and technology has been interpreted to be that of overcoming the shortcomings of nature, human or otherwise” (1996, p. 114). There are certainly many examples of this statement as it relates to the human condition, seen in the cases of such inventors as Louis Braille who invented the system of reading for blind people which offers them an extended way of learning and viewing themselves and their environments, or Jacques Cousteau who aided in the invention of the aqualung (what is known today as SCUBA) which gave humans immediate access to the world beneath the sea. Without a doubt, technology has enhanced human performance beyond its natural abilities. So what about the technology of film? What shortcomings has it helped humans to overcome, and more importantly for this discussion, what will the technology of film offer as an extension into the world for teachers? I suggest that film plays a part

in helping humans understand the world as it is perceived by others as well as oneself. Film aids in the perception of reality, despite the frequent claim that it is ‘only’ representative or is even *not* representative of reality.

Framing the Edit

First, let us examine how the technology of film offers to the teachers a concept of the real. Through a great number of techniques, such as *découpage* and *montage*, the frames of a film are projected onto the screen, “creat[ing] the impression of movement; yet each is a flat image, surrounded by a border or ‘frame’” (Aumont, 1992, p. 9). It would seem that such a simple-sounding contraption would produce a simple effect but not so. Despite its borders which limit the span of view, “we react to the flat image as if we were actually seeing a portion of three-dimensional space analogous to the real space in which we live. . . , perceived as strongly authentic and [carrying] with it an impression of reality” (Aumont, 1992, p. 10). Still photographs put into motion convey the message to our brains that what we view during a film is comparable to our viewings of the world. Instead of being limited by the frame of the screen, in life we are limited by other forms of ‘frames.’ For example, some ‘frames’ that permeate our world-view include how we perceive ourselves, how we perceive the perceptions of others, and how we often take things in our lives at face value without attempting to broaden their meanings or worth. We allow the complexity of living and being to establish borders around our lines of vision which chops our worlds into disconnected pieces. We ignore the periphery in favor of maintaining our comfort zones. The body of film, however, does just the opposite. Film is composed of editing techniques that connect bits of various frames of which the result produces seamless connections of sometimes very unrelated pieces. The manner in

which those pieces are joined, through *découpage* as well as *montage*, lends a feeling of completion to film, creating a body that is whole. In addition, “even though the onscreen space is the only visible part, this larger scenographic space is nonetheless considered to exist around it” (Aumont, 1992, p. 13). The periphery is acknowledge and incorporated in a way that promotes to the spectator the notion that it *is* actually there and is contributing to the overall experience of film. In film, constant communication transpires between what is visible and invisible. For example, there is continual interplay between the on camera setting and the off camera setting, between the characters who may or may not be on the screen, and between the actions which start or stop in the frame of which the end result may or may not be visually accessible. Regardless of what is not on screen, the film is able to make connections that contribute to its overall effect as an ontological whole as “a vast ensemble of codes [to] be assimilated by the public so that the presented image resembles a perception of reality” (Aumont, 1992, p. 109). I would argue that teachers could learn from the technology of film with regards to *découpage*, *montage*, and its ongoing relationship to the periphery. Teachers should use the body of film as a guide in learning how to connect aspects of her/his reality that may seem disconnected and in trying to establish an understanding of things to which s/he turns a blind eye or leaves unnoticed. Thus teachers should engage in an active rapport with the technology of film, taking from it ways in which to ameliorate reaction to life. Weber says “to resort to ‘artificial’ means of overcoming ‘natural’ deficiencies would thus be to confirm, and perhaps to aggravate, a relationship of dependency” (1996, p. 114). I do not subscribe to the notion that a relationship of this sort, to technology, would become a dependent one. Rather, I suggest that it would be a reciprocal one, where the teacher

gives meaning to the existence of film and the film aids in the negotiation of the teacher's perception of the world. The teacher would not, does not, become dependent on the film but instead absorbs the nuances of the technology of the film body as a means for extending self not only into the film itself but into the world through connecting what might not have seemed likely for connection before and through opening up the periphery to acknowledge existence beyond what is immediately perceptible. This is not an example of dependency or of the "cinema fetish" that Metz (1977) speaks of but one of coexistence: the film exists independently from its viewer and vice versa. The point of connection between the two bodies serves as an infinite line of communication. Weber speaks of television transmission and its effects on the viewer: "It renders them invisible, paradoxically, by transposing them *into* the vision it transmits. Transmitted vision and audition 'contain,' as it were, distance and separation while at the same time confounding the points of reference that allow us to determine what is near and what is far, what is connected and what is disconnected" (1996, p. 122). Film, I would argue, functions equally through the same means. The film frame allows access to different views in such a way that our mode of perception can be molded, shaped, so that what we see on the screen helps us to connect the dots in real life, but in a way that gives us a sort of independence to analytically choose how to bring together aspects of the periphery that make sense to us. "Thus the film image is phenomenologically associated with its frame. It is all too obvious that the reality it seems to record is independent of the frame; not so the representation of that reality, however. Since the represented objects are produced by virtue of that representation, as image data, they become by that fact subordinate to the image-making data, i.e., the dimensions of the frame" (Mitry, 1997, p. 74). The

representative aspects of film are encoded in the frame, yet the ontology of the image gives the impression of delimiting the frame itself. This is a second element of film aside from editing techniques that adds to the teacher's ability to expand her/his perception of reality: the image.

Framing the Image

The image as an element in film is constituted by the various shots, and according to Jean Mitry (1997) there are about ten different types of shots, such as the closeup, the long medium shot, and the establishing shot (p. 60). Each shot is also constituted by its angle of recording which depends on the where the camera is placed during filming as well as by the movement (or stagnation) of the camera. "The movement of the camera introduces many images into one, with re-framings, and also makes a single image capable of expressing the whole" (Deleuze, 1986, p. 45). The image is captured by these practices and is consequently displayed on the screen, and "though the limits of the screen are no more than a *repository* for represented reality, they become a *frame* for the representation" (Mitry, 1997, p. 74). In this sense the term *frame* refers to the reference point or the point of view, not the technological term concerned with editing procedures. This type of *frame* consists of references to reality, modes of representation, and the life of the image beyond the screen. In this sense, the *frame* is the explanation for the status of the image and the meaning that it takes on for itself. The image can be expanded through the technology of film and also through dialogue but most importantly the image can perpetuate the old saying "a picture is worth a thousand words." Most often the image itself creates its own persona, its own life, and from that the viewer can also create. "Between word and image, between what is depicted by language and what is uttered by

plastic form [i.e. film], the unity begins to dissolve, a single and identical meaning is not immediately common to them. And if it is true that the image still has the function of speaking, of transmitting something consubstantial with language, we must recognize that it already no longer says the same thing. . . whatever the superficial identity of the theme” (Foucault, 1965, p. 18). No matter what appears to be conveyed, there is always more to an image than the words that may describe it or the impression it leaves upon those who view it: its meaning is a *mélange* of elements, some specific to film and to some specific to the way the world has conditioned the teacher to view. However, once the teacher becomes aware of her/his abilities to negotiate meaning from the technology of film, there should be a liberation that takes place that allows the body of the film and the teacher to flow through each other.

This liberation derives from a proliferation of meaning, from a self-multiplication of significance, weaving relationships so numerous, so intertwined, so rich, that they can no longer be deciphered except in the esoterism of knowledge. . . . Meaning is no longer read in an immediate perception, the figure no longer speaks for itself; between the knowledge which animates it and the form into which it is transposed, a gap widens. It is free for the dream. (Foucault, 1965, p. 18-19)

The teacher should be able to imagine, to create, or ‘to dream’ because of the connection that s/he can make with the body of the film. Once that link is established, the teacher will be ready to explore all facets of the film image and reality.

Film is at once accused of not being ‘real’ while at the same time being ‘too real.’ It is outlandish, it hits too close to home; it is unconceivable, it is exactly like real life. Which is it? Can it be both? Mitry argues that film is both real and unreal. He says that “represented reality is both the same as and different from actual reality: the same, as ‘represented content,’ since the image datum is the image of reality; different, as

‘representation,’ because of the image-making properties which structure the image datum and refer it to a noncontiguous space with different dimensional associations” (1997, p. 79). In other words, the objects that you see are actually the objects that exist in the world. However what is perhaps not in keeping with the audience’s point of view is how those objects are represented due to the process as well as to the environment of film making. The objects of film may maintain their known meanings but may also gain additional meanings because of the phenomenon of film itself. Reality is present but is negotiated, “in the same way as the image reflected by a mirror” (Mitry, 1997, p. 79). The reality is recorded and (re)presented. The teacher who does not attempt to untangle the web of reality presented in film is remiss in her/his duty. For “if the attitude of the reader is to interpret a suggested reality and suggested ideas through a series of conventional signs, the attitude of the spectator in the cinema is to interpret, through a perceived reality, ideas which are suggested rather than signified, film signification being necessarily vague and imprecise” (Mitry, 1997, p. 347-348). Hence it is the teacher’s responsibility to uncover how certain films relate to her/his reality and to create new tributaries between what is known in hopes of making paths to the unknown. “By close-ups of the things around us, by focusing on hidden details of familiar objects, by exploring commonplace milieus under the ingenious guidance of the camera, the film, on the one hand, extends our comprehension of the necessities which rule our lives” (Benjamin, 1968, p. 236). The key is to examine the “necessarily vague and imprecise” aspects of film, to whittle them down so that what is left is the pulp of the film, the “why” of the reason the viewer can glean something from its roots. A perfect space in which to search is found in the work of Deleuze.

Among his many confounding ideas about Cinema, Deleuze discusses the possibilities of the “espace quelconque” or the “any-space-whatever” in relation to the affection-image (1986) and how we might apply these concepts to the experience of specific viewers, such as teachers, could be very versatile. The term “any-space-whatever” represents the general idea of fragmentation. “Any-space-whatever is not an abstract universal, in all times, in all places. It is a perfectly singular space, which has merely lost its homogeneity, that is, the principle of its metric relations or the connection of its own parts, so that the linkages can be made in an infinite number of ways. It is a space of virtual conjunction, grasped as pure locus of the possible” (Deleuze, 1986, p. 109). As for the teacher, the concept of fragmentation may actually best describe her/his state of mind. S/he is continuously confronted with the fragmentation of her/his role as educator through the various local, state, and national demands and limits put forth almost daily. Because of the anti-intellectual duties required of the teacher, s/he is unable to be authentic and s/he searches for a way to her/his true self. Possibilities for connecting the fragmented identities of teachers lie in the viewing of film. Deleuze speaks of three ways the espace quelconque manifests in cinema: through shadow, lyrical abstraction, and color (Bogue, 2003, p. 81). Deleuze refers first to the shadow as an example of an any-space-whatever because the shadow offers that point where there is the possibility of connection, but because of the darkness (or absence of light) produced by the shadow, it is only the idea of the connection that can be confirmed. This perpetuates the notion of fragmentation inherent in the espace quelconque. “Depth is the location of the struggle, which sometimes draws space into the bottomlessness of a black hole, and sometimes draws it towards the light” (Deleuze, 1986, p. 111). This aspect of

the theory is important to the teacher's perception of reality as it is affected by film because the shadow effect encourages the audience to think, to interpret how the fragments of dark and light connect, thus showing the teacher their abilities to connect fragments of fragments "by an inversion of perspective" (Deleuze, 1986, p. 112). For the teacher, this is paramount because it offers her/him the space in which to reaffirm self: through interpretation and analytical thought, the teacher can again become in touch with her/his intellect. In addition, the inversion of perspective caused by the shadow in any-space-whatever affords the teacher the opportunity to turn negative outlooks into positive ones. Secondly, Deleuze explores lyrical abstraction as a point of fragmentation in film. This consists of the relationship of light with white while the shadow lingers in the background to "express an alternative between the state of things itself and the possibility, the virtuality, which goes beyond it. . . , [where] the spirit is not caught in a combat but is prey to an alternative" (1986, p. 112-113). This aspect of any-space-whatever shows the duality of the image: the image can be one thing but then can choose to be another. For the teacher, this concept is an important one because it opens up conversation about choice and about the multiplicity of choice. For the teacher, it reveals a fresh approach to the limitations set forth by all 'the powers that be': lyrical abstraction presents the teacher-viewer with the possibilities of choice. I would argue that this element could encourage teachers to challenge the limitations, to make choices that push back the lines, and to realize that despite the struggle, there is an alternative that stretches past the limitations of standardization. Thirdly, Deleuze examines color as an absorbent characteristic: "it is the power which seizes all that happens within its range, or the quality common to completely different objects" (1986, p. 118). In this instance, color

performs like a simile, pointing out commonalities where they are not obvious for the casual observer. In “any-space-whatever,” color serves to delineate the fragmentation in film in order to bring out what is not normally seen. Color is a model for the teacher because it provokes the denotation of similarities among different objects. The teacher is prompted by color to take into consideration the possibility of two dissimilar objects actually sharing something in common. This can encourage the teacher to emphasize common goals of some of the demands that are placed on her/him, in spite of the dissenting methods on how to arrive at those goals. Deleuze’s ideas about any-space-whatever “[retain] a single and same nature: it no longer has coordinates, it is a pure potential, it exposes only pure Powers and Qualities, independently of the states of things or milieus that actualize them” (1986, p. 120). No matter how the espace quelconque is realized, it communicates untainted possibilities.

Framing the Perception

In *Cinema 1* (1986) Deleuze focuses on the theory of movement-image. He proposes that the artists in cinema do not think via concepts but rather with movement-images. Deleuze proposes that the living images (which reflect what is known as perception) receive action and react to action through different portals and that they are thus “centers of indetermination” that carry movement (1986, p. 62). Deleuze’s use of the term “centers of indetermination” calls to Henri Bergson’s use of the phrase in describing evolution, where the “indeterminate, *i.e.* unforeseeable, are the forms [a matter] creates in the course of its evolution. More and more indeterminate also, more and more free, is the activity to which these forms serve as the vehicle” (Bergson, 1911, p. 126). In film, Deleuze sees such a free-forming image. He divides the movement-

image into three categories: the perception-image, the action-image, and the affection-image. Important for our discussion here is the perception-image. “What Deleuze calls a ‘perception-image’ is a movement-image related to the first side of the interval, a selective registering of incoming movements, a *framing* whereby some elements are ignored and others rendered visible” (Bogue, 2003, p. 35). The perception-image is what the viewer chooses, subconsciously and sometimes consciously, to see. For each and every spectator the perception-image of a single frame may be different. Deleuze’s idea is perhaps influenced by Bergson’s ideas of evolution. Indeed, Bergson states that the “spontaneity of life is manifested by a continual creation of new forms succeeding others” and although Bergson speaks here directly of evolution, his idea can be applied to that of perception, since individual viewer’s observations create continual and spontaneous reactions (1911, p.86). “Bergson observes that our perception of the external world is subtly affected by our expectations and anticipations of future events and by the possibilities open to us for future action” (Bogue, 2003, p. 35). In relation to film this means that the teacher, although perhaps actively watching the film, allows her/his outlook and dreams or desires to affect the actual seen/scene. Because this study involving teachers concerns their willingness and abilities to look for new ways of thinking through viewing films, the perception-image is the element of viewing that needs attention due to its possibility of inhibiting teachers from absorbing new ideas. If teachers are unable to defer their preconceptions it is likely that they will not gain any new perspectives from the viewing of film. What will be paramount is the ability of the film itself, through its very nature, to take over the teachers: the experience will rely on the magic of cinema. Metz (1977) compares this effect of cinema to a dream; Aumont et

al. (1992) contribute it to the impression of reality; Mitry refers to it as the “hold of the unknown” (1990, p. 206); Cavell says that “the impact of movies is too massive, too out of proportion with the individual worth of ordinary movies, to speak politely of involvement. We involve movies in us” (1971, p. 156). All of the theories invoke perception.

Deleuze often references phenomenology, the philosophical view of perception, in his work (1986, 1989). Although a thorough discussion of phenomenology precedes this section, I would like to make a brief discussion here of it as it relates to film theory.

Deleuze says that

What phenomenology sets up as a norm is ‘natural perception’ and its conditions. Now, these conditions are existential co-ordinates which define an ‘anchoring’ of the perceiving subject in the world, a being in the world, an opening to the world which will be expressed in the famous ‘all consciousness is consciousness of something. . . . Hence movement, perceived or made, must be understood not of course in the sense of an intelligible form (Idea) which would be actualized in a content, but as a sensible form (Gestalt) which organizes the perceptive field as a function of a situated intentional consciousness. (1986, p. 57)

What this means is that natural perception, as it is affected by the perceiver’s point of view, is seeded in the roots of the perceiver’s being, which is constituted by each and every experience this person has encountered and which colors the lens through which s/he sees. However, in relation to cinema, Deleuze believes that this natural perception may be censored because “the cinema can, with impunity, bring us close to things or take us away from them and revolve around them, it suppresses both the anchoring of the subject and the horizon of the world. Hence it substitutes an implicit knowledge and a second intentionality for the conditions of natural perception” (1986, p. 57). In other words, the audience can lose her/himself in the viewing of film, so much so that some or

all of her/his previous experience and expectation filters are suspended, which allows for a purer viewing of the film. Bergson says that “our perceptions give us the plan of our eventual action on things much more than that of things themselves. The outlines we find in objects simply mark what we can attain and modify in them” (1911, p. 188). Here again, Deleuze’s thoughts merge with the ideas of Bergson in that there is this notion of the existence of the object and how it enters into individual perception while simultaneously our perception is a priori to our realization of the object. Natural perception ceases to function as it does in daily life and it is replaced with an openness, a willingness to view what is not normally perceived. This is the sort of perception that teachers should subscribe to. It is my hope that the teachers in my study will get caught up in the film, will allow the dream, the impression of reality, the hold of the unknown, the involvement to overcome their limitations of perception. “‘Reality’—if it means anything—means interpreted experience” (Greene, 1985, p. 123). The teacher must allow her/his authenticity to be altered through interpretation, as “the authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced” (Benjamin, 1968, p. 221). I propose that film can influence an alteration of authenticity, of essence, but only through a suspension of natural perception. In order for the teacher to experience a true change in her/his authenticity, s/he is obliged to become vulnerable to the effects of film. S/he must invite the “intimate fusion of visual and emotional enjoyment” (Benjamin, 1968, p. 234) into the folds of perception. Once this is accomplished, the teacher will experience the film in an unadulterated state: with fresh perspective, with seeking heart, and, most importantly, with open mind.

Framing the Thought

From an examination of any-space-whatever and the perception-image, one can see that film, according to Deleuze's theories, provides various interesting ways in which to view the cinematographic world. The spectator is provoked to look for outlets to apply his ideas, mirroring what I contend to be the intention of film in the first place: to evoke a spirit of an analytical viewing of film that can be carried out into the world. If the spectator enacts the movement-image articulated by Deleuze, then film has done its job in jolting the spectator awake from reality and perception of reality. "It is this capacity, this power, and not the simple logical possibility, that cinema claims to give us in communicating the shock. It is as if cinema were telling us: with me, with the movement-image, you can't escape the shock which arouses the thinker in you" (Deleuze, 1989, p. 156). What must be taken into consideration is that thinking generally focuses on discreet parts of a whole. Indeed Bergson compares perception to cinematography. He states that "we take snapshots, as it were, of the passing reality, and, as these are characteristic of the reality, we have only to string them on a becoming, abstract, uniform and invisible, situated at the back of the apparatus of knowledge, in order to imitate what there is that is characteristic in this becoming itself. . . . [T]he *mechanism of our ordinary knowledge is of a cinematographic kind*" (1911, p. 306). However, film and the movement-image attempt to do just the opposite: the goal is to initiate thought that will encompass the whole and does so through audiovisual assault. "The shock has an effect on the spirit, it forces it to think, and to think the Whole. The Whole can only be thought, because it is the indirect representation of time which follows from movement. . . It relies on montage, although it follows from the image. . . The

whole is the organic totality which presents itself by opposing and overcoming its own parts” (Deleuze, 1989, p. 158). In my study it is the teacher who will encounter the shock. S/he is challenged with the task of using film in order to perceive the whole in hopes of surmounting the parts (although not ignoring them altogether) in favor of the big picture. I would suggest that each teacher has the task of learning to think not only of film but *through* film, in an act that will un-solidify many of the ways that people have become accustomed to thinking. “If a viewer is free to draw upon her own reserves of memory as she participates in the creation of the object on screen, her private and unofficial histories and memories will be granted as much legitimation as the official histories that make up the regime of the cliché—if not more” (Marks, 2000, p. 48). This type of thought processing will offer up a new way of coping with the world and it will be uncomfortable. But what better way to undo the numbness of living than to be uncomfortable? In this respect, cinema will do something of which many think it is incapable: it will “reach the Dividual, that is, to individuate a mass as such, instead of leaving it in a qualitative homogeneity or reducing it to a quantitative divisibility” (Marks, 2000, p. 162). Deleuze sees in cinema the potential for it to actually create divergences. His arguments that are centered on thought and film support his theory. As long as this “movement-image. . . [is one] which embeds itself within us” (Deleuze, 1989, p. 157) teachers are obligated to think beyond the frames of the film—past the editing, past the image, past the perception—so that the proliferation of genuine thought perpetuates. It is within the multifaceted (non)boundaries of thought that such a dividualization takes place. For the teacher, dividualization is vital: it is the portal through which the educator must come to see their professional world. Film can aid in

developing this view by encouraging analytical thought through the examples it sets in its technological world.

Clearly, the relationship between thought and cinema is one that benefits the teacher. What is this benefit and how does it manifest itself? Deleuze (1989) states that

It is indeed true that the three relationships between cinema and thought are encountered together everywhere in the cinema of the movement-image: the relationship with a whole which can only be thought in a higher awareness, the relationship with a thought which can only be shaped in the subconscious unfolding of images, the sensory-motor relationship between world and man, nature and thought. (p. 163)

First, based on these observations from Deleuze, the teacher must engage in an enhanced status of thinking. There are few situations in which the teacher is challenged to think in a way that exceeds the parts of a whole: often the spectator's attention is caught by a certain shot, a camera angle, a montage of images. However, Deleuze suggests that there can be a connection to the whole through an elevated state of thought, by paying attention in specific ways. For my study, the teachers will be prompted to consider how certain characters in the films we view reflect elements of the type of teacher they would like to become. They will also be encouraged to slip into the shoes of student characters in order to gain a current perspective of students' lives that they perhaps have not recently imagined. Eventually, the teachers will be asked to reflect upon the effects of film viewing on their relationships inside and outside of the classroom. I believe the structure of this aspect of my study is an opportunity for teachers to heighten their awareness of the inter-workings of their multifaceted roles as teachers. This is not something that teachers would ordinarily have time to do, but I believe that this study will demonstrate the dire need for such reflection. Secondly, the teacher must disengage from her/his conscious self in order to allow the rush of images to wash over the mind. I take this to mean that

the work of the subconscious is as equally important as the work of the conscious. The teacher, then, must be in a state of heightened attention while also allowing for images to come in “under the radar.” As for teachers, this step is extremely important and will be addressed not in the discussions that follow the viewings but in the journaling that takes place individually after the experiences, when the subconscious will be doing its undetected work of assimilating everything from cinematography to music and sound. The teacher will conduct her/his own experiment in montage by cutting and pasting together what s/he wants from the films that were seen. Finally, the teacher should attend to the common points of reaction between himself and his environment as well as the associations between nature and thought. Although these pairs might seem to be binary, I suggest that it was not the intention of Deleuze to pit them against each other. Instead, I would argue that the man acts on the world and the world on man, just as nature acts on thought and thought on nature. What needs to be brought out here is that during such reflection, often “the imagination suffers a shock which pushes it to the limit and forces thought to think the whole as intellectual totality which goes beyond the imagination” (Deleuze, 1989, p. 157). It is my hope that the teachers who participate in my study will be pushed to this point, that their imaginations will take over what they assume as “givens” about education, that their points of view will be altered, that they will once again enjoy intellectualism as part of their jobs. I would argue that teachers as a whole lose sight of the end goal (teaching students to think and to think analytically) because they are continually overwhelmed by policies and procedures which blind them to the power of influence that they possess in bettering our society through education. Film can be a source of inspiration for teachers and can inspire a resurgence of faith in the

importance of what they do day after day. “Whether or not the stories are ‘good,’ stories are used by most of us to construct some meaning for our existence and to find ways to form connections with other people. Our very lives become stories when we move from the feeling of them to thinking and talking them” (Dalton, 1999, p. 69). The very nature of the story within a film forces it to compact large quantities of time into smaller increments and the *essence* of the experience that film relates remains true to its origin, whatever that may be. The presentation of education or of educators in films which focus on teachers and their struggles as well as their relationships with their students (whether positive or negative) opens up room for discussion about those very topics. Discussion generates awareness and awareness generates curiosity, developing the space for more conversation and analytical thinking. “Restoring our belief in the world—this is the power of modern cinema. . . belief replaces knowledge only when it becomes belief in this world, as it is” (Deleuze, 1989, p. 172). And that is the key point to understand: film must be used as a point of departure for change, not as a biblical, how-to guide.

Watching film and absorbing all that its elements have to offer must be the fodder for thought and future action toward the world in which we live and believe. As spectators, teachers will not be expected to *be* that character with the perfect ending on the screen, rather they will simply be encouraged to extract any and all meaning that speaks to them as educators.

The Act of Viewing

The perspective of viewing must change. Currently, we “see” a film; we “watch” life go by; we “witness” the change of modern society. Passively, our time is spent and we perceive ourselves to have no control. “From the first, we are engaged in a living

dialogue with a world that sufficiently exceeds our grasp of it as we necessarily intend toward it, a world in which we are finitely situated as embodied beings and yet always informed by a decisive motility” (Sobchack, 1995, p. 43). We must use our embodiment to extend ourselves into our world. Film offers us the chance to do this: as spectators, we can participate in meaning-making through the active viewing of a film, where we allow ourselves to become analytical, active thinkers who do not just “see,” “watch,” and “witness.” We must be cautious in succumbing to a “culture in which vision dominates our sensory access to the world and in which a discrete and reductive emphasis on visibility and body image greatly overdetermines our more expansive possibilities for seeing and making sense of our enworldedness” (Sobchack, 2004, p. 187). Instead we must use our vision for vision, to observe the world and how we can act on it. In this section, I will focus on the body and “spectatorship studies, where the model is no longer the passive, manipulated. . . spectator, but rather the contradictory, divided, and fragmented subject” (Mayne, 1995, p. 179). My aim is to discover ways in which the body of the teacher may be used to draw together the fragmentation of self and of life through film in an attempt to experience a reality where desire, cinema, and reality meet to empower the viewer to an active, analytic use of the mind.

Taking in a Film

I am present for the film in a double capacity. . . as witness and as assistant: I watch, and I help. By watching the film I help it to be born, I help it to live, since only in me will it live, and since it is made for that purpose: to be watched, in other words to be brought into being by nothing other than the look.

---Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier*, 1977, p. 93

The interesting thing about film is its ability to create numerous double meanings. Consider the expression “taking in a film.” Of its various implications, two stand out

immediately: the idea of seeing the film and the idea that the film can be ‘taken in,’ as if ingested. As for seeing the film, this involves the rituals of checking out the showing times, getting appropriately dressed to attend, getting your ticket at the window then subsequently surrendering it to the collector, purchasing some well-overpriced snacks, finding the perfect seat, settling into the cushy chair to enjoy the dark, anonymity that the theatre has to offer, and finally seeing the display of moving images flash across the screen. The other idea, that the film can be ‘taken in,’ thus follows all of the rituals known as taking in a film. The notion that a film is ‘taken in’ asserts that the spectator absorbs into her/his being the cinematography and the narration that the film has to offer, so much so that s/he may experience a change in perspective on some issue or another related to the film viewed. Bazin (1967) refers to this as the “depth of focus,” which “brings the spectator into a relation with the image closer to that which he enjoys with reality” and also says that it “implies, consequently, both a more active mental attitude on the part of the spectator and a more positive contribution on his part to the action in progress” (pp. 35-36). The feeling of reality that is replicated in film is what allows the spectator to submerge her/himself into the world of film, which invites her/him to participate in meaning making. Hence, the film opens itself to the teacher so that s/he might open her/himself to the film. For the teachers in this study, such a process in viewing is vital to revealing ways for teachers to regain power and autonomy in their classrooms. By viewing films that portray teacher characters as able to find ways around obstacles, I assert that teachers will be more likely to examine certain barriers they face in their day-to-day trials. It is important to remember that “the screen is a space in which viewers can identify with an image that is *not* of them—the screen is not a mirror—but

confirms their existence and reflects back on them” (Marks, 2002, p. 25). This reflection is one that could initiate analytical thought in the teacher about her/his role as an educator. Seeing a character who reaches a goal that is similar to hers/his, the teacher will experience a feeling of empowerment that is likely to translate back into the classroom, even if only for small increments of time. Of course, this perspective assumes that the viewer must be an active participant in the interpretation and meaning making that is decidedly an integral part of spectatorship.

For teachers, the idea of being “active” while watching a film may be a slightly foreign concept. The actions associated with watching are all but active: the audience sits quietly, staring straight and forward, only moving to get more comfortable in their chairs. This is not a picture of activity. Nonetheless, what oftentimes is ignored by movie goers is the rapid processing of the brain as it takes in the film. In the mind’s eye, there is much taking place, as the encoding and decoding of images and narration floods the senses, and although the spectator’s demeanor does not reveal the activity within, it is ongoing, from start to finish and, hopefully, beyond. On the other hand what needs to be acknowledged by the teacher is her/his willingness to believe in the film that passes before her/his eyes. “Obviously participation requires the audience to make a leap of faith” (Mitry, 1997, p. 210) because the teacher must suspend some or all of her/his beliefs about reality in order to actually become absorbed in the film. “However, to say that the vocation of the cinema is to allow a man to *see himself* is true only in the most general sense. The audience member ‘sees’ himself acting, as a man, through the actor” (Mitry, 1997, p. 210). S/he does not in actuality believe her/himself to be the character portrayed on the screen, although in this study the teacher may very well experience

many similarities so that a projection of self is made onto the person in the film. “But the very fact that he projects himself onto the actor means that he is detached, independent, and it is precisely because he is independent that he is obliged to associate himself with the hero” (Mitry, 1997, p. 210). What this means is that the spectator consciously attributes the commonalities between self and character/actor to the fact that they are separate entities with corresponding intentionalities. For the teacher, the importance of this relationship is compounded by her/his quest for empowerment. This empowerment may be found in recognizing attributes that the teacher shares with the characters portrayed and in asserting her/his independence from the film by analytically choosing the type of relationship in which to engage the film. The teacher may desire to use the film as a mirror that reflects her/his reality, as a shadow that alludes to some of the aspects of her/his reality, or as a window that allows her/him to view something totally different than her/his own world. “Participation demands that reality have meaning ‘for us,’ in other words, it demands that as we directly perceive it, we should be capable of giving it a future of some sort” (Mitry, 1997, p. 203). As such the spectator should be willing to let the film live in her/him by allowing it a life of its own in the ways it affects her/his perspectives of the world. Without the spectator, film would cease to exist: it would merely be an object without meaning. The spectator is what gives the film ontological reason: s/he functions as the screen of the screen. Without the perception of the spectator, the film would be inactive and dormant. “Film meaning is rooted in perception; it is the expression of an ‘intentional’ existence, constituting the immediate reality of the film and thrusting us, through the emotions it determines, into a world potentially contained in the film,” if not, at the very least, represented by film (Mitry,

1997, p. 122). Clearly, though the film is somewhat dependent on the spectator, the spectator is not necessarily dependent on the film but instead garners the fruits of its labor, gathers them up to take into the reality in which the spectator lives. However, “to be dependent upon an object affirms not only the materiality of one’s body but also the incompleteness of one’s self: it suggests that meaning inheres in the communication between self, objects, and others rather than in communication mediated in the mind alone” (Marks, 2000, pp. 119-120). Such communication results in a dialectical relationship that, though recalling dependence, certainly produces an environment of reciprocity. Through this act of give and take, the viewer is opened up to the possibilities of the world, and “in some way it presents us with the truth inherent in the object and becomes, as it were, an *exploration* of our consciousness—if not total, then at least more complete. . . it guides us toward the ‘essential’ truth of the object transcending and eclipsing what is perceived” (Mitry, 1997, p. 123). For teachers what this means is that film affords the opportunity for them to look at the essence of what is offered up as the object of “teacher” in film. There is the chance for discovery, in a very unorthodox way, of self as a voyeur of self as it is present in popular culture. The teacher can accept or reject parts of or the whole presented by film: the important aspect is that the viewer will be analytically engaged in the perceiving of what is (re)presented as ‘teacher’ to the world through cinema. This analytical style of thinking will encourage the intellectual persona in teachers and might be the springboard needed to propel the teacher in the direction of identifying what makes her/him authentic and autonomous. “If film reflects what we present to it through what it offers us, by revealing an action onto which we can project ourselves, it shows us what we are, since we ‘fulfill ourselves’ in it” (Mitry, 1997,

p. 86). The fulfillment of self, however, does not come just from an analytical viewing of the film. Instead it is composed also of the overall affective effect that is engendered in movies.

Feeling Film

Historically, film theory has not been focused on the viewer as its object of affection. Typically, theorists have tended to topics such as cinematography and film as art as their major subjects of discussion. As is noted by Vivian Sobchack, “scholarly interest has been focused less on the capacity of films to physically arouse us to meaning than on what such sensory cinematic appeal reveals about the rise and fall of classical narrative, or the contemporary transmedia structure of the entertainment industry, or the desires of our culture for the distractions of immediate sensory immersion in an age of pervasive mediation” (2004, p. 57). Many theorists in the field casually neglect the importance of the spectator’s role in film: they “cast aside” what value spectators add to the production of movies in favor of what value film can add to itself. Several contemporary film theorists, such as Sobchack and Laura Marks, are presently working to “redirect” the lens toward an understanding of how the spectator and her/his body contribute to making meaning of the film and of the film experience itself. Specific to this study, I would like to delve into how teachers’ bodies experience film and how this affects the manner in which teachers come to embody what they take in from film.

The goal in this study is to encourage teachers to actively view film in a way that triggers in them analytical thought about themselves and their positions in education. “Because movies engage with our embodied memories, each of us experiences a movie in an absolutely singular way. Meaning is made in the material connection between our

bodies, the body of the film, and the bodies, animal, vegetable, and mineral, recorded by the film” (Marks, 2002, p. 122). In order for teachers to profit from seeing movies, specifically ones about teachers and education, the teachers will need to be willing to turn over their minds and bodies to the idea that film could be beneficial. In making accessible one’s mind *and body*, the teacher will have double the space for “screening” film and its affects. According to Sobchack, “the film experience is meaningful *not to the side of our bodies but because of our bodies*. Which is to say that movies provoke in us the ‘carnal thoughts’ that ground and inform more conscious analysis” (Sobchack, 2004, p. 60). Because all of our perception takes place physically *through* the body (sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste) before it reaches the brain and then is processed as information prior to doubling back to be cognitively experienced, it makes sense to believe that by recognizing those faculties as valuable in film viewing, we can heighten our film experience overall. What I mean by this is that if we can acknowledge not only the importance of our mental cognition of film but also our psychical cognition of film, then we stand to increase our benefit of understanding our encounters with reality two fold because we will be dually engaged, thus resulting in deeper analytical thought about what is being viewed and how it relates to our lives. “We, ourselves, are subjective matter: our lived bodies sensually relate to ‘things’ that ‘matter’ on the screen and find them sensible in a primary, prepersonal, and global way that grounds those later secondary identifications that are more discrete and localized” (Sobchack, 2004, p. 65). I would argue that an identification with film that starts in the body and extends to the mind, as Sobchack suggests, is one that would produce deep connections capable of changing a person’s outlook. A relationship exists between the spectator and the film

that encourages the mind to act. This action begins with the visual and external senses and then transfers to within, finally extending into the viewer's world. "Whether the human body's or the film's, the 'address of the eye' transcends its bodily situation and finitude, traverses space and time, visually inhabiting and constituting them as lived experience through reflection, imagination, memory, and dream" (Sobchack, 1992, p. 246). It is this simulation of lived experience offered by film that I believe will aid teachers in re-identifying just who they are and how they can affect changes in their classrooms.

The goal of this research is for teachers to learn to experience film in a way that stimulates a continuous interaction between their bodies, their minds, the screen, and real life. Ideally, this interaction would produce interplay among the four elements, allowing teachers access to resources that encourage feelings of empowerment. "Experiencing a movie, not ever merely 'seeing' it, [the] lived body enacts this reversibility in perception and subverts the notion of *onscreen* and *offscreen* as mutually exclusive sites or subject positions" (Sobchack, 2004, p. 66-67). Thus, the blurring of film reality and world reality would (further) occur, and in this case to the betterment of how teachers perceive themselves and their roles. Once such a juncture takes place, the teacher shall be open to continuous change and growth because the flow of information would be constant and multiple. Thus, according to Sobchack, "these bodies also subvert their own fixity from within, commingling flesh and consciousness, reversing the human and technological sensorium, so that meaning, and where it is made, does not have a discrete origin in either spectators' bodies or cinematic representation but emerges in their conjunction" (Sobchack, 2004, p. 67).

As meaning is made through this uninterrupted relationship between the teacher's body and mind as they are joined with cinema, the teacher gains a sense of control despite the lack of being able to necessarily detect through what circumstance meaning comes to affect her/him. "Both the film's body and the spectator's body are implicated in their respective perceptive activity, enable it, and allow it expression in the world" (Sobchack, 2004, p. 217). For the teachers in this study such a freedom typically does not exist. The current educational milieu does not offer the teacher much opportunity for creation or meaning-making but instead usually constricts or intimidates her/him into becoming an object necessary for the dissemination of standardized testing materials. In this way, teachers have become the pawns of the government, bodies without meaning, disposable objects separate from any spark of ontological being or knowledge. It is as if the minds have been plucked out of their vessels to be stored somewhere away from the opportunity to lead students to enlightenment. Teachers are a matter of "objectification and reification. That is, our bodies have become increasingly distanced and alienated, increasingly viewed as 'resources,' and increasingly lived as 'things' to be seen, managed, and mastered" (Sobchack, 2004, p. 182). Film, however, could be the medium through which teachers regain a sense of body and embodiment. Film offers the opportunity for experiencing forms of reality through another's eyes, which in turn offers the teacher new vision. The images on the screen can serve as a way for teachers to reconnect with all aspects of self. One path to this reunion is through an acknowledgment of how the body experiences and absorbs film. Laura Marks writes of "haptic cinema [which] appeals to a viewer who perceives with all the senses. It involves thinking with your skin, or giving as much significance to the physical presence of an

other as to the mental operations of symbolization. . . recognizing the intelligence of the perceiving body” (2002, p. 18). Validating the sensible body as a multi-perceptive organ useful in viewing film permits the spectator to use that body to understand movies as extensions of reality. Through various ways of perceiving, the spectator is opened up to many interpretations and is able to authenticate her/his experiences with cinema. “As a coterminous perception and expression of a mutually lived world, the film serves as a conduit for perception” (Sobchack, 1992, p. 173) and the spectator is able to absorb what the film freely gives through her/his various senses as if s/he is experiencing it first-hand. Film viewing becomes, then, the medium through which, with which, and by which the spectator is able to acknowledge her/his body, not just her/his mind, as the master preceptor that does more than just accumulate information at the surface. Instead, the body becomes the site of sight, the noise of hearing, and the touch of touch. “Haptic cinema, by appearing to us as an object with which we interact rather than an illusion into which we enter, calls on this sort of embodied intelligence” (Marks, 2002, p. 18). For teachers who watch movies where teacher characters are successful and autonomous, this could create an environment for the experience of empowerment; teachers might carry that feeling of empowerment over into their lived reality. However,

as our embodiments differ and our situations change, so the film’s activity of sign production and its meaning change for us in our differently situated activity of looking, in our different intentions toward it. Thus, while the sedimented significations and meaning of our historical and cultural context set the limits of both the film’s and the spectator’s activities of sign production and interpretation, our individual situation and contingency establish the possibilities of our semiotic and hermeneutic freedom. (Sobchack, 1992, p. 305)

It is upon this freedom that I suggest teachers will be able to experience film for more than mere visual entertainment but rather will, by allowing their senses to be

stimulated by the experience of viewing, intend toward absorbing a feeling of power from film and will use that power to break away from the entrenched mandates of anti-intellectual academia so that they may turn toward a new history for themselves, not as simple bodies in a classroom, but as embodied beings who make a difference in the minds of our youth.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In order to investigate my interests in the anti-intellectual environment of public education which directly affects teacher identity, I chose to examine teachers' perceptions of their role in education through group discussions. My approach to this study is grounded in a combination of phenomenological inquiry and focus group interviewing. According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), phenomenological inquiry was developed as a three-phase process that involves self-reflection and interviewing, phenomenological reduction, and structural synthesis (p. 112-113). The goal of this type of inquiry is to explore the "deep, lived meanings that events have for individuals (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 113). Because phenomenological inquiry recognizes the influence of events on people, focus group interviewing is a logical fit for my method of interviewing. It "assumes that an individual's attitudes and beliefs do not form in a vacuum: People often need to listen to others' opinions and understandings in order to form their own" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 114). Focus group interviewing seems to offer a natural-feeling atmosphere that is flexible and conducive to critical thinking because the participants are able to compare and contrast their thoughts with others as well as to analyze and synthesize as they articulate and defend their positions. The questions driving this study are: 1) Are teachers able to think critically, specifically showing an awareness of their embodiment of film as it relates to themselves and their profession? 2) How does group discussion among peers encourage teachers to participate in critical pedagogy? and 3) Is there evidence that teachers, at the conclusion of the study, show

more active interest in their positions related to and the current state of education? This chapter will reveal my methods of research: the design of this study, the data collection, and the analysis procedures.

The Design of this Study

My first step in approaching this project was to determine the origin of my interest in this topic of anti-intellectualism and the deskilling of teachers. On a personal level, the practices in my own classroom have been marginally affected by such governmental policies as No Child Left Behind and standardized state tests. I have, for the most part, been able to maintain a fair amount of autonomy on a day-to-day account. Because I teach French at a rural, southeast Georgia high school (called Pence High School in this study), there are at this time no End of Course Tests and no Georgia High School Graduation Test towards which I must teach; the administration has historically left my department to its own devices. However, this is not the case for my colleagues in the English, Math, History, and Science departments. The members of these departments are under steady scrutiny by the administration, which seems to be constantly observing them, meeting with them, planning workshops for them, and requiring from them data about failure rates. All of these things, at surface value, seem like normal procedures for the management of a well-run school. However, it is the attitude with which these activities are presented and approached that gives them a negative connotation. It is seemingly a situation of surveillance and it has left the majority of our faculty with, from my observation, a very defeated aura. This, I believe, is the impetus for my study and that was how I determined to ask for volunteers from the faculty at Pence High School to be participants in the focus groups.

Focus Groups

I chose to divide the volunteers into two focus groups. The job of each focus group was exactly the same: to watch films, to discuss them, to take notes on them, and to write brief journal reflections on them. I wanted to limit the number of participants in each group so that everyone would have an opportunity to voice opinions. Based on Marshall and Rossman's suggestion that focus groups containing between 7 and 10 members adhere to a more relaxed and natural experimental atmosphere where discussion is encouraged about differing opinions and points of view, I kept the number at 7 participants for each group (1999, p. 114-115). In addition, each focus group was organized based on gender and years of experience. I paid attention to balancing males to females as much as possible because I wanted both groups to contain each gender's voice. I also wanted to create an environment that would enrich the discussion, allowing for multiple perspectives to be represented, so I arranged the groups to have representatives with various years of experience. Focus Group One contained 5 women (all Caucasian) and 2 men (one Hispanic and one African American) who went by the following pseudonyms: Amanda, Patricia, Monica, Sheryl, Amelia, Mack, and Roger. The breakdown of years experience included the following: 2 teachers with +20 years, 1 teacher with 13-19 years, 1 teacher with 6-12 years, and 3 teachers with 0-5 years. Focus Group Two contained 4 women (1 African American and 3 Caucasian) and 3 men (all Caucasian) who went by the following pseudonyms: Eunice, Joel, Bill, Joanne, Sophie, Laura, and Hugh. The breakdown of years experience was as follows: 2 teachers with +20 years, 2 teachers with 13-19 years, 1 teacher with 6-12 years, and 2 teachers with 0-5 years. The issues of standards, standardized testing, and standardization of teaching have

had direct effects on five of the teachers in Focus Group One and six of the teachers in Focus Group Two. The effects will be discussed in detail in Chapters 4 and 5, where the data of the discussions, film notes, and journals will be dissected. However, it is important to note here that because the majority of these are teachers of English, Math, Science, and Social Studies, I expect that their perspectives of education as it takes place at Pence High School will be colored more by current policies and practices of that institution, which do not necessarily represent American education in general. In addition, the three teachers whose subjects are currently undergoing the implementation of standards, with standardized testing and standardization just around the corner, bring different perspectives to this discussion than the teachers who have been experiencing standardization for some time. Since all participants were acquaintances with each other and with me, the researcher, it was also important to consider balancing the number of out-spoken participants within the two groups. This aspect of the group composition was necessary in order for an acceptable level of open communication to exist. During the entire process, it was paramount that I recognize my need to remain objective and critical of my own interpretations. I did this to the best of my abilities by acting mainly as a moderator and collector of data.

Film Selection

I chose to use film in this study as a point of departure for the discussions in the focus groups for several reasons. First, I believe many of the teachers at Pence High School to be in a state of self-preservation. Basing my opinion solely on the day-to-day observations I have informally made in the past, the teachers seem unwilling to speak their minds in an educational setting. Rather than have the participants meet to discuss an

assigned topic, I believed that having teachers watch films about educational contexts in a comfortable setting would encourage them to open up to speaking their minds. Second, I would argue that films and spectatorship lend to analytical discussions because the film's body is "a direct means of having and expressing a world—given to us as a technologically mediated consciousness of experience, but given to itself, through the praxis of its existentially functional body, as the immediate experience of consciousness" (Sobchack, 1992, p. 168). As such, I suggest that the participants, having had the immediate experience depicted in the film, would be increasingly interested in the discussion at hand. Being prompted by film allows the participants to connect something in the present to an experience in the past, bringing the experience to the surface, making it easier to reference in discussion. Third, influenced by the musings of Merleau-Ponty, I believe that "one of the great achievements of modern art [such as film] and philosophy . . . has been to allow us to rediscover the world in which we live, yet which we are always prone to forget" (2004, p. 39). Film as a modern art, I propose, is important to the way we perceive the world. Film offers the spectator a moment to see through the eyes of others or to rediscover our very own perspectives. This was important to the participants in my study because they needed to compare and contrast various experiences during the focus group discussions, considering their own perspectives as well as the perspectives of others.

The films I selected for the participants to view all contain a main character representation of a teacher. The focus groups watched *Mona Lisa Smile*, *Finding Forrester*, *The Ron Clark Story*, and *The Browning Version*. *Mona Lisa Smile* tells the story of an independent young woman from the West Coast who joins the faculty of

Wellesley College as an art history teacher. She believes that she is entering into a woman's college of enlightenment and finds herself surrounded by the idolization of marriage rather than education. Her battle becomes not only that of teaching art but also teaching young women to value their intellect as well as their hearts. In the end, the teacher leaves the college because her ideals for feminine emancipation do not match those of her colleagues and most of her students. *Finding Forrester* is a film about a young African American teen from the Bronx whose talent for basketball rivals his passion for literature and writing. Through unlikely circumstances, he meets a reclusive writer who becomes his mentor. The elderly white male believes in the boy and his talent, which eventually gives the boy courage to attend a private school. The final lesson is learned, however, by the mentor, who rediscovers the importance of trust. *The Ron Clark Story* is based on the true stories of a young, southern white male teacher who takes a risk by moving to New York City to teach at an elementary school in Harlem. He chooses to teach the class perceived as the worst in the school. Because the teacher creatively and firmly educates and disciplines the students at school, often even visiting and helping them in their homes, the students are able to achieve state test scores higher than those of the gifted class. *The Browning Version* relates a tale of a retirement-aged British teacher who works at a private boarding school for boys in England. Students all respect and fear this teacher of the classics but only one has endeared him to his heart. As the teacher is forced into early retirement to make way for a modern languages program, he must share the spotlight with a departing teacher who is leaving to play professional rugby. This complicated plot demonstrates much about the life of a teacher outside of the classroom, touching on school politics and personal relationships. In the

end, the viewer is left to answer her/his own questions evoked by the film. Each of these films was selected based on the representation of teachers as autonomous, critical pedagogues who typically experience a conflict with administrative forces but who also manage to reach their pupils. I chose this central theme because I thought it would be the appropriate catalyst for discussions involving the participants' opinions and feelings about their own experiences as educators. I also hoped that the participants would be able to fit themselves into the place of the characters in the movies so that they would more easily be able to observe their own physical reactions to the situations in the films. I wanted the participants to pay attention to their bodily reactions because I felt more passionate, critical discussions could emanate from physical stirrings and their relations to film and real life if emphasis was placed on the whole film experience.

Data Collection

Meeting Procedures

Each focus group met four times at my house to watch films. I chose this location because I felt it would be a friendly, comfortable, and unrestricted place to watch a movie and have a discussion. I wanted the event to feel like a group of friends or a support group who were getting together to enjoy intellectual activities.

Each meeting followed the same procedure. First, I reminded the group of the importance of confidentiality. I always emphasized that the discussions themselves should not be discussed outside of the focus group meetings. I did this in an effort to allow the participants to feel as if they could speak candidly without fear of others gossiping about their comments. Second, I reminded the group that the goal of my study was for them to think critically about the representations in film and how they relate to

their current situation as educators. I also reintroduced my theoretical framework at this time, emphasizing the importance the body plays in our experience of the world. I did this so that the discussions would be guided by the interests of this study. Third, I outlined the questions that would be discussed after watching the movie and I gave them an outline of events in the plot as cues for scenes to pay attention to in relation to their own physical reactions to the film. Again, I did this in order to focus their discussions on the interests of this study. Fourth, the participants watched the movie and were encouraged to write down their feelings, thoughts or points they would like to discuss after the viewing. I included this step because I thought it would encourage the participants to pay more attention to their physical and mental reactions during the viewing. Fifth, after the movie concluded, I turned on the audio and video recorders. I re-outlined the questions to be discussed and then turned the group loose to speak on their own for a thirty-minute discussion. I limited the discussion to thirty minutes because I was making an effort to respect the participants' personal time. My role in the discussion was as a moderator: I made an effort not to participate in the actual discussion but at times I did redirect their discussions back to the questions posed in advance. The directed questions that were posed every time were: (1) Distinguish the feelings that swept over you while viewing this movie from the feelings that sweep over you when you encounter similar situations at work, whether they pertain to interactions in the classroom or to interactions with administration, (2) Compare the main teacher character's desires for her/his students to think critically and to think independently to that of your own desires for your own students, (3) Hypothesize how focusing on critical thinking skills in the classroom with your students may or may not help teachers, (4)

Summarize your position on involvement with critical thinking skills on a personal and professional level and how those skills affect your pedagogical practices. On some occasions I posed new, additional questions that came to my mind in reference to the groups' comments as the discussions were taking place. The participants themselves posed questions to other members of the group a few times during the first meeting and more frequently toward the last meeting,. At the end of the meetings, I collected the papers on which participants had written notes and filed those for later analysis.

One week after each meeting, I asked participants to write a short reflection in the form of a journal entry with regards to that meeting's effects on their classroom practices. These journal entries were intended to offer the participants the opportunity to extend their comments from the discussion as well as to allow time for quiet reflection on personal critical pedagogy. I did not respond to these journal entries directly but used them to guide the questions for the subsequent meetings. I filed the journal writings with the notes that were collected at the meeting so that I had a file of data for each meeting.

At the end of the process, I asked the participants to write a fifth and last journal reflection on their overall experience with the focus group. I requested these brief reflections as a means to validate my interpretation of the cumulative data collected during the actual process.

Several months later, after I wrote the interpretation of data in for the foundation of Chapters 5 and 6, I asked the focus group participants to read my interpretations of what had been said and written during the study. They were asked to make any comments, agreeing and disagreeing, with what I purported to have discovered. Several

members responded to this request, and we communicated via email as questions arose. They returned their comments to me via email and I incorporated them into my findings.

Researcher Journal

As the researcher, I kept an informal journal of thoughts and observations that were provoked during the focus group meetings as well as during my time spent analyzing the data collected. I used this journal to direct my thoughts for the future meetings as well as to see my own pattern of thoughts throughout the process. I often found myself asking more questions, many of which would benefit later studies rather than the study at hand. I felt this showed growth on my part because I was able to look beyond the experience at hand and to imagine how this work would affect my future interests.

Analysis Procedures

According to Judith M. Meloy (2002), “qualitative research requires personal rather than detached engagement in context, it requires multiple, simultaneous actions and reactions from the human being who is the research instrument” (p. 145). What this has meant to my dissertation study is that I had to become a constant listener, interpreter, analytic thinker, and somewhat of a fortuneteller so that I could take advantage of all aspects of this project at once. At the focus group meetings, I could not simply rely on the audio and video recorders to pick up everything that happened because there were moments of interaction when the recorders were off. I had to include those observations in my researcher journal to help prompt my thoughts during the process of the study.

Because I was concerned that immediately transcribing the discussion from each meeting would lead to my own interference in the overall discussion process, I elected to

transcribe and study the discussions at the very end of the study after meetings had been concluded. I felt that by waiting to do the transcriptions until after all meetings were finished I could maintain more neutrality during each meeting. I would not be able to, through my own questions or comments, taint the thoughts or words of the participants by leading them to discuss certain topics or leading them to discuss things from a certain point of view that I might have developed from any intense study between meetings. The intent was to let the participants discuss at will what they saw as important and to let each meeting develop naturally. I was sure to take notes in my researcher journal about my thoughts and reactions to the meetings so that when I was ready to compile the data, I would remember them. Also, in waiting until the meetings were completed in order to read over the data as a continuous stream of dialogue, I was able to see more clearly the emerging themes discussed by the participants. As I transcribed, I listened for these emerging themes during each session and I compared the sessions in order. Therefore, each discussion was analyzed multiple times. I did not set out with a preconceived notion of the themes to emerge; instead I approach data analysis with “immersion strategies” which call for the researcher to rely on intuitive and interpretive skills (Crabtree & Miller, 1992, p. 17-18). As I began to find themes and categories emerging on their own, I made note cards and coded them so that I would be able to quickly access my findings. In addition, following the same technique as I used with the transcriptions of the recorded sessions, I read the notes taken by the participants during the films to look for reappearing comments, specifically for any notations that were perhaps written but not voiced. I was curious to detect what thoughts, if any, had been silenced or forgotten during the discussion. I also read the journal responses after transcribing each meeting

and looked for continuing themes or newly emerging ones, again following the same procedures as with the transcription of the recordings. Throughout the entire process, I tried to keep in mind “the purpose. . . which is to display the daily events of the phenomenon under study” Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 153).

Because this study is narrative in nature, there is no set standard by which to mark the data. Instead, it was necessary to be open to what all participants expressed and to work with the data as it evolved. This type of data cannot be measured for credibility in the traditional sense. In order to maintain the value of this study, the data was triangulated through the three forms of collection: (1) my interpretations of the audio/video transcriptions of the focus group meetings and the notes taken by the participants while they watched the films in conjunction with the four journal responses written by the participants after watching the films, (2) the participants’ fifth and concluding journal reflection on their experience, and (3) the participants’ evaluation of my interpretations of what was discussed and written in reflection. As trends in the data appeared, they began to create a cross-referencing system that provided credibility to the findings.

Limitations and Biases

Because the impetus for this study is the current situation at the rural southeast Georgia high school where I teach, it was extremely important that I make every effort to maintain a role of neutrality while conducting the research so as to extend the validity of the study as much as possible. I asked for volunteers from the faculty to participate in the study in an effort to randomly select individuals. I selected an equitable number of participants from five levels of experience in the field. I selected as many various

academic and vocational teachers as possible so as to represent the thoughts of the faculty at large. While conducting the focus group discussions, I only interjected when the group focused on irrelevant discussion for an extended period of time. When posing the discussion prompts and journal prompts, I avoided language that was leading or biased. However, benefiting the study was the fact that all participants were acquaintances, which led to the ease of conversation experienced at the focus group discussions. The concern of confidentiality was alleviated by the consent forms that each participant signed as part of the IRB requirements as well as by the assurance that pseudonyms were to be used during the transcription of the audio/video recordings.

CHAPTER 4

MY FILM ANALYSIS THROUGH A PHENOMENOLOGICAL LENS

Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the notion of film as a phenomenological experience that affects the spectator in physical and emotional ways that contribute to the validation of her/his identity. I accomplish this through a phenomenological reading of the films chosen for this study. It is important to establish an understanding of the films themselves as well as the way in which my physical reactions to them guided me to use them as an impetus for focus group discussions.

Why Use Film in This Study?

Cultures since the beginning of time have produced various forms of art, from cave drawings to the decorations found on ancient sarcophagi, from the paintings on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel to the photographs of Annie Liebowitz, and from the hand painted frames of Hanna-Barbera to the digital images of computer-animated films. All of these art forms can be associated with aesthetics, implying “a conception of ‘beauty’ and thus of the taste and pleasure of the spectator” (Aumont, 1992, p. 6). However, no matter what the medium of the media, without its dedicated audience, it would have no purpose. So to what end does the audience strive in absorbing the virtues of painting or photography, television or film? I believe that the audience actually wants and needs more than a simple definition of aesthetics and is, indeed, aching for a reflection of self, looking for validation, and searching for the meaning of life. Audiences long to see a representation of reality that is “real enough” to pass as actual experience and, in turn, that gives them some guidance in dealing with life. In a global society that is

increasingly careless, rushed, and solitary, the audience is desirous of connecting with self and others, and such connection can be found through media, specifically the media of film. But what is the unique element that brings about the connection one can find in experiencing a film?

From a phenomenological theoretical lens, film is a means through which the spectator is able to gaze upon life from a distance while simultaneously experiencing life by way of the camera. One could consider film spectatorship to be a parallel to “the movement from our lived and un-reflected-upon experience of phenomena . . . to our reflection on both the phenomena and our mode of experiencing it” (Sobchack, 1992, p. 36). In other words, the spectator sees a representation of life unfolding on the screen and s/he internalizes those visual images and the various physical and emotional feelings that the images provoke. This might be compared to the experience of dreaming: for example, the sleeping person dreams that s/he is being chased and so is running quickly through streets of the mind to escape the imagined assailant. If awakened during the dream, the previously sleeping/dreaming person might be breathing heavily and may experience a feeling of fear or anxiety caused by the events in the dream. Despite the fact that this instance is just a dream, a story in the imagination and psyche of the dreamer, the physical and emotional evidence attests to the mode of reality that was experienced. Immediately after such a dream experience, and often later on as well, the dreamer feels as if s/he had actually experienced the event. “I know it was a dream but it was so *real*,” one might often say in retrospect. I contend that the experience of film is similar. When the spectator takes in a film, s/he too lives through a physical and emotional episode that becomes part of who s/he is. In the sections that follow, I sort through my own dream-

like experiences with the films that I selected for this study. I outline my own physical and emotional responses to the films and I connect my reactions to Sobchack's work as it was discussed in Chapter Two.

My Personal Readings of the Films

Mona Lisa Smile

Mona Lisa Smile tells the story of an independent young woman from the West Coast who joins the faculty of Wellesley College during the 1950's as an art history teacher. She believes that she is entering into a woman's college of enlightenment and instead finds herself surrounded by the idolization of marriage rather than education. Her battle becomes not only that of teaching art but also teaching young women to value their intellect as well as their hearts. In the end, the teacher leaves the college because her ideals for feminine emancipation do not match those of her colleagues and most of her students.

As I watched this film, there were moments that I found myself responding physically as if I were actually *taking part in* the action of the scene, rather than merely sitting in my living room relaxing in front of the television. The initial scene to evoke a physical reaction from me was the very first scene of the film depicting a ceremony to open the academic year. As the hollow, solemn a cappella voices of a ladies choir chime out into the stone chapel, all of the faculty members are proudly dressed in their robes, hats and hoods, standing erectly, awaiting the entrance of the student body, which is shown hastily walking in droves towards the chapel. At this point of the film I realized that my eyes were wide and that I was holding my breath as I clutched a napkin in my hand. The anticipation on the face of Ms. Watson mirrored my own anticipation (or is it

the other way around?), and I smiled in spite of the formality of the scene. Next the character of a young female student raps at the door with a formidable gavel taken from a velvet-lined box, her gesture announcing the presence of the eager, glowing students who want to enter the chapel in order to start their new year of learning. I felt myself sigh and closed my eyes as the skirted young women poured into the chapel after having heard President Karr regally announce the academic year as having begun. Those feelings overwhelmed me, and I felt as drained as if I had attended the ceremony myself! As the scene changed, I realized that the film had literally caused a physical reaction in me and that the scene had provoked feelings of mixed pride and wistfulness: I was proud to be an educator and wistful to teach students as enthusiastic, well-dressed, and respectful as the ones represented on the screen.

The next scene that moved me physically and emotionally portrays Ms. Watson meeting with her class for the first time. As she peers timidly through the window of the door to the classroom, girls flit by into the lecture hall as if gliding on roller skates. The nurse walks by and warns Ms. Watson that the students can “smell fear.” At this comment, I found myself sucking in a deep breath of air and I said to myself, “oh my!” Ms. Watson enters the auditorium, places her slide cases on the table and begins class by saying that they would be following Dr. Staunton’s syllabus. I noticed that I closed my eyes and shook my head left to right in awareness of her immediate error. By admitting that she herself had not designed the syllabus, she casts a shadow on her own reputation, and appears ill-equipped to teach the class. Before Ms. Watson can even ask, a student runs energetically to the front to retrieve the slide boxes and other students begin pelting her with questions and comments. When Ms. Watson introduces herself simply as

Catherine Watson, one student snidely remarks, “*Dr. Watson, I presume?*” I slowly let out the air from my lungs as I felt the beginning waves of disappointment being to flow from my head to my toes because it seemed that Ms. Watson was sinking and that the students were gaining control of the class. However, the new teacher responds to their inquiries with short, quick remarks, eager to begin the lesson, and the same student who took over the slide box runs to shut out the lights before Ms. Watson can even ask her to do so. I noticed my eyes rolling in my head in agony at the students’ anticipation of her every word because I could imagine her dread and feeling of ineptness. As she begins to discuss the art slides with the students with a shaky and hoarse voice, she is met with all-knowing attitudes glibly presenting all the right answers. She licks her lips and plows forward. At this point, I felt my stomach drop to my knees like it does when I ride a big roller coaster and I had this sensation of dread prick the skin on my arms. I could tell that this was the type of class that never lets a moment pass without trying to challenge the teacher, which can be a harrowing experience. As the students take over the class, flying through the slides of complicated art as if they were illustrations from Dr. Seuss’s children’s books, they eventually bring the class to a halting close and adjourn themselves by saying that if Ms. Watson has nothing more, they can simply go on to study hall. All the students get up and leave before Ms. Watson even has a chance to respond. She looks up wearily to see an administrator leaving the room forebodingly in the wake of the students. At the end of this scene, I groaned aloud from frustration and disbelief. I felt as if I were the one who had just made the million mistakes that Ms. Watson made on the screen.

During the scene where the nurse is dismissed I also noticed my embodiment of the action. Sitting in her office behind her dauntingly heavy, dark wooded desk, President Karr begins to tell the nurse of the complaints brought against her by the board, complaints which have become particularly serious after the publication of student Betty Warren's scathing article in the school newspaper regarding the nurse's practice of distributing contraceptives. The president's demeanor is rigid but somewhat compassionate, although her words are cut and dry when she tells the nurse that she has damaged the appearance of the school by supplying the girls with contraceptives. The nurse tries to smile and promises the president that she will not do anything to hurt the appearances of the school, that if appearances are all they are concerned with, she can meet those demands. The president reveals that the board has already taken action to dismiss her. I realized that I was holding my breath with fear at the tone of the president's voice which is tainted with resignation. When it becomes more and more apparent that they are going to let the nurse go, I felt my heart go up into my throat with anger and sadness and my fists clench at the boldness of such a dismissal. I believe that my reaction to her dismissal was so strong because I felt an injustice had occurred: it seemed that the nurse was only trying to help the girls, while the board was passing judgment on both the girls and the nurse. In trying to help them have responsible and safe sex, the nurse loses her job. This dismissal was something that I could see potentially happening to a well-meaning teacher whose actions might be pure of motive but had still managed to cause a negative societal reaction.

Another scene that caused me to react physically was when President Karr told Ms. Watson about some parent criticism with regards to her teachings. She catches Ms.

Watson in the hallway in a very “oh by the way,” almost friendly manner, which caused me to immediately sit up straight in my seat, and then tells her that she has been getting some phone calls about her unorthodox methods of teaching. The president is referring to Ms. Watson’s use of more modern art and her way of challenging the girls to think for themselves, regardless of what society tells them they should think. This scene made me wring my hands, as if I were the one being scolded because, just like the nurse, Ms. Watson is only trying to help the girls. The president says graciously that if she would like to remain at Wellesley, she will need to include less modern art in their “traditional” curriculum. Standing in the main hallway in front of the Christmas tree, Karr follows that warning with a cheery wish for happy holidays, leaving Ms. Watson standing alone and dumbfounded. In reaction, I found myself huffing a quick breath of anger and squinting my eyes at the very injustice of the president’s request, at this woman’s willingness to be the hired henchman for the parents. The irony of a powerful woman—the president of a premier women’s college—surrendering her power to those who pay her salary at the cost of engendering original thought in the minds of her young lady students infuriated me.

Later in the film, when Ms. Watson and her newlywed student, Mrs. Jones (formerly known as Betty Warren), go head to head in the classroom about her absences, I noted more of my strong physical responses. In the scene the class is going well, as Ms. Watson ironically illustrates how the non-conformist Van Gogh has been turned into something for everyone to copy with a mass-produced paint-by-numbers kit, when Mrs. Jones enters, head held high, and disrupts the lesson. As soon as she had entered the room I felt my face scrunch up and my arms crossed themselves because I could feel a

confrontation on the rise. The students are lighthearted and happy to see Betty back from her honeymoon and they gather around her, hug her, and congratulate her. Then Ms. Watson informs her of the work she has missed and the classes she has not attended. From there they get into a tit-for-tat argument that leads to Ms. Watson and Mrs. Jones' making each threats. One student tries to interject that the faculty members generally look the other way when the married students miss class, but Ms. Watson ignores her. Instead she wildly questions the students as to why they do not get married as freshmen so that they could graduate without ever having to actually attend class. Jones pithily tells Watson that she should not judge their traditions. Watson responds sternly that Mrs. Jones must come to class or that she will fail her. Jones tells her that there will be consequences, referring to the fact that her mother is on the board. Watson approaches her and questions whether this remark is a threat, to which Jones says that she is just trying to educate her. Watson tells her that education is HER job, at which point the conversation ends. I found myself pushing my tongue up against the roof of my mouth, pressing it against my front teeth in contempt for this student who was so disrespectful of the value of class time with her behavior and her comments. I was enraged that a teacher should have to defend the value of attending class.

An additional scene where I found myself reacting in a physical sense to the film was the following class scene depicting the day after Mrs. Jones writes a newspaper article slandering Ms. Watson and her intentions as a teacher at Wellesley. Ms. Watson charges into class with a purpose, handing the slide case to a student. She bellows out, "slide!" and a student frantically begins the show, which consists of magazine ads featuring women, and when a favorite student tries to make a joke, Ms. Watson breaks

the spell of camaraderie that has been built and tells them that they are just going to listen in class that day. I immediately put my hand to my mouth at both the content and message of the slides and at the abruptness of Ms. Watson's manner. I felt very uneasy because the slides were so belittling to women. Slide after slide posited women as the subjects of their husbands and Ms. Watson drills them rhetorically about what they see and what each slide means. I felt my heart drop and my breathing go shallow because the expressions on the faces of the students are mixed with confusion and enlightenment. The room is dead silent and at this juncture I noticed that I could hear myself begin to breathe again in anticipation of what challenge she will present to the students. Then Ms. Watson quotes a passage from the Jones article that says Ms. Watson is questioning the roles they were born to fill. Afterwards, Ms. Watson apologizes with an air of disappointment and defeat and then dismisses class. Her eyes are brimming over, and I too found myself with tears welling up in my eyes, as if I were the teacher being persecuted by young Mrs. Jones. I reacted to this scene because I could feel her pain: I have taught classes before where preconceived notions ruled the tone of the class and were simply impenetrable. I felt just as lifeless after that scene as I have felt in the past after dealing with some of my own students.

Toward the end of the film, Ms. Watson receives a letter from the president, which the viewer hears read aloud in the ominous voice of the president, inviting her back to the faculty if she can meet certain stringent criteria, such as turning in all lesson plans at the beginning of the school year and sticking strictly to the traditional curriculum. After Ms. Watson reads the letter, she enters into her classroom, where the class is enthusiastically discussing the Mona Lisa from their own perspectives. The

students are actively analyzing the meaning behind her eyes and her smile, offering their opinions as to why this piece is so valuable. During this discussion, I felt all the tenseness in my muscles release that had gathered as Ms. Watson had read the letter of impossible demands. Indeed, I felt revived and rejuvenated by the students' thoughtful discussion about the meaning of art. In the film they are so engaged in the dialogue that they do not even notice the seriousness of the facial expression of their teacher. At this point, I was feeling quite proud of the advancement of the students but as I saw Ms. Watson's face, I began to feel my own tears surfacing again. Ms. Watson could not even enjoy the fruits of her labor, this unimaginable display of critical thinking, because she had been asked to do the impossible for the following school term. To conform to the school's demands would be to lose her identity as a free thinker inspired by art.

In the final scene, which appears to take place immediately after the graduation ceremony, the girls frantically chase Ms. Watson down in the taxi as she is leaving. Seemingly, the whole class follows her longingly down the road, away from the college, waving tearfully, sadly, as this woman of substance rides out of their lives. It is this last scene that finally made me cry wholeheartedly, the kind of cry that is a heart-aching, full-bellied cry. I was sad that she was leaving this school that so obviously needed her but who did not want her as the person and teacher she was. I recognized some of that attitude as it is still reflected in educational institutions today.

My experiences with this film caused me multiple physical reactions that often mirrored and sometime echoed the ones acted out on screen. It is clear that my body was giving to the film as the film was giving to me. It was an exchange between two entities: the entity of the film as it displayed its representations of the world and the entity of me

as the viewer as I accepted and rejected those representations. Sobchack's explanation of such an embodied experience is critical in support of these thoughts. She says

Embodied beings are always active, no matter how "passive" they may be perceived from without. [The spectator's] vision is as active as the film's. What the film is doing visibly, [the spectator is] doing visually. . . . In the specificity of its prereflective spatial situation and reflective temporal consciousness, [the spectator's] lived-body experience in-forms how and what [the spectator sees], and [the spectator does] not merely 'receive' the film's vision *as* [her/his] own, but [s/he] "take[s]" it up *in* [her/his] own, and as an *addition* to [her/his] own. (1992, p. 271)

In other words, the viewer is not obliged to merely consume the experiences in the film as her/his own. Indeed, the viewer must shift through the experiences of and in relation to the film and should determine for her/himself their weight and value as it relates to her/him. I suggest that this phenomenological use of film is important to this study because I am interested in the fixed perceptions of teachers at Pence High School. In order to encourage these teachers to honestly investigate their own experiences and reality as teachers, they must first re-present those experiences at the forefront of their thoughts and feelings. Film is an avenue through which to accomplish this process. As teachers watch films about other educators, they are able to place themselves in the roles of the lead characters and have the opportunity to feel, contemplate, and accept or reject the representations that they see. The embodiment that takes place while watching films adds to and reminds the viewer of the visceral experiences they have had in the past. In addition, I suggest that discussion of these films and the experiences therein aids in a thorough self-reflection. The goal of the self-reflection is for the educators at Pence High School to gain a more critical understanding of their places in education and to apply that critical attitude toward their pedagogies.

Finding Forrester

The film *Finding Forrester* tells the story of a young African American teen from the Bronx whose talent for basketball rivals his passion for literature and writing.

Through unlikely circumstances, he meets a reclusive writer who becomes his mentor.

The elderly white male believes in the boy and his talent, which eventually gives the boy the courage to attend a private school. The final lesson is learned, however, by the mentor, who rediscovers the importance of trust.

Jamal is the main student character in the film and he is presented in the first several scenes as an average teen: he plays basketball with his friends, he attends classes but does not actively participate, and he has a sense of his own privacy, which is demonstrated by his jotting notes down in a notebook at his locker. However, the first scene where I was aware of feeling a physical reaction while watching this film occurred when Jamal's mother meets with his teacher about his test scores. The two are seated in student desks while they talk amicably about Jamal. The teacher tells the mother that while Jamal's grade average is a C, he has scored in the top percentiles on the state's standardized tests. As the mother learns that Jamal's scores are very high, she releases a flickering smile but behind her eyes is confusion and helplessness. At this moment I felt myself mirroring her exact facial expressions. Her expressions, I suggest, were because she did not understand why his classroom performance did not match his scores and because she did not really know what this information was supposed to mean for Jamal or for her. My expressions were due in part because I teach students like that, who are intelligent but whose grades do not reflect it, and because I feel inept in dealing with students like that since I can do almost nothing to motivate them. The mother responds

proudly that she knows he is smart and that he writes in his journals constantly but that Jamal only talks about basketball. The teacher tells her that basketball is where Jamal gets his acceptance because the teens do not care about each other's performance in the classroom. At this point, I noticed that I still had a flickering smile: this time, however, it was more of a knowing smile because I understood where the teacher was coming from. I teach students who seek peer validation through extra-curricular activities.

The next scene that evoked a physical response is the one where Jamal sneaks into the apartment of "the window," which is Forrester's home. He and his friends have noticed a person looking out at them as they play basketball. The boys talk about him on the court and at school, relating urban myths about this person that they call "the window." It is during a conversation at lunch that they dare Jamal to break into this apartment and to bring something back from it. The boys go at night and wait for the lights to be turned off. Once they think that the person has had ample time to fall asleep, they send Jamal to break in. As he climbs the fire escape and opens the window, I felt my heart begin to race with fear. I just knew that he was going to get hurt or get in trouble! The background music was a strumming guitar and I found myself holding my breath. Suddenly, from the darkness, Forrester appears, shouting, and Jamal scrambles like a cockroach to get out. I felt myself shake with emotional release because he escaped. However, he has left his backpack in the apartment and so he is forced to go back there the next day to ask for it. When he gets it back, he realizes that Forrester has read through all of his journals and has written comments in red ink. This intrigues Jamal and he goes back the next day to ask Forrester to read some more of his work. Forrester is agitated and shouts at him to write a 5,000 word essay on why he will stay out of the

apartment in the future. This made me laugh because I thought it interesting that Forrester managed to make a teachable moment out of what could have been such an unfortunate situation.

I also felt an embodied response to the scene showing Jamal sitting in the darkness on his small bed as he tries to write the 5,000 word essay for Forrester. In the background, through the thin walls of the apartment, there is the noise of people having sex, screaming and banging against the wall. My immediate reaction to this scene was the closing of my eyes as a feeling of pity washed over me from my gut. His environment caused this reaction in me because it made me wonder how many of my own students have difficulty working at home due to similar or worse situations.

Later on, there is a scene depicting a meeting between the administration of Jamal's local school, a private school, Jamal and his mother. Based on his test scores, the private school offers Jamal the chance to attend the private school, as the representative praises him for his test scores and off-handedly tells Jamal that he will be able to play basketball. I felt my back tense up and my throat tighten in warning and defense because I have seen students built up in the classroom just to be exploited in the sports arena. I felt that this was what was happening to Jamal: the private school needed a good African-American player and so they found the one with the highest test scores at a local school. My physical reactions were caused by my fear that Jamal was going to be let down by the administration in some way.

Soon after, Jamal goes into Forrester's apartment for a second time, upon invitation, and Forrester confronts him about his 5,000 word essay and about his being black. As he flips the pages of Jamal's work, he shouts out, "And you're black!"

Remarkable!” I felt shock at the boldness of his statement and a small jolt of surprise shot through my body at his calling Jamal “black” as if it were a derogatory statement. Jamal responds in irritation to Forrester’s statement, saying, “What do you mean I’m black,” and Forrester continues to goad him. However, Jamal does not let him get the best of him and he leaves without retaliating because he wants to continue the mentoring relationship that has begun between the two of them. My physical reaction occurred because of the content of Forrester’s comments, rather than the delivery. I could not imagine trying to motivate my students to perform, as Forrester was doing, by playing a sort of devil’s advocate game. I would imagine I could lose my job for that, even if it were done outside of school time.

During the following scenes, the mentoring relationship between Jamal and Forrester is solidified. I often found that I had physical responses to these lessons. For example, Forrester encourages Jamal to write the first draft with his heart and to write the second draft with his head. I found myself smiling at the mentoring demeanor of Forrester. He is strict yet understanding and this evoked my own understanding of his style as a teacher. Later on Jamal has trouble writing; it is as if he has a mental block. Forrester gives him an old article he had written and tells him to start typing it and then his own ideas will flow from it. When Jamal finishes the rewrite of the article that Forrester had written, Forrester glowingly tells him that being able to take his work and make it Jamal’s own is quite an accomplishment. I felt a huge smile cover my face at this comment because I felt pride in his accomplishment, as if he were my own student. As this scene continues, Jamal begins to tease Forrester about his past and his former life as a writer. He says things like, “back when people used to read your book” in order to get

a rise out of Forrester. I felt a small giggle bubble to the top of my throat at the very congenial relationship that was developing; the joy of what the two characters were experiencing manifested in my own joyous laugh. As Jamal prepares to leave, Forrester asks him to leave all things in the apartment that are written in the apartment. Jamal sighs the exasperated sigh of a teen but he complies.

During the development of the relationship with Forrester, Jamal begins attending the new private school, where he finds many challenges. One of these is his English teacher, Mr. Crawford. Mr. Crawford has the reputation of being a difficult teacher with whom to develop a good rapport. At the end of one of his first classes with Mr. Crawford, Jamal is asked to stay after. As he approaches the desk of the teacher, I felt knots form in my stomach as I fearfully anticipated the critical things the teacher would say. Mr. Crawford proceeds to speak derogatorily to Jamal about how his test grades do not match his course grades from his old school. Jamal responds to the teacher with stoic silence. Mr. Crawford haughtily tells Jamal that he will have a chance to prove through his writing in class whether or not he should be treated as a serious student or as just a boy who is there to play basketball. At this point, I felt my knots of fear change to knots of indignation at the teacher's negative and sarcastic way of talking to Jamal. In a later scene before class, Mr. Crawford accuses Jamal of cheating on his papers, saying that based on his background he should not be able to write with the talent that he is exhibiting. He demands that the next paper be written in front of him, in his office. During this scene my mouth dropped open at the audacity of this teacher. It seemed that every time this man spoke, I found myself on the verge of yelling at the screen. He was so offensive and I could just imagine how he made the students feel.

The next scene is of Jamal slamming Forrester's refrigerator door as he claims he will write nothing more for Crawford. Forrester asks him calmly what it will prove for Jamal to refuse to write. I found myself smiling a knowing grin at this scene because I could feel Forrester disarming Jamal and setting the situation up for Jamal to meet the challenge. Then Forrester makes the statement that Crawford's problem is that he is afraid of what he does not understand, which is how a black boy from the Bronx is capable of writing as well as Jamal does. At this point in the scene, I found myself shaking my head from side to side with frustration at Crawford's shallowness as a teacher and as a human. Forrester talks Jamal into continuing his writing and encourages him to turn in a paper for an essay competition that will be held by the school.

In order to compete in the essay contest, Jamal breaks the promise made to Forrester and enters the essay that he wrote based on Forrester's old article. Because Crawford is a literary scholar and is familiar with Forrester's work, he recognizes it as containing elements from a published article. During the scene when Crawford and the administration confront Jamal because they believe he has plagiarized parts of his essay, Jamal does not defend himself or reveal his relationship with Forrester. Instead, he goes to Forrester to ask him to write a letter to testify to the fact that he had permission from Forrester to use his work. Forrester is angry and hurt that Jamal betrayed their agreement to keep all of their work in the apartment and he refuses to help him. During this scene I felt myself clenching my teeth with anger at both Jamal and Forrester because I felt let down by both of them. I felt let down by Jamal because he did not trust in himself to write something on his own and I felt let down by Forrester because he did not immediately show outward support for this child for whom he seemed such an advocate.

Toward the end of the film during the competition from which Jamal has been disqualified and because of which his future at the school is in jeopardy, Forrester shows up to read a paper that Jamal wrote. All of the spectators are in awe because Forrester has graced them with his presence. Crawford believes the writing that is being read belongs to Forrester, and at the conclusion of the reading, Crawford begins to stutter and praise Forrester for his incredible talent. However, when Forrester reveals that the writing belongs to Jamal, Crawford is shamed and disbelieving. Throughout this scene I felt my chest fill up with air and I was moved to the edge of my seat in anticipation of what was to come. I felt a huge wave of pride flow over my body for both Jamal's work and for Forrester's support of Jamal.

My physical and emotional reactions to this film, although similar in actual manifestation to the ones I experienced while watching *Mona Lisa Smile*, were specifically different in meaning. What I found that I gained from this film was the ability to *feel* from both the teacher *and* student perspectives. This caused me to consider the rigidity with which I normally view my experiences as a teacher. As the source of my physical and emotional feelings jumped back and forth while I watched the film, I began to have the sense that I no longer was able to view the film from one fundamental point of view. Sobchack says that "this fluid, centered and de-centering intentional encounter with a sensible and significant world implicates a bodily being in and of it and indicates a consciousness able to sense and make sense through movement and sight and reflection upon movement and sight" (1992, p. 218). In other words, my bodily responses to various points of view identifies me as part of the film and this enables me to feel these things and to understand their meanings because I have experienced them both within the

context of the film and as an expression of the film. I contend that this aspect of film viewing is important to my study because I want the participants in the focus groups to come to terms with the vitality of multiple perspectives and how those can be used toward the development of a critical pedagogy. If a bodily experience and one's conscious investigation of such in relation to film viewing can de-center the teachers' points of view, then film viewing is an integral activity to the goal of this study.

The Ron Clark Story

The Ron Clark Story is based on the true story of a young, southern white male teacher who takes a risk by moving to New York City to teach at an elementary school in Harlem. He chooses to teach the class perceived as the worst in the school. Because the teacher creatively and firmly educates and disciplines the students at school, often even working with them in their homes, the students are able to achieve state test scores higher than those of the students in the gifted class.

The very first scene that struck me physically was when Ron Clark was reporting for his first day of teaching in a southern elementary school. A boy is shown standing inside of a trashcan in the hallway. Ron asks him what he is doing and the boy sadly says that his teacher told him that since he could not learn that he should go out with the trash. Ron leans down and kindly introduces himself, they talk for a minute, and then Ron asks the boy if he remembers his name. The boy does, and Ron says, "See, you can learn," and picks him up out of the trashcan. During this scene, I found myself flinching at the sight of the student in the trashcan and I let out a sigh of disgust at the thought of a teacher actually doing something that cruel.

The movie fast-forwards to the scene when Ron decides he is going to try teaching somewhere else. The school is having an end of the year party and they celebrate Ron's success at bring up the standardized test scores by giving him his own parking space with a cement pile engraved with his name. Because of this, Ron wants to go somewhere else where he will make a difference and he decides to move to New York City. After knocking on every school door in Harlem, Ron finally lands a job when he walks up to a school where the principal and a teacher are arguing in the entranceway. The teacher says that he has had enough and that he is not coming back. Ron instantly volunteers to take his place, asking to teach the least desirable class on campus.

The next scenes that moved me were the ones showing Ron Clark visiting the various students' parents before he begins teaching in the school in New York. He goes door to door, where he is yelled at by a single parent, met with silence as he sits for tea with an extended family of Indians, wards off being seduced by another single parent, and has the door slammed in his face by yet another. I found my eyes wide and mouth gaping at such an exhibition of dedication. Specifically, when he visits the home of the student Shemika and he is treated without any respect, yet he persists with visits to other families, I noticed that I took a deep breath and that I let it out slowly. To continue in the face of such apparent disrespect seemed a bit overwhelming to me.

After Ron has been at the school for a few days and has tried to establish rules and a familial atmosphere, he finds that the students are uncooperative and unwilling to work with him. Indeed, even the principal does not treat Ron with respect. The principal, as he looks around Ron's bright and freshly painted classroom, bellows, "Who vandalized this room?" I found myself cringing at the principal's negative attitude and at

the fact that he would undermine the authority of a teacher, especially one who is trying to encourage the low performing students. He says to Ron, “My school, my rules, my way.” I was outraged at this flagrant showing of power over Ron by the principal; however I recognized the situation as all but uncommon. As would be expected, the students in the film follow up the principal’s warning with a big, “whewoo,” which made me purse my lips because I understand how it feels when the students pit the administration against a teacher. It is not an uncommon occurrence, and this scene made me frustrated and angry.

After this scene, Ron continues to try to build trust and respect among his students while he is teaching the content for their standardized tests. He tries various methods, such as story telling, rapping, and chugging chocolate milk. Several times he finds his room vandalized and on most occasions, the students are still not respectful, but he does not let this deter him from his mission of helping the students obtain high test scores on the state tests.

Another scene to which I felt a clear reaction was when Shemika shows a blatant disrespect for Ron after he has been trying for weeks to bring the class together as a “family.” He is asking the students to turn in the journals that they were supposed to write. He calls on them one by one, with an increasing disappointment in his voice, but not one student has it. He calmly asks them why they are doing this, and Shemika begins her tirade of disrespect. She mocks him, saying, “Oopps, I forgot to say ‘yo sir,’ I guess I’ll get a check by my name.” Ron asks her confusedly if she wants to get a detention, and she flippantly turns her back to him and begins to talk to another student about her nail polish. Ron demands for her to look at him when he talks to her. She defiantly

continues to keep her back to him and says sarcastically, “Oh my double bad, I guess I’ll get another check.” He yells to get her attention, “Look at me,” and swirls her desk around. Shemika squeals in surprise and tells him to go to hell. He grabs her desks and shakes it up and down three times. The class is silent. Ron realizes what he has done, grabs his pack, says, “You win,” and he leaves the room. During this entire scene, I felt my heart begin to race and I realized that I was holding my breath when suddenly, at the point where Ron shakes the desk, I let it go in a huff. The tension from that scene made me feel physically rigid because I understand what it is like to feel that frustrated by a student’s behavior, but I could never imagine reacting the way he did. I was afraid that he was going to get into trouble with the principal but nothing happened. Indeed, after spending an afternoon away, exploring the city, Ron comes back the next day to continue his efforts. Eventually, the students come to respect him and they begin to give serious effort to learning. Some students attend weekend tutoring at restaurants where Ron meets them for lunch and others, like Shemika, get house visits in order to help them achieve.

Later in the film, Ron meets with Shemika and her mom in the principal’s office about his having overstepped his boundaries. The mother is angry because Ron was at her apartment the night before, cooking dinner for Shemika and her brothers so that Shemika could do her homework. At this meeting, Ron tries quite emphatically to tell the mother about Shemika’s potential, but at first the mother only sees him as a white man telling her what to do. As the conference ends, they move into the hallway. The mother says that Ron is giving her daughter grand ideas that are just going to be crushed by life. Ron tells the mother that Shemika has potential, that she is intelligent, creative, and is a born leader. He says that she may test well enough to transfer to the gifted

school if they can work together. The mother softens and agrees to have the babysitter keep the younger children longer each day so that Shemika can have more study time. During the beginning of this scene, I found myself gripping the cushion to my sofa because I felt anger at the mother for using her discontent with the world as an excuse to dismiss education. At the end of the scene, after Ron talks her into cooperating, I felt my muscles relax and I let out a sigh. The whole scene, I realized, I had been sitting with my muscles taut because of the confrontation that was taking place. I have experienced that same feeling when I have had to confront parents of the students that I teach and it always makes me weak in the knees afterwards, which is a very similar feeling to the one I felt when I let my muscles relax at the end of this scene.

Toward the end of the film, Ron is trying to save another student, Tayshawn. To reward the students for their hard work, Ron arranges for the class to see a musical, *The Phantom of the Opera*. Tayshawn is excited and he takes the flyer home and paints a graffiti-style work of art on the wall of his bedroom. His foster father comes in, sees the work, and tells him that he is supposed to do that on the street and not at home. He beats Tayshawn within an inch of his life. Meanwhile, Ron notices that Tayshawn does not show up at the theater. He leaves the parents in charge and anxiously takes off to search for him. Ron goes to the apartment, which is empty, sees the graffiti, and bolts out of the door. Eventually, Ron finds Tayshawn in a nearby alley. He comforts the weeping boy and takes him to get medical attention and then to a boys' home recommended by the principal. Throughout this scene, my legs and arms were shaking and I began to cry. My reactions were an embodiment of the stress and danger portrayed on the screen. I have

never experienced anything like this in real life, but I felt such compassion for the student in the film that I empathized with the scene.

The final scene of the film that moved me was the awards ceremony that Ron held in his classroom. During the ceremony, he honors students for their high achievements and improvements. He is calling out their names and they come forward, dressed very nicely, to receive their awards. Suddenly the principal comes in and he announces that their test scores have returned. All the students passed, scoring even higher than the honors class. There is an immediate eruption of joyous celebration. Before I realized it, the pride that I felt on my face in the form of a smile had turned to tears of happiness and inspiration that I felt because of the accomplishments of these students. It was as if I was their teacher and had been the one to help them realize their goals. I could imagine the satisfaction that they all felt at their accomplishments.

One thing that the physical and emotional reactions to this film did for me was to call into question my own way of seeing. Essentially, I had to choose to see the representation of the teacher in this film as realistic or unrealistic. I had to take ownership in the way that I used my point of view to establish exactly how I would approach the meaning of my reactions. This process, I suggest, is similar to the process that one goes through in formulating a critical pedagogy that incorporates an understanding of one's vision of the world. "The first steps toward this possession of our own vision involve a radical reflection on the act of viewing and its relation to our being-in-the-world. They also involve a radical reflection on ourselves as viewing subjects who are aware of our own immediate and mediate access to the world and others" (Sobchack, 1992, p. 54). What this means for this study is that as the participants process their

physical and emotional feelings evoked by the films, they assert the understandings of these to their realities and how they view those realities. An awareness of perspectives and realities is pertinent as one moves toward a critical pedagogy. The role of the focus group in all of this reflection and growth is to offer a non-threatening space outside of the school for teachers to develop these thoughts with other professionals in the field.

The Browning Version

The Browning Version relates a tale of a retirement-aged British teacher who works at a private boarding school for boys in England. Students all respect and fear this teacher of the classics but only one has endeared him to his heart. As the teacher is forced into early retirement to make way for a modern languages program, he must share the spotlight with a departing teacher who is leaving to play professional rugby. This complicated plot demonstrates much about the life of a teacher outside of the classroom, touching on school politics and personal relationships. In the end, the viewer is left to answer her/his own questions evoked by the film.

Because of this movie's emphasis on the character of the teacher as a complex person, rather than on him solely as a teacher, my reactions to this film were a little different than they were to the others. The first scene of opening prayers for the day gave me a feeling of welling curiosity because although their attire of academic robes seemingly demonstrated a respect for education, the headmaster's announcements for the week dealt mostly with news revolving around sports, with a brief reference to the main character Andrew Crocker-Harris's impending "retirement" from teaching classical languages. I found myself furrowing my brow and squinting my eyes because of the

ironic nature of the scene. Here the audience sees a visual value of academia but the words that are spoken do not support the ruse.

After the morning prayers, the scene shifts to the courtyard outside the chapel. Andrew is immediately portrayed as being isolated from everyone—his peers, students, and wife—as he walks through the crowd and then sits alone on a bench. There is no real indication of why he is alone and it caused me to frown in bewilderment because I felt as if I had just stepped into the middle of a deep conversation of which I was not a part. In the film, people in the courtyard refer to Andrew and his leaving the school, but no one approaches him. I found myself immediately feeling sorry for this older, distinguished man, and this emotion manifested itself in my shifting uncomfortably in my seat, as if I were searching for a way to figure out why he and his situation seemed so mysterious.

The next scene takes place in Andrew's classroom and it is this last class meeting that moved me. Before Andrew arrives to teach class, the students are talking and gesturing, some making fun of Andrew, calling him Hitler. The headmaster, who appears to be quite a dolt, comes in and talks to the boys as he and the new teacher who will take Andrew's place wait for his arrival. As Andrew appears, the students scatter to their seats without talking. Andrew's presence in the classroom is like that of a king at court as he strolls down the aisle to the front of the classroom. The students are silent; they stand when called upon; they work without talking. The students give diligently, though perhaps not freely, of their efforts while Andrew seems to remain aloof and at a distance seated behind his large wooden desk in an ornately carved over-sized chair. At this point, I felt myself pinch my eyes shut and quickly reopened them again as I shook my head, a physical accompaniment to my surprise at the respect that Andrew commanded from his

students. At the end of class, during which most of the time students are correcting their writings without talking, Andrew tells them a very reserved farewell and good luck, and then he announces that he has an end of term treat for them. For a moment, there is a glimmer of hope in the boys' eyes until he reveals that they will be reading a scene of the play *Agamemnon*. He says this with a certain pride and pleasure directed at the magnitude of the work that they will read. The students do not react as if this is a treat; however, as they read shakily, Andrew passionately helps them to pronounce the words. At this point, I felt myself shaking my head in agreement with Andrew's methods, understanding from my own point of view as a French teacher what it is like to teach a language. When he realizes that they do not understand the text, he tells them this and narrates what has happened. Suddenly he excitedly takes over the reading himself, almost unaware of the boys in the room, until the bell rings to dismiss class. The students remain frozen in their desks until Andrew stops reading and dismisses them himself. They flee from the room without saying a word of goodbye to him. He later goes to the window and stoically stares out of it. The audience does not see what Andrew is looking at and an odd feeling of pending doom looms in the air. In the end, I felt let down, as if my energy had been depleted, I think because I wanted the students to appreciate Andrew despite his reticent demeanor. However, I could not quite put my finger on why I felt so drained, especially so early on in the film.

The next scene depicts the student Tapelo coming to Andrew's house for private lessons. Before Tapelo arrives, a young science teacher arrives at the house to meet Andrew, who has not yet arrived. There is an awkward moment between Andrew's wife and the teacher where the audience can sense that there is some underlying problem that

has yet to be identified. Just then, Tapelo arrives for his lesson. Andrew arrives immediately after Tapelo and they go out into the yard for the tutoring. This is another scene where I experienced physical and emotional reactions. As Tapelo attempts to translate aloud from a text while they are sitting out under a tree, Andrew holds his head back, eyes closed, listening intently to his pupil. When Tapelo makes errors, Andrew corrects him pointedly but with care; however Tapelo eventually begins to put his own spin on the translation. This causes Andrew to open his eyes and look at Tapelo and he questions Tapelo's version of translation. Tapelo is hesitant but expresses his desire to add the emotion he feels from the text into the words of his translation. Andrew smiles pleasantly, looks away, and recounts a time when he was a young man and that he too felt moved by the text. Andrew seems as if he is in a far away place as he talks. He admits to having written his own ardent translation full of emotion and he continues to stare into the distance. This scene made me feel wistful and I found myself somewhat confused by Andrew's mysteriousness. I noticed again that I was shifting in my seat, acting out my inability to settle my thoughts.

Meanwhile, it is revealed that Andrew's wife is having an affair with the young science teacher and there are several comments by many of the male faculty that insinuate that she has perhaps had affairs with others, although that is never confirmed. It is also revealed that she has a very condescending attitude toward Andrew, even going as far as to blame him for the denial of the pension. She is unable to hold her tongue when it comes to dealing with Andrew, but his responses are tepid and very brief. It is implied that they have an interesting history together but the details are never exposed. The

whole sense of the film is one of reserve, as if the plot itself is a character mimicking Andrew.

The next scenes that I found to be moving involved the headmaster. First, the headmaster comes to meet with Andrew about his pension. The headmaster explains that even though Andrew is being forced into retirement early because of ill health, the governors of the school are not willing to grant him the pension. Andrew brings up the fact that the administration is forcing him to retire and that there have been exceptions made before, but the headmaster replies that they are asking him to leave to benefit his health (about which the audience is never given the details) and that the exceptions occurred in the past because a teacher received direct injuries during a staff-student football match. At this point I felt indignant and I could tell that I was breathing hard and that I was cocking my jaw to the side because I felt that Andrew was not being treated fairly. He seems like an upstanding individual who is dedicated to his field but the headmaster and the board that the audience never sees seem to have hidden reasons for asking him to retire and for not offering him the pension. Second, there are a series of celebrations that take place during this last week of school. I found myself reacting physically when they are at the cricket match and the headmaster discusses the order of the end of term ceremony with Andrew. There is another teacher leaving at the end of this term who is going away to join a national sports team. The students, of course, idolize this teacher. The headmaster asks Andrew to concede his right to speak last as the senior member of the faculty to the sportsman because he says he feels Andrew's speech will be anti-climatic. Andrew gives his consent to go first. My physical reaction to this was to clench my teeth in response to the audacity of the headmaster. He seemed like

such an innocuous bumbling older man, but his way of manipulating Andrew, who appeared to be a far superior person, managed to irk me into gnashing my teeth.

Toward the end of the film, at the cricket match, Tapelo finds Andrew under a tree, gazing into the distance. He gives Andrew the gift of Robert Browning's translation of *Agamemnon*. Andrew accepts it graciously and begins to cry after reading the message Tapelo has written inside. Tapelo feels he might have made errors, but Andrew tells him that it is perfect. At this moment, I felt such sorrow for Andrew that my chest ached for him in his solitude. Tapelo is, understandably, very confused at this outpouring of emotion by his teacher. Andrew assures him that it is due to the immense stress he has felt lately and then praises Tapelo for the wonderful gift. When Andrew rejoins his wife and other teachers, he joyfully tells them of the gift from Tapelo. The teacher who is to take the place of Andrew and the classics program with his modern language department is asked to read the notation by Tapelo. He tries but does a poor job, and Andrew is shown merely looking at him without saying a word. Andrew's wife, on the other hand, seething with some unknown anger, demeans the gift and the writing from Tapelo, causing Andrew to excuse himself. The young science teacher, who at this point has broken all ties with Andrew's wife, follows him to the library, where he tries to encourage Andrew. Andrew listens politely but tells the young man to let him be. I again felt that there were multiple layers of meaning to this conversation beyond what the audience is allowed to know or to understand.

The final scene of the film is the end-of-term ceremony. Before the ceremony, Andrew and his wife decide that they should separate. They arrange for her to go away to her mother's house immediately. Andrew goes alone to the ceremony where he will

give his speech. However, instead of presenting first, as he had previously agreed, Andrew changes his mind and insists on giving his speech last. He is welcomed by very little applause when his name is announced. I noticed that I felt a sense of dread in my stomach at the pitiful show of support with which he was received and I was surprised that the students and faculty would not have made more of an outward show for him, despite any negative feelings that they might have had. As he begins to speak from his note cards, he realizes that what he has planned to say is not what his heart feels.

Meanwhile, his wife sneaks into the auditorium to show her last effort of support. At that moment he is overcome by the need to connect with the students and he tells them that he has failed to give them sympathy, encouragement and humanity and asks for their forgiveness. Because of this, I experienced a chill accompanied by a sigh, which indicated to me that I felt a sense of resolution with the problems of this character.

Although I was left with many questions, I enjoyed a sense of knowing that this character is able to come to terms with whatever internal conflicts he was experiencing, including those that were not revealed to the audience.

Because this film's plot was more involved than the other three films that I selected, I felt that my physical and emotional reactions to it emanated from a different place than the ones to the other films. I was really forced to ponder these reactions, rather than just identify them with experiences that I had encountered in my own life. Indeed, not very many of the experiences of the teacher in the film had I ever lived as my own. I was required to deeply analyze why and how the physical and emotional manifestations to the film were provoked and to understand what meaning they held for me. Sobchack describes this activity as mediating. She says

Thus, while space and its significance are intimately shared and lived by both film and viewer, the viewer is always at some level aware of the double and reversible nature of cinematic perception, that is of perception *as* expression, of perception as a process of *mediating* consciousness's relations with the world. The viewer, therefore, shares cinematic space with the film but must also negotiate it, contribute to and perform the constitution of its experiential significance. (Sobchack, 1992, p. 10)

I suggest that this type of activity is one of critical thinking and as such supports this study as a means of encouraging critical thinking practices in teachers. By asking the focus groups to watch and mediate film, I am asking them to come together as a think tank of sorts. The films serve as a springboard, a point of departure, from which the participants can discuss their experiences (through the real and through those in the films), how those experiences have affected them physically and emotionally, and what the outcomes of these effects have been and what they predict them to be in the future. I posit that these discussions can encourage teachers to strive toward a reclaiming of their identities, which, I have argued earlier in Chapters One and Two, are in jeopardy.

Conclusion

“Won from our reflection on the nature and function of our own vision, it is this understanding that confers upon the film the human capacity for perception and expression and infuses its performance of vision with meaning” (Sobchack, 1992, p. 278). It is essentially vision that should be used as the basis for the starting point from which to push toward an understanding and relationship of reconciliation with and about film and how it and its processes affect our lived experiences. Film offers the opportunity to experience and re-experience. Within that world teachers just may find a pathway to a new understanding of themselves, how they become who they are, and how they can use experiences with film to reorganize and redirect their ways of thinking.

These redirections may help them to engage in practices toward a critical pedagogy in order to take control of their own lives in the real world.

CHAPTER 5

FOCUS GROUP ONE: DISCUSSION OF DATA

All explanations of my conduct in terms of my past, my temperament and my environment are therefore true, provided that they be regarded not as separable contributions, but as moments of my total being, the significance of which I am entitled to make explicit in various ways, without its ever being possible to say whether I confer their meaning upon them or receive it from them.

---Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 1958, p. 529

Introduction

This chapter and the next will attempt to sort out the discussions that followed each focus group's viewings of the films as well as the brief journal reflections written by the participants. Rather than view these discussions as raw data to be manipulated, they are being viewed as confidential conversations held by colleagues, many of which are acquaintances and friends. Indeed, the intention of this work is to reveal the situation at the rural, southeast Georgia high school where I teach with the members of the focus groups. The process by which I have examined these pieces was through a method of discovery. This approach allowed me to see what consistent themes surfaced from the commentaries. Despite my efforts to maintain the highest level of neutrality in interpreting these segments, this work is quite naturally affected by my own subconscious and conscious interests and concerns. Indeed, a person with different interests and experiences might read these transcripts and journals and come to very different conclusions than I. In order to validate my findings as they pertain to the situation at Pence High School, I asked several focus group members to read my interpretations and to make notes as they read. My interpretations evolved from intensive study of the data. First, I worked through each session by the chronological order of the meetings,

processing one film viewing session at a time. I listened to the audio recording and viewed the video recording several times each before actually transcribing the conversation itself. I did this because I wanted to get a genuine feel of the tone of each meeting. I also read any notes taken by the participants during the film. After the transcription, I read the brief journal reflections several times each. Once having done this for all films for both focus groups, I was able to discern certain emerging themes of thought that reflect the concerns about teachers and their identities that provoked the theme of this study. In the sections that follow, I will provide some insight into the discussions based on a mixture of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and Sobchack's film studies. The sections are (1) the participants' physical and emotional responses to film, (2) anti-intellectualism, (3) surveillance, (4) language of defeat, (5) positive language and hope for the future, and (6) evidence of critical thinking and steps toward critical pedagogy. The information in each section will be arranged in the chronological order of the focus group meetings where the films were viewed and will include commentary from those meetings as well as from the film notes and journal reflections. The conclusion section will be an exploration and interpretation of the fifth and final journal reflections concerning the participants' thoughts on their experiences with the focus group.

Physical and Emotional Responses

Merleau-Ponty posits, "We have no way of knowing what a picture or a thing is other than by looking at them, and their *significance* is revealed only if we look at them from a certain point of view, a certain distance and in a certain *direction*, in short only if we place, at the service of the spectacle our collusion with the world" (1958, p. 499).

Merleau-Ponty's argument is that one must have a point of reference in order to grant meaning to something. In this work, I argue that the body of film has no meaning without the viewer who views it from her/his own situated perception of reality that is gained through living. For the purpose of this study, the participants in the focus group serve as the point of view, the origin of perception, from which these films about teachers are viewed. The distance and direction that they impose on these films varies according to their individual experiences in education. As the GPS—global positioning system (interesting that the state of Georgia should name their new standards GPS also: two methods of surveillance that appear on the surface quite innocuous)—of this study, the participants were directed to tune in to what the sensations of their bodies had to say to them because physical reaction is an embedded part of a person's experiences. Indeed, "what is called sensation is only the most rudimentary of perceptions, and, as a modality of existence, it is no more separable than any other perception from a background which is in fact the world. Correspondingly each act of perception appears to itself to be picked out from some all-embracing adherence to the world" (Merleau-Ponty, 1958, p. 281). Because one of the interests of this dissertation is one's physical response to film, it was important to draw the participants' attention to their physical reactions during the viewing. I provided paper to the participants on which they were to record any awareness of physical reactions while viewing the film. Many of the participants took notes; however, encouraging them to discuss their reactions in terms of the physical was a much more difficult task than I had imagined. Although many of their notes show that they did indeed pay attention to their physical reactions, those physical experiences were expressed as emotions during the discussion.

Mona Lisa Smile: Film Discussion

This first meeting evidenced the lack of acknowledgement that people in general give toward the importance of embodied experience. All participants were present and seemed to feel a little nervous. The discussion went rather slowly and included some very long pauses. It seemed that most of the teachers in Focus Group One had a difficult time discussing the film in terms of how their bodies reacted to certain scenes. When asked at the beginning of the discussion, “Did you find that the first scene, at the opening ceremony of school... did you find yourself doing anything physically, during the scene where they rap the gavel?” (fg1-1, p. 1), only one participant noted an embodied experience of the film. This participant, Amanda, said, “Oh sure, goose bumps. My hair stood straight up,” which was followed by, “Academic regalia always makes you feel like you should stand up straighter and show off your hood and show people what you’re made of, and to show people that we are a profession. We are not a job” (fg1-1, p. 1). Amanda’s comment demonstrates a keen understanding of why her physical reaction to the film contained meaning for her. Indicating that an encounter with an experience on film does indeed evoke physical response likened to that of an actual experience, Amanda connected how she felt during the film to how she has felt in reality when she has dressed in an academic robe and hood. Despite the fact that she only wears such apparel once a year, she is in tune with the physical and emotional connection between her reaction to the film and her feelings in reality. Other participants responded to the initial question with an emphasis on their emotions rather than their physical reactions. Sheryl said, “I felt proud,” Amelia said, “yeah” in agreement, and Patricia said, “We wish some of those traditions were still in place” (fg1-1 p. 1). These participants were speaking of emotions

that they felt during the film. These emotions were difficult to associate with a physical manifestation. They knew that something inside them gave them the feeling of being proud and of wishing but they did not attempt to articulate an exact physical reaction.

As the discussion continued, the group focused on the main teacher character's first day in the classroom. Many had comments on the way the students drilled their teacher relentlessly to the point of what one might call defeat. Patricia said, "It made me mad," while Sheryl offered, "Yeah, I could just feel myself [gasping noise of sucking in breath], like losing my breath" (fg1-1, p. 2). Here is a very good example of emotion versus physical response. Patricia called on the *word* describing the feeling itself, whereas Sheryl was specific about her *body's* involvement in the viewing, even to the point of re-enacting her physical response. How did Patricia know that the scene made her mad? Was it because she too sucked in her breath or did she clench her fists or grit her teeth? Despite her neglect in describing her physical reaction, Patricia was evidently in touch with the situation in the film and continued to take part in a discussion where the participants voiced their understanding based on previous experiences in their own classrooms. Eventually she displayed another emotion evoked by the film: "I panicked when they said, 'You've got to turn in your lessons for the entire term'" (fg1-1, p. 4). Here she identified with what the main character was feeling and although Patricia still did not offer us a physical description in the discussion, it is possible that there was a physical manifestation of that panic she felt.

Later in the film, the nurse is disciplined by the administration for distributing contraceptives to the female students. The focus group was asked, "How about when the nurse was dismissed? At the beginning of the film Ms. Jones wrote the editorial that the

nurse was promoting promiscuity, and thereafter the nurse lost her job. Did you have any physical response to that?” (fg 1-1, p. 9). Mack responded, “It was vomiticious. [quoting the word from the film]” (fg 1-1, p. 9). Although this was said somewhat in jest, it does demonstrate the acute sensations that Mack experienced at the idea of such an unjust situation in the film. The embodiment he experienced was evoked by some sense of knowing and he was able to single out a very strong physical reaction. He backed up his physical response with one of emotion: “It was sad because she either had to conform or leave, at that point” (fg 1-1, p. 9).

At the end of the meeting, several participants were anxious to know if I had “gotten what I needed” from them. Always the student, these teachers wanted to be sure that they were earning a 100% on their assignments. I explained to them, as I did at the beginning of the meeting, that I only wanted to be allowed to record their conversations about their thoughts relating to the films and to education in general and for them to think about how to use those thoughts to ameliorate their school environments. I let them know that I had no idea what would come from these conversations but that the whole process was just an adventure to be enjoyed. They left with smiles on their faces, commenting that it was fun.

Mona Lisa Smile: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

There was some evidence of physical reaction to the films written in the participants’ film notes, as they were encouraged to write down moments when they noticed a physical or emotional reaction to the film. There were also several participants who mentioned their feelings in their journal reflections. As for the order of this section and the following sections on *Film Notes and Journal Reflections*, I will report the

findings that were recorded by all of the participants. I will not repeat any remarks made by the same participant; however, I will include any notes that duplicate what was said by others in an effort to validate what was said. Then I will make a general interpretation of how these notations are related to the study.

In reference to the first scene of the opening ceremony of the school year, Monica was the only participant that had not already voiced her physical reactions. She wrote in her film notes that she felt “puffed up” with a good feeling. This feeling, I would suggest, was due to the honor, respect and importance that are placed on academics in this first scene.

Amanda and Amelia noted that the experience at the first class meeting of the main character, Ms. Watson, made them scared because the students could predict every move she was making. Patricia said that this scene made her grit her teeth and that she became tense. Monica jotted down that she could feel the situation in her stomach. All of these physical and emotional reactions indicate that the participants were able to put themselves in the shoes of Ms. Watson. The scene became an embodied experience for them as they reconnected with feelings some of them identified as similar or the same as those experienced on their first day of teaching.

Monica remarked that the scene where the nurse is dismissed made her clench her jaws, while Mack stated that he felt sadness that they were demanding she conform or leave the faculty. Both of these reactions imply that the participants felt empathy for the nurse, perhaps because they understood what it might feel like to be forced to conform.

As Ms. Watson experienced the critiques of the administration and parents about her unorthodox teaching methods, Monica made a note that she felt rigid and that she

found herself wrinkling her nose. This physical response of Monica's muscles tightening and her facial reaction indicate that she experienced a feeling of being on guard during the attack on Ms. Watson. Her body responded as if she too were being attacked. Mack wrote that he felt amazement at the control the parents have over the school in the film. Although it is unclear how the feeling of amazement manifested in Mack, one can imagine that his eyes widened and that perhaps his breath shortened.

When Ms. Watson has the confrontation with the student, Mrs. Jones, about her absences, Monica and Amelia wrote that they felt anger at the student. Sheryl marked that she felt sick to her stomach, while Mack said that he felt shocked; both noted that students in their classes at Pence High School are absent as frequently as this character and that they expect the same treatment that Mrs. Jones in the film expects. All of these reactions indicate that the participants were reliving similar experiences to this scene in the film because they were able to connect to it with passion.

After Ms. Watson re-groups, she brings slides of contemporary art to class in an attempt to have a discussion on the role of women in society. During this scene, Monica remarked that she felt her eyes widen and her teeth clench. Her first reaction, I would suggest, was in response to the depiction of women as subservient to men in the advertisements of the 1950s. Her second reaction, I suppose, was in response to the students' rather blank and unassuming reactions to what their teacher was trying to show them. Amelia wrote that she felt sadness for Ms. Watson and for women in general and disappointment in the students for not being more bold and independent. Mack said that he felt heartbroken for Ms. Watson because she wanted more for her students than they wanted for themselves. The collection of the responses implies that these participants

identify with Ms. Watson, I would argue, because they know what it is like to want students to achieve the highest goals possible and that they too are let down at times that some students desire to achieve only the bare minimum.

During the meeting between Ms. Watson and President Karr, when Ms. Watson is asked to conform or make plans to leave the following term, Monica, Amelia, and Sheryl said that they could feel Ms. Watson's frustration as she is cut off at every pass. These participants' frustrations were rooted in, as they all wrote, having experienced similar conversations with administrators who are not willing to let teachers do what they think is right. These teachers drew on those experiences to enhance their understanding of the film through their mental and physical responses. In addition, Mack wrote that he felt moved because Ms. Watson was unwilling to accept what was considered normal. I would argue that this feeling germinates from the same origin as the other teachers' comments: having been in a situation where he was not supported by the administration when he felt he should have been.

When the class meets for the last time to discuss the Mona Lisa and they begin to teach each other, Monica and Mack noted a sense of pride in the students' accomplishment, while Sheryl said it made her feel good. These feelings usually manifest physically through smiles and sighs. I purport that these participants were able to feel these emotions because they understand what it is like to bring a student from a basic to an advanced level of performance and thinking. They drew on their own experiences and identified them as being similar to those in the film.

In Amelia's journal reflection she wrote, "The movie brought up some real feeling, both good and bad, that I feel and have felt throughout my teaching career." I

suggest that Amelia recognized that she was able to feel things about the film because she could put herself in the situation of the teacher, and because she *is* a teacher, the experience of this film was enhanced.

Finding Forrester: Film Discussion

The atmosphere of this meeting was less tense than the first, although there was still a sense that the participants felt somewhat reserved and several lags in conversation were apparent. All were in attendance except Roger, who had to attend a class at the local university. Participants at this meeting did not focus strongly on their physical or emotional reactions to the film in this discussion. Monica was the only one to comment on how she felt in reference to the film. She remarked, when she saw the students at the private school wearing uniforms, “I thought that was cool because sometimes I wish that our kids would wear uniforms because it would make things a lot easier. So that was one of the things that stood out” (fg 1-2, p. 2). This remark is significant only because of the unassuming role of the uniforms in the film. Uniforms generally serve the purpose of creating an equitable environment for learning. Monica picked up on the use of uniforms because it was something that she already felt an emotional interest in outside of the film. It is interesting to note that no one in the group disagreed with Monica, despite earlier conversations in the first meeting where the majority of the group was advocating the need for students to feel comfortable “in their skins,” so as to encourage students to think differently.

I would suggest that the lack of the group’s discussion about their physical or emotional experiences connected to the film was due in part to the point of view from which the film is made. The central character is a student who is being supported by a

mentor-teacher figure. The main storyline is not from the mentor-teacher's perspective and so it is likely that the participants were unable to form the same physical and emotional bond with the characters as they had been able to do during the viewing of *Mona Lisa Smile*. Despite the evidence of lacking physical and emotional responses, the participants maintained a casually paced conversation that seemed to interest all parties involved.

Finding Forrester: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

Amanda, who said that she cringed when Jamal snuck into Forrester's apartment, took the only film notes that indicated a physical or emotional reaction during the film. She said she did so out of fear that he would be hurt. I suggest that her reaction emanated from her taking a motherly or protective stance, as Amanda might do for one of her own students. As she mentioned in discussion, she has been in situations where she has had to comfort students who have been injured, and it is something that pulls strongly on her heartstrings.

I purport that the participants did not write notes on their physical and emotional reactions during the film because the connection they made with the characters in this film was weak. I suggest that this occurred because the point of view in this film is shared between the teacher character and the student character, whereas the other films focus solely on the teachers' perspectives.

Amanda stated the following in her journal: "It warms my soul to see us portrayed as we would wish to be. This movie is what I wish we would all be and what I wish young teachers would see us as being!" The representation of the teacher character in this film touches Amanda because she saw him as being the model for all teachers,

especially since she is an English teacher. She also said, “I always want to be the kind of teacher who makes a difference in the students’ lives, but seeing this on screen just reinforces my beliefs.” It seems that the experience of this film has brought very strong feelings to the surface that Amanda wishes everyone could incorporate into her/his educational experience. The film also validates the reasons she became an educator and bolsters her identity as a teacher.

Amelia remarked in her journal that, “Since watching the film and discussing it I have been more conscious of my students. I’m trying to push them to do more than they are comfortable with. I’m looking for my Jamal, the student who needs an extra push.” Amelia expressed an emotional connection with the film that has inspired her to look more deeply under the surface of her students’ façades so that she can be more encouraging. She is using the film and the discussion amongst the participants as a springboard to new ideals in her classroom as she looks to challenge the students who are often overlooked. This is an excellent indicator that she is beginning to question her methods of teaching and that she may be at the start of developing a new critical pedagogy.

Mack’s journal reported that he felt “so disappointed because [Forrester] helped only one person and not many.” I find this interesting because I think it symbolizes the great teacher angst: teachers must help the masses in order to make a difference. Such a false belief can cause teachers to feel disappointed in themselves, not just in the films they watch.

The Ron Clark Story: Film Discussion

The mood of this meeting was a little different than the first two. The group members were more at ease and somewhat cheery, and there were fewer moments of awkward pausing than in previous meetings. I suggest that this difference in behavior indicates that they were beginning to understand each other and to understand that my expectations were guided only by the desire to have them converse about their concerns and perceptions. All participants were in attendance except for Sheryl, who could not attend due to childcare issues. The participants' mentioned physical and emotional reactions to this film were specifically classified as engendering anger.

Amanda: What was it that made me mad? [referring to film/notes]

Amelia: The FIRST thing that made me mad was the little boy in the trashcan.

Amanda: Yeah, that made me so mad. I, you know, I look at our faculty and-- maybe I'm naïve, and maybe I'm I don't know what-- but I don't believe that anybody would do that. And did your heart almost break when Teshawn got beaten up by that horrible foster parent? OOOhhh I was so mad at that man. I believe if I'd have seen him, I would've had to say something. I may not be real strong but I'd give him a piece of my mind and something else if I could. That was, oooohh, that makes me mad.

Tara: Did anybody else cry besides Amanda and me?

Mack: When he got beat down? Oh, well you know, I almost did.
[giggle]

Amelia: But you could tell that's why he bowed up all the time when somebody got in his face, because he was used to being beaten.

Mack: umhumm (fg 1-3, p. 4)

The participants' visceral responses were caused by the endangerment of a child character's physical and mental abuse. Their reactions indicate outrage and some of them

even admitted to having cried because of what they experienced during the film.

Amanda went a step further by placing herself in the scene and she described in a sort of rant what things she might have said or done. It is clear from her commentary that she felt deeply about the character, as if he were her own student. This demonstrates a true embodiment of the film experience. Mack, on the other hand, was not as comfortable in discussing his physical response because when pointedly asked if anyone had cried, he jokingly admitted to being on the verge. Despite his jovial manner, the scene where a student is beaten severely also affected Mack, and there is evidence of this because he actually made an effort to respond to the question rather than having just said no.

Later in the discussion, there was dialogue about the effect that a particular administrator of Pence High School has on teachers and students. A question was posed in an effort to get participants to relate those experiences to scenes in the film.

Tara: How about the first question that we always go back to: Distinguish the feelings that swept over you as you watched the film? For example, maybe the point in the movie where the principal comes in and says, "Who vandalized this room?" The interaction between the administrator and teacher or teacher and administrator...

Amanda: I hate it when sometimes an administrator will say something to the kids or the kids will say something to the administrator, and I feel like I have to defend one or the other. I like for us to all be on the same team. I don't like confrontation. I don't like to have to defend my kids, what I do. I'm not trying to say this negatively, but we are all here for the same reason. Let's all try to realize that and help each other. If somebody came into my classroom and said something like that, I would've gotten my feelings hurt.

Patricia: Especially in front of the kids, and they're all like "whooooooaaaaaaa."

Amanda: Exactly. You don't do that kind of thing in front of the kids. That's why, when we're in the hall, I try hard not to say things that the kids could hear that they shouldn't. I just feel like they've got enough

strikes against them, THE adult, sometimes the ONLY adult, that they have in their life, that we have to be a positive influence on them.

Amelia: One member of our admin staff, she changes the mood of a room when she walks in.

Amanda: The kids automatically get their backs up.

Amelia: They know that she stresses us out. And immediately they ask, “Are we in trouble? Are you in trouble?” And I don’t like that.

Tara: Did you get that feeling at any point when you were watching the film?

Amanda & Amelia: Oh yes, sure we did. And the kids did [in the film].
(fg 1-3, p. 9)

The participants indicated that they “got their backs up” in relation to the scene when the principal demands to know who’s vandalized the classroom, directing the question at the character of Ron Clark. Their physical responses were like those that they described their students having when a particular administrator enters their classrooms. The term “to get one’s back up” harkens to the action of a cat, right before it defends itself in a physical assault. The teacher’s use of this term gives the impression that these teachers feel they and their students must be on their guard at all times when confronted by an administrator.

The Ron Clark Story: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

Patricia expressed in her film notes that she was appalled during the scene where a student is standing inside of a trashcan in the hallway at his teacher's direction. Monica wrote that she felt anger at the teacher who put the child there. Amelia said that she felt disbelief that a professional would ever do something like that to a child. Mack said that he felt sadness at the sight. The film evokes these emotions because these teachers have a love for children and want to see them treated with respect.

Amelia also wrote in her film notes that she "felt like killing" the student character of Shemika during the scene when she is disrespectful toward Ron and he shakes her desk violently. The figure of speech Amelia uses here indicated how infuriated she was and it shows that the film's depiction really hit home for her and perhaps made her remember similar situations she has experienced in her classroom. In addition, Mack noted that Ron's behavior during this scene shocked him. I would suggest that Mack was shocked because by this point in the film, our hero Ron has established his unshakable patience. This scene humanizes Ron's character for Mack, which I suggest affected the way he viewed the rest of the film.

Amelia also noted that she felt outrage directed at the parent during the scene where the mother and Ron meet in the principal's office to discuss Shemika's potential. I would argue that the film evoked this outrage as a result of Amelia's desires for society, especially parents, to understand the value of education and what it can do for a person's future.

In his film notes, Mack wrote that he felt inspired by the scene when Ron returns from being ill and he has the heart to heart discussion with his class. I purport that Mack

felt inspired because he identified with Ron's genuine love for his students and their learning. Seeing Ron really relate to his students and talk to them with respect and care made Mack feel that he might be able to develop the same rapport with his own students.

Amanda wrote in her journal reflection, "I found myself CRINGING when Tayshawn was beaten. Even in movies, things like that hurt me in my heart. I had a situation similar to that in my own life when a student came to class all bruised and beaten. . . . Sometimes we [teachers] are the only positive, caring adults in their lives." Amanda's physical response caused by the brutality in the film was an embodiment of her fear and pity for the character in the film mixed with her memories of her very own student's beating. This example of how film affects its audience demonstrates that film can serve as a reminder of realities that we sometimes forget and that film can move us into re-recognizing our emotions.

In Amelia's journal reflection, she wrote:

This film affected me more emotionally than the two previous films. . . . I could relate to the scene where he and the honors teacher were waiting for the students to finish their standardized test. . . . I take their performance personally because I have poured out my soul trying to teach them. . . . I really enjoyed this movie. It helped me remember why I do this job. I do this for my students, not myself.

Amelia's comments illustrate how a film can induce feelings in a viewer that give her/him insight into situations and motivations in her/his life. Film can be a catalyst for bringing a person back to life, so to speak. In this case, film caused Amelia to recognize her emotions as they relate to standardized testing and to her purpose in education.

Mack wrote in his journal that this film "was very inspirational and moving" because, he said, "I am faced with my own unpleasanties." This is an example of how film can, by representing a version of reality, give its viewers hope for their own

situations. Mack said that because of this film he is reminded that “If I have touched and taught at least one student, then I have done my job. It’s movies like *The Ron Clark Story* that motivate me to continue to do what I love doing.” This reflection shows that watching film can also help a person grow. Indeed, in Mack’s reflection on the second film viewing, he stated that he was disappointed that Forrester only help one student; however, in this third reflection, after having watched *The Ron Clark Story*, Mack recognized the positive effects that can come from helping at least one student.

Roger remarked in his journal entry: “I am taking back into my classroom from this movie a renewed peace of mind. I practice encouraging my students, as well as giving constructive criticism. They need us to be honest and caring. . . .More than anything I learned to EXPECT THE BEST FROM EVERY CHILD!” What film has done for Roger is validate his own practices in the classroom. The film portrays a good teacher as being patient and caring, which Roger stated he is; therefore, this film’s representation shows Roger that he is a good teacher. In this case, film has helped fortify Roger’s identity as a teacher.

The Browning Version: Film Discussion

This meeting progressed very differently from the other three meetings. The members were more talkative and the conversation flowed without any pauses. The only two participants who were unable to attend were Amelia, who had to go to the pre-school lottery drawing for her oldest child, and Mack, who had to attend to a family matter. Physical and emotional responses to the film were scattered sparingly throughout this fourth and final discussion. Roger started with this comment: “This movie was very relaxing for me. I kept having to pop myself to stay awake” (fg 1-4, p. 1). I remember

thinking to myself at that moment, “Great, they didn’t like this one. They thought it was boring.” However, what progressed from this first physical observation was a dialogue much more in depth and in tune with the groups’ feelings and observations than any other conversation. A particular response that Amanda made concerning validation reportedly “hit home” with her.

One of the things that really hit home to me was the little thing that means so much, that we don’t get a lot of validation. That little tiny book... when I was younger I kept what I called my treasure chest. It was a file folder of little things that kids had written me, like in journals and things like that, over the years. One of our teachers who is now a librarian at [a local elementary school], she used to teach math at the high school. She was having a hard day, and I told her, “Just wait, your time will come and one day you too will be able to start your treasure chest.” And she said, “What do you mean?” And I said, “I’ll bring to you my treasure chest.” And throughout those whole years of teaching, here’s this little file folder [holds up pinched fingers less than an inch thick]. But it was full of treasures. And this man [in the film] got that one book. But also the two grown former students who came to him at the cricket match-- he’d obviously made an impact on them. You don’t ever know who you’re going to make an impact on. He thought it was a negative impact, but obviously it wasn’t, if they remembered him and wanted him to know how successful they were. He’d made some kind of impact on them. (fg 1-4, p. 1)

Because the scene in the film where a student gives the main teacher character a gift moved Amanda so, she was able to recollect a moment shared with a colleague concerning her very own special words from students over the years. In addition, she vocalized her belief that teachers impact students, even if the manifestation of that influence does not arrive until much later. The emotional connection that she made between the film and her own life demonstrates the true effects that film can have on its audience.

Roger also used an emotional connection to the character to reflect on his career. Even though he did not use specific words to indicate how he reacted physically to the

film, there is evidence that there was some reaction in what he chose to share with the group. He said:

The only thing that comes to my mind right now talking about this particular teacher [in the film] is that certain people thought of him as Hitler. You know, last year was my first year and that was what I felt because I have students that come up to me now and are like [makes a look out of the corner of his eye, evil]. And then you know too they come back and hug you, and I'm like, "oh gosh," looking for a knife, "What do you want to hug me for?". . . And so I get that whole "ahhh." A girl told me this afternoon that she's failing biology, she's failing English, and she really doesn't give me any problem and she's doing ok in career prep. And so we had a meeting, and I was just totally shocked. And I ran into her in the hall after school, and we were talking, and she said, "Well I'm scared of you," and I said, "Me? Why are you scared of me? It's an excuse and you don't want to work hard. Maybe this comes easy for you, but you've got to work hard and you've got to cooperate with every teacher and do your best." And I think I feel that way. And I can see myself being like this guy... you know, and I tell them, "I don't care if you ever don't speak to me in the hall, but when I see you and you have a job, and you look like you're well taken care of, then I'll know. I'll feel like I've done my job." You know? . . . And that's what I thought, maybe I'm Hitler. (fg 1-4, pp. 1-2)

Several phrases, like "I felt," "I feel," "I can see myself being like this guy," and "maybe I'm Hitler," indicate that Roger made some emotional connection to the main character and that he was able put himself into that character's role on screen because he has participated in similar real-life experiences. Later on, Roger even remarked, "So I guess I really did identify with this guy more than I really want to admit to," (fg 1-4, p. 3). I believe that this statement reveals a lot about the reasons there were few participants to admit physical or emotional responses to the film: they may have been hesitant to acknowledge any sympathies or similarities to this character who seemed so stoic and out of touch with his students.

The Browning Version: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

In Sheryl's film notes, she wrote that she was "amazed how the students stand at attention" in the scene where the main character Andrew enters the classroom. This amazement translates into her observations of her own reality at Pence High School, where apparently the students do not show respect through this action. This is an example of how watching film can encourage its viewer to think comparatively, promoting steps toward critical thinking.

Amanda's journal reflection noted the following: "When the young man presented the book to his teacher, I was so touched. My heart was melting. I don't think students always realize just how soft we are." This scene in the film evoked a physical and emotional reaction in Amanda because it validated her reason for being a teacher. The power that a film has to bring about an understanding of one's self is, I would argue, equivalent to that of any real life situation's visceral effects. The film caused Amanda's heart to melt just as if she were the one receiving the gift.

Patricia commented in her journal: "The film was slightly depressing; it makes me sigh, but it also gives me confirmation that I am not alone. I can't be anything other than who I am. . . .Call me 'Hitler' or other names, I still believe that I'm doing the right thing by holding students to a standard." Again, there is evidence that film can be validating. Patricia identified with the character of Andrew, whose standards were clear and whose expectations were high. She saw some of her self in this character and it gave her support to feel at ease in the teacher identity that she has created for herself.

Anti-Intellectualism

The participants seemed to reveal evidence of multiple aspects of anti-intellectualism as it was brought forth by the discussions of the films as they intertwined with the participants' perspectives and experiences. Sobchack argues that, "the [science fiction] writer or filmmaker may want to present intellectual thought, ideas, and concepts to his reader, but his primary goal is not to inform, nor to philosophize, but to create a narrative which dramatically—through its style and structure, its characterizations, its events and objects and places—provokes the reader to think, to observe, to draw his own abstract conclusions" (1998, p. 25). I propose that science fiction films are to science fiction film enthusiasts what films about educators are to the teachers who watch them. These films featuring educators engross the teacher as viewer just as strongly and provoke the teacher to analyze the film beyond what is seen on the scene. Because of this, I believe that through discussion, teachers, by chance or with intent, bring to light various anti-intellectual elements that are reflected in and by the film. Just as "the body of the [science fiction] film, through the technique of montage and through the nature of the story, evoke[s] fear from within the body of the spectator . . . [so too can educator films evoke] this phenomenological style of spectatorship that causes the body to respond physically, mentally and emotionally provok[ing] the viewer to think" (Weaver & Britt, 2007, p. 29). From this emerges evidence of anti-intellectualism as it exists within and surrounding the educational arena. The participants in this study brought up topics that, I propose, suggest anti-intellectualism, such as, but not limited to, neglect of tradition, renunciation of the intellect of the teacher, devaluing of education in general, and disinterest in the intellect itself.

Mona Lisa Smile: Film Discussion

Through the discussion, there were moments when the conversation was flavored with comments relating to anti-intellectualism in education. In response to the opening scene of the film where there is a formal ceremony to begin the school year, Amelia remarked. "Education is still a privilege. In this county, we all have that privilege. In a lot of places they don't. And I don't think our students or anyone thinks education is a privilege any more" (fg 1-1, p. 1). Patricia responded, "I think that maybe where some of our children gain the disinterest... that some of them have... you know, they don't always want to think. They want us to give them the answers so that they don't have to do it. They want that rote memory" (fg 1-1, p. 1). These remarks were interesting to me because they show how some teachers at Pence High School feel that education is not valued as an intellectual activity by the general public. These comments also show that teachers are thinking about the state of education in our society and that their views confirm that they feel somewhat unneeded as a group of professionals. Amelia's statement demonstrates that she perceives education as being taken for granted. Patricia's statement shows that she perceives the role of teachers to be one of doling out answers rather than encouraging thinking. Both of these ladies expressed the feeling of a loss of intellectualism in education.

Later, when asked the question, "Do you think we challenge students [to think differently, like the main character does with the slides of the advertisements] on a daily basis, and if so, how?" Monica responded, "In my class, yes, I have a lot of freedom to go off on tangents. And yes, we often challenge the students to try to think outside of the norm, I hope," (fg 1-1, p. 5). My interest here lies in the word choice of "to go off on

tangents” in reference to the idea of thinking differently. In general conversation, when one refers to going “off on tangents,” the connotation is not positive. A “tangent” usually indicates conversation about something irrelevant or unimportant that may or may not be worthy to the main topic at hand. It is as if Monica is indicating that to challenge students to think differently is, in education, a negative, extraneous idea. This is an example of the manifestation of anti-intellectualism in public education. When a teacher views class discussion that is not directly related to content as a “tangent,” it is clear that the demands of our factory system of education have truly affected the value of the intellectual.

Sheryl confirmed Monica’s perception by adding:

I know with me the only time I can do that is by forming relationships with some of these kids, where you *do* have a bond with them and you can talk to them on a more personal level, and they come up to you in the afternoons. Then you are able to challenge them more like that, after you get to know them more personally. Maybe not in the classroom setting but on a more one on one basis you are able to do that... because we are faced with so much in our classrooms. (fg 1-1, p. 6).

Again the classroom seems relegated to “business” rather than to the encouraging of intellectualism. This detracts teachers’ abilities to maintain their identities as intellectuals who are interested in guiding students in critical thought. Instead, it seems that teachers are “faced with so much in [their] classrooms” that they are merely present as clerks whose job is to shift paperwork and maintain order.

Mona Lisa Smile: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

In her film notes, Patricia wrote that the scene of ceremony for opening the academic year is “wonderful but would be unappreciated by students now.” This comment shows that Patricia believes her students at Pence High school hold an anti-

intellectual attitude toward the honoring of academics. Although the film seemingly adulates academia, as the plot progresses the viewer realizes that the university is later depicted as an expensive finishing school for intelligent young ladies to meet and marry intelligent young men who will find well-paying jobs in the highest part of society. Indeed, even the film itself demonstrates the anti-intellectualism that is woven through our culture. In addition, she noted that when the administration and parents meet with Ms. Watson to tell her to curtail her unorthodox methods of teaching, Patricia found it to be “not fair to her [Ms. Watson’s] higher standard,” referring to the high expectations that the character projected to the students. This is another example of an anti-intellectual message that is sent in the film as well as in reality. In fact, Sheryl wrote in her film notes that this “still happens today.” It is not unusual at Pence High School for parents to call into question the teaching methods of the faculty if they do not agree with the grades earned by their child(ren).

In her journal, Patricia wrote about having discussed the film with teachers outside of the group and outside of Pence High School in order to gain more insight. She said that one teacher said, “We’re now required to write units (on the fifth grade level). We haven’t been given a template. We haven’t been provided instruction of any kind, but we’re supposed to do it. Some teachers are doing it; some are not.” This example of anti-intellectualism is a direct result, I suggest, of surveillance. Because the teacher has been trained to do things as she is told by administration, she seems at a loss as far as being able to devise a plan of her own. The previous deskilling of teaching has cost this one teacher the ability to use her intellect. I predict that what will happen in this situation is that one teacher will end up doing all of the units for the grade level while the others

conform to using what s/he has created as a method of prescriptive teaching. I would also argue that, ultimately, this would please the administrators of this school because the result would be that all students will be receiving the ‘same’ formulaic instruction.

Sheryl echoed the sentiments of the teacher that Patricia referred to as she reflected on the implementation of the new GPS (Georgia Performance Standards). She said, “Many of us have not been trained to think or teach like this.” I purport that many teachers feel this way: because intellectualism is not at the forefront of the academic world, teachers feel inept at using their minds to overcome obstacles. Instead, they look to a higher power to show them what to do. At the risk of sounding like I subscribe to a ‘conspiracy theory,’ I suggest that perhaps the state officials are introducing the GPS as guidelines for teaching that encourage critical thinking when in reality they are aware that teachers expect to be told what to do. Perhaps the state officials are just using these new standards as a ruse to further implement prescriptive teaching because they place example units and plans on the state website that they know many of the teachers will use in lieu of creating their own.

Finding Forrester: Film Discussion

Although the discussion relating to anti-intellectualism is not as obvious as it was in the first meeting, several conversations during this session focused on their own students’ disinterest in completing assignments, in contrast to the character of Jamal who is exceptionally motivated to work on his own outside of class. Several participants mentioned specific situations where their students have refused to do assignments, and even though the participants contacted parents to ensure that the work would be completed, nothing was ever turned in (fg 1-2, pp. 5-8). I suggest that when the students

at Pence High School refuse to complete assignments, it is because there is no value placed on the act of developing the intellect. Students seem to have no respect for their education. In addition, these teachers mention having notified parents who did nothing to verify that the assignments were done, indicating that they do not hold the development of the intellect in high esteem either. These conversations document the disinterest in education, as we know it, marking the presence of anti-intellectualism in society.

Finding Forrester: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

Monica wrote in her film notes that she felt interest in the scene at the beginning of the film when Jamal is in class at his local school and he knows the answer to the teacher's question but he does not say anything. This scene is an example of how an environment can promote anti-intellectualism. In this scene, Jamal is pressured by the behavior of his peers not to participate because, at least outwardly, they act as if the intellect is unimportant. Through their actions and words, they emulate anti-intellectualism. Whether they actually believe that the development of the intellect is unimportant or not does not matter; because their observable attitudes communicate that the intellect is not of value, then it is not. Perception is reality.

In her journal, Amanda wrote that after seeing this movie she overheard a conversation between her students that made her cringe. She said, "Some of my students [were] saying they did not know why they had to learn all THIS _____. My skin crawls when they talk this way." This comment mirrors the scene that Monica pointed out in the film where the peers devalue the development of the intellect. Amanda's students were performing the same role as the students in the film: they projected an

anti-intellectualistic attitude about learning. Where this attitude finds its origin is unclear, but it is certain that it exists at Pence High School.

Amelia also shows recognition of the same situation of anti-intellectualism in the film in her journal entry: “If it had not been for the test that Jamal took he would have stayed at just getting by. He would never have shown his full potential because in his environment that wasn’t what was accepted. . . .It makes me wonder how many of my students are working just hard enough to get by instead of working to their full potential.” Amelia acknowledges that this type of anti-intellectualism exists at Pence High School, although she is not sure which students it actually affects. What is clear is that at Pence High School, this issue is not being addressed with the students directly and it is allowing the presence of anti-intellectualism to infiltrate the climate.

Finally, Roger noted in his journal, “I see this often in my class, students that pretend to be not as smart as they really are to impress other students. I think it is kind of a normal thing with high school students.” Although Roger recognizes the anti-intellectual acts going on in his classroom, he attributes it to adolescent behavior rather than an actual devaluing of the intellect. This is an excellent point, but I would argue that an evaluation of actual student performance would have to be done in order to determine whether this is just an ‘act’ or whether it is real. Regardless, as I argued earlier, perception is reality, and if these students perceive others as not placing importance on the intellect, they may also take on an anti-intellectual attitude.

The Ron Clark Story: Film Discussion

Just as Ron Clark demonstrated value of the development of the intellect through his continued efforts to help his students improve their test scores, I suggest that the

teachers in this focus group value education because they value the intellect and its development through intellectual rigor. As entities themselves, the intellect and its maturity define the very hallmarks of academia. However, I would argue that most students do not view school as a means to the intellect nor do they believe that the intellect is important in their daily lives. This was portrayed in the film through the various characters and their situations exterior to school. The difference, however, between the characters in the film and the students that these teachers educate is that the characters in the film eventually understood the value of advancing the intellect, whereas most of the students at Pence High School do not. Two participants in particular expressed unrest with their students' views of school.

Patricia: See I think that translates to the classroom as well because my students don't see the point in learning Spanish. "I'm never going to use this. I'm never going to have to have this. I don't know why...." As long as they have that attitude they don't do well in the class.

Roger: Don't the students CHOOSE to be in your class?

Patricia: They choose a language.

Roger: That's something that troubles me too. Some of these kids, they have a choice with some of these classes. And then they get in there and make statements like that.

Monica: Well, even with Spanish, the kids that are doing the construction route or automotive route, Spanish will go right into that.

Patricia: I tell them that, and they say, "Well, I'm not going to Mexico." And I say, "You don't have to, it's coming here!"

Amelia: Most of the workers at my husband's [construction] work are Hispanic. He uses Spanish because he has to communicate with those guys to get them to do whatever they can do.

Patricia: But yeah, it's the same thing. If they don't see a reason for it, they won't do well. (Appendix A 3, p. 8)

Roger and Patricia both imply that the students' lack of respect for learning is the cause of their disinterest in school. Although the participants did not articulate this situation as being anti-intellectual, it is evident that they feel as if one should value education for the development of the intellect, regardless of whether or not one finds the information itself useful at the moment. The idea intimated here is that one acquires knowledge for the sake of mental stimulation that encourages growth in the brain. The more brainpower one has, the more adept s/he will be at existing and contributing to society.

The Ron Clark Story: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

In her film notes, Amanda wrote that Ron "lived in a dump = low pay." This is an observation of anti-intellectualism as it manifests itself in the low salaries that teachers typically make when compared to other professionals with equal or less education.

Although the film's depiction may be an exaggeration, I suggest that the government voices its stance on intellectualism through the monetary value they place on educators and their careers.

Patricia made a note during the film that "music sells." No one, in any of the notes or journals, wrote anything about *intellect* selling; in fact, the common thread through all of these movies and all of the discussions and writings of the participants is that it is the teacher's job to *convince* students how important a cultivation of the intellect is. There is no evidence anywhere in the perceptions of these participants that anyone besides teachers is concerned with the development of the mind.

Amelia and Mack noted that the principal should have never reacted the way he did in front of the students about Ron painting the classroom. I interpret this to mean that they found it demeaning and undermining to Ron's identity as a teacher. Such an affront,

I suggest, communicated to the students in the film that Ron was not valued. If Ron, as a teacher, is not valued, then it also communicates that learning is not valued since the job of a teacher is to educate the students. I would argue that these same messages are communicated at Pence High School. There were times this year that the principal of the school would use the all-call intercom to berate teachers about tasks that were not done according to his directions and also to scold students about their various behaviors. The message being sent is the same as the one in the film: the teachers are not valued; therefore real learning is not valued.

The Browning Version: Film Discussion

Because this film sets juxtaposition between the academic and the athletic, there was a more open and direct conversation, although brief, about anti-intellectualism. The participants discuss a specific scene in the film:

Monica: Ohh, ohh, that's another thing that they said, when they were talking about the speeches, [quoting the film] "We think more of the athlete than the scholar." Remember when they were talking about that? [repeats quote] And that's so true!! [giggles]

Amanda: so true

Patricia: yes

Monica: And gosh what does that say of our society? And I mean look at all this junk about Anna Nicole [Smith], and she's become this icon. Look at what she's done with her life! She started as a stripper, and you know all that stuff, and these people are worshipping her.

Patricia: umhumm

Monica: You know? But we do, we put more emphasis on the athlete than the scholar and that's sad.

Patricia: And that's why they value our jobs so, is because we're the scholars. [said sarcastically]

Amanda: That's part of our society. Our profession is not valued. (fg 1-4, p. 6)

The participants who spoke up, all notably women, rallied against placing more value on athletics than on education. They gave the idea that they believe it is wrong because the scholar should be more revered than the athlete, but they did not detail why or how. The statements were made and the conversation moved forward. It was as if Amanda's last statement dismissed the validity of their discontent because anti-intellectualism is "part of our society." No one offered an argument on why it is part of our society or why it should or should not be. These women seem to be dutifully tied to the understanding that there is a permeating disregard for the intellect that may not be able to be dissolved.

As the group continued to talk, Roger pointed out that even the students have an understanding of our anti-intellectual society and that they both buy into it and they use it to their advantage in school. The participants discussed various teaching styles based on what they saw in the film:

Roger: And what's funny is that they recognize that. I've had students tell me, "Oh, I like such and such. She's so sweet. But I'm not passing English because we're here, then here, then here, [gestures in the air to various spots] and I can't put it all together because this person is all over with the thing." But they love them to death and you couldn't say one bad thing about that person. But they recognize, even as a student, and maybe it's an excuse for some of them because I don't sit in the room and observe or anything but when you hear students saying the same thing, that, "I'm missing something because the person is all over the place and there's no organization," and so, but, as far as...

Amanda: The kids are pretty smart about picking up on that kind of thing. That doesn't necessarily mean that they want to learn, it just means that they are very aware. (fg 1-4, p. 7)

The example given here was taken from an observation of student conversation. It seems that the students are happy to have any excuse to not take responsibility for their learning

or for their academic achievement, mainly because it does not seem to be valued. Both Roger and Amanda see the students as clever but apparently not intellectually ambitious because, I would argue, it is not something that society demands.

The Browning Version: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

In her film notes, Patricia remarked that it is “the frustration of every teacher . . . wanting the best when society says no.” I interpret this notation to mean that the teacher’s job to encourage the development of the intellect is in direct opposition to what society deems as important. This is represented in the film as (1) the students’ dislike of Andrew’s high standards and expectations, (2) the replacement of the classics program with the modern languages program, (3) the fact that Andrew is denied his pension after 18 years of service, and (4) the higher respect that the students and administration gives to the teacher who is leaving the school to become a professional rugby player above what they offer to Andrew. All of these examples mirror what is seen in contemporary culture, and they prove that the intellect falls very low on the list of society’s priorities.

Surveillance

The idea of the effects of surveillance in schools, as discussed by Michael Foucault, is that “school became a sort of apparatus of uninterrupted examination that duplicated along its entire length the operation of teaching. It became less and less a question of jousts in which pupils pitched their forces against one another and increasingly a perpetual comparison of each and all that made it impossible both to measure and to judge . . . The examination did not simply mark the end of an apprenticeship; it was one of its permanent factors; it was woven into it through a constantly repeated ritual of power” (1979, p. 186). Amazingly, Foucault is speaking of

the educational movement in France around the year 1775. Currently in education, the effects of surveillance are deep, as many high school teachers are losing their sense of purpose in the classroom. This is the result of increasing accountability as it is placed on them by federal mandates such as No Child Left Behind, by state tests like the End of Course Tests and the Georgia High School Graduation Test, and by administrators who constantly change procedures and policies and who manipulate statistics in order to meet Adequate Yearly Progress reports. These types of tests and evaluations serve as a form of surveillance and are found as players in the plots of the films that the focus group watched. As Sobchack suggests, in film, “what we see is precisely what we get—and so we want to exhaust our curiosity in the surfeit of this new surface space, to see everything that is displayed and dispersed there, in complex but superficial relation” (1998, p. 271). I purport that the participants of the focus group worked within the context of the films, exploring their own experiences that connect to surveillance. Some of these observations were obvious and some entrenched.

Mona Lisa Smile: Film Discussion

The members of the group labeled the administration in the film as performing surveillance on the teachers through the scenes when reports were made and letters were placed in the files of the nurse and main teacher. The participants also readily identified areas of surveillance that they witness at Pence High School. Sheryl enumerated, “They tell us, ‘You need to do this, this, and this,’ and we do it because most of us need the job and we’re not going to go any place else because it is too far to drive. You know? It’s just. . . we all do the same thing” (fg 1-1, p. 3). Sheryl seemed a bit exasperated at being given infinite lists of tasks to accomplish that seem in this context to have little to do with

teaching students. This sentiment was echoed immediately by Patricia, who said, “You’ve got to decide which rules, which confines, you can work within,” and Roger, who remarked, “You’ve still got to pay the bills” (fg 1-1, p. 3). These teachers clearly feel that they are performing for a higher power in the system and that it is a conscious decision to remain in the profession, despite its lack of freedom. In addition, Mack stated, “We do it because we love our jobs. But we do it also because, like she said, if we don’t do it, then they could just ask us to leave, so, you know? I love teaching, myself, you know, but I’m there because I am doing what I am supposed to be doing, because that is what I have to do, and if we don’t then they could simply get rid of us,” (fg 1-1, p. 4). I would argue that such a remark indicates fear. Despite his love for the profession, Mack sees his job as an obligation to “they,” which one could interpret to mean “the administrators.” These administrators hold a certain power over the teachers in that they can terminate the teacher’s position if the teacher is seen as being insubordinate in any manner. The conversation continued:

Amanda: You’re talking about the other duties and responsibilities?

Mack: yeah

Monica: I think in a sense, I think you still play their game and play your own at the same time. I mean you can still...

Patricia: You can still be yourself.

Monica: play by their rules and continue to be who you are to an extent. You can teach what you want to and how you want to teach it and try to convey a message within the rules.

Patricia: Umhum. That’s why I panicked when they said, [in the film] “you’ve got to turn in your lessons for the entire term,” and I thought, “I could do that.” You know, we did that with our little pacing guides, or whatever but it changes...

Sheryl: But I might not do it.

Patricia: because it changes daily. (fg 1-1, p. 4)

Although Monica, a non-academic teacher, advocated that teachers should create a space for teaching on their own terms, she was unable to persuade the others that this is possible. Patricia offered an example of one type of surveillance that documents a teacher's adherence to administrative mandates in the form of a pacing guide. A pacing guide is a timetable of what specific content area teachers should be teaching on any given day and often includes how to teach and assess each item. Patricia and Sheryl complained about and indicated the unrealistic nature of such demands and they found fault in the administration's attempts to make teachers conform. Later on Amanda talked about the need to teach students about daily living but said, "Unfortunately, a lot of us have a lot of constraints with testing, a lot of constraints with required content, a lot of times we might want to get into things like that with our kids, but we can't because of all the things that we are required to do, so that we can live within AYP" (fg 1-1, p. 6).

Clearly, these teachers want to enhance their students' learning environment beyond the minimum level but all express a need to stay within boundaries set by those in higher positions. These concerns are touched on again at the end of the discussion:

Tara: Out of curiosity, have you been encouraged, for example, Amelia, for you to make a unit and for someone else in your department to make a unit and then you switch?

Amelia: Yes, we've done that a lot. Like, "Let's put our activities together and let's all pull from the same thing."

Patricia: Check each other's lesson plans...

Amelia: Even then we try not to take away, like if you like yours better and I like mine, then do your own, but it does take away.

Patricia: But it's under the umbrella of, "being fair to the students," not "you teach the way you're comfortable," but "this student needs to be taught the same way this student is taught, and therefore you need to look at her lesson plans, and she needs to look at yours, and let's all teach the same thing, every day, at the same time."

Amelia: But mostly it just guards against people who don't do their job, who we have to give them something. (fg 1-1, pp. 11-12)

As shown in these examples, surveillance further perpetuates the reduction of teacher autonomy. The participants' comments indicate that the surveillance is multi-layered through the means of pacing guides, swapping unit plans and activities, and verifying their colleagues' lesson plans. At this level the teacher becomes part of the machine of surveillance because the administration has them checking on each other, as Patricia articulated, "under the umbrella of 'being fair to the students.'" Administration then becomes a sort of innocuous entity because teachers are busy looking at one another rather than focusing on resisting the surveillance. Autonomy and intellect take back seat to making sure that everyone is on the same page, at the same time, using the same materials under the guise of collaborative efforts. Indeed, collaboration has its place and is valuable when used as a tool to engender critical thinking, but it should not be used as a means to police what goes on in the classroom. Such a use of collaboration can cause the feelings that these teachers have when their job seems to consist of merely making sure everyone is doing what they've been told to do.

Mona Lisa Smile: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

In her film notes, Patricia wrote that in the film there is a "committee for the protection of everything." The committees in the film function as surveillance over what the young ladies learn and do at Wellesley. One can draw a parallel between those fictional committees and basically any one of the many bureaucratic groups that manage

education in reality. There are checks and balances in place throughout the educational system to make sure everyone is doing what s/he is supposed to be doing at any given time, from the federal government right down to the student. Indeed, Sheryl wrote that administration often asks “teachers to change in order to stay” when something they are doing does not mesh with the administration’s policies or philosophies. As a result, teachers lose their autonomy and lose sight of the identity that they have developed as educators.

In her journal, Patricia said that one of her friends outside of education said, “The students are so used to being given the answer; they are mad when you don’t give them the answers. It’s all about regurgitation and test scores. As long as the students are passing, administrators look good.” In this case, test scores are used as surveillance to make sure that education appears as if it is doing its job. As long as the surveillance can show parents and administration that everything looks as it should, everyone is happy, except maybe the teachers who would like to have the individualism to teach so that the students actually learn to think for themselves.

Amelia reflected in her journal on the fact that she feels “as more and more freedoms are taken away from and decided for me. . . . as new standards and tests continue to be imposed. I feel like I am losing the ability to be effective.” Amelia is testament to the damages that the surveillance of the state causes to teacher identity. She voiced that she feels that she can be effective on her own, without the state’s over-imposing supervision but that freedom is not an option.

In her journal, Sheryl observed:

In the film, Ms. Watson was being told by other people, the headmaster and students, what she should teach and how it should be taught. In some

instances, the state tries to dictate what we teach as well. . . . Sometimes I feel that I am under a microscope, especially being a content teacher, because we are held accountable for so much, [like the] EOCT and GHSGT, and the students are not held accountable for as much.

This repetition of what the other participants have said throughout the focus group study simply reinforces the extent to which these teachers feel the pressures of the surveillance of the state. I do not suggest that their attitudes exist because they do not want to be held accountable; rather I interpret their responses to mean that they feel that as professionals they can do an above average job without the extreme measures the state has taken.

Finding Forrester: Film Discussion

Because the theme of this movie does not deal as largely with surveillance, the participants were less apt to discuss it. However, during the discussion of the incompleteness rates of homework, comments like the following were made:

Patricia: Well, we have to keep the numbers up. [referring to pass rate]

Monica: Well, I know but...

Patricia: We've got to keep the grades up. I mean we can't give them zeros and all of that.

Sheryl: . . .this 'no zero policy' --and I understand that you can give one if you contact the parent and all-- but because of our 'no zero policy' and giving them chance after chance to do the assignments...whenever I gave homework, which I did give homework every night, still, and I would take it up on random occasions. (fg 1-2, p. 6)

Monica: But see, some of them will never do their homework. Fifty years ago there were some of them that would never do their homework, a 100 years ago...

Patricia: Fifty years ago we could fail them. Today we can't. (fg 1-2, p. 8)

Amelia: Every time we turn around, we are getting hammered with something. Either I get my pass rate up to 80%, and then they all fail the EOCT or the HSGT. Either way, I lose. (fg 1-2, p. 10)

Clearly, these teachers feel that they ultimately have no control over the ability to assign grades. Several of them refer to a “no zero policy” created by the administration. The idea behind the policy is that a teacher may not assign a zero for work that is incomplete or not turned in. The teacher is supposed to call the parent to discuss the assignment and to request that the parent see to it that the student turns in the work. The teacher has the right to set a deadline with the parent for the work to be turned in and then, if the work is not turned in by that date, a zero may be assigned as long as the parent is in agreement. If the parent is not in agreement, the student theoretically has an entire semester to turn in the assignment. This may not seem like an unreasonable request from the administration because it is made with the intention that a grade should indicate mastery of content, rather than rate of responsibility. It is also made in an effort to teach students that they are responsible for doing every assignment. However, this policy can become quite time consuming. For example, last semester during the first nine weeks, there were more than 200 assignments among the three classes that I taught which were not turned in by the end of the sixth week. It would be nearly impossible to keep up with the amount of phone calls that would need to be made in order to enforce the policy. With restraints on time and the availability of only two phones in the teacher workroom, teachers would never be able to make all of the necessary contacts, and that is assuming that all phone numbers for the students in the system are functioning. These participants seem to feel as if their hands are tied. One even indicated that if she did follow the policy to the letter of the law, many of her passing students would still not be successful on the state tests,

which would then also indicate her as being an ineffective teacher. This type of surveillance forces teachers to surrender their authority and autonomy in the name of policy and bureaucracy. It causes them to feel overwhelmed and inept at effecting change in the behaviors of the students, in due course causing teachers to feel helpless.

Finding Forrester: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

In Amanda's notes, she wrote that, "Forrester is trying to show Jamal how to think outside his environment. How much BS he'd take!" Amanda implied that if Forrester were part of the faculty at a school like Pence High School, he would more than likely find himself under scrutiny for encouraging Jamal to think on his own. This example stresses the idea that teachers are under surveillance by administration to make sure that students meet state standards and that the school meet the state of Georgia's evaluation of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), in keeping with the requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), at the end of each school term.

Patricia wrote in her journal reflection that "The media and masses at large expect teachers to do more--be more 'global minded'; train students for global jobs; use global resources like e-conferencing and e-pen pals." The media, meaning television journalism but also including television and film, is also a surveilleur of education and of teachers. Through the reports made on the news about educators and government policies, through the television shows such as *Welcome Back, Kotter*, *Dangerous Minds*, and *Boston Public*, and through films like the ones in this study as well as others such as *The Substitute*, *Teachers*, *Coach Carter*, *Lean on Me*, and *Take the Lead*, the media shows the American (and sometimes global) society what they should be expecting from teachers and education. There are positive and negative effects of the media's surveillance, but

the representations that are produced are generally out of the hands of those who invest their lives in education.

Amelia wrote, “Once Jamal was removed from his friends and put in a higher achieving environment, his work and grades improved greatly.” This comment demonstrates that an environment created by a person’s peers can become a form of surveillance. Amelia saw the peers at Jamal’s local school as holding him back from reaching his potential. As I argued early in Chapter Four, in the section on **Anti-intellectualism**, *Finding Forrester*, when one’s peers project the attitude of not caring about education, it is contagious. Such posturing can become a way that students control each other’s behaviors, taking on the form of surveillance.

The Ron Clark Story: Film Discussion

Teachers in the group brought up another way that teachers are placed under surveillance that has not been mentioned in this work. The group noted that parents in the film are not represented as being involved in the education of their children. However, the participants purported that there are parents at Pence High School who care about the interactions between teachers and students. Patricia commented on how parents can serve as an outlet of surveillance for the administration and how the administration seems to welcome this practice.

Patricia: It always gets my back up when a parent goes to an administrator first, and then they come to me, and I don’t even know what they’re talking about. It’s like, “Can we wait and let’s get the kid in here and let’s figure out what we’re talking about here?” The parent has come with both barrels loaded and I’m going... [held up hands in air]

Amanda: They think if they go to the administration first that they will get preferential treatment. And unfortunately sometimes they do. (fg 1-3, p. 9)

Amanda backed Patricia up on this point by acknowledging that parents are able to garner the support of the administration before the teacher even has an opportunity to discuss the situation with the administrator or the student. This type of surveillance sets up a detrimental situation for teachers, pitting students against teachers, parents against teachers, and ultimately administrators against teachers.

Once again, teachers mentioned the high stakes testing that continues to hold them accountable for student production, despite all of the forces external to what goes on in the classroom. Here is what they said:

Roger: I went through those [progress reports] this morning and had kids low in math, low in biology and I said, "What is going on?" And I got it from 2 kids, "Oh everybody in that class is failing," and I said, "Everybody in that class is going to be at the PLC."

Amanda: Everybody in that class is going to fail the EOCT!

Amelia: That's what I told them. You will not be coming back to me in a few years because you fail the HSGT if you pass my class. (fg 1-3, p. 11)

The teachers threw around the terms EOCT and HSGT as if they were threats to the students, when in reality the teachers know that they are being equally judged on these test scores. This type of surveillance makes the teachers seem ineffective since the scores are ultimately beyond their control and are more likely to be affected by the students' home environment and study habits. Surveillance like this contributes to a teacher's diminished feeling of autonomy.

The Ron Clark Story: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

Ironically, no film notes or journal reflections were made that indicated any form of surveillance. Although the movie depicts the principal as overbearing, the test scores as the driving force ultimately behind teaching students to achieve, and peer behavior as

an influence on student behavior, none of these things were discussed under the connotation of surveillance. I hypothesize that this occurred because Focus Group One found this movie to be very inspirational. They did not critique the hero character or the environment in which he teaches; therefore no elements of surveillance were brought to the surface.

The Browning Version: Film Discussion

Indications of surveillance were very weak during this discussion. Indeed, only one participant comment related to any type of surveillance and, as always, this remark implied the ever-present standardized tests. As participants discussed how the main character demanded perfection from his students, they spoke of how their students at Pence High School are not truly held accountable for their learning.

Monica: There's a quote that says, "I don't learn from my mistakes, I learn from the consequences of my mistakes," and too many times we take away the consequences of their mistakes. And so then where are they going to learn?

Patricia: Parents do as well.

Roger: umhum

Sheryl: Every thing is falling back on us; nothing is falling back on the kids. They're not being held accountable for what they're doing; we're being held accountable for what they output.

Roger: umhum

Patricia: umhum (fg 1-4, p. 8)

Sheryl's comment that the teachers are ultimately being held accountable for all learning refers to standardized testing and perhaps also hints at required passing rates and the no zero policy. It would seem that students would be affected more by these test results than the teachers; however, with infinite numbers of times that the students are allowed to take

the tests and as little as the EOCT counts towards passing a class, the students actually have little to fear. The GHSGT holds a little more importance for them because it can keep a student from graduating, although there are unlimited times that a student can take the test. On the contrary, teachers are placed under much more scrutiny for the results of these tests. Passing rates at Pence High School are reflected on a teacher's Annual Summative Report at the end of the school year under the category of Student Performance. There are 4 levels of proficiency: Not Effective, Inconsistently Effective, Effective, and Exceptional. If a teacher's pass rates are between 90%-100%, then the teacher will receive a rating of Exceptional. If a teacher's pass rates are between 80%-89%, then the teacher will receive a rating of Effective. For pass rates between 70%-79%, a teacher will receive a rating of Inconsistently Effective. For pass rates 69% and below, a teacher's rating will be Not Effective. For teacher's whose courses have an End of Course Test mandated by the state, the pass rate is based on the scores from those tests. For other teachers, the pass rate is based on the actual percentages of students passing the class. Clearly this report is something that weighs heavily on a teacher's mind and heart since it is the document that can be used to release a teacher from her/his contract. This report must also be provided to a potential employer if a teacher wishes to obtain a job at a new school. This might explain why teachers at Pence High School often seem to focus on student performance on state tests and on the no zero policy. Because these teachers feel like they are constantly under scrutiny, there is little time to consider enhancing the minimum requirements for fear that they will miss time covering potential test questions.

The Browning Version: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

There was no obvious evidence in either the film notes or the journal reflections that the participants recognized forms of surveillance in this movie. Most of the writings mused over Andrew's personality and their understanding of it instead of over how the film relates to their current situations in education at Pence High School. I suggest that the different focus of this film on the various aspects of the teacher as a person rather than on the teacher in education diluted any forms of surveillance that might have been depicted.

Language of Defeat

I chose to name this recurring theme "language of defeat" because I felt that the participants emitted at times a sense of helplessness in terms of where they are going in their profession. In many instances, this language is used in reference as the result of surveillance, whether it is in regards to testing on the state level or in reference to policies at the school where they all teach. This "language of defeat" seemed to be a common denominator among all participants, some seeming to feel more distraught than others.

Mona Lisa Smile: Film Discussion

Amanda started the discussion with:

Movies like this always make you proud that you are in education but it never seems like our work has the happy ending like some of these movies do... [O]f course it is very heartwarming and you want that to happen in your own life. Sometimes it does but for the most part it doesn't. I think that what we have to do is that we have to realize that what we do doesn't necessarily have an effect today, tomorrow, or next week but hopefully it will have an effect on down the line and those are where our successes are. Our successes are not in today; our successes are in tomorrow. (fg 1-1, p. 1)

The group received these words with a long pause. Although it seems that Amanda's comment was intended to be uplifting, the focus of her meaning was that happy endings do not readily exist in the profession of teaching. Because she did not elaborate why she feels this way, it is difficult to hypothesize about the origin of her remark. However, I found it interesting that even though only one participant agreed with her, Amanda did not feel obliged to explain herself to the group. I would propose that this is an indication of some type of acceptance on Amanda's part, perhaps an acceptance of a reality that simply conflicts with the world portrayed by Hollywood.

Several participants got into a heated exchange about holding students accountable. A few of them mentioned that the state does not support the policies that they set in place; rather, they place the accountability on the teachers to accomplish the goal through documentation of test scores.

Sheryl: Accountability. They're not holding them accountable for anything. But yet the state is not holding them accountable for anything because the state does not enforce an attendance policy. So if the state can't enforce an attendance policy then we can't either.

Amelia: I feel like I do them a disservice...

Sheryl: Yes!

Amelia: Because when they get out in the real world and they don't show up for work or they are late, there're going to be penalties. They are going to be completely unprepared because their entire life they've not been...

Sheryl: Because we can't teach them responsibility. [said in reference to the philosophy of the principal that teachers are not accountable for teaching responsibility]

Amelia: And that bothers me also.

Sheryl: And yet we will produce productive citizens. [said mockingly]

Amelia: How can you produce productive citizens who can't get to work on time?

Patricia: I think we should have them punch in on a time card, like you do on a normal workday. (fg 1-1, p. 7)

Clearly these teachers are frustrated because mandates are being placed on students by the state for which the state will not take responsibility in enforcing or supporting. The teachers appear to want to throw their hands in the air. They feel defeated by the processes of education themselves. Even teachers who take it into their own hands to impose regulations on the students, such as the importance of deadlines, feel defeated.

According to Monica,

Early dismissal forms were supposed to be returned today [to be released early during final exam days at the end of first semester]. We've gone on 3 field trips this year in my class, and I've been preaching deadlines and if they didn't turn in permission forms by my deadline, then they won't be allowed to go on the field trip. No ifs, ands, or buts about it. So I sent a student to the office today with my early dismissal forms, and they sent the student back, and they said, "Ms. B, they don't have to be in 'til Friday. It's ok." I was like, "oh man, that just blew everything that I have done all semester!" (fg 1-1, p. 8)

She cited how the local administration undermines what she teaches in her classes. She is not alone in this detrimental blow to teacher authority. Amanda, Roger, and Patricia state:

Amanda: They do it every time! There's always a deadline, and they extend it or take it even on the day.

Roger: But that's why they do that, because they expect that they are going to be late.

Patricia: But that condones that behavior.

Monica: It just blew everything that I'd done up to that point.

Roger: That's why I put mine in a folder until somebody calls for it, because I know that's what they're going to do. And then the student

takes it up there and they're like, "no," after you've spent 10 minutes explaining how and why it's got to be in on time. (fg 1-1, p. 8).

Conflict between what responsibility teachers are imparting to the students and what expectations are being followed by administration is contrasted well in this dialogue. As the teachers said things like, "They do it every time," "But that condones," "It just blew everything," one can feel the teachers' disappointments as they are communicated here. A matter as small as collecting forms can become a major factor in whether or not a teacher perceives her/his job or even herself/himself as valuable in the process of carrying out policies.

Mona Lisa Smile: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

Amanda wrote in her journal reflection, "I wish almost daily that I could change my strategy in some of my classes. One of the reasons I don't do it, I will admit, is that I don't have the energy necessary to think the lesson through." I interpreted this as a form of language of defeat because Amanda communicated that she has more responsibilities than she is able to physically handle. This type of defeat chips away at teacher identity because the teacher begins to feel a sense of helplessness that can affect her/his effectiveness.

In her journal, Patricia wrote, "I do try to gear some assignments with critical thinking exercises: however, since most students are incapable and fail those assignments, I have compromised in pursuit of the almighty grades. I believe we are creating a caste system of those who 'know' and those who don't. The future of education is bleak and needs revamping." These remarks indicate frustration due to student abilities and the need to keep up passing rates for the eyes of the administration.

Frustration is another ingredient that can damage teacher identity and cause teachers to give up on themselves and on their students.

Amelia wrote, “Being a teacher is part of my identity. . . .The longer I am in education, the more frustration and helplessness I feel as more and more freedoms are taken away from and decided for me. . . .The question is when do we say enough and do not allow our selves to be further compromised.” Amelia’s reflection speaks of her loss of identity through the loss of freedoms in her classroom. There is also a sense of timidity to her comment, as she wonders what she can do to regain what she has lost.

Finding Forrester: Film Discussion

Direct language of defeat was not as prominent during the discussion of this film.

Only two somewhat obvious remarks were made that indicated a feeling of defeat.

Patricia: I can honestly say that over the last 20 years that my teaching style has changed, and I’ve watered it down a lot and I’ve stopped giving homework, period, because they don’t do it. (fg 1-2, p. 6)

Amanda: I just think that part of it is the culture we live in today: fast paced, many things that we have to do, getting from one place to another, but because of the lack of, the less emphasis that we’ve begun to place on education, on homework specifically, makes it—is it worth while? Is it something that I need to do? Is it something that I’ve got to do? Because of what we have to do for the admin and with the lack of parental support, not because they don’t support but because they have so many other things to do, we teachers are caught, as the kids are caught, from one side and the other. What do we do? (fg 1-2, p. 8)

Patricia noted a decline in the rigor of her courses due to the lack of direct support from students. Amanda pointed out the effects that modern society has on how she decides what will be done in her classroom. Under the umbrella of “everyone is so busy,” Amanda tried to justify why rigorous education is no longer the main priority of the

masses. Both ladies indicate a defeat of what they value and seem to be pleading for answers.

Finding Forrester: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

As Patricia reflected on the demands of society to teach students for global lives, she remarked, “Never mind that we don’t have the resources in our own classrooms. We don’t have computers, enough Internet connections or even students who are interested in the rest of the world. . . .I believe all teachers would love to rise to these expectations, but I also believe that teachers are too busy teaching to today’s standards to tap into the future.” These comments demonstrate the frustration that Patricia feels at the various pressures to accomplish very unrealistic things. Her tone is one of disappointment in the ability of society to understand the limitations placed on teachers. I suggest that a teacher’s identity as one who can truly help students to profit from education is affected by the ignorance of those who are outside of the four walls of schools. When expectations like the ones she mentions are a reality for the society at large, it is difficult for a teacher to live up to them under the conditions at most schools, particularly at Pence High School. Not being able to meet expectations, I propose, has serious implications for teacher identity because most teachers are caring people who want to please and help others.

In her journal, Amelia wrote, “I want all of my students to achieve all that they can but I find myself getting used to the level of work they give me instead of insisting and pushing for more.” Amelia’s words are an example of the mental fatigue that eventually takes a toll on the part of a teacher’s identity that demands excellence. Amelia recognizes that she has lowered her expectations and that she is doing nothing to change.

I suggest that in the face of students needing to just pass tests, even teachers lose sight of the intellectual rigor that drew them to their profession originally.

The Ron Clark Story: Film Discussion

This third meeting seems to hold less language of defeat than the previous meetings. Mack detailed how he was currently teaching a particular student who frustrates him and expressed that “I have tried and tried to get her involved and I don’t know what to do. . . I’m at the end of my rapidly fraying rope because I don’t know what to do” because the girl will not do her work and only tries to escape the classroom (fg 1-3, p. 1). It seems that Mack feels that regardless of how much he cares, he is still defeated by the will of this student to do nothing in his class. Later on he mentioned a different situation that makes him feel defeated. He said:

Today I came in and I explained something three times and they still didn’t get it. I just stopped and said, “Guys, we’re all here to help each other. I’ve said this three times and it’s not clicking. If you know what’s going on, then turn around and tell your neighbor. It’s not just me--there’s one of me and there’s 30 of ya’ll. I can’t help everybody.” And then one of them said, “But we don’t get paid to help each other. (fg 1-3, p. 11).

Amelia immediately replied, “We’ve ingrained that in them though, starting early, that, ‘I’m not going to do anything that I don’t get something for,’” as several others indicated agreement in the background (fg 1-3, p. 12). It is apparent that the lack of motivation on the part of the students weighs heavily on these teachers. These examples of situations that occur daily seem to instill a sense of futility concerning the teachers’ plights in education. None of the group members offered ideas or words of encouragement except to point out that this type of incident happens in all of their classrooms. This too is an indication of the extreme defeat that these teachers seem to communicate: they are not even able to offer any suggestions because their experiences are similar.

The Ron Clark Story: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

In his film notes, Mack wrote that he thought it was “excellent but not possible” during the scene when Ron meets his students for lunch and for tutoring. I would argue that Mack’s comment is a reflection of his perception that there is not enough time nor is there much willingness on the part of students to make this type of meeting something that could occur on a normal basis. This could be interpreted as language of defeat because, although it might be effective, it is viewed as an unattainable goal.

Patricia noted, in her journal, that, “I’m sure the public sees teachers as narrow-minded, closed to new ideas and archaic in our thinking. I see us as using limited resources to the best of our abilities, being as creative as we can in limited space and as teaching and re-teaching to the apathetic at a disadvantage to the willing.” Patricia’s outlook, although veiled in optimism, speaks to the overwhelming responsibilities teachers have to just do what they can to get by. This situation, I contend, is crushing to a teacher whose identity is based in giving every student a rigorous education, full of exploration and discovery.

Mack’s journal reflection discussed the behavior management issues that he was experiencing in a particular class. Although he said he had contacted parents and asked for help from the administration, no one had done anything that improved the situation. He said, “I have seriously thought about getting out of the teaching profession altogether. . . .I wish that these students would realize and accept that we really do care for them and that we want the best for them, but unfortunately the majority of them don’t.” I propose that when a teacher is battling behavior issues in the classroom, it can be the darkest hour of her/his career and can make a person second-guess the meaning that their position as

an educator holds. Although it is ultimately the responsibility of the students to control their own behavior, it is difficult for a teacher to come to terms with what this means in relation to their effectiveness as an educator. Mack's comments demonstrate the feelings of helplessness and self-doubt that such issues can create.

The Browning Version: Film Discussion

This particular focus group meeting was lightly tinted with language of defeat. Only one remark in relation to how society views scholars seemed to fall into this category. As mentioned earlier here in Chapter Five, **Anti-Intellectualism**, *The Browning Version*, Patricia said, "And that's why they value our jobs so--because we're the scholars. [said sarcastically]" (fg 1-4, p. 6). I suggest that she feels run-down by the public's perception of and lack of value for educators. She did not indicate how or why she perceives the public as not valuing teachers' jobs, but one might deduce that she is referring to the modest salary that most teachers earn.

I find it very interesting that at this last meeting, these participants did not use as much language of defeat as in earlier sessions. What is even more interesting is that this session took place toward the end of the school year when most teachers at Pence High School begin to wilt and complain the most. This negative trend was not at all evident at this discussion.

The Browning Version: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

There was no obvious evidence in either the film notes or the journal reflections that the participants found a reason to express defeat in response to this movie. Most of the writings mused over Andrew's personality and their understanding of it instead of over how the film relates to their current situations in education at Pence High School.

Despite the audience seeing the many defeats of Andrew in this film, such as the fact that he is in general not appreciated, that his personal life is suffering, and that he is misunderstood by the majority of the people in his life, I suggest that the strength of this storyline focused the participants' attention on the character, disallowing them time to make personal connections in terms of their own teacher identities.

Positive Language and Hope for the Future

Despite what has been depicted thus far as a bleak outlook for these teachers at Pence High School, there are still positive attitudes that reveal that these people look toward the future with hope. The message that these teachers persist in giving is that their struggles are not over but they have not and will not be lost in the current place of education. With these words of hope, the participants assert that they will continue to reach out in service to their students' minds and spirits. Merleau-Ponty suggests, "The world around us must be, not a system of objects which we synthesize, but a totality of things, open to us, towards which we project ourselves" (1958, p. 450). What follows are miniscule words that speak volumes about how these teachers dive into the worlds of their students with care, understanding, and dedication.

Mona Lisa Smile: Film Discussion

Because this film focuses on how teachers can bring about changes, even if small, the participants spoke of change on several occasions. They were able to make connections from the film to moments in their own teaching careers, and as a result, they spoke of looking positively to the future.

Patricia: I like how movies like this help me re-evaluate the things that I do in the classroom.

Amanda: And that guy said another thing in the movie: “Change takes time, let them catch up with you.”

Patricia: umhum

Amanda: So lots of times, we just need to realize that they’re not on the same track that we are and that maybe if we do give them a little more time, maybe they will figure it out for themselves. (fg 1-1, pp. 2-3)

Interestingly, the participants’ focus on a scene where the main character is being cautioned about her teaching practices turns into a moment of revelation for them. This revelation indicates their need for constant growth in the field. Patricia comments positively on the value of self-reflection, while Amanda muses hopefully over encouraging students to think for themselves. These thoughts show a willingness to think critically about their place as teachers in education and about the processes of education itself. Roger added to this, as he said, “I’ve decided that, you know, this is what I’m going to do, and I have to be happy with it. If I’m not happy with it, I guess I’ve got to move on. I’ve got to know that better days are going to come. That is real important to me” (fg 1-1, p. 3). I would argue that Roger also shows the ability to self-reflect and that he is prepared to take the bad with the good as long as he can count on and hope for the good to exist.

Later on in the conversation, Monica and Amanda discussed the scene in the film when the main character attempts to change the way the young women view their education at Wellesley from that of dating service pleasures to opportunity for professional career fulfillment.

Monica: And choices...she was trying to teach about choices. She tried to get the students to understand that they could make choices based on their own motivations, and they do not have to make choices based on what society says they must do, or their particular sect of society. Just like

our students. We have students very similar, maybe, to what we saw up there [referring to the film] and we also have the extreme on the other end.

Amanda: Cookie cutters come in all different neighborhoods. It doesn't matter what neighborhood is on this side of town with this much square footage, or it is on this side of town with this amount of square footage. There is a set of rules that you live by, a set of rules that the kids abide by, and they don't veer very much from it. This set of people think that education has this much importance, clothing has this much importance, social status has this much importance. Whereas this group over here thinks they are totally different. However, within the confines of that group, they don't veer much from the norm. I think if we can teach the kids to think differently, to aspire to different things—not necessarily better things-- different things, usually that they.... Maybe they will see: “it is ok to be something different than what is expected of me or what has always been. Maybe it is ok for me to be different and it's ok for me to go away or to be somebody else that's not who everybody expects me to be and that I can be comfortable in my own skin.” (fg11-, p. 5)

Monica is able to recognize the role of society in education but did not comment on its effects. However, Amanda named the ways society dictates the norms of culture and how those affect students. The way she spoke wistfully of what might be possible in the classroom confirms a hope that education is not stagnant and that change and difference will not be stamped out by standardization.

Another member of the group spoke about teaching life lessons in a positive light. Noting that he was teaching a student who was habitually tardy to class, Roger demonstrated his belief in the ability to teach students about codes of behavior that perhaps are not priorities for the administration.

Roger: You know, we talked about mentioning that life lesson-- I bring it up. You walk in my class and you are habitually late, stop the presses and let's discuss why you are late so that everybody can learn from it. So I say, “you don't do this on the job. They kick you out. They snatch the sign in sheet if I'm running late, and I'm killing myself to get here. I've got to sign in on time.” So I let them know that. It's not an every day thing and it's not a preachy thing, but when it's hitting me and I'm thinking about it, we're going to discuss it. Perhaps that is because we are

in career prep, and I know sometimes it takes time away from talking about academic courses, but is it important? Is it important?

Sheryl: I agree.

Roger: That's what I think gets some of them. I see them shuffling up the hall a little bit faster the next day. So it's us making them accountable in saying, you can say it in a nice way and not destroy them but let them know that "I'm serious about it." (fg 1-1, pp. 7-8)

His comments on teaching the importance of timeliness are hopeful because they demonstrate his belief in his students' abilities to improve their behaviors. He illustrated that he demands their attention and their respect, not because he deserves it but because he gives it freely to them by not being "preachy" but by being honest with students on how their behaviors now can make or break who they are in the future. His remarks here indicate that he is hopeful that the students will one day be great citizens and employees.

Immediately after that point in the discussion, Monica geared the topic toward a comparison between the main character's experience at the end of the film where the student characters come into their own ways of thinking and her own experiences in teaching when students noticeably progressed.

Monica: I think on a positive note, one of the reasons that we keep teaching was brought to the surface when they are discussing the Mona Lisa, towards the end of the movie. Also at graduation, you could see the sense of pride that the teacher had, you know, when they were discussing the Mona Lisa, she could see that the light bulb had gone off and that that is why a lot of the time we put up with some of the stuff we put up with, because every once and a while we see a kid that the light bulb turns on and we're like [snap] "that's it! That's why we are still here." It may not be an entire class like it was her class but it can be that one kid, they look at you and you realize, "my god, they got it!" You know?

Sheryl: It makes you feel sooo good.

Monica: umhum! And that is stuff that's healing.

Patricia: And I think in the long run the students appreciate teachers who hold them accountable.

Sheryl: yeah

Amelia: Well it feels good to have kids still visit me from years... I've had a few that have hunted me down...

Sheryl: It feels nice, doesn't it?

Monica: I've had kids come back from jail and visit me.

Sheryl: Alright!

Monica: But it's nice because they come back and they're like, "I should've done things a little differently." (fg 1-1, pp. 8-9)

Monica demonstrated the ability to look at the positive side of a situation. At this moment she focused on the good that comes from a lesson where students express understanding and where students display growth. The other participants chimed in with affirmations of their own, noting the enjoyment they receive when they hear about the successes of former students. It is intimated here that the teachers have hope that they will always have these instances to look forward to in the future.

Mona Lisa Smile: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

Sheryl wrote in her journal reflection: "I love the movie *Mona Lisa Smile* and the impact that it can have on education if people would actually watch it and think about how issues in the movie relate to issues that we currently have now." I suggest that Sheryl's language indicates hope for the future in terms of how educators can turn to film as a point of departure for inspiration for critical thinking and discussions that can help them to find ways of empowering themselves.

In his reflection, Mack wrote about the fortune of Ms. Watson, who is able to see that she makes a difference in the lives of her students. In response to that, he said, "Although I

don't get to experience this feeling often, this is the satisfaction I get when I see my own students begin to think and care about themselves. I wish I felt this more often." Mack recognizes that he receives validation from seeing this in the film and from watching his students grow, but he is wistful because it is not a common occurrence, although he does believe in its presence. His wistfulness indicates hope that he will again experience the joy he has felt in the past at seeing his students grow.

Finding Forrester: Film Discussion

A portion of the discussion concentrated on an internal spark that some students possess in terms of being motivated to learn. The participants saw this spark in the main character, Jamal, and contemplated why this spark exists. Throughout the conversation, the participants offered their interpretations of the spark: one said that it is caused by familial support, one said that it is caused by the need to escape a negative environment, another mentions that it is caused by being in tune spiritually, and a fourth proposed that the teachers themselves can be the cause (fg 1-2, pp. 3-5). These participants prove that in spite of the prevalence of anti-intellectualism and the feeling of defeat, there is still hope that each student can find his or her spark and that as teachers, they can be a part of that ignition that will help to carry on the thirst for knowledge.

Finding Forrester: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

In her journal reflection, Monica wrote, "Just as the young man was helped by Forrester, Forrester was helped by the young man. That is often the case with teaching. Teachers can thrive and grow as human beings just by helping their students. We reap what we sow." Monica's words indicate that a teacher's hope is in her/his future relationships with students and in her/his efforts to teach. These comments reinforce that

a teacher identity based solely in the ideal of helping students will not waiver when assaulted with the various demands of the profession.

Roger wrote in his journal reflection that “success takes on many different forms, based on your individual situation; being able to follow your passions in life is a successful thing.” These remarks emphasize what Monica wrote in her journal: a teacher can feel good about reaching out to students no matter what limitations are set by the educational system. I interpret this to mean that these participants feel that teachers must base their identities in making a difference in the lives of students, even if it is not in the traditional ways that originally called them into the profession.

The Ron Clark Story: Film Discussion

The first evidence of positive language and hope for the future occurred when Amelia mentioned the benefits of contacting parents. She said, “And so it’s whenever... they can’t see better for their children, education didn’t do anything for them, so why should their children even bother? So a lot of it is, if we do put out that contact, it helps and it makes them feel like they can come to us and get some help” (fg31-, p. 2). She expressed belief in the effects of teachers reaching out to parents and advocated that such contact can be encouraging for them.

Further into the discussion, Roger echoed that positive feeling in saying, “I don’t know, just from a new teacher’s perspective, just having energy and just wanting to do the job. And I come in wanting to do this work every day,” (fg 1-3, p. 6). Roger attributed his positive attitude to being new in the profession; however, from his comments during the discussions, it truly seems to be his natural state of mind. Basing this observation on his contributions to all of the sessions, Roger appears to have the

ability to take situations that may frustrate and challenge other teachers and to use them as teachable moments with his students. There is an example of this later on in this discussion when he stated:

Sometimes when a new person comes in, people say, “Well, I’ve been here all these years and I know how these kids are,” but sometimes when a new person comes in, you should listen to them. Last year, when I came, I had kids doing current events and people would come to me and ask me about it and say they didn’t understand how it related to what I did, that they were getting complaints. I said, “Have them call me and I’ll explain.” I’ve had admin ask me, “Well do you really need to?” “Umhum”. What I liked about this guy [Ron Clark] is that he stood up to that. Not in a rude way, not in a mean way, he just went about the plan he had and improved those kids and that situation. Being consistent in a positive way. (fg 1-3, p. 9)

The Ron Clark Story: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

In her journal reflection, Monica wrote, “This movie is a good example of what can happen if a teacher believes in his/her students. It was good to see that Mr. Clark wanted a challenge.” I suggest that these are words of hope for the future because Monica sees it as her job to be prepared to work through situations that are not easy and that maybe are not in the job description. I would argue that she does not accept defeat easily, nor does she allow others or their policies to define her. In order to maintain such an attitude, teachers must have a true understanding of their purpose as teachers and must find ways to work within the confines of the system.

Roger remarked, “This was an awesome account of a truly awesome story. Ron Clark’s energy and love for teaching every child has helped to empower me.” This comment reflects a hope for the future because Roger indicates that he will take action as a teacher because of the example Ron Clark sets. It also supports

the notion that film can help teachers regain their focus and that film can serve as a point of departure for positive ways for teachers to reclaim who they want to be as educators.

The Browning Version: Film Discussion

There were several instances of positive, hopeful language at this meeting. The comments ranged from autonomy with discipline in the classroom to seeing students as adults later in life, and from being inspired, to giving children hope and connecting with students. These remarks were threaded throughout the discussion and seemed to come from making connections to characters in the film. For example, Roger said,

One day, [the ISS teacher] had a sub and she had them in there on the floor, reading a book to them. It probably was a first grade book, and I just told all my kids, "Come on, you're coming back," and at that moment I decided ISS is in my room now. I don't need that anymore. We are going to take care of it in here, you're going to get your chances with me, then I'm going straight to the write-up form. And I think that's made a difference and made me have more patience too. (fg 1-4, p. 4)

Roger's reflection was in response to a comment made about how the students in the film did not understand the main teacher character. As Roger revealed how he could relate to this situation, he spoke about the discipline situation in his classroom. He highlighted that he, like the main teacher character, does what he thinks is right when it comes to discipline in his classroom. This is an area where he is able to maintain autonomy and he prides himself in that.

Amanda spoke about seeing her former students out in public places, such as Wal-mart.

But I do tell them this is the best part of my job, is seeing what person you've become. And that's one of the things that young teachers don't really realize. If you expect to get pats on the back, in high school especially, if you expect to get little trinkets and stuff like that, you're not.

But what you do get is that 5... however many years. You see people who are good citizens, who are good mothers and fathers, who've gone on to get good jobs. (fg 1-4, p. 4)

She expressed pleasure and hope in knowing that the young people she teaches turn into adults who do positive things with their lives and who find it important to tell her this when they see her years later. This gives Amanda the ability to look beyond the everyday classroom situation and to find hope in the future.

Sheryl summed the conversation up best when she responded, "This is inspiring! I'm ready to go teach 4 more classes [almost shouting]," (fg 1- 4, p. 5). Despite having been away from her home for almost twelve hours at this point of the day, Sheryl found excitement in hearing the affirmations from her colleagues and expressed her excitement about teaching. This evening's atmosphere became a breeding ground for encouragement and positive reinforcement.

The Browning Version: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

In her journal reflection in reference to Tapelo's gift to Andrew, Amanda wrote, "[The students] all have the keys to our hearts, or we wouldn't be in this profession. Even though the past few months have not been great, I do not regret going into teaching as a career." What these remarks indicate is that Amanda does not let the day-to-day trials affect her overall perception of herself as a teacher. Despite experiencing hardships, teachers can maintain a sense of purpose and accomplishment.

Patricia wrote, "We [teachers] must brace each other, encourage each other and steer away from basing our worth upon student opinions." The hope that Patricia offers in her journal reflection is that teachers can look to their peers to help maintain a positive

perception of their teacher identity. They can look to one another as professionals and intellectuals for support and inspiration.

In Roger's reflection, he wrote, "This story has inspired me to be flexible but continue to expect the best, and as I expect the best, I work at being the best teacher-leader." These words mark the career of a teacher who is in charge of his own teacher identity and who finds strength in himself in order to set an example for others. His words are inspirational.

Evidence of Critical Thinking and Steps Toward a Critical Pedagogy

This section will explore the discussions surrounding critical thinking as well as observations of what might be considered the participants' tendencies toward critical pedagogy in relation to the films and to the teaching profession. It was my expectation that with each passing meeting and journal entry, the participants would be more inclined to participate in critical thinking which would lead, for those not already so inclined, to active participation in critical pedagogy. One can find connections of critical pedagogy to consciousness in Merleau-Ponty's discussion of the operations of consciousness. He says

All consciousness is, in some measure, perceptual consciousness. If it were possible to lay bare and unfold all the presuppositions in what I call my reason or my ideas at each moment, we should always find experiences which have not been made explicit, large-scale contributions from past and present, a whole 'sedimentary history' which is not only relevant to the *genesis* of my thought, but which determines its *significance*. (1958, p. 459)

Indeed, for teachers to subscribe to a critical pedagogy means that they should examine their presuppositions but must do so with the understanding that they will never be able to peel all of the layers of their meanings down to just one point. However, such

examinations can open up spaces that reveal truths, and these truths can serve as awakenings toward an improved environment of education.

Mona Lisa Smile: Film Discussion

The first evidence of critical thinking occurred toward the end of the first discussion. The participants were mulling over the dismissal of the nurse character in the film who was distributing contraceptives without the college's permission.

Monica: But they were also concerned more about the school's reputation. That was the whole deal. They were concerned about the appearances of the school because their whole attitude was like, "let's bring in these women who will be good wives."

Patricia: I was struck by the fact that the nurse, who had a [female] companion and obviously the school knew it and they were not... they were accepting of those behaviors. And the other teacher...

Mack: The male teacher was sleeping with students.

Patricia: was sleeping with students and yet they... this small thing where she is trying to help students, you know, and they weren't going have that. There was almost a double standard.

Sheryl: umhum

Roger: Some of that was from the parents though, because they came in and complained.

Amelia: Some people carry more weight than others, too.

Roger: right

Amelia: That woman was her mother. [referring to the board member]

[pause]

Monica: I think that would be true in our system.

Amelia: oh yeah (fg 1-1, p. 10)

This example shows the participants' willingness to sift through the storyline in an attempt to make sense of the action of the film. Monica pointed out the difference in motivation for the school administration's actions: some actually care about the well being of students while others obsess over appearing reputable to the public. Patricia noted that despite the school administration's piety, they looked the other way about the private lives of their teachers, even when they could be construed as posing a danger to the students. At the end of this part of the conversation, Monica was able to take the situation in the film and forecast what results would transpire in her own school system, where parent complaint often takes precedence.

Finally, there was a discussion about the students' over-preparation for the first day of class in the film. The participants pointed to the fact that students expect to be given exactly what it is that they are expected to know so that they can memorize it and regurgitate it. What they emphasized is that the students cannot think for themselves because previous schooling has not helped them to develop the skills they need to be critical thinkers.

Amanda: They wanted everything exactly like they expected: in the syllabus. What was it that the girl said? "This is not in the syllabus."

Sheryl: That's exactly how it is with the new GPS that are going into play. They are not required to think exactly as they've always been taught to. Now they will actually have to think and veer, and it is that conceptual thinking. And so a lot of kids are finding it hard to think that way and to adjust because they haven't been taught that way. (fg 1-1, p. 11)

Mona Lisa Smile: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

In her journal reflection, Sheryl wrote that "Moving into the new GPSs, teachers are being forced to teach inquiry based lessons. Many of us have not been trained to think like this, so it is so hard for us to conceive teaching it."

Mack remarked, "Today's students are a lot like the students seen in the movie--scared to think outside what's not written or taught. I try to teach my students to think critically. . . but they freak out when I ask them to do this."

Finding Forrester: Film Discussion

The main discussion where there was evidence of critical thinking taking place concerned the *lack* of student and teacher abilities to participate in critical thinking practices. The following dialogue reveals the participants' thoughts:

Monica: [Forrester] just wanted Jamal to have fun with writing.

Patricia: Write with your heart.

Monica: I think kids have quit having fun with writing because they are busy thinking about their spelling and they forget about having fun while writing. And I think it's important for kids to have fun. We had that in college, you know? When we went to college you were so scared about not writing this down or the APA style's not going to be right and it was no fun!

Amanda: Patricia and I both wrote that down. Both of us did. "Don't think like a writer, write with your heart not with your head."

Mack: I've got students that as soon as we try to do a writing assignment [in Spanish], hands go up, wanting me over there, "Is this right? Is this right? Is this right?"

Patricia: They are so used to instant gratification. We assign our Spanish 1 students an alphabet book, where they have to select a word for each letter and draw a picture for it and tell the English word. And today was the very first day, and all they had to do was make a list of the words and I had a student who asked me, "Will you look and see if these pictures are right?" And I said, "Did you draw them?" And he said, "yeah," and I said, "Then it's right." And he said, "Yeah, but I need to know, I need to know if it's right."

Monica: Teachers are becoming the same way.

Amanda: Yes!

Monica: I was at a meeting yesterday and I could not believe the questions that were being asked. I thought, “They’re only asking that because they are scared to try something different.” And uhhhh, it was wild. We are becoming so rigid too, things have to be this way, this way, this way and we are so into rules. We are forgetting to have fun.

Patricia: It’s true.

Amelia: Every time we turn around, we are getting hammered with something. Either I get my pass rate up to 80%, and then they all fail the EOCT or the HSGT. Either way, I lose.

Tara: Did anyone go to the rubric training, the assessment training?

Amanda: That was in our English department meeting today. Do you remember when we had to write the instructions for the ‘connect the dot activity’? “You need to add a dot this way and this way....?” We’ve done this before.

Patricia: It was either a Marsha Tate [well-known professional educator who teaches about differentiated instruction] thing or something.

Amanda: And you had to write out the instructions to make sure that a person would know what to do. Then we had to make a rubric to see if the person who does the assignment was able to accomplish it according to the directions, a 4-3-2-1. Yeah. That.

Tara: So you “learned” how to write a rubric in your meeting?

Amanda: Yeah, I think this is the third time we’ve done that same activity.

Tara: A person from the state department was there?

Amanda: Indeed. (fg 1-2, p. 9-10)

Multiple layers are revealed in this section of discussion. First, the participants critiqued the students’ inability to think through a process or a series of steps. Second, they evaluated fellow educators’ incapability to think beyond what is given to them. Third, they assessed the practices presented in a meeting held by the state department of education which was intended to teach the teachers how to think in terms of rubrics.

Each point represents the pattern of decline of the value of or the need for critical thinking. At the initial level of critical thinking, there is the student who must be prodded along so that s/he will complete the assignment. This is followed by the adult educator who asks questions during meetings because s/he is possibly intimidated to think on her/his own. The final example is of the state imposing a way to grade things systematically so that teachers do not have to think or actually assess student work. Interestingly, all of the participants here were able to recognize that the element of critical thinking is weakened and the tone of their conversation indicated that they are not content with this state of affairs. The discussion ended with their reflections on how teachers can make or break the motivation of students, which implies that the participants feel that there is a connection between teachers, student motivation, and critical thinking.

Finding Forrester: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

In her journal, Monica wrote, “My class just finished a chapter in our study skills book that taught different thinking skills concepts. The majority of kids said that the reason some people do not like to think is that ‘thinking takes too much time and effort.’”

The Ron Clark Story: Film Discussion

I found it difficult to discern many moments where critical thinking was obviously taking place. There were only two instances that spoke to me. One was a moment when Monica was reflecting as the group listened.

That’s one of the things I’ve learned, I used to try to make them pass their classes but you can’t do that, that’s a temporary solution. What works best is to figure out what they need to help them graduate high school, let them figure out what career they want to do after high school because most of them don’t have reason to graduate, at least most of the kids I work with. That’s what takes time. That’s one reason that I wasn’t too sure about the semester thing [4x4 block]. That’s what takes time, to

figure out, “Hey what do you want to do? Why do you need this piece of paper? How can it benefit you?” It goes back to the movie we saw a few weeks ago, *Finding Forrester*. The reason Jamal would take what he took from Forrester and those other people was because he wanted something. He got what he wanted. And if I can get my kids to figure out what they want, then they will, for lack of better words, bow down when they feel like snapping. You know right now, some piece of paper is not real important to some. (fg 1-3, pp. 7-8)

Monica compared and contrasted her students and their needs with what teachers feel students need and with the situation of a character from a previously viewed film. She was able to admit that while she understands the importance of a diploma, her students may not label it with the same value, even if they do understand the benefit of obtaining one. Another group member, Patricia, considered how the students in the film are in some ways not like the ones in her classes.

Patricia: [Ron] kept saying, “We’re family and families respect each other.” And I thought, “not their families.” That’s not what family means to them. And if you walked in and said, “Ok. Rule #1, we’re family.” Well, that might mean fighting and arguing, you know, so...

Amanda: And they had to learn a different definition of family.

Patricia: It made me wonder how many times I say something and I’m using words that they don’t understand. (fg 1-3, p. 11)

Patricia compared the various understandings of the word “family” that the character Ron Clark uses to gain dedication from his students. She pointed out that one person’s experience with family may not be another’s experience. These musings also cause her to reflect on terminologies used in her classroom and what associations certain students may have with various ones.

The Ron Clark Story: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

Many of these journals focused on Ron Clark’s abilities to be creative and to reach students in comparison to the participants’ own teaching methods. The

participants in this group saw Ron as an icon in the field and, rather than critique him, they sought to find ways to praise him and apply what they learned from him to ideas involving their own practices in the classroom. This illustrates thoughts toward the beginnings of critical pedagogy, where one evaluates her/his environment to see how it interacts and affects education and its processes and then makes changes in her/his practices that reflect what s/he has discovered.

The Browning Version: Film Discussion

Evidence of critical thinking seemed to be most prevalent during the fourth focus group meeting. The dialogue between the group members was fast paced much of the time, unlike the beginning sessions, and many of the members took to asking each other thought-provoking questions rather than simply telling stories related to the film or recounting events from the classroom. Indeed, at least sixteen questions were posed by the group members during this session. Listed below are some of the questions that were asked:

- Monica: I liked the quote that he would say, “You’ll get what you deserve, nothing less and certainly nothing more.” [others quote as well] What if we had that standard at the high school? You know? What if that was our motto? That would be so cool, that would be so cool to see what would happen. (fg 1-4, p. 1)
- Patricia: So in the movie he apologizes for being a failure. Do you see him as being a failure? (fg 1-4, p. 5)
- Monica: And gosh what does that say of our society [that we value the athlete more than the scholar]? (fg 1-4, p. 6)
- Patricia: So then, how do you do it [create civilized human beings]? (fg 1-4, p. 6)
- Monica: Do you think... I like comparing the other one [Ron Clark] with this guy. He probably would have never gotten teacher of the year, but I bet you his test scores would have been extremely high. (fg 1-4, p. 8)

- Amanda: How do you reach the happy medium [between being Mr. Popular and Hitler]? (fg 1-4, p. 8)
- Monica: There's a quote that says, "I don't learn from my mistakes, I learn from the consequences of my mistakes," and too many times we take away the consequences of their mistakes. And so then where are they going to learn? (fg 1-4, p. 8)
- Patricia: I disagree with that statement . . . because some of the culture that I see, I think, "Where in the world did that come from and why do we have it? Why do we allow it?"

Amanda: We should probably define culture...

Patricia: Define what's best. (fg 1-4, p. 10)

- Patricia: And is that what is best for our society? That is part of our culture.

Patricia: So is culture what is best for society? That's the question. (fg 1-4, p. 10)

- Sheryl: Is that what's best for our kids?

Patricia: And is that what represents what is best in our society at this time? In our lives? (fg 1-4, p. 11)

This meeting discussion marks the first time that the participants began asking each other questions in order to elicit answers that were thought of on the spot. The tone of the questions was probing, as if they were challenging one another to think. The feel of the discussion was more comparable to a debate at times rather than a conversation. I would argue that this is evidence of the participants partaking in a type of critical thinking that was not evident during the first session. During this meeting, the teachers managed to focus more on hypothesizing and analyzing rather than on relating stories that were about education but not directly connected to the film.

The Browning Version: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

Amanda wrote in her journal, “Oftentimes we don’t realize how much our lives outside the classroom affect what goes on in the classroom.” I interpret this statement to mean that educators should consider how their own humanity affects what they do as teachers. I also infer that it is important for teachers to recognize that students are also humans and that they have experiences that affect who they are and what they do on a daily basis. Such awareness leads to the understanding that the intricate patterns of life are woven together, touching every aspect of a student’s ability to learn. As examining these elements becomes part of a teacher’s methodology for teaching, s/he begins to develop a critical pedagogy. I suggest that Amanda’s comment is evidence that she is thinking toward a critical pedagogy because she acknowledges that the classroom does not exist in a vacuum and that a person’s experiences affect her/his education. She implies that one must go beyond the surface of appearances in order to reach a contextual understanding of the root causes for all interactions in the classroom.

In her journal reflection, Patricia wrote, “I find myself more like the teacher in this film than any of the others. . . trying to hold the students to a standard that the world doesn’t agree with... trying to instill values that others don’t deem valuable and constantly being ‘bombarded’ with the stigma of being ‘Hitler’.” Patricia’s comment, like Amanda’s, indicates that she too is forming her own critical pedagogy. Because she compared herself to the character of Andrew and found certain qualities in common with him, she was able to articulate how her practices do not always fall in step with those of her environment. This examination implicates the beginning processes of a teacher’s recognition for the need of critical pedagogy in education.

Monica's journal reflection contemplated the relationship between Tapelo and Andrew. She discussed the importance of the understanding Tapelo has for his teacher when others did not understand him and she remarked how students like this can help teachers survive when they experience challenges in the classroom. One comment read, "So often we praise the popular and forget the rest, when the rest may make the biggest difference." I suggest that this reflection indicates Monica's tendency toward a critical pedagogy because it demonstrates that she looks for the value in all students and recognizes that the unassuming ones have as much potential as the extraverted ones. Monica gives worth to all students and this suggests that she uses education to reach out to the students, in spite of all their differences, in an effort to encourage their successes in the future.

Mack noted in his journal that "Although I found the movie interesting, it was more difficult to understand than the others we have seen. I'd like to watch it again. Some movies are meant to be seen more than once so that we can get a better understanding. This was one of those movies." Roger also wrote, "This was a good story; the kind you need to watch a few times in order to get the full meaning and feeling of the main character's situation." These comments illustrate how film can encourage its viewer to think. Both of these participants recognized value in what the film communicated and realized that there was more beneath the surface than what they could absorb during a single viewing. I would argue that this is also evidence supporting that these teachers are developing ideas toward a critical pedagogy: they are willing to analyze and evaluate in an effort to understand. Such a quality is necessary for teachers

who are working toward critical pedagogy because an analytical mind is necessary for assembling the educational puzzle pieces together in order to better serve students.

Conclusion

A month after all of the focus group meetings were completed and all journal reflections had been submitted, I asked the participants to write a fifth and final reflection on the overall experience of participating in the focus group study. Only two participants, Amelia and Sheryl, did not respond to the request. All the participants who responded remarked that they enjoyed meeting with and getting to know their colleagues in a setting outside of the school. They also all said that it was interesting to hear what their peers had to say about the films and how those films related to their perceptions of Pence High School. Three of the four said that they felt good about having a place to “vent.” In addition, they all said that they learned that they were not alone in the challenges and struggles of education.

Some of the individual comments are worth further discussion. First, Patricia wrote her opinion of how the various films affected her in her practices. She said, “The moving, stirring, encouraging movies were easier to digest, but didn’t seem to stir me to action the way the ‘uncomfortable’ movies stirred me to change or adjust.” Patricia’s comment is evidence that watching film can encourage teachers to analyze themselves and their place in education. Teachers can use what they discover as an impetus for growth and can apply it in their classrooms.

Second, Mack discussed how the focus group meetings served as a space to extinguish the alienation teachers feel. He remarked, “I think it is safe to say that we all left each session feeling motivated and proud to be an educator. . . . I was glad to see that I

am not alone in this. . . .” As has been demonstrated in this chapter through the participants’ discussions of their physical and emotional responses to film and how those connect to their own experiences, the teachers at Pence High School feel estranged because of the various restrictions placed on them by the tools of surveillance and by anti-intellectualism in our culture. The teachers in this focus group were able to reach out to each other in a non-school setting through positive language and hope for the future and through participating in critical discussions that led to some members’ beginnings toward critical pedagogy. Mack’s recognition that he is not alone is a positive indicator that teachers need intellectual discussion groups such as this experience provided in order to grow as professionals. Roger reiterated this as he wrote, “The fellowship and meeting of the minds was AWESOME! . . . This movie time with colleagues, discussing the pros and cons of education in [this] county and beyond, has been fantastic! [These meetings] helped me to see that we can not make assumptions about a student’s ability if we have done nothing to challenge their true intelligence and understand their background.”

CHAPTER 6

FOCUS GROUP TWO: DISCUSSION OF DATA

The fact remains that I am free, not in spite of, or on the hither side of, these motivations, but by means of them. For this significant life, this certain significance of nature and history which I am, does not limit my access to the world, but on the contrary is my means of entering into communication with it. It is by being unrestrictedly and unreservedly what I am at present and the world, by taking on deliberately what I am fortuitously, by willing what I will and doing what I do, that I can go further.

---Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 1958, p. 529

Introduction

As noted in the previous chapter, this chapter is a continuation of the analysis of the data dealing specifically with the meetings and journal reflections of Focus Group Two. The justification for using two focus groups in the study, as was mentioned in Chapter Three, was to limit the groups to a comfortable number of people for discussion purposes. This same reasoning supports the need for separate chapters on data exploration: separation of the data is to facilitate manageability for me as the researcher and for the reader as well. The procedures for exploring the discussions and journals of Focus Group Two were identical to those for Focus Group One. The chapter is structured exactly like Chapter Four, wherein the sections that follow will provide some insight into the discussions based on a mixture of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and Sobchack's film studies. The themes that emerged during analysis are the same as with Focus Group One. This chapter is divided into sections that include: (1) the participants' physical and emotional responses to film, (2) anti-intellectualism, (3) surveillance, (4) language of defeat, (5) positive language and hope for the future, and (6) evidence of critical thinking and steps toward critical pedagogy. The information in each section will be divided by

the chronological order of the focus group meetings where the films were viewed and will include commentary from those meetings as well as from the film notes and journal reflections. The conclusion section will be an exploration and interpretation of the fifth and final journal reflections concerning the participants' thoughts on their experiences with the focus group.

Physical and Emotional Responses to Film

This examination of participant responses to film is based on the premise that the participants come to the focus group meetings and view the films from within the context of their own realities. How those realities are affected by their individual experiences is difficult to decipher because the participants' points of view are entrenched in the combination of those experiences. This *mélange* of happenings forms each participant's perception. Merleau-Ponty theorizes

We can no more construct perception of the thing and of the world from discrete aspects, than we can make up the binocular vision of an object from two monocular images. My experiences of the world are integrated into one single world as the double image merges into the one thing. I do not have one perspective, then another, and between them a link brought about by the understanding, but each perspective *merges into* the other. . . . My point of view is for me not so much a limitation of my experience as a way I have of infiltrating into the world in its entirety. (1958, p. 384)

In other words, a person's perspective is a conglomeration of past perspectives that allows her/him to enter into the world. The key role for each participant's perspective in this study is the meaning it confers on how s/he views film. One interest in particular is

how the participant's physical responses to film add significance for her/him as the viewer. Since "in perception we do not think the object and we do not think ourselves thinking it, we are given over to the object and we merge into this body which is better informed than we are about the world, and about the motives we have and the means at our disposal for synthesizing it" (Merleau-Ponty, 1958, p. 277). As the viewer watches a film, s/he is immersed in its world; therefore it was important during this study that the viewers be reminded about their bodies because it is the body's perceptions that bring about a synthesis of the film and the viewer's reality. The focus group members were given paper and were asked to record moments during which they became aware of their own physical responses while viewing the film. These group members' comments in relation to the attention they placed on their physical and emotional responses to the film seem somewhat prominent. The participants seemed more comfortable speaking about the emotions that were produced by certain physical responses rather than about the embodiment itself.

Mona Lisa Smile: Film Discussion

This was the first time the group met and all members were present except Bill, whose son's birthday dinner was previously scheduled for this night. The group was excited and interested about coming together as part of the study. They asked a few questions pertaining to the direction of my research. After watching the film, it was clear that they had become involved with the process and they were ready to talk. As the group discussed the moments in the film, their responses ranged from feeling physically apprehensive to uncomfortable, from jealous to beaten down, and from empathetic to wistful. The group's discussion did not follow the timeline of the movie, but instead

went in the order of whatever affected them the most. The first mentioning of a physical response was the moment in the film when the nurse is dismissed from the staff for supplying contraceptives to the female students. Joel said that he felt “apprehensive and anxious,” while Laura said that she felt “tense.” It was as if these two participants could actually feel what the nurse was experiencing as much as if it were happening to them. The feelings of apprehensiveness, anxiousness, and tenseness indicate that their bodies responded viscerally to the situation in the film: at the very least, the participants’ various muscles contracted, causing them to recognize and identify these emotions. Later in the conversation, Joel reiterated those same physical feelings in relation to the confrontation about absences between a student and the main teacher character, Ms. Watson. In the film, Ms. Watson told the student that if she was absent again, she would fail her. Joel remarked:

That in my mind made it a win-lose situation. “I win; you lose. And ha, ha, ha.” When of course, you want your students to do well; you want them to learn. Of course that is what you want them to do. I know that is why I put ‘apprehensive and anxious’ because I was worried...probably because [I cross] that line on a daily basis... (fg 2-1, p. 3)

Joel expressed his connection to the main character through physical feelings that developed as he watched the scene unfold. He recognized that his being apprehensive and anxious, where the body’s muscles contract and breathing becomes irregular, was in response not only to the character’s plight but also to how this film’s representation of the teacher awakened memories of his own behaviors in the classroom. As he identified with the character, he experienced a moment of self-actualization in that he associated his own behavior with that of the character, which caused a physical reaction within him.

Hugh continued the analysis of the circumstance between the student and the teacher from his own frame of reference. He said:

That situation where they were having the conversation [about the absences] and [Ms. Watson] said, “I’m going to fail you”...what bothered me about it was that comes across as some sort of vindictiveness on the teacher’s part, which I really didn’t read into her character and it kind of made me uncomfortable and sort of like, “Whew” you know, “this is something new.” It was kind of like the shock when you found out that man had been lying to her [at the end of the movie]. (fg 2-1, p. 3)

Hugh’s emotional responses to the film emanated from a different place than Joel’s. It seems that Hugh viewed the film more as a text to be deciphered than a film to be experienced. He analyzed the teacher as a character instead of ingesting her experiences as his own. However, saying that he was “bothered” and “uncomfortable” by the vindictiveness of the teacher shows that Hugh did have a physical response to the film and its out-of-character portrayal of the teacher’s maliciousness.

Joel offered more insight to his reactions to the film later on in the discussion when he said:

The most common thing that I wrote on my [note] paper was ‘jealous’. I was jealous at the opening of the academic year scene because you had kids who were standing out there, quiet, doing what they were supposed to do, when they were supposed to do it, whether they liked it or not. I was jealous of that because of that high respect for academics. I also put jealous when she was showing the slide of contemporary art...because maybe in 20 years I’ve had a couple of pretty good ideas and have felt like there was a good lesson and I felt that was a great scene right there. She knew what she wanted to do, she came up with a plan for how she was going to make them think, and it was a slam-dunk. (fg 2-1, p. 4)

These comments are interesting to me because Joel demonstrated how his emotions were affected because of embodiment. One can deduce from these comments that his feelings arose based on his lack of experiences similar to those in the film. I suggest that his

feelings of jealousy surfaced because Joel longs for a place in society where education is revered like it is in these scenes from this film. I suggest that the manifestation of jealousy in the body is like that of anxiousness: I imagine that Joel's muscles tightened and that his breathing became irregular. From that he was able to recognize and label the jealous feelings.

Sophie discussed the main character's first few days of class when she must find a way to challenge the over-prepared students. Sophie related the following:

But I felt deep down, when you looked at her and she was showing [the slides of advertisements], I just felt so beaten down, because you've been there, where you're so frustrated, you know? At the moment, she didn't realize how great [her lesson in reaction to the first day of class] was, she just felt really beaten down . . . And I can kind of empathize with that, in teaching ecology... I felt it was so very important that they understand why you don't open the Alaskan pipeline, and they're like, "Gas would be five cents cheaper." [said in a sarcastic, mocking tone] (fg 2-1, p. 5)

This feeling of being "beaten down" that she mentioned manifested itself physically in Sophie's sighing and shaking her head. She connected with the frustration of the main character because she said she too had "been there." As she watched the film, the fictional reality on the screen brought to mind moments in her teaching career when she felt defeated. This identification resulted in Sophie expressing empathetic feelings.

Empathy can be evoked for many reasons and can be embodied in various ways. In fact, Joanne mentioned an embodiment of empathy when discussing the final scene of the film. She said, "...at the end, you could see what a difference she'd made to those girls and that's why I had the tears just start rolling" (fg 2-1, p. 6). Later in the conversation Joanne explained in more detail her physical response of crying as she remarked, "I'd like to think that somewhere inside of us...I mean we're all still doing this and I'd like to think it is not just for the paycheck... that there is that something in us that

makes us do what we didn't think we could do" (fg 2-1, p. 10). Joanne's tears came from her comprehension and understanding of the emotions shown on the characters' faces during this final scene where the students are exuberantly yet tearfully riding after the teacher who is leaving campus for the final time. The teacher is smiling and crying because of the admiration and appreciation that is being shown by the students' actions. Joanne identifies with the elements of this scene because they evoke her own memories of relationships such as these.

Mona Lisa Smile: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

The only evidence of physical reaction to the films was contained in the Film Notes that were written by the participants as they watched the film. They were encouraged to write down moments when they noticed a physical or emotional reaction to the film. These sections on Film Notes and Journal Reflections will be organized in the same manner as the ones in Chapter Four: I will report the comments that were noted by all of the participants, and although I will not repeat any remarks made by the same participant, I will include any notes that duplicate what was said by others in an effort to validate what was said; then I will make a general interpretation of these in relation to the study.

The feelings that were reported held various similarities. Eunice reported feeling butterflies in her stomach during the first scene where the ceremony for opening the academic year is portrayed. Joanne noted that she felt fear during the scene when Ms. Watson teaches class for the first time. This fear, Joanne remarked, was in response to the appearance that the students knew more than Ms. Watson. Joanne also noted that she felt tightening in her chest as the nurse was dismissed and as Ms. Watson was critiqued

by her administrator and the parents. She also reported feeling stiff when Ms. Watson met with the president of the college and when Ms. Jones confronted Ms. Watson after having written the editorial. Hugh reported wincing and feeling anxiety during the scene of the first class meeting. He also mentioned feeling the futility of the confrontation between the president of the college and Ms. Watson. Laura noted that she felt tense during the encounter between Ms. Watson and Ms. Jones about the absences and that she felt a sense of awe during the scene of the last class discussion of the Mona Lisa when the class leads itself. Sophie wrote that she felt nervous and excited about the opening of the academic year scene. She also said that she felt disappointed but not surprised when the nurse was dismissed from her duties. Her response to the last class discussion was one of disbelief and she said that this made her feel jaded.

I would suggest the participants who wrote down their physical and mental reactions to the film contributed the most to the overall discussion after the film in terms of speaking voluntarily. They seemed to have more to say than the other participants during this particular discussion. Although this is just supposition on my part based on a qualitative collection of data, I would argue that because they had paid attention to their physical and mental responses during the viewing of the film, they gained added insight to their thoughts as they related to the film and to their experiences, which facilitated the ease with which they could participate in the discussion.

None of the journal entries contained any evidence of physical or emotional reactions. I would argue that due to the elapse in time between the viewing and the journal reflection, the initial reactions were less intense and so were not included in the reflection. In addition, participants may not have wanted to rehash what had already been

stated during the discussion. Finally, they may not have paid attention to or may not have had any reactions on which to reflect.

Finding Forrester: Film Discussion

When the group met the second time, Eunice declined any further participation in the study, saying that she had promised someone she would cover for her at the county's credit recovery program on the nights we had planned to meet. The dynamics of the group displayed no obvious changes due to her absence, although everyone seemed a little more at ease and somewhat rejuvenated due to a recent holiday vacation. The physical and emotional responses were not directly discussed at length during this session; however, the content and direction of the conversation was clearly driven by these types of reactions that were evoked during the viewing. For example, the participants repeatedly discussed the relationship between the main characters of the student, Jamal, and the mentor teacher, Forrester, in terms of how they felt about the relationship or how it related to their own situations. In fact, Joel remarked, "I think that movie was telling me that the best educational experiences occur when the teacher realizes that he has as much to learn from the students as they do from the teacher" (fg 2-2, p. 3). Because this is a comment that can only be made after having seen the entire film, I suggest that Joel came to this conclusion from the combination of physical and emotional reactions to the film, therefore leaving him unable to articulate the individual moments of response that lead to his thoughts.

The participants also conversed about how Forrester's methods to teach Jamal writing skills related to what they wished they could do in their own classrooms. Joanne stated that she "loved watching Forrester work with him" (fg 2-2, p. 6), while Laura said,

“I would love to be able to be [a model like] that for one of my students” (fg 2-2, p. 11).

Both of these teachers expressed a form of desire that emerged in them as they watched the mentor teacher and student develop a relationship that encouraged independent thinking built on the foundation of supportive teaching methods.

In addition, the group members mentioned the intellectual rigor that Jamal so enjoyed. Many participants expressed a desire for their own students to have such motivation. Indeed, Laura said, “I’m depressed,” (fg 2-2, p. 9) in reference to a comparison of her students with those in the film, and Joanne said, “I was kind of like, ‘Wow, I wish I could get my students to do that,’” (fg 2-2, p. 1). Depression and awe: these two emotions are quite opposite but are brought on by the same observations that triggered recognition of personal experiences that evoked specific feelings.

There were only three instances when participants directly mentioned their physical or emotional responses. First, Sophie speaks from the heart about a connection she made between the film and the faculty with which she teaches:

I think the most emotional part for me was when Forrester was talking about how dangerous a teacher who is bitter can be; because you know, you see the number of people who went into teaching for teaching and those who went into teaching because they couldn’t make it in med school...I do sit there and look at our faculty and think, “How many of you are where you are because you want to be here or are here because whatever you wanted to do didn’t work out and you’re disappointed in who you are?” (fg 2-2, p. 1)

Although Sophie does not delineate her exact physical reaction during this part of the film, she is able to draw on what she felt physically and translate it into her perception of the situation at Pence High School. From her emotional response to the bitter teacher in the film who tries to intimidate Jamal in the prep school

classroom, Sophie expressed concern for how many teachers exist like that in reality.

Second, Laura said, “I’ll tell you, I started crying when he opened that book, and it said the forward was to be written by Jamal. He trusted Jamal to do his only other book that he would ever produce” (fg 2-2, p. 11). Many times throughout this conversation, Laura mentioned that she has not taught any students that have truly had an innate desire for knowledge and that she has not experienced a student-mentor relationship of reciprocity such as the one depicted in this film. I suggest this physical response of crying was in relation to Laura’s desire to experience a student-mentor relationship like the one between Jamal and Forrester. Her crying was an embodiment of this realization in conjunction with the film viewing.

Finally, as the participants discussed the confrontation in the private school classroom between Jamal Wallace and the embittered teacher, Joanne noted a physical reaction. During this scene, the teacher tries to embarrass a student by demanding answers from him. Jamal takes up for the student, after which the teacher turns viciously on Jamal, where he quotes poem and after poem and Jamal names the titles and the authors of each. Joanne said, “There was that one that was like, ‘Maybe I should have directed the challenge at you, Mr. Wallace,’ and he did and Jamal was like, ‘bam, bam, bam, bam.’ We know teachers like that. We teach with teachers like that, who are intimidated by kids who know more than we do. I was just... there was a physical reaction to that” (fg 2-2, p. 2). Joanne noted the she was able to draw a comparison between the teacher on the screen and teachers that she knows in real life, connecting that film experience to reality. Although Joanne did not offer details about her visceral

response to this scene, I suggest that from the tone in her voice and the look on her face it was obvious that the experiences had affected her in a deep, emotional way that she possibly did not want to share with the group at that time.

Finding Forrester: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

Very few notes were written during this meeting. Joanne marked that she felt apprehension when Jamal's mother met with his local school teacher. She also noted that she has felt as out of place at school as Jamal feels when he first attends the private school. I found it interesting that this movie evoked apprehension on two occasions for Joanne because, being an English teacher, she was completely in awe during the rest of the film, as was demonstrated in her commentary that infuses this entire chapter. What this communicates to me is that physical reactions during film can be quite potent. They can disrupt a person's entire outlook and perception, making certain scenes more powerful or affecting than others because they are such a contrast to ones that typically affect the viewer.

Only one journal reflection addressed feelings that surfaced after watching the film. Joel wrote, "Jealousy is one word I would use to describe my feelings after the film. I want a student to want to be taught by me as passionately as the young man in the film wanted interaction with Forrester." This comment directly validates what the group discussed regarding the students at Pence High School: the students there are unmotivated to cultivate their intellects. Joel's articulation of the desire to teach motivated students demonstrates also that teachers need that type of interaction with their students in order to feel validated.

The Ron Clark Story: Film Discussion

Only four of the participants were able to attend this meeting. Sophie was unable to procure a baby sitter, and Jean had been involved in an automobile accident and needed to attend to resulting business. The mood that permeated the meeting was one of a relaxed group of friends getting together to chat. The emotional responses related to the participants' physical reactions were very different from the first two viewings. In fact, the main emotions that were conveyed were ones of frustration and anger. The first example of this actually occurred before the group meeting. At the time, Hugh was teaching afternoon classes at our county's credit recovery program, so he viewed the film before coming late the meeting for the discussion. When I asked him how he liked the film, he said, "It pissed me off." This was not the reaction that I had expected and so I was anxious to hear more about his feelings once we met as a group. At the meeting, he elaborated on his earlier comment:

I resent a lot of things about that movie. A lot of things about that movie irritated me beyond...Like the first thing, you know, it seemed like from the very beginning, you have all these portrayals and these vignettes about what we are supposed to do. It's kind of like, "Why can't the children learn? Mr. Clark can do it. Look at all these things that HE has done." You know, honestly, if you're not at home cooking dinner for them and if you're not going to meet with every parent, at their house, or if you're not up there degrading yourself... That sort of stuff just really rakes me up. You know that first scene, "Teacher says I'm trash because I can't learn." WHO? Really? You really think that is going to happen? How long do you think that person is going to be in the classroom? But it makes it look like something that we all do. (fg 2-3, p. 3)

Hugh's emotional reaction to the film varied from irritation to outrage to embarrassment. He felt that the portrayal of the teachers and the situations in which they were involved communicated that all other teachers who do not go to the same extremes as Ron Clark are ineffective. It was clear from the tone and loudness of Hugh's voice that he

experienced great agitation, especially since he had viewed the movie several days before the discussion and he was still extremely passionate about his point of view. I can imagine that his blood pressure went up, that he made audible sighs, and that his muscles became tense as the story unfolded and angered him. Throughout Hugh's comments, Laura injected statements of agreement, such as, "Right, I put that [Ron] is everywhere," and "That's true, degrading," although she did not examine her own emotions or physical reactions (fg 2-3, p. 3).

The Ron Clark Story: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

None of the four participants turned in any notes from the film session. I would suggest that this is due to the small number of people who were in attendance. During the viewing, only three of the participants were present and, unlike any other session, they talked to one another during the film, making oral notes on what they were feeling and experiencing. At the time, I was under the impression that they were also taking notes; otherwise I would have recorded what they were saying.

In Hugh's journal reflection he indicated that "This dramatization really irritates me because lay people watch drivel such as this and expect teachers to perform this way." In Laura's reflection, she stated that "We all envied the relationship and impact [Ron Clark and the character of Ms. Watson] had on their students. However, Ron's story struck us as unbelievable and unattainable because of the feeling that he had no life other than that of teaching. Honestly, I don't feel there is enough of me to be able to do that." In Sophie's reflection, she said, "Unfortunately I did not feel inspired by Ron Clark. In a way I resented him. I will never have the time, motivation, or 'withitness' he has. The movie made me feel like a failure as a teacher." The overall message from these

participants is that, ironically, Ron Clark's story is not realistic and that it makes them all feel defeated. I would suggest that these strong reactions came because they knew this film *was* based on a real teacher's story of success and it was difficult to accept that maybe someone could really do such time consuming feats and live to tell about it. In fact, after we watched the film, we viewed the interview with the real Ron Clark, which made him even more omnipotent. The other films, which featured the same type of character overcoming odds as daunting as Ron's, were not perceived as a threat because the participants *knew* they were fictional accounts. Rather than gather inspiration from Ron Clark, these participants discounted him as an anomaly in teaching.

The Browning Version: Film Discussion

For this meeting, all participants were present except Joel, who was coaching baseball practice. Their general demeanor was one of fatigue and from the expressions on their faces I could tell that it was all they could do just to get themselves to the meeting. This session took place during the middle of March as many of the teachers were preparing their students in the last few days' crunch before the GHSGT. Unlike during the other discussions, the participants did not refer to their physical responses to specific scenes in the film. In fact, the group hardly discussed their own emotions in relation to the film. Sophie remarked, "It's very hard for me to communicate how I feel" at the very beginning of the group discussion (fg 2-4, p. 1). She went on to explain,

You know teachers like that and you know how students feel about that but I've never thought about the personal side of that man and how unfulfilled he must be... until...I mean...very.. because I feel that I get enough kids who come back to see me, to make me feel fulfilled as a teacher. If you're the one who's moved beyond how they feel about you as a teacher and you teacher whether they hate you or not, then it looks like a more thankless job than the one I have. And I felt really bad for him because I feel like getting thanked is such an important part. (fg 2-4, p. 1)

I would suggest that her comment shows that she was having a difficult time connecting to the main character and the situation he was in at the end of his career at this private school. She had almost an air of bewilderment about her as she made the comment, which indicated to me that she had not yet come to terms with what she had experienced in the film.

At the end of the meeting as the timer went off was the next time any participants mentioned their emotional reactions to the film. They said:

Laura: I enjoyed it.

Sophie: My heart is just like... [slumps over]

Laura: Are you depressed?

Sophie: Little bit.

Hugh: I like him as a character. I wish I could teach like him. All this touchy-feely stuff makes me weary.

Laura did not elaborate on why the film brought her enjoyment; her commentary was simply a statement of summary, while Sophie indicated that she physically felt her heart going limp inside from the effects of the film. On the other hand, Hugh was happy, wistful, and drained all at once from his experience. Clearly this film did not have the immediate physical and emotional effects that were more obviously noted during the viewings of the other films. I would argue that this was due in part to the multi-layered approach of the plot as well as to the general fatigue of the participants.

The Browning Version: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

Only one participant made notes on physical and emotional reactions during this film. Joanne noted that the courtyard scene after the opening prayers, when the students

are playing around, brought her to laughter. She also noted that her breathing slowed during the scene when Andrew calls down a student during his last class. Several times she marked that she felt heartbreak for Andrew as he looks out onto the courtyard after his last class and as he finds out he will not be receiving his pension. In addition, she recognized a sinking feeling when Andrew's replacement tells him that the boys call him Hitler. Finally, she said that she felt empathetic for the struggle Andrew has as he makes his final speech at the end of the movie. I would suggest that Joanne was able to connect to this character with so many physical manifestations because, as she revealed during the discussion, she had some very similar experiences around the time that the focus group watched this film. She allowed her own reality to ignite a corporeal experience in response to the film because she was especially in tune with her feelings at that time.

Anti-Intellectualism

Because the participants in this study had the task of watching representations of their identities as teachers through film, they had to take on the role of both viewer and viewed. "Being both the subject and the object, the spectator [had to have] the capacity to determine which aspects, if any, from film [would] be allowed to add to or subtract from her/his identity. Although it is obviously apparent to the spectator that film is a mediated representation of reality, the spectator [found] herself/himself in a situation where s/he [had to] actively participate in making meaning" (Weaver & Britt, 2007, p. 33). Because these focus group members were willing to watch, think, and discuss, they revealed how film can be the impetus for the act of reflection as well as a reflection of what exists in society. "Reflection and reflexivity are merely ways of making explicit what exists prior to reflection and reflexivity and, indeed, provides their grounds"

(Sobchack, 1992, p. 135). As they apply to this study, reflection and reflexivity are the film *and* what the film makes explicit. The participants identify that reflection and reflexivity and schematize that identification into their own perceptions. What the participants emphasize from this reflection and reflexivity is the absence of the intellect (as a person and as an entity) in society, the denunciation of the teacher as intellectual, the devaluing of the school, and the anti-intellectual processes embedded in education.

Mona Lisa Smile: Film Discussion

The most common remarks concerning the participants' perceptions of intellectualism pertained to the *lack thereof* in our society. Immediately after the film, Laura began the conversation:

Laura: Can I start? Number one, the feelings that swept over me, when [the student] Ms. Jones and [the teacher] Ms. Watson were having the tit-for-tat about the absences, I was thinking, "I wish I could think that quick on my feet."

Hugh: yes

Laura: To be so... because I can think fast but it's not as intellectual as her. They were going back and forth, but of course our kids don't come back at us intellectually. . . (fg 2-1, p. 1)

Laura recognized that the environment in education is not conducive to intellectualism. Although I have no doubts about Laura's intellectual ability, she does not see herself as an *active* intellectual. She does not see herself as having abilities to think quickly in an intellectual way. As I have argued earlier in this work, there is not an emphasis placed on the development of the intellect at Pence High School or in the field of public education in general, and Laura's comments are a direct result. She mentioned that she is unable to engage her students in conversational banter due to the lack of intellectual development

on her part and on the part of the students. Deeper into the discussion, Laura said that the students “just look at you and go, ‘Just tell me what to do,’” (fg 2-1, p. 9). I propose that she has a desire for increased intellectual skills because she feels they lead to a path of empowerment for her and her students in her classroom. Indeed, Laura notes the loss of intellectualism as she compares the film setting of the early 1950s to now: “I think they were a lot more intellectual back then than we are today. We are not deep people,” (fg 2-1, p. 10).

Mona Lisa Smile: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

In her film notes, Eunice remarked that Ms. Watson had “underestimated” her students. I found this to be interesting because it could be perceived as a form of anti-intellectualism. A teacher could very well perpetuate the damages of anti-intellectualism in her/his class by having expectations that are too far beneath the capabilities of the students. Fortunately, in this film Ms. Watson raises her expectations and challenges the students like they have never before experienced.

Joel jotted down in his film notes, “Let’s create some clones,” next to some notes about the critiques from the administration and parents when they encourage Ms. Watson to follow the course syllabus and to use orthodox methods of teaching. This suggests that Joel saw the administration and parents advocating like-minded thinking in their girls. They did not want Ms. Watson to stir up their traditional ways. This is an example of anti-intellectualism directed at keeping these young ladies in their places in this story of the 1950s.

In Joel’s journal, he admitted to feeling that something just is not right, as if there is “a climate of ‘do what is conservatively normal.’” I suggest that this feeling may come

from the rampant anti-intellectual attitudes that prevail in our society, ranging from the media to state mandated standardization in schools.

Laura commented in her journal that “My students do not want to be ‘pushed’ to use their brains. They make comments like, ‘This is too hard. Just tell me what to do.’” This is continued evidence from the discussions that the value of the intellect has not been instilled in students, either at school or at home. Laura admitted that it is easier to give in to them than to try to make them think, but what classroom teachers must realize is that they are their own worst enemies. Educators need to stand up against the anti-intellectual habits of students and begin to take the time to encourage them to value and cultivate their intellectual abilities.

Finding Forrester: Film Discussion

The majority of participants made a point to mention how the circumstances in the film made them think about intellectualism in reality. Most participants agreed that the student character, Jamal, was unlike the majority of students at Pence High School because he excelled due to his intrinsic self-motivation. Hugh said, “[Jamal] demonstrates this at the end of the movie, too, when he misses those foul shots on purpose to say, ‘Hey, I want to be here because I’m smart, not because I’m your basketball star’” (fg 2-2, p. 1). This scene in the film highlights the student character’s awareness of the importance of intellectualism. In response, Joanne stated, “But a lot of my students don’t have what Jamal has” (fg 2-2, p. 1). Later on, Laura added, “Yeah, because he had knowledge, but our kids don’t have that knowledge. And I don’t see that craving for knowledge in our kids like Jamal had” (fg 2-2, p. 5). These comments exemplify the multiple times that participants commented on how they do not regularly

teach students like Jamal. What none of the group members pointed out, however, is that Jamal was also depicted as being the *only* student at his local high school to have such motivation. The rest of the students are represented as being content to achieve the bare minimum, an attitude consistent with the participants' observations of their own situations. It seems as if Hollywood is highlighting a rarity in the career of a teacher and in turn is highlighting what is missing from our society: the desire for intellectual rigor.

Another example of the pervasiveness of anti-intellectualism that was mentioned during this discussion was the students' needs for extrinsic rewards. The participants compared how Jamal sought knowledge and activities for the sake of expanding his mind, whereas their own students shy away from those things. Several mentioned that the only way to encourage student achievement was through giving them something in return. Joel stated: "They are absolutely trained to get a reward for what you are supposed to do in the first place. And yet we're going to pass out candy and jump up and down for you doing exactly what a normal person should be doing at school" (fg 2-2, p. 7). The students' attitude of entitlement for completing work is fed by teachers who feel obligated to dole out treats for student performance. This gesture of good faith unwittingly undermines the worth of learning for the sake of developing the intellect, contributing to the underlying anti-intellectualism in a society that does not, in general, value education in the first place. As Joanne said, "Knowledge just... it just isn't revered" (fg 2-2, p. 9).

Finding Forrester: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

Bill's film notes stated, "What you know, what brings you comfort" is why Jamal values education over other things, like basketball. This also works in the opposite

direction: people who do not know their intellect, for whom education is uncomfortable, exist in a space of anti-intellectualism in which they place themselves. Because there is veritably no propaganda for the intellect, like there is for basketball, the Wii, mobile phones or other commercialized and marketable entities, school is the only place where the average person is encouraged to develop her/his mind. Unfortunately, school is riddled with anti-intellectual activities such as multiple choice tests that do little more than encourage recall and boredom.

Laura wrote in her journal that “The majority of my students just want to pass.” The anti-intellectual influence, which I maintain is fueled by the EOCT and GHSGT, where students just have to make a minimum score to graduate, feeds the students’ lack of motivation to excel and go beyond mediocrity. Indeed, the majority of students, as reported by these teachers at Pence High School, are not interested in extending their minds past the minimal requirements for graduation.

The Ron Clark Story: Film Discussion

The majority of this group’s discussion pertained to anti-intellectualism as it was communicated through various scenes in the film. Despite the storyline’s main premise that anyone can be successful, the participants agreed that society in general detracts from the intellectualism that should be prominent in education.

As the group talked about Ron Clark’s student, Shemika, and the struggles that the two of them experienced, Bill lead a dialogue about how the film portrayed the parents’ value of education.

Bill: I want to touch on what the mother was thinking, I got the impression that she had just not bought into school at all. And that she

really didn't care what was going on at school, as long as [her daughter Shemika] was able to do what was required of her at home.

Laura: Right.

Bill: She had not bought into school and since she did not buy into it until Clark made her understand that this kid really could be something special.

Laura: umhum

Joel: I hated the feeling that I had about that for Mom because I had the feeling that Mom was only then excited about that because it was going to do something for her, "Oh, ok, that's that special school," see what I mean?

Laura: Oh I see what you're saying.

Bill: The light turned on. [snap]

Hugh: She gave up on education before.

Laura: Well, maybe she did, but he just took it that way. I kind of felt that she thought, "Oh gosh, my child can't do that." I took it in a different way.

Bill: But think about what Clark was trying to do. I mean, 'cause if he wanted to meet with every one of those parents, he wanted them to understand that education was important. Because honestly, we know this: our students don't think education is important, their parents don't think it is important, their environment doesn't think that it's important. (fg 2-3, p. 2)

The examples of anti-intellectualism in this discussion proceed from what is depicted in the film to what the participants have observed in their own experiences. First, the participants highlighted the issue that, in the film and in reality, parents do not value education in general because they perceive that it did nothing for them. In turn, these parents do not want to invest extra time into developing the intellect of their children because they do not see any new advantage it would bring. Second, the participants brought out the issue that parents do not often recognize the intellectual talents of their

own children and therefore do not subscribe to any sort of behavior that indicates a belief in their abilities. Without this indication of belief, the children themselves do not develop any confidence in their own intellects. Third, the participants pointed out that the environment does not advocate the importance of the intellect. By this, I suggest the participants are referring to the environment of their peers at school as well as the home and societal environments, situations which have been discussed by this group in earlier meetings.

Hugh brought out another element of anti-intellectualism portrayed in the film that takes place in their own classrooms as well. He questioned the group, saying, “Doesn’t that bother you that they portray that *that* is what we are supposed to do? Drinking chocolate milk until you puke? Then obviously you are NOT a good teacher” (fg 2-3, pp. 2-3). Laura responded, “I resent having to entertain, very much so” (fg 2-3, p. 3). These teachers expressed discontent with the perception that education is supposed to be filled with fun and games and the degradation of the intellect, as teachers (who should be a main intellectual example for students) perform the role of court jester in order to earn the students’ respect and interest. This communicates that there no longer exists a basic level of laud for the intellect in and of itself. Somewhere along the course of history, the intellect has been cast out of society’s list of important things.

Later in the discussion, the group commented on how the processes and requirements of the education system itself perpetuate an anti-intellectual environment. The discussion began with a comparison between the discipline problems projected in the film and the way those same problems would have been handled when they themselves were in school. This led to a delineation of how school is organized today.

Joel: The point is that now, I'm supposed to try to do everything I possibly can that will work with you and you and you and you. So I gotta have really at least 12 different ways to deal with the kids. And I understand building relationships with the kids. To me, I think that's the most important part of our job. Of our ABC's that's the most important.

Hugh: Yes, it is.

Joel: And with our curriculum-- and with maybe it's just the way our school is set up, although it's not the only one, where you could have the highest level and the lowest level all in the same class, and I understand that you have to differentiate instruction and that on block we have to do all of these different things but-- we have to do all of these different things because there is not a whole lot of free thinking going on with what we're supposed to be teaching [said with a sigh/laugh]. And so it's got to be masked, so in order to get all these square pegs through the round hole you've got to be able to take care and put out all these fires every day because it's tough being a square peg shoved through a round hole.

Laura: I completely understand and I completely agree. (fg 2-3, p. 10)

What Joel communicated is that the process of education itself is anti-intellectual.

Despite the fact that current trends advertise the need for teachers to recognize the various ways that students think and learn, the school itself is not organized for teachers to be able to effectively deal with these issues. Instead, teachers are expected to differentiate instruction for 30 students on various levels in one class while preparing them all for the same standardized tests at the end. What small chance there is for intellectual development and the teaching of the value of the intellect is extinguished in the procedures themselves.

Toward the end of the meeting, the discussion turned toward administration and its role in the devaluation of the intellect. Laura remarked,

You know that our admin has said that, "Ya'll, we've just got to get them to here. [Holds hand up indicating a minimal bar.] If we can't get them to here, how are going to get them to here? [Moves hand to a middle bar.]" So basically, according to me, it's saying to teach to the middle, get them

up to here, forget about these smart kids because they're going to do it anyway. (fg 2-3, p. 11)

The concern raised here indicated that the administrators contribute to the anti-intellectualism in education at Pence High School because their expectations are minimal. As mentioned in earlier meetings, the administration worries only about receiving passing scores on standardized testing rather than pushing the students to value the intellect.

The Ron Clark Story: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

Joel remarked in his journal that he did not like the message being sent that “Teachers are lazy and don’t care.” This is a valid point that highlights Hollywood’s contribution to anti-intellectualism. In all of these movies, there is typically only one teacher on the entire faculty of the schools depicted who is a “good” teacher: one who is extremely intellectual and who goes to extreme measures to get results from students. The rest of the teachers are portrayed, as Joel pointed out, as lazy and apathetic. Although it is sometimes inspiring to see the details of such a teacher’s life, it is also disheartening to see the rest of the teachers cast aside as ineffective. What this does is show the audience that only a few teachers are intellectual and that the rest are living happily in the land of anti-intellectualism without a care in the world.

The Browning Version: Film Discussion

The participants discussed how the students’ respect for Andrew, the main teacher character, manifested itself in their behavior in the classroom. They contrasted this behavior to the way many students behave at Pence High School. They agreed that the students in their school no longer respect teachers or education in a serious manner as compared to the students in the film. They debated on why and how this change in behavior arrived. Hugh added:

But like before when I taught [15 years ago], what the teacher said went. You didn't have to worry about a kid criticizing you or saying something stupid about the way you'd handled something. The assistant principal wasn't going to come to you and say something like, "We've got this problem. They're saying you're not treating the kids fair." You know when [one of the administrators at our school] first said that to me, I'd thought she'd lost her damn mind. I'm like, "Excuse me, do you think that I am that ridiculously unintelligent that I'm going to treat my kids unfairly? If ya'll think I'm that stupid, then why did you hire me?" So you know what I'm saying? (fg 2-4, pp. 4-5)

I interpret this comment as a direct observation of anti-intellectualism for several reasons.

First, Hugh felt that his intelligence was called into question when an administrator interrogated him on how he handled an incident in his classroom. It shows that administration at Pence High School does not believe their teachers are competent enough to institute proper behavior management. Second, this example shows a general perpetuation of an anti-intellectual environment where problems with behavior take precedence over establishing a desire to cultivate the intellect.

Later in the discussion, the participants mentioned the moment in the film when the administration places more importance on athletics than academics. The scene concerns the order of the farewell speeches, as they ask Andrew to concede to speaking after the coach. The participants compared that to Hugh's situation with the administrator. Joanne said, "But he dissed Andrew, not really any worse than [the administrator] did [with Hugh], but I mean, 'we need you to go first because' they value the athlete, not the scholar," (fg 2-4, p. 6). This is an example of anti-intellectualism within the educational system as it is depicted in film. None of the participants argued against this statement, showing that they believed it to be an accurate account of the way things are in education.

A final example of anti-intellectualism as it was brought forth by the focus group concerned the way the administration in the film was terminating Andrew and dissolving his classics program because they were replacing him with someone who could teach modern languages. Laura made a connection from the film to an experience in her own life:

Well, when I watched this thing the person that came to mind was [a former teacher]. She taught in the business dept forever and they called her Wacky [last name]. She was one of those teachers who hadn't kept up with the changes. She'd taught keyboarding for 20 years and all of the sudden now she had to teach computer apps and she didn't-- couldn't, literally could not-- teach it to her self fast enough to stay on top of her kids. Our admin pulled her out of computer apps and gave her business law, took her out of her classroom, and made her start floating. It's just like they were doing everything they could to make her quit. And she did. Seven weeks into the school year, she said, "I can't do it." And the whole time I watched this film, I said, "I feel so sorry for him. He is being shuttled off. He's not getting his pension." They were just throwing him away. (fg 2-4, p. 6)

This is another example of how the administration, both in the film and at Pence High School, exhibits behavior that could be labeled as anti-intellectual. In both situations teachers nearing the ends of their careers were forced into quitting their jobs in order to make room for changes in programs. Rather than placing value in what these teachers had to offer in relation to the changes, the administration offered no support and they were turned out on their ears. I interpret this as evidence of anti-intellectualism because it shows that there is no reverence for knowledge that is not part of the latest trend in education, nor is there value placed on those who are the bearers of such knowledge.

The Browning Version: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

Laura wrote in her film notes that Andrew seemed to "display passion for his subject" at the expense of taking "pleasure in degrading" his students. I found this to be

another example that teachers can also perpetuate anti-intellectualism within the confines of their classrooms, despite their efforts to demonstrate otherwise. I would argue that teachers must be cautious of allowing their expertise to stamp out any excitement their students might have toward learning. Bill echoes this same notion in his journal entry when he said, “This was the story of an eccentric scholar (only occasionally a teacher) who became so self-absorbed in his scholarly pursuits and stoic philosophy that his marriage, his students, his career, his entire social life suffers.”

Surveillance

Just as focus group one recognized areas of surveillance in terms of administrative directives and standardized testing, so too did focus group two. Throughout their dialogues, these participants referred to the general feeling that they have lost and are losing autonomy in their classrooms because of the mandated methods for teaching and raising test scores. Michel Apple describes this phenomenon best. He says

This is partly the case because of the increasing power of the “evaluative state.” This signifies what initially may seem to be contradictory tendencies. At the same time that the state appears to be devolving power to individuals . . . the state remains strong in key areas. . . In essence, we are witnessing the process in which the state shifts the blame for the very evident inequalities in access and outcome it has promised to reduce from itself, onto individual schools, parents, and children. (2000, p. 234-235)

The participants in this focus group keenly recognize this assertion of surveillance and they articulate where their realities meet and diverge from the representations in the films that they viewed together as a group.

Mona Lisa Smile: Film Discussion

The first item mentioned as a form of surveillance in this discussion was when Joanne spoke about the tool of written documentation that an administrator can use to influence the behavior of a teacher. In reference to the movie, the group was discussing how the administration warns the main character about her forward-thinking behavior by placing a letter in her file. However, when the administrator performs a similar behavior, there is no consequence for her. Joanne said, “Ms. Carr [the president of the college in this film] did the same thing but she didn’t get a letter in her file [said in a mocking tone]... I feel at our school, like in many schools, they do not want us to express ourselves” (fg 2-1, p. 2). This is an example of surveillance: just as the behavior of teachers in the film was monitored and documented, so too is the behavior of teachers in reality. Joanne admitted to feeling that her freedom of speech is limited because of possible repercussions that could go in her professional file. In some instances, such a technique is a worthy tool when it relates to the unfair treatment or outright disrespect of students. However, what Joanne pointed out here is that such a tool can be abused and can be used to intimidate teachers into silence when they would otherwise be provoked to action. This type of quiet surveillance chips away at a teacher’s autonomy and value as an educator. In fact, Hugh agreed with Joanne, saying, “We all see what happened to [the nurse in the film] when she bucked the system,” (fg 2-1, p. 2).

This discussion continued and other participants chimed in with their own comparisons of the film and their reality at Pence High School.

Hugh: That situation where they were having the conversation and she said, “I’m going to fail you”...

Laura: But remember this is in the 50's and she might could have failed her.

Eunice: She might could have said that without getting into trouble.

Laura: Because of our mindsets, where we have been.

Hugh: We can't give zeros.

Laura: I think that is affecting us. (fg 2-1, p. 3)

These teachers expressed disbelief in the power that the teacher character seemed to exude over the grading in her class. They began to hypothesize why she was able to make such bold statements, which then led them to assess their own school policies. Just as was mentioned by focus group one, these participants blame their lack of power on their "mindsets" which are affected by administrative surveillance due to specific grading policies set forth by their administration. As was explained in Chapter Four, this encumbering policy is so largely unmanageable by teachers that it overwhelms them, making them feel powerless, stripping them of any feeling of sovereignty in their own classrooms.

Even when considering the issue of what to teach and how to teach it, Focus Group Two expressed the same concerns as the first group:

Joel: ...She knew what she wanted to do, she came up with a plan for how she was going to make them think, and it was a slam-dunk.

Laura: Within the context of her subject.

Joel: Perfect, right.

Laura: The girl [student] said, "That's an ad," and [Watson] said, "No, that's art."

Joanne: But she had the freedom to do that.

Laura: right

Joanne: We don't have that freedom in a lot of ways.

Hugh: It's those QCCs.

Laura: Or those GPS.

Sophie: But remember they reprimanded her for it? Because they said, "You're going to turn in your lesson plans."

Joanne: . . .She didn't have the test scores hanging over her head. . .We still don't get to plot our own course that might accomplish those moments. (fg 2-1, p. 4)

The toll of government mandates is quite obvious here: these teachers' thoughts are constantly manipulated because they must meet various goals set forth by the state, so much so that Joanne mentioned lack of "freedom," and Sophie used the word "reprimanded" in relation to what should be an intellectual process of creating a lesson to help students acquire knowledge and intellectual skills. Clearly it is not the standards themselves that are negative but the way in which they are being projected to the teachers as a form of control over what they do and how they do it that is detrimental to teacher identity. Even when the main teacher character in the film is able to turn a disastrous beginning into an intellectually stimulating lesson, the teachers in this group had a hard time accepting it. In response to this situation, Hugh argued:

But I don't think she would use that stuff had it not been for that article [that the student wrote about her in the newspaper]. She was going to make them look at carcasses, or whatever other kind of strange art, at Pollack. But that was going to be her agenda and then it changed. She was able to take something current and turn it into a meaningful lesson without having to worry about the QCCs. (fg 2-1, p. 5)

This sort of obsession with meeting state regulations stamps out creativity and spontaneity in our teachers. Hugh alluded to the fact that lessons driven solely by the

QCCs in order to meet test scores lack meaning. Such surveillance eventually drains teachers of much time or desire to push beyond the minimum.

In support, Eunice stated, “When I look at what I’ve had to do for all the ‘testing purposes,’ with an ‘s’, I can’t think of any one of my exercises that has been able to foster what I wanted to do” (fg 2-1, p. 8). Later she continued: “Remember when [Ms. Watson] started, she said, ‘We’re going to use professor so and so’s syllabus.’ She didn’t even come prepared with anything but prescriptive teaching. That’s sort of what we do when we have the curriculum guide, we have this...we are becoming more prescriptive... So I think teaching has become prescriptive” (Appendix B 1, p. 11). Eunice compared how the teacher in the film at first planned to use a colleague’s syllabus to how her own methods have become prescriptive in order to meet the surveillance of testing standards. She articulated that she has not used materials that she considers useful for any other purpose except for in the preparation of testing. It would appear that, for the most part, her freedom to teach her classes in the manner in which she would desire has been totally extinguished by the need for meeting state test goals.

Joanne summed up the surveillance issue perfectly:

I believe that pretty soon they are going to want all the teachers to do the same thing on the same day. And ideally if we are doing what education is intended to do and to meet the needs of all of our students, our method of delivery is the gift that we bring. That is why I don’t believe the whole prescriptive thing is going to work. It shows that the administrators don’t know what is going on at our school. (fg 2-2, p. 11)

Mona Lisa Smile: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

In her film notes, Joanne noted that her chest tightened when the nurse was dismissed. This physical manifestation demonstrates the effects of surveillance on teachers. I suggest that all teachers are constantly aware that the

administration has a right to disagree with any one of their practices and that the administration has the task of documenting grounds for dismissal. It is as if Joanne was predicting her very own demise, as she was notified several months after this meeting of the non-renewal of her own contract at Pence High School.

Sophie wrote in her film notes that she felt frustrated during the scene between Ms. Watson and President Karr when Ms. Watson is told exactly what she must do in order to be rehired for the following year. I would argue that her feelings of frustration come from the feeling that she too is being watched by her administrators through documentation such as turning in lesson plans, End of Course Testing, and Georgia High School Graduation Test scores. These items are not necessarily put in place by the state to intimidate teachers, but this form of surveillance that communicates to teachers that they are ultimately not competent enough to decide if a student has mastered course content breaks down a teacher's autonomy.

Indeed, in Sophie's journal reflection, she also wrote, "Because of my fear of low test scores, students, in all honesty, are not required to think critically in my classroom. . . . With the understanding that the curriculum is set by the state, time is the major obstacle keeping me from truly educating my students." This statement further indicates the hazards of this type of surveillance. When teachers risk teaching students how to think in lieu of covering all of the content, surveillance has won.

Finding Forrester: Film Discussion

As I explored this discussion, two very different forms of surveillance emerged that I had not anticipated. The first came to my attention during a segment of conversation about the main character's teachers at the two schools. The participants discussed the differences between what Jamal could learn from his prep school teacher and his local school teacher.

Bill: But what did [Jamal] learn from the other guy [in the private school]?

Joanne: It wasn't the other guy as much as it was the classroom. The surroundings that she had [in the local school]...

Hugh: the distractions...

Joanne: the distractions like the one kid cussed, and it just rolled off her back. She didn't say anything.

Bill: The stimulation from the other students though... you cannot ignore that. I mean Jamal is the way he is in the old school because of his friends. It's that sense of belonging. When he goes to the other school, that sense of belonging changes, and it really is what he wants from the other students.

Sophie: But he still doesn't speak up...

Joanne: But he was in a position where he could follow his dreams. Remember in the letter at the end, Forrester says that, "long ago I knew that you would realize your dreams, but I never dreamed I'd realize mine."

Bill: But what if you could take them and put them in an environment where they're among their peers, so that they could feed off of each other?

Laura: In a good way? Is that what you mean? You mean in a positive way?

Bill: oh yeah...

Laura: umhum...

Bill: And the same is true in the opposite direction. I mean I really don't see Jamal changing if he doesn't change schools. (fg 2-2, pp. 3-4)

What surfaced for me when studying this dialogue is that these teachers allocated a place for the student to become a surveilleur, not necessarily of the teachers but more of the students themselves. Standardization exists as a top-down form of surveillance, while peer surveillance runs as a lateral scrutiny. The peers are an entity that can limit the extent to which students gain access to an intellectual domain based on how much it is valued in that particular culture. Based on the observations the teachers made during the film, a peer can perform surveillance based on the type of environment s/he creates through behavior. The participants pointed out that Jamal's peer surveillance at the local school existed in the distractions that peers created in the classroom as well as in the lunchroom and basketball court. By contrast, the peer surveillance at the private school existed in the challenges that were made in the classroom in an effort to show off who knew more. This type of surveillance, if used by students in a negative way, is as debilitating for teachers as that which comes from higher authorities because it is just as uncontrollable.

The second form of surveillance brought up during this meeting also deals with the student population; however, in this sense it is the way in which the administration groups them in the classes that serves as a form of surveillance. Several teachers engaged in dialogue about the differences between the points of view of rural versus urban communities. As Sophie asked if anyone felt that environment plays a part in the value of education, Bill said, "It's definitely environment and some of this is heterogeneous grouping" (fg 2-2, p. 8). Heterogeneous grouping is used to equalize instruction for all students. However, in reality what heterogeneous grouping does is place students with

vast levels of abilities in one class where the teacher must attempt to teach to everyone at the same time, leaving little room for one on one work with students who desperately need it and no time to challenge students who are bored. As a method of surveillance, it assures that teachers who have not been trained properly in differentiated instruction will not be effective for anyone but the middle group of students and test scores will more than likely maintain a passing rate. Meanwhile, the public perceives that all students are being treated equally, even though the ones at the bottom are still basically being underserved and still stand no real chance of advancement. This type of surveillance assures that the average to above average people will maintain their places in society, while the less fortunate continue to struggle at the bottom under the guise of being treated the same way as everyone else.

Finding Forrester: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

In their film notes, both Bill and Sophie stated that Jamal had to leave his local school in favor of the private school in order to receive a better education because he needed to get away from the environment of the local school. This validates my earlier argument that an environment, like one where the student peers exhibit certain behaviors to minimize the benefits of education, can operate as a form of surveillance. I would argue that a peer environment could serve to keep students from failing or from excelling in a quiet game to maintain the status quo.

Joanne reiterated this argument in her journal reflection when she said, “Being with Forrester offered him escape physically from his project home, mentally from the unchallenging environment of both home and his neighborhood school, and emotionally from feeling out of place because he was smart and/or black.” This statement validates

that environment can function as a form of surveillance because it can either limit or expand a student's opportunities.

Hugh's journal reflection indicated a sense of being surveilled by the administration, a situation which validates my argument elsewhere in this chapter. He said, "While I personally agree with Forrester's approach, I am quite certain that many of these techniques would be classified as barbarous and would get most teachers reprimanded, if not fired." Hugh's comment demonstrates that teachers are concerned with the perceptions of the administration based on their abilities to regulate and deem appropriate what teachers do in the classroom.

The Ron Clark Story: Film Discussion

The main form of surveillance that surfaced during this discussion was in terms of film itself. The point was brought out by Hugh, who said, "I don't mind trying [to reach students in different ways], but what annoys me, though, is that the lay people out there [watch movies like this and] start thinking that it is *that* easy and it puts more pressure on us for the impossible" (fg 2-3, p. 7). I interpret Hugh's comment to mean that people often rely on film to reveal to them certain realities of which they are not a part. Although people can distinguish between film and reality, they often take the representations on film as a general truth about the world because that is the only measure to which they can refer. What films like these that focus on the world of education demonstrate to the public eye is that teaching can be challenging, but in the end every teacher is able to heal all the problems of society through various means, like visiting every child's home or rapping out a history lesson or restating the rules every day until suddenly all students are behaving and performing well in class. This serves as a

method of surveillance, even if accidental and involuntary, because it causes the public to set certain expectations for educators to meet, even if they are unattainable or illogical in the everyday scenario of teaching. This is detrimental to a teacher's feeling of autonomy because it is just one more source of pressure added to that which already exists in terms of state and local surveillance.

The Ron Clark Story: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

There were no film notes turned in for this film and there were no elements of surveillance noted in the journal reflections. This is probably due to the participants' being so fascinated with the amount of time and dedication that Ron Clark put into his teaching that they failed to discuss one of the main motivators for his efforts: raising state standardized test scores. What this says to me is that although the participants have expressed anxiety and fear over the surveillance of tests scores, they know that ultimately the scores mean very little in terms of how much students are learning. This demonstrates that surveillance, although it can make a person walk the line, can sometimes serve to engender apathy as well.

The Browning Version: Film Discussion

The first evidence of surveillance mentioned during this meeting was in reference to the administration's continuous focus on failure rates. As the participants were commenting on how the character Andrew seemed to be unfulfilled, they mused over the exact source of such satisfaction in teaching.

Sophie: But as a teacher, is your fulfillment in the *education* and just the *course work* or that *sympathy* that [like Andrew] failed to give them? That's the big part I try to give my students and a little bit of science. Granted that may not be what I say to the administration but they need...

Laura: [giggle] right

Hugh: But [administrators] talk about that, “build relationships, build relationships.”

Sophie: Build relationships; don’t fail them.

Laura: Right!

Hugh: Yeah, that’s it, a little bit of science and don’t fail them. (fg 2-4, p. 2)

The element of surveillance comes out in the worry, which is jovially expressed here. I would argue that these teachers feel that despite an emphasis placed on the building of relationships, they are under the microscope concerning the number of students who fail. I suggest that the teachers insinuate that they feel pressured to pass along students who would not normally pass so that the percentages are up to the expectations of the administration. The administration is concerned with pass rates because those numbers ultimately increase the graduation percentage rate, which is an element in the evaluation of the state’s evaluation of AYP, or Adequate Yearly Progress. The purpose of the surveillance of these pass/fail rates is to enhance the school’s reputation and yearly evaluations. The detriment unfortunately lies in the decrease in autonomy that teachers experience as a result of this surveillance.

Of course, other forms of surveillance were already discussed in the previous section, Anti-intellectualism. The situation with Hugh, his student, and his administrator demonstrates a sort of circular approach to monitoring behavior: the teacher watches the student, the student watches the teacher, and the administrator watches both of them. The administration uses the students’ reports to control how teachers handle discipline in the classrooms. This causes teachers a loss of free will as they deal with all situations that arise in their classrooms, whether they involve behavior or grades.

Finally, a form of surveillance that was mentioned previously took center stage to the entire meeting's discussion. As was mentioned in this section under *Mona Lisa Smile*, the administration controls teacher behavior with the threat of placing a letter in the teacher's file. During this session, Joanne offered a personal testimony of the damage that such a letter can make. She revealed, "Without any reason, without any explanation, two days before I had my wreck, I was brought into [the principal's] office for him to have the assistant superintendent tell me that I would not be rehired in this county," (fg 2-4, p. 8). Joanne, who said, "it's embarrassing to know that I've successfully taught with awards for 15 years and now it is all in jeopardy" (fg 2-4, p. 10), went on to detail the specifics of how she would not be returning to Pence High School next year. She would never know why because, as a new hire, in order for this situation not to be placed in her permanent file, she had to write a letter of resignation. If she chose to pursue the reasons behind her dismissal, she would have to reveal to future employers that she had been dismissed from a teaching position. Not wanting that to follow her permanently, although knowing that she had done nothing to warrant her release, she was forced to turn in her resignation and to seek other employment. This form of surveillance is used to coerce teachers into following policies with which they do not agree, like the no zero policy at Pence High School, for fear of having letters placed in their files or being terminated without reason. Although this is just one side of the story, Joanne's situation serves as an example to other teachers at Pence High School that a teacher can seemingly be compliant and still be asked to resign. Surveillance that maintains itself off of the fear of those being surveilled is very detrimental to a teacher's complete identity because it ultimately undermines the freedom in everything a teacher does and says.

The Browning Version: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

Sophie mused in her journal about the end of her own career: “What would it be like? Will I be shoved aside for a newer, fresher teacher?” This is another example of how surveillance affects a teacher’s identity. Sophie envisions that when she has taught another 26 years the administration will be checking up on her and deciding whether or not she is effective and should be *allowed* to stay. Such surveillance breaks down a teacher’s self-image and causes self-doubt.

Language of Defeat

Although the participants of Focus Group Two were not largely negative in their attitudes about their profession or education, there were moments when a language of defeat slipped into their conversations. They mostly seemed to feel unappreciated and irrelevant in the educational milieu.

Mona Lisa Smile: Film Discussion

During this session, comments that I identified as language of defeat were scattered and very few. Interestingly, these remarks all carried the theme of needing validation in one’s job but not receiving any from administration, students, or colleagues. First, Joanne said, “I feel at our school, like in many schools, [the administrators] do not want us to express ourselves” (fg 2-1, p. 2). In terms of validation, it appears that Joanne wanted to be heard and acknowledged by administration. She connected to this need through the scene in the film where the main character is instructed on what behaviors are appropriate for a teacher within the school setting. Joanne’s point of view is colored by particular situations that she experienced at Pence High School this year, some of which

have been discussed earlier in this work, relating to surveillance. (See Chapter Five, **Surveillance**, *The Browning Version*.)

Second, Sophie expressed discontent concerning her perception that the students have not found value in her personal thoughts as they have related to the curriculum (fg12-, p. 5). This is in response to the scene in the film where the students begin to listen and learn about art from the perspective of the teacher. Sophie's struggle to gain validation as it is exemplified in the film is possibly magnified by the lack of support shown by an administration that dictates policies without teacher input or support. In addition, the state's obvious irreverence for teachers who voice the detriments of frequent, high-stakes standardized testing must affect her perception that most teachers' thoughts are not valued.

Third, Sophie mentioned a need to know that she is making a difference in her profession and in the lives of her students. She stated, "If you look at your job and you think, 'Is that going to happen for me?' And you look at the movie, you just think, 'It is a Hollywood ending and that's why this is a movie'" (fg 2-1, p. 6). From Sophie's response, one can imagine that she does not expect to be chased down by her students at the end of the term in the way that the students in this film do their art teacher. However, Sophie's question, I would argue, is a natural and common one. I would suggest that most teachers wonder when their moment of appreciation will come where they will feel validated in the paradox that they have taught the best they could under the given circumstances.

Lastly, Joanne was seeking a validation of appreciation from a very different source than any of the other participants mentioned. She noted: "But you don't get

[‘thank you’] from people that we see every day, our own colleagues, we don’t see that. But [Ms. Watson] didn’t get it from her administrator either,” (fg 2-1, p. 7). Joanne’s observation that she received no accolades from her own colleagues and administration was highlighted for her in the film because Ms. Watson did not receive any either.

Mona Lisa Smile: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

In her film notes, Joanne mentioned that she stiffened when Ms. Watson met with President Karr and Joanne then said, “I wish I could go into any administrator’s office, sound off, and be heard.” I suggest that this statement indicates that Joanne feels that she does not have a useful relationship with the administration because she is aware that they, according to Joanne’s observations, do not perhaps allow a sound off and/or they do not listen.

In his film notes, Bill responded to the scene where President Karr gives Ms. Watson the guidelines for her contract to be renewed. During this scene, Ms. Watson speaks her mind to the administration in a respectful yet assertive manner. Bill said, “I wish we could all be that open.” This spoke to me as a type of language of defeat because Bill implies that he is not able to have such candid conversation with his administration. I hypothesize that this type of professional yet personal conversation is missing from the dialogues of Pence High School because the teachers do not feel that anyone truly listens to them. This causes them to feel alienated and to find confidences only among themselves, making them merely complain to one another rather than finding encouragement to formulate ideas and plans of their own. This type of defeat causes divisiveness and makes it difficult for progress to take place.

During the scene where the class discusses the Mona Lisa, Laura and Sophie noted that they wished their classes could teach each other and that the scene was unrealistic. These comments symbolize defeat, I would argue, because they do not believe that the scene could happen in reality. Rather than finding hope in the scene, these two participants only see that it does not happen for them, nor do they have faith that it *can* happen. This is a dangerous type of defeat because it affects these teachers' expectations for their future students, who they automatically assume will not be able to perform in such a self-guided manner. Without such a faith or hope that students are able to learn this way, there is little chance that they will be able to provide an atmosphere for such learning to occur.

Laura's journal also demonstrated her frustrations as they relate to critical thinking. She wrote:

In this day of NCLB, I sincerely feel critical thinking skills are falling by the wayside. We are not producing human beings that can analyze a problem and come up with the best solution. What does this say for our government? It is a little scary for me. We do not have time in our busy lives and preparation for high-stakes testing to devote time to deeply think about a subject, then discuss our thoughts with others who have also thought deeply about the same subject.

Laura expressed defeat in that she feels overwhelmed by the general pace of living. She attributes her frustration about not helping students learn to think to the government and she questions why mandates such as NCLB are allowed when the obvious result is students who are like lambs going to the slaughter. I suggest her defeat is in the feeling that she alone can do nothing to change things.

In Sophie's journal reflection, she also mentioned the challenges of time. She said, "I rush through the broad array of topics handed to me by the state and

try to reinforce the conceptual knowledge with labs. I received my test scores and unfortunately around 50% of my students met the state's standards of required knowledge in Biology." Sophie, like Laura, feels defeat at what the state mandates she must cover in the course she teaches. It appears that she too feels as if there is nothing she can do to overcome the issue of little time to "teach" a large amount of information.

Finding Forrester: Film Discussion

Several forms of the language of defeat are identifiable in this group discussion. The teachers expressed feelings of helplessness as it pertains to student behavior and teacher identity. Both of these examples were in reference to scenes in the film that evoked the discussions.

As participants discussed the lack of intellectualism in society, Joanne used the example of how poets are no longer held in high esteem. Bill disagreed with her, pointing out that those who write rap songs are a type of poet. This comment led to a discussion about how behaviors are affected by rap and hip-hop music. Some commented that the behavior seen in the music videos and in the lifestyles of the stars are contradictory to what educators deem as important.

Laura: There should be some level, some standard of behavior that we all aspire to, and I'm talking basic manners. Consequences. You have kids in your class who literally don't understand . . . that this behavior elicits this consequence.

Sophie: Because they don't value that particular behavior.

Laura: That's why I think our society is going downhill. We have to know that there is at least a minimum behavior, a way to behave, to fit into a society that is going to be productive and progress. (fg 2-2, p. 10)

This discussion revealed helplessness in making students understand the values of particular behaviors outside of their immediate teen world. It also shows that educators sometimes do not see the teen world as having worth. I would suggest that in order for teachers to reach their students, they should attempt to become familiar with the world their students inhabit. With some knowledge of their students' interests, teachers may be able to open the minds of the students to different perspectives.

There was also a discussion of how different Jamal's character was from the students at Pence High School. During that discussion, Laura talked about her recent experiences at a conference.

And I go to these vocational conferences and try to learn something more with this software that I teach, Dreamweaver, and I get in there with all these teachers from Atlanta and I ask them how they do it. And they say, "Oh just put them on the tutorial and turn them loose," and I say "Tutorial? Like on the internet?" And she said, "Yes, they will learn so much and you will learn so much from them." I say, "I do not know where you are getting your children because if I just say, 'Go do this tutorial,' I have to stand there over them and make sure that they do it, or else they're off on MySpace and they're going to look at Nike shoes." That does not work with my students. I have to have it lined up, "You're going to this, and then this, and then this. And then when we're through, we'll see because I'm waiting on 14 other [students] to just get done with this *one*." (fg 2-2, p. 8)

Laura expressed her disbelief that students could self-direct during instruction based on what she experiences daily at Pence High School. Her comments were riddled with defeat as she communicated that she feels that she must watch the students every minute to make sure that they are not on inappropriate websites on the internet. The source of this type of helplessness is difficult to extinguish because the factory model of education perpetuates it, where one teacher is responsible for turning out well-trained students from over-populated classrooms.

The last language of defeat pertains to comments made by several teachers who remarked that teachers are being expected to perform too many roles in relation to their students. Teachers are expected to teach, to counsel, to discipline, to moralize, to register, et cetera. Laura expressed a sense of helplessness in her ability to do it all. She reported that she can only be responsible for delivering the content.

Laura: And I'm going to do this [delivery of content] and that's all I have to do. And then it's up to everybody else to try to push them. Is that selfish? Anddo ya'll feel that way?

Hugh: absolutely (fg 2-2, p. 7)

I suggest that Laura's feelings of helplessness are compounded by the infinite amount of tasks assigned by administration which have nothing to do with the roles mentioned above. The amount of procedural paperwork in addition to daily responsibilities with students is suffocating. Laura exemplifies a teacher in just such a situation.

Finding Forrester: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

In the journal reflection, Laura stated, "It may be because I teach a vocational subject that. . . it is all I can do to get all my students to do the basics." I suggest that Laura does not feel as valued as she thinks she might be as an academic teacher and this contributes to her feeling of defeat. She insinuated that she is bothered by student attitudes that perpetuate mediocrity. Dealing with this on a daily basis would certainly be detrimental to her identity as a teacher.

The Ron Clark Story: Film Discussion

The language of defeat during this meeting first focused on the participants' disillusionment with student motivation. As the participants were discussing Ron Clark's initial frustrations in the film as he tries various techniques to encourage students to

conform to a code of behavior and to care about their studies, it became clear that these teachers experience similar battles on a day-to-day basis. The difference, however, between what is portrayed in the movie and these teachers' reality is that they have not experienced sweeping success like Ron Clark. They said:

Laura: [Ron] made a comment, I wrote this down, he said, "They can do; they WON'T do," and boy, if that doesn't sum up *my* students!

Bill: yeah!

Laura: They *can* do but they *won't*. [referring to her own students]

Bill: It's just our *environment*. (fg 2-3 p. 2)

The language of defeat that I witnessed here shows that these teachers feel that there is nothing they can do to change their situations in the classroom. No one disagreed with Bill when he blamed the problem on the environment and no one made suggestions on how to go about combating this problem. The teachers seem to be saying that they have tried all they can but that the lack of student motivation cannot be overcome.

The second conversation that intimated defeat concerned being overwhelmed by the expectation that teachers should give more than humanly possible. In the film, Ron Clark portrays a teacher who is omni-present. Laura expressed her surrender like this: "He had developed that relationship with those students, then they did want to go [to see the musical]. And maybe that's what we're not doing, maybe we're not getting them, developing those close-knit relationships like he had. But ya'll literally he had no other life. I just can't give. I've got a husband [and two children]," (fg 2-3, p. 4). Laura voiced what I would argue many teachers feel: they are expected to be superhuman in order to be educators. She continued her comment with support from other members in the group:

Laura: You know how he was involved with every aspect of their lives. I'll be honest with you, I'm embarrassed to say, I don't want to have anything to do with teaching Sunday School at church. I don't want to have anything to do with Bible school. I don't want to have anything to do outside of school with the kids I teach because I... they suck every thing I have out of me.

Hugh: Absolutely, the life-- it's like being vaporized everyday. (fg 2-3, p. 6)

These teachers communicated that they can do nothing beyond all of the requirements that have to and can be documented. Outside of those immediately necessary actions, they said that they have no other energy. I suggest that these feelings come from the overwhelming demands placed on teachers by QCCs, EOCTs, GHSGTs, and AYP. These participants seem to be mentally and physically exhausted, and despite hypothesizing what additional actions they could take to help their students, there is not enough time or energy left to follow through.

The Ron Clark Story: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

Bill reflected at length in his journal on the level of commitment to which Ron Clark was willing to dedicate himself and argued that such a time consuming commitment would not be possible. He said, "It seems that more and more is required from teachers these days with less and less from the child's family and social circles. I guess that's what separates the Clarks of the teaching profession from the rest of us mortals." I suggest that Bill feels a small amount of defeat because he recognizes that the majority of teachers, including him, are being asked to do the impossible. This is exacerbated in Hollywood films when every teacher represented is made to look ineffective except for the hero teacher character.

Sophie echoed Bill's sentiment in her journal when she said, "I cannot come home and work on my lessons solely for an evening. I cannot meet students on Saturday for tutoring. Is that what it takes? Then I never will be effective and it is such a depressing mindset to have. . . . I just want [Ron Clark] to come make lemonade out of my situation." Sophie's thoughts demonstrate a language of defeat and reinforce that teachers feel they are being asked to overcome impossible obstacles in order to be effective.

Hugh replicated the very same reaction in his journal when he remarked, "Even if the results are correct, the attainment of these results are nearly impossible for an average educator. Who has time to visit every parent, write songs, and make video tapes of lessons while one is too sick to go to school?" I allege that thoughts such as these chip away at teachers' perceptions of themselves as intellectuals who make a difference in education.

The Browning Version: Film Discussion

There were three comments that I classified as language of defeat. The two came from Joanne. She spoke about alienation and the effects of surveillance. First she observed that teachers are for the most part living separate lives from the rest of the world. She said, "[in] teaching, we're alienated as a whole anyway except from each other," (fg 2-4, p. 1). Although I am not certain that she meant this in a negative way, it is a point that supports the idea that teachers feel very much as if they are on the perimeter of their environment. Because they receive little support from parents, the administration, or the state agencies, teachers have only each other on whom to rely.

Teaching can be, at times, a lonely and thankless job, with its rewards often coming after years of dedication and hard work.

Joanne also expressed her disappointment in the value her administration placed on her as a good teacher. She said,

I am now faced with having to sell my home and move to find a job with a 5 year old, being a single mother. And I just have a real different perspective about it being important for there to be good teachers or good people around. Because if it was about having a good teacher around, someone with experience, I wouldn't be in the situation I'm in now. (fg 2-4, p. 9)

This spoke to me as language of defeat because Joanne seemed somewhat helpless. She felt she had been a good teacher and followed the mandates of the administration but that despite her compliance, they did not value her.

Hugh also used language that indicated a sort of defeat. He said, "Yeah, I know, I'm an old dinosaur. But like before when I taught [15 years ago], what the teacher said went. You didn't have to worry about a kid criticizing you or saying something stupid about the way you've handled something," (fg 2-4, pp. 4-5). I would argue that he felt defeated because the administrator trusted the word of a student over his own. Because the administrator doubted Hugh's ability to reason and to make a sound decision, I would argue that Hugh no longer has faith in the administrator.

The Browning Version: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

In Hugh's journal reflection, he wrote, "I was convinced, however, that the old school ways of teaching proved themselves to be superior to all of this new stuff we do in order to keep the children 'entertained.'" This statement is a validation to arguments made earlier that teachers feel resentful and overwhelmed by the numerous fads of education that demand teachers cast aside approaches that they find effective in favor of

the latest and greatest techniques. I would argue that while most teachers do enjoy using new methods, the idea that a higher authority has the right to require that everyone teach a certain way strips teachers of their autonomy and makes them feel inadequate. This feeling of inadequacy surfaces because such mandates assume that teachers are too stubborn or too inept (or too busy) to research strategies on their own.

Positive Language and Hope for the Future

Film's ability to bring out feelings and give its spectator hope is an outward manifestation of film's own inner existence as a body unto itself. The spectator's embodiment of the sorrow or joy a film expresses only works to support that notion. Indeed, "both [film and spectator] can and do transcend the immanence of their immediate bodily experience, generalizing and using their lived-bodies and concrete situation in the world to imaginatively prospect the horizon for future projects and possible situations and to re-member experience retrospectively" (Sobchack, 1992, p. 261). Through their descriptions and re-memberings of experiences that relate to the films about educators used in this study, the participants illustrate that such an embodiment can be used by the spectator as a way to project her/himself into her/his locus of reality. In the discussions that follow, the participants exemplify how such an embodied project can translate into positive outlooks and hope for the future.

Mona Lisa Smile: Film Discussion

Many of the participants in this study focus on seeing the results of their efforts as teachers when they happen to see the students later on in life as adults. Thoughts from focus group one were echoed when Hugh said:

You don't get that immediate gratification, though. I mean like, here we don't get immediate gratification, like the students chasing us down with

bicycles. It doesn't come that way. It comes for me like when I went to this reunion for students I taught 15 years ago and I saw them and they told me about their lives and they were actually relatively sane and they were not the same creatures that I had...they were prosperous, good citizens. (fg 2-1, p. 6)

As Hugh compared the main character's fortune of knowing that her students have turned out well to experiences of his own, he showed that there is more to teaching than the present day. He showed that a teacher's job is a work in progress, an unfinished piece of art that must be appreciated at a later time. Joanne reiterated Hugh's beliefs when she said, "Somehow we don't see it right then, that it has some kind of effect" (fg 2-1, p. 10). This demonstrates their hope for the future in that what they teach now will later on add to the lives of their students.

Mona Lisa Smile: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

In Sophie's film notes, she wrote that she was excited and hopeful during the opening scene where there is a special ceremony for commencing the academic year. This symbolizes her continued faith in academics themselves, despite some of the frustrations that she has expressed at other times during this study. She also stated that she "felt empowered" by Ms. Watson when the character confronts the student, Mrs. Jones, about her absences. I would argue that seeing a teacher character use her intellect to exude authority and to reason with a student could give confidence to teachers in their own endeavors in education.

Hugh also noted that the opening of the academic year scene gave him "feelings of hope and promise of new opportunities." This language is encouraging because it brings to light the value of new beginnings and demonstrates that teachers do have the

chance to reinvent themselves at the start of each academic term. This can be a potent source of empowerment for teacher identity.

Finding Forrester: Film Discussion

Two examples of positive language indicating hope for the future surfaced from this discussion. One was inspired by a conversation about the importance of being in the position to follow one's dreams, as was the character of Jamal at the private school.

Joanne noted:

Are there not students that we know, just by watching them... we know they will fulfill their dreams, even if we don't teach them? I mean, luckily I've had the opportunity to teach several students this year that I know are going to go far and be successful. I knew that even before I taught them. It was just my pleasure to have them in my room, so that I could learn, be inspired by the fact that there are still really are people who do dream versus those that just go through the motions to get out of high school" (fg 2-2, p. 4)

Joanne's observations speak to me as hope for the future because she showed here that she has not given up on students despite the many reasons it would be easy to do so. Her remarks also display that it is not singularly the brightest and most motivated student that gains the attention and admiration of teachers but that students who look at high school as an experience of enrichment also earn accolades.

Another demonstration of hope for the future was noticeable during the dialogue about the mentor teacher leaving the forward of his book to be written by Jamal. As other teachers stated that they would like to be a mentor like Forrester, Hugh summarized the effect that the movie had on him:

One thing that I was thinking about through the whole thing... it's the same gushy stuff we're supposed to get from these kinds of movies... was that, in the process of being the teacher and taking the kids under our wing, at the same time there's always that symbiotic thing going on that

we have to get something back from them. We may not get it as grandiosely as all that, but you know, they have to dramatize it for the movies... But for us, I think *that* is the whole main theme of this. (fg 2-2, p. 11)

What I gleaned from Hugh's commentary is that the movie helped him to recognize a positive energy that teachers sometimes might overlook: students reciprocate the meaning of teachers' actions. Whether it is in what the students learn that teachers expose them to, or whether it is in the way students respond because of how teachers treat them, or whether it is because the students open teachers' eyes to things they have not understood before, the relationship itself is something about which to feel good.

Finding Forrester: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

Joanne's journal entry focused on providing hope for students. She wrote, "We, as teachers, may be an escape. . . . Though we may not know we're providing an escape, we must open ourselves up, allow our students to see us for who we are." This represents positive language because Joanne recognized the importance of the relationship between a student and teacher and how the teacher may not always realize the support that s/he offers. This realization is something that can instill a different sense of purpose to a teacher's job and this may relieve some of the infinite weights that the teachers in this study have projected as holding them back. On the other hand, Joanne also recognized the hope that teachers can receive from their students. She remarked, "I can say that I've gained a lot from my students and it's a reason I keep teaching: they keep me young, they teach me about life in the modern world, they teach me that though they are perceived to be less intelligent, by their standards, they are, in many ways, more intelligent, just in different arenas than what is deemed acceptable or a standard in education today."

Laura also noted that, “It would be wonderful to have that type of relationship with one or more students.” The reference to Forrester and Jamal’s relationship as something wonderful to achieve indicates that Laura does think such a relationship can exist. This statement symbolizes Laura’s hope that she will one day experience such a situation in real life, not just through film.

The Ron Clark Story: Film Discussion

The main point of discussion that indicated a hope for the future focused on having fun with the students. Some participants referred to this in terms of relating to students during extra-curricular activities, while others pointed to the enjoyment of helping students learn new things. Bill said, “If I can’t make it fun for me, then I know I’m not making it fun for them. I know if I don’t want to do it, then they don’t want to do it,” (fg 2-3, p. 8). Despite the earlier conversation where the group spoke of the anti-intellectualism that persists when education is looked at as a “dog and pony show,” Bill maintained that one can make education fun in an intellectually stimulating way that is enjoyable for the teacher and the student. I suggest this indicates hope for the future because Bill has a positive outlook on the way to treat his job.

Hugh also spoke of the fulfillment he experiences through teaching, but he also adds that what also inspires him is that he makes time for other ways to relax and enjoy himself. He said, “You can enjoy your job and get satisfaction out of it, which is something to which we all aspire, but when I’m talking about fun, I’m talking about something completely different than what I’m doing at work” (fg 2-3, p. 8). This spoke to me as hope for the future because Hugh demonstrated there are multiple levels on which one can experience contentment and that those levels teachers experience at school

can work to enhance those outside of school. I interpret his comment to mean that professional and personal joy can co-exist without subtracting anything from each other. This speaks positively about the future expectations of living as an educator.

The Ron Clark Story: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

There is no evidence in the participants' responses that indicated to me that this film engendered hope for these teachers. Again I will point out the irony in this, since this was the only film based on a true story. I suggest this indicates that at Pence High School there is something in the environment that causes these teachers to believe that a situation like Ron Clark's is just an anomaly.

The Browning Version: Film Discussion

Only one comment during this discussion strongly suggested a hope for the future. When Joanne said, "We know the world is not a touchy-feely place. You have hope from the relationships you have," she spoke of having trust in other people despite any negative things that people have done (fg 2-4, p. 13). She gave encouragement to the group to move beyond times of hurt and to look deeply into the relationships that have not let them down to find support and reciprocation of caring.

The Browning Version: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

Joanne's journal reflection showed hope for the future when she stated, "The classroom can be a respite from our personal lives, a place of comfort, especially if we have good relationships with our students. Our students can be a saving grace." These thoughts reiterate what Joanne professed in the third journal entry: that teachers can find positive things and hope in the students that they teach.

Evidence of Critical Thinking and Steps Toward a Critical Pedagogy

During the exploration of these conversations, it was interesting to find covert and overt discussions concerning critical thinking. It is in this section that I will consider what they have said in relation to my own thoughts. I will also ruminate over the observations of what might be considered the participants' critical thinking in relation to the films and to the teaching profession. My expectation was that, as each meeting passed and journal entries were written, the participants would show evidence of participation in critical thinking and would indicate an activated interest in critical pedagogy, if said participants were shown not to subscribe to such at the onset. Merleau-Ponty says, "The matter and form of knowledge are results of analysis. I posit the stuff of knowledge when, breaking away from the primary faith inspired by perception, I adopt a critical attitude towards it and ask 'what I am really seeing'. The task of a radical reflection, the kind that aims at self-comprehension, consists, paradoxically enough, in recovering the unreflective experience of the world" (1958, p. 280). This train of thought can be applied to this study in that the participants have gained a form of knowledge through analysis about themselves and the thoughts and experiences of others as they relate to films about educators. I propose that the self-comprehension that some have experienced can possibly find its sustenance in thinking toward a critical pedagogy that unveils how the experience of the world is connected to the educational environment.

Mona Lisa Smile: Film Discussion

Most of the conversations during the first session concerning critical thinking were open critiques of the lack of interest and ability on the part of teachers and students to think critically. The participants connected with and admired the main teacher

character for her perseverance and ability to push her students to be analytical thinkers.

For example, Joanne compared her practices to those of the main character.

Joanne: One thing that I really identified with [Ms. Watson] is that I really want my kids to think outside the box and a lot of them...

Hugh: It's a hard thing to do.

Joanne: . . .When I try to get them to write questions, they start off with factual recall and I say no. They might could start off with a yes or no, but then I say, "Well how are you going to get that to happen?" or "Why?" Right now I feel like I'm beating my head against the wall because we are doing persuasive writing and for an effective persuasive piece, you have to be able to think and anticipate the responses or what questions the audience will have so that you can refute that as part of your work. (fg 2=1, pp. 7-8)

Joanne and Hugh both admitted to the difficulty of leading students to think critically but they did not articulate *why* it is difficult. I would hypothesize that, as was seen in the film, the challenge lies in that students are typically rarely asked to analyze content on their own. Joanne hinted to the fact that she has to ask her students a series of questions in order to help them arrive at an effectively written essay, although even then she expressed how taxing that could be. I suggest that it is a cumbersome task at the high school level because of three main situations. First, most students have never before been asked to think in this manner. Second, because a high school teacher deals with 120 students on average per day, it is mentally exhausting on the teacher to attempt to work with that many students at that deep level of understanding during the timetable of a school day. Third, teachers meet a resistance from students because of the anti-intellectual nature of our environment that impedes their abilities to be effective. Below is a lengthy but important part of the focus group discussion that demonstrates a foundation for my argument:

Laura: I just wrote a paper on critical thinking and all the research says start in middle school, that you can help develop critical thinking but that you cannot develop a moral compass. You can teach them to think critically and by middle school they can start analyzing things and synthesizing and forming opinions but that you cannot develop a moral compass. That is two separate things.

Hugh: One of the things I heard though GPS training is that there is a new emphasis on critical thinking because we are turning out kids whose brains are just mush.

Laura: right

Hugh: The best thing that I heard from this first meeting is that we are supposed to be able to start facilitating more analysis.

Sophie: But then they tell you how to think critically, which defeats the purpose. "Here are the five steps to teach a child to think critically."

Laura: Well, let me tell you why they do that. They have to give it you...teaching critical thinking is hard! It's like beating your head up against the wall!

Hugh: Yes it is!

Laura: And they just look at you and go, "Just tell me what to do."

Hugh: yeah!

Laura: Number one, it's hard to teach it. Number two, it's hard to do it and I guarantee none of us are pretty good at it.

Hugh: No, I know I'm not.

Laura: I'm not either! So they do that, Sophie, so that they teach you how to do it, so that you learn how to teach it. I know that is why they give you those steps.

Sophie: But at the same time there can be no box. So once you set those parameters, you just built a box . . .But if someone teaches you how to teach someone to think critically then *you're* not thinking critically. And what's the point? How can you get your kids to do it? It's got to be original.

Laura: Right and everything I've read says we've got to learn because we weren't raised that way either. We've got to learn how to do it. Just like [Ms. Watson] did [in the film]. (fg 2-1, pp. 8-9)

Although Sophie demonstrates that she is an advocate for encouraging students to think at higher levels, she disagreed with Laura about the way to go about it. Sophie argued that a state mandated formula for teaching critical thinking defeats the purpose and philosophy of critical thinking itself. The interesting side to this disagreement is that Laura recognizes the state's intention in giving directives on higher order thinking skills as a re-training of teachers who themselves were not "taught" to think in this manner. What is not brought out is the fact that neither teachers nor students are actually required to possess the capacity to think critically because most state goals that both groups work toward are content based assessments that are measured by multiple choice test scores. Although there may be a very minimum number of questions on these tests that do necessitate higher order thinking skills, they are not weighted more than the simple recall questions. Therefore, there is not much incentive for teachers to spend time and energy on critical thinking skills when the majority of the assessment comes from a vast curriculum and when passing scores can be accomplished with the low skills of identification and recall. Sophie's remark at the end of the conversation summarizes the need for pushing beyond standardization: "But haven't you ever had an idea come to you in your darkest hour? And that's the beauty of critical thinking to me, not, "You told me to do that" (fg 2-1, p. 10).

Mona Lisa Smile: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

Bill jotted in his film notes, in response to the scene where the parents and administrators critique Ms. Watson's teaching methods early in the film, that "what we

sometimes do not understand. . . our first response is to critique.” I found this to be an interesting analysis of this situation. Rather than construing the scene to be a judgment call on the part of the administrators and parents, Bill immediately proposed that critique often comes from unfamiliarity. I suggest this exemplifies Bill’s tendency toward critical pedagogy because he demonstrated the ability to look beyond the surface of the critique itself to find the root of it. This is what an educator who practices critical pedagogy does: s/he looks for the source of the issue and acts accordingly in preparing her/his students.

In his journal reflection, Joel wrote, “I believe the main obstacle to open-mindedness in the film, and today, is conservative political elitism. If one of the biggest obstacles to learning in general is the fear of failure, how in the world are we supposed to win the game if we cannot even encourage kids to think what they want, much less say it out loud?” Joel exhibits characteristics of a teacher who understands critical thinking as it relates to critical pedagogy because he points out the quandary concerning student performance and links it to a societal cause. The next step for Joel would be for him to take action to break down that political elitism within the walls of his classroom and then for he and his students to carry that action out into the community.

Bill’s journal reflection focused on his dedication to the ideals of critical thinking in his classroom. He remarked, “I have found that the only limitations we have are the ones that we believe we have. . . . Just because the State says that I have to teach the facts that are going to be on some damn test doesn’t mean I can’t let students think for themselves. . . . if you can learn something and then really think about it and understand it, you can change the world.” I would argue that Bill projects the image that he is able to find a space within the confines of surveillance to encourage students to think for

themselves. Although Bill has been teaching 18 years in middle school, this is his first year at Pence High School, which means that this is his first year experiencing the extent to which high school teachers are made accountable for the student performance that makes or breaks the existence of the school itself. It is encouraging to hear that he sets high standards for his students and I would be interested to see if and how his philosophy changes the longer he teaches at Pence High School.

In Joanne's journal reflection, she discussed how she would like for her students to apply critical thinking to their understanding of literature and the methods that she uses to encourage that way of thinking, such as refuting what students say during discussion in an attempt to make them think beyond the surface. She also mentioned that she wants students to be able to talk about literature with each other "regardless of their socioeconomic level." She stated, "When you're allowed to think for yourself and plot your own course, you think more critically than ever and isn't that what life is all about?" I suggest that Joanne sees herself as aiding students in their progression of learning about literature and about each other. This is a step toward a critical pedagogy of which the goal is for the students to understand how they are different and similar and how those differences and similarities might connect during a discussion that they may carry with them beyond the limits of the classroom.

Laura wrote in her journal reflection: "I realized I do not possess good critical thinking skills. Once again, I've never been taught. I disagree with Sophie [who in the discussion said that following steps to teach critical thinking is the antithesis of critical thinking]. I do think the skills need to be taught. My research found that humans are not 'hard wired' to think critically." What I find interesting about Laura's comment is that

she has shown herself during the meetings and in her writings, in my opinion, to be quite the analytical thinker. I would argue that she does not see herself this way because she is encumbered by the results of her efforts to encourage students to think critically. Their resistance, as she reported in the discussions and in her journal entries, is coloring her perception of her own abilities.

As she reflected on her low EOCT scores, Sophie commented in her journal that, “Obviously, students are not succeeding when critical thinking is absent from the curriculum. The critical thinking required of me is to figure out how to expose students to the state standards and require them to think critically about the concepts they are required to learn.” Even in the face of the transition from QCCs to GPS, which are supposed to be thematic based teachings to encourage student critical thinking, Sophie must still be sure to “cover” all the content that will be tested on the End of Course Test. In this entry, she alluded to the overwhelming amount of information that the students must learn and implied that critical thinking must take a backseat to delivery of content. She noted that once that is accomplished, it is time for the test and there is no time for critical thinking.

Finding Forrester: Film Discussion

This discussion group demonstrated their tendency toward critical thinking by asking each other questions to instigate conversation that forced its participants to consider their positions about the movie in relation to what they thought about education in general and in terms of their own students. They articulated various themes and discussed their perceptions at length.

For example, as the group talked about the way the embittered teacher handled his classes and relationships to students, several conversations took place at once and multiple questions were asked.

Sophie: That was his bitterness coming out. It was like, "I've failed as a writer, so I will force my superiority as a teacher on you."

Bill: "I am superior in my environment."

Hugh: Did you all think about the contrast between the way that teacher taught his class and the lady teacher at the very beginning?

Laura: She was very good.

Hugh: She was good. She was very confident and she projected that feeling that we *should* project of a genuine concern for the students rather than that of superiority.

Bill: Do you think that Jamal could have gotten the education that he needed based on what she just said?

Hugh: yes...

Sophie: With teachers like her, I believe he could have.

Hugh: Not as high of a level but...

Joanne: yes...(fg 2-2, pp. 2-3)

Although the group continued the conversation, as it turned toward the merits of private versus public schooling, this segment demonstrated the participants' abilities to consider multiple perspectives and make predictions based on their own experiences in education. I found it interesting to follow the flow of this group because even though this was only their second meeting and a few of its members were a little more like friends than acquaintances, it seemed that their thoughts flowed seamlessly, even in moments when they were in disagreement.

Another moment in the discussion that showed evidence of critical thinking was when the participants compared the two schools to Pence High School.

Hugh: Did you notice that we have the perception looking in about this Ivy League prep school? That it's all stained glass and blah, blah, blah. But then when you listen to the kids who are in the school talking about the curriculum, talking about the teachers, what did we hear? "They're doing this just to make us do it. Yeayeayea."

Laura: The same thing as at our school...

Hugh: Yes, the same sort of attitude. Is the difference in the schools just one maybe of expectations?

Sophie: You have to take that on a teacher-by-teacher case, expectations. Like the white guy versus the black woman... You know, she probably had higher expectations of just that one kid than that white guy did of Jamal. (fg 2-2, p. 4)

Hugh began the discussion by questioning the participants' perceptions and then analyzing the words of students at the private school in the film. Laura immediately drew a parallel between the dialogue of the students in the film and the complaints she hears from her own students at Pence High. This was followed by a second question from Hugh about expectations, to which Sophie produced a quick analysis based on the film.

A last example of repartee among the group that signifies critical thinking came as they discussed how various people in Jamal's life influence his motivation to write. Each participant gave her/his own interpretation of how Forrester taught Jamal.

Joanne: [Forrester] said, "Writers write so readers can read what they write. You can't think; you have to write." And then as he started typing... then he left him and he walked around and he waited him out.

Sophie: But when he said, "You can't think you have to write," isn't that the antithesis of critical thinking? That instruction?

Joanne: But remember he followed that, “The first draft is from the heart,” and the second one is what you think about.

Joel: Right. Your mind gets in the way of your heart is what I got from that.

Hugh: It’s talking about the process. You need to write then go back and assess it. (fg 2-2, pp. 6-7)

Sophie immediately challenged this moment in the film, seemingly based on her idea that the film itself purported thinking for one’s self, while a main portion of the plot gave the message to let one’s heart lead the way. This example of how Sophie analyzed the text of the film shows efforts of critical thinking.

Undeniably, Joel and Hugh both offered different perspectives, showing that they are not willing to merely accept Sophie’s comments at face value. Joel pointed out that according to his understanding of the scene, one’s mind and heart are not exclusive of each other. Hugh summarized that the analytical step to writing does indeed exist but that it comes after the initial draft. These participants’ abilities to work through the text of the film and to come to varying conclusions as they talk together demonstrate their abilities to think critically.

Finding Forrester: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

Most of the journal entries reflected on the participants’ abilities to look beyond their students’ limitations. Their messages spoke to me as evidence of the processes of critical thinking on their parts because they were questioning themselves and their practices. This is an important step in developing a perception of education that supports critical pedagogy. As educators, these participants have to be willing to examine what they do as teachers, why they do

it, and to what end they strive. Although these entries were not full of discussion about critical thinking itself, they showed an internal struggle of the participants to figure out where they are headed.

The Ron Clark Story: Film Discussion

Although critical thinking in the classroom was not discussed during this meeting as it was in the previous two, there was evidence of critical thinking on the part of the participants. First, Joel pondered aloud how he could use this film as an educational tool in his own classroom. He said:

What would happen if I took this movie into my classroom and turned it on from the beginning, and played it up through the principal's reaction to painting the room? So we've gotten in there, we've seen the kids treat him like a turd, basically we've gotten no where, and then I give them some guide to that: "You're going to watch this and you have to pick one of the kids to be, you have to chose one, which one would it be. And make them pick, then stop and talk to them about that, then watch the rest or maybe half way. "Is this guy making any progress with these kids?" "Oh, ok why is he doing that?" And then watch the rest and say, "Give me a list of all the things, all the ways the teacher was making an impact, was able to change these kids, because obviously we can see the benefit, we can see what they gained from that." Then put them on the spot about me, "List all of the things on the board that he does that I do not do. What do I NOT do that I need to do?" (fg 2-3, p. 5)

As the researcher, I became very excited to hear Joel add this to the discussion. It demonstrates that he evaluated the actions of the teacher character in the film, that he compared those to his own actions, and that he then questioned how he would assess the students' perspectives of him as a teacher while encouraging them to analyze and draw conclusions while watching the film. I would argue that Joel showed a desire to alter his pedagogy because of his thoughts during this focus group meeting, turning his critical analysis of the film to that of his own practices.

Later, Hugh critiqued the segments of the film where Ron Clark shows that guzzling chocolate milk and rapping for the students makes learning palatable. Hugh said, “I reject that premise because you know we do the kids a disservice if we create this illusion for them that “Oh, everything in life is fun. We’re going to go to work and it’s fun and you’re going to be entertained while you’re there,” and that’s bullshit (fg 2-3, p. 7). Hugh’s assessment of how schools prepare students to live in a world of entertainment in comparison to how life as an adult really is indicates that he found contrasts between what he saw in the film, what is encouraged in education, and what is happening in adult life. This critique is a crucial testament to the idea that watching and discussing films can help teachers recognize and evaluate things in our society that affect education so that they can take positive action in dealing with them in reality.

Finally, as the participants were discussing how Ron Clark’s expectations of his students were only raised higher, never lower, they compared that situation to the one at Pence High School. As mentioned earlier in Chapter Five (**Anti-Intellectualism**, *The Ron Clark Story*), the administration at Pence High School has arranged the schedule so that students of all abilities take classes together and has said that teachers need to be concerned with bringing the students to a certain level. The teachers have talked about how fatigued they are with the various demands being placed on them (Chapter Five, **Language of Defeat**, *The Ron Clark Story*), and at this point in the conversation they synthesized those thoughts as they discussed what has happened to their own fulfillment and standards.

Joel: I think part of the draining aspect is having to, because of a lot of these other things we’ve mention, is to get our fun, to get our carrot, what do we have to do with our expectations? We have to...

Hugh: lower

Joel: lower our expectations

Laura: oh, just to get them to there...

Joel: I've got to move the carrot that I'm chasing within arm's reach so that at least at times I can reach out and touch it. (fg 2-3 p. 11)

This conversation demonstrates that the participants recognized the connection between all of the pieces they have previously discussed and how those affect the gratification they get from teaching.

The Ron Clark Story: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

Joel wrote in his journal that "The song and dance is great, but that style is not for all teachers nor is it the only way to be successful in the classroom. I think the real key for teachers, and Ron Clark, lies in the building of relationships. Not just with our students, but the whole team." I suggest that this quote shows Joel's continued efforts to develop a critical pedagogy because part of that process is figuring out how one's students fit into the education puzzle.

In Hugh's journal reflection, he wrote, "These fictionalized accounts create a perception that teachers who do not achieve these results are incompetent and exonerate parents and their children of lackadaisical performance in the classroom." I propose that Hugh critiques the fictionalization of Ron Clark's situation because, as he compares it to circumstances at Pence High School, he cannot find any teachers who make efforts parallel to those of Ron Clark. What Hugh does recognize is that the film does not portray parents as being held responsible for their children's education and he suggests that this validates the audience's own apathy in regards to their role as parents. This critique is a mark that Hugh is compiling his own ideas in relation to critical pedagogy,

starting with the role of the parent in our society. How he chooses to approach this issue and to incorporate it into his teaching practices remains to be seen.

The Browning Version: Film Discussion

This discussion, more than any other, focused mostly on the plot and characters of the movie. The participants seemed to become deeply involved in analyzing the main character, Andrew. I found most of the evidence of critical thinking in the various hypotheses that participants made.

At the beginning of the conversation, Hugh explained a parallel between Andrew's lamentations for the disintegration of his marriage with that for the dissolution of the classics program, which also represents the breakdown of civilization and academic rigor, as he knows it. Hugh said:

I don't think that he was not unfulfilled with his work, I think it was his marriage that we sensed was unfulfilling for him. I think that maybe his emotional outburst at the end had to do more with his relationship with his wife than with his teaching because when he was up there talking on stage he was lamenting. This upset him too but the whole, like, civilization is crumbling: we don't focus on the classics any more. We've sort of denuded the content, which of course we all know is now very basic. (fg 2-4, p. 1)

In the process of analyzing the character, Hugh also brought to light a parallel between the watering down of content in the film and in reality. In the film, the teacher who is to replace Andrew and his classics program is depicted as a young, inexperienced teacher who cannot correctly translate a passage written by one of Andrew's students. This scene symbolizes the decline in educational stringency. What Hugh pointed out is that, in reality, the same can be said for contemporary education.

Later in the meeting, Joanne made her own synthesis about Andrew's journey in the film. She said:

Joanne: But you see, to me...I think toward the end, he was coming to the end of a lot of things: his career, his marriage, the end of the school term, I think that in the library and getting the book from Tapelo...

Laura: Validated him?

Joanne: I don't know if it's "validated" I want to say... it's a bad analogy, but like when the bride wears a veil over her face and then they take it off for the kiss; I think his blinders were taken off, and he just came to a bunch of realizations at one time. (fg 2-4, p. 11)

Joanne hypothesized that the gift from his student, Tapelo, was the pivotal moment when Andrew suddenly understands how all of the things with which he was struggling became clear to him. Joanne used the analogy of a bride removing her veil as a visualization technique in synthesizing the film.

At the very end of the conversation, Laura analyzed the impetus behind Andrew's final speech. She dissected it based on her perception and offered a proposition.

Laura: I'm just saying when he was giving his speech he was baring his soul to them. He was apologizing for not giving to them what he realized what he should have been, what they had a right to have, he was, like, baring his soul to them and he became one with them and they realized it. And I think that is why they gave him that standing ovation.

Joanne: But there's also that immense, immense...even though they may not have liked what he taught, for him there was that huge respect and high standard.

Laura: Yes, there was that respect. Ok, so they already respected him and so when he does that, don't you think that all of the sudden that they realized that they could love him? (fg 2-4, p. 12)

Laura explained her interpretation of the scene and what it meant to the characters in the film. In doing this, she showed a connection between Andrew's past and present, drawing a comparison of what he was and what he realized the students needed him to be, in spite of the respect they had for him.

Several group members also compared Andrew to their own college professors. Hugh and Joanne both discussed that they experienced teachers who, like the character of Andrew in the film, were stoic and stern. When comparing his English teacher to Andrew, Hugh said that “She would just ride you in class. She would just cut your papers to shreds, but you wanted to do for her. I would get a B on a paper and it would make me thrilled” (fg 2-4, p. 3). Evidently, Hugh’s perception of his teacher gave meaning to the fictional character of Andrew in a way that facilitated his comparison of the two. In the association Joanne made, she recollected, “The first class [with this teacher] I got a C minus and I was mortified. I’d never gotten a C minus in English. Are you kidding me?! I took every class that she ever taught. It was the same thing. A lot of how I teach is like her. She pushed me and she made me work,” (fg 2-4, p. 4). Joanne, like Hugh, gathered her memories of this teacher and used them to aid her analysis of the main teacher character in the film.

The Browning Version: Film Notes and Journal Reflections

In Laura’s film notes, she commented on the scene where Tapelo, Andrew’s student, comes to the house for tutoring. Out under a tree in Andrew’s yard Tapelo challenges the tradition of translation by paraphrasing, in his mind bringing the text to life. Laura noted that she felt that this scene “humanizes Andrew.” This is a very insightful remark, one with which I agree. I also propose that this humanizes students in Laura’s eyes as well. I suggest that in recognizing the humanization, Laura can strive to figure out how to use its effects in her classroom. Perhaps she can devise a method to use humanization in order to encourage the students who are unmotivated and unwilling to work.

Bill's journal reflection focuses on an analysis of Tapelo's gift to Andrew. He hypothesized that the gift of an alternate and untraditional translation of a text represents "what might have been had Andrew possessed and passed on 'civility' and understood that he had the incredible talent for inspiring his students." Bill's remarks are a reminder that Andrew was unable to recognize his own faults and how that is his demise. Bill then compared Andrew's inabilities to those in the members of the group. He said, "I have over the last couple of showings noticed that many of us are not allowing ourselves to see the errors of the characters in the films. It at least seems that this may be because we don't want, or cannot find, errors in ourselves." I would argue that these comments indicate that Bill frequently thinks through means of analytical interpretation. There is evidence that, as he watched these films, he continually searched for meaning through comparisons to his reality. Considering his commentaries as a whole, there is evidence that he strives to find connections between the world, his students, and their education in his classroom, signifying participation in his own type of critical pedagogy.

Sophie wrote in her journal: "When I was trying to participate in the discussions, I continually tried to separate [Andrew's] marriage from his job. After a while I thought more about that. I can't separate my marriage and private life from school and vice versa. They both affect each other." This reflection communicated to me that Sophie is beginning to think more about the connections that support the world of the teacher because she sees that the personal life and the professional life overlap. I suggest that this is the first step in working toward

a full application of critical pedagogy: she must first recognize how all of the things a teacher deals with relate and then she must apply that comprehension to understanding the position of the students. At that juncture she will begin to incorporate these into her teaching.

Conclusion

Once a month had passed after conclusion of the meetings and all of the participants had submitted the last of the four reflections concerning the films, I requested that the focus group members write a fifth and final reflection to summarize their feelings about the experience. All of the members responded, with the exception of Eunice who had dropped out of the group after the first meeting due to other educational responsibilities. Five out of the six participants commented specifically that getting to know colleagues with whom they normally do not have the opportunity to connect and doing this outside of the school environment was an enjoyable experience. Four out of the six participants stated that they saw benefit in meeting to discuss films because it opened up an opportunity for self-evaluation. Half of the participants noted that they felt more open to express themselves because everyone in the group had signed the confidentiality agreement.

There were some individual reflections that are worth discussing in detail. First, Laura reflected on why she felt the focus group meeting was meaningful as an experience outside of the school. She said, "If the administration 'contrived' a meeting like this, it just wouldn't be the same. Because we all felt comfortable discussing how we felt about the movies, issues at school, etc., it was a very

invigorating experience!” A major component for the success of this groups’ ability to be honest with one another was the fact that the meetings were totally independent of Pence High School, even though everyone who participated was on the faculty there. I suggest another element to the success of these meetings was its inception and instigation by a colleague. Because everyone involved was a peer, the participants enjoyed a feeling of belonging. As has been identified in Chapter Four and in Chapter Five, teachers at Pence High School feel isolated; these meetings provided an opportunity to overcome that isolation.

Second, Joel wrote, “Going through the focus group process is a great way to define and get closer to the truth about what we do and how we do it.” Joel’s comment highlights the results of this chapter. One, this chapter illustrates that the participants’ dialogues about their physical and emotional responses to movies connect to the participants’ own experiences. Two, this chapter reveals that the teachers at Pence High School recognize their estrangement. Three, this estrangement occurs because of the multiple limitations imposed by the methods of surveillance and by anti-intellectualism in our culture.

Third, Sophie remarked, “It gave me a new self awareness that I didn’t have before. . . .There was a lot of food for thought. . . .As long as I am willing to change, I will be a good teacher.” Sophie’s comments echo many of the participants’ sentiments: willingness to work on who she is as a teacher will make her a good teacher. In order to facilitate the students’ understandings of what they learn, why they learn it and how it fits into their lives, a teacher must first understand her/his function in that process. Taking the time to examine one’s

self and how one's role as an educator affects students is the first step toward a critical pedagogy.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

Reflection cannot be thorough-going, or bring a complete elucidation of its object, of it does not arrive at awareness of itself as well as of its results. We must not only adopt a reflective attitude. . . but furthermore reflect on this reflection, understand the natural situation which it is conscious of succeeding and which is therefore part of its definition; not merely practice philosophy, but realize the transformation, which it brings with it in the spectacle of the world and in our existence.

---Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 1958, p. 72

Introduction

In this dissertation, I proposed that by offering teachers a space in which to regain their critical thinking skills, teachers would be able to reconnect with their intellectual personae, affording them the opportunity to reposition themselves in the community as analytical thinkers who strive to meet the needs of their students while simultaneously compelling students to go beyond the imposed standards into their own spaces to explore critical thinking themselves. Using films about educators as an impetus, I met with two focus groups and explored the following questions through a phenomenological lens: 1) Are teachers able to think critically, specifically showing an awareness of their embodiment of film as it relates to themselves and their profession? 2) How does group discussion among peers encourage teachers to participate in critical pedagogy? and 3) Is there evidence that teachers, at the conclusion of the study, show more active interest in their positions related to and the current state of education? In this chapter, I reconsider these questions as I think about how the discussions of focus group one and focus group two reveal the thoughts and pedagogical practices of my colleagues at Pence High School. I also reflect on how this attempt to understand and to encourage fellow

educators to escape from the confines of standardization has implications for future studies.

Are Teachers Able to Think Critically, Specifically Showing an Awareness of Their Embodiment of Film as it Relates to Themselves and Their Profession?

In considering how to demonstrate that teachers are able to think critically through the use of film, I wanted to consider how their bodies play a part in guiding them to deeper discussions about their experiences as teachers. Using the phenomenological perspective of Maurice Merleau-Ponty enabled me a glimpse at whether or not such a consideration was possible. Through his work, and in his own words, I was able to conclude that

Our analysis of one's own body and of perception has revealed to us a relation to the object, i.e. a significance deeper than this. The thing is nothing but a significance. . . . But when I understand a thing, a [motion] picture for example, I do not here and now effect its synthesis, I come to it bringing my sensory fields and my perceptual field with me, and in the last resort I bring a schema of all possible being, a universal setting in relation to the world. At the heart of the subject himself we discovered, then, the presence of the world. . . (Merleau-Ponty, 1958, p. 498)

The spectator's embodiment of film through her/his physical and emotional reactions is indeed the first step in her/his approach to experiencing film and to encouraging thought about film. The teachers participating in the focus groups of this study exemplified this during their discussions. Most transitioning between topics during the discussions of the films was based on the recollection of the participant's physical or emotional response(s) to a certain action in a scene or specific language used in a scene. For example, during the first meeting to watch and discuss *Mona Lisa Smile*, focus group two transitioned from talking about Ms. Watson bucking the system when Joel said, "I felt anxious during the conversation about the absences." The participants' sensory and perceptual fields

worked as guiding forces for the participants' thoughts, which directed the dialogues about how the experiences in the films related to their own experiences in education. As a spectator, the "body takes possession of time; it brings into existence a past and a future for a present; it is not a thing, but creates time instead of submitting to it. But every act of focusing must be renewed, otherwise it falls into unconsciousness" (Merleau-Ponty, 1958, p. 279). The conversations of this study permitted the participants' pasts and futures to become the focus of the present and they took on the tone of critical discourse about education in terms of the topics discussed, such as situations related to anti-intellectualism and surveillance. In comparing the film worlds to their own worlds, the participants demonstrated that, through discussion and analysis, they were able to read the films phenomenologically as well as critically.

In no certain terms am I suggesting that one's experiences with film can be, in the words of Merleau-Ponty, whittled down "to a collection of 'bodily sensations' but [I am] saying that the body, in so far as it has 'behavior patterns', is that strange object which uses its own parts as a general system of symbols for the world, and through which we can consequently 'be at home in' that world, 'understand' it and find significance in it" (1958, p. 275). Through such an understanding, it is possible to open one's self up to other ways of seeing, communicating, and experiencing the world. The members of the focus groups used their physical and emotional "behavior patterns"—such as hair standing on end, clenching teeth, tensing muscles, deflating heart, anger, anxiousness, sadness—in response to films in finding a comfort zone in which they explored what the films were communicating to them, how that connected to their experiences in life, and what those connections meant for the future. It was important to fully explore these

reactions because, although they may have appeared to indicate a simple empathy for the scene or the characters, they may also have surfaced because of the participant's past and/or future. Indeed, Sobchack (1992) says

In its focus on the lived-body's postural schema, its subjective activity, and its objective forms of "taking up" and engaging space, phenomenological inquiry locates the "subject," "consciousness," and "meaning" in actual and embodied existential praxis. However, because of its attention both to the lived-body as a communicative system of perceptive and expressive function and to a horizon of existential possibilities, broader than any specific praxis, phenomenological inquiry also indicates how the forms of specific existence are not an essential "given" and, however "natural" they may seem, could be otherwise. (p. 161)

Thus, as forms, the physical and emotional reactions encouraged the participants to investigate why such embodiments exist in response to film, causing them to better articulate the meaning that the film held for them. Despite how it might have felt, for example, "natural" to cry at watching Ms. Watson in *Mona Lisa Smile* ride away with her students peddling in bittersweet cadence behind her, the participants had to examine *why* they cried and had to work through the possible deep-rooted causes for those tears. Indeed, "to experience a structure is not to receive it into oneself passively: it is to live it, to take it up, assume it and discover its immanent significance" (Merleau-Ponty, 1958, p. 301). Doing so provided the participants with the groundwork for approaching their reactions with critical thought and encouraged them to carry that critical thought over to more intellectual conversations about education in general and education at Pence High School.

How Does Group Discussion Among Peers Encourage Teachers to Participate in Critical Pedagogy?

This study used films as a point of departure for discussions among teachers because “films have the cultural power to influence how members of a society make sense of social life. The commercial film industry is a socializing institution. Films *teach* us who we are as much as they *reflect* who we are” (Bulman, 2005, p. 7). What became clear during these focus group discussions of film is that (1) teachers enjoy watching films where teachers are represented, (2) teachers are enthusiastic about comparing themselves and their colleagues to the portrayals on the screen, (3) teachers are passionate about comparing their experiences as educators with those portrayed on screen, (4) teachers desire confidential, critical dialogue about their current situations at Pence High School, and (5) teachers are willing to go beyond their surface observations in order to participate in deeper critical analysis. I suggest that the group discussions held by these focus groups encouraged teachers to be reflective, which is not something that many of them have time to do on a daily basis. “If anything has been presupposed by phenomenological reflection, it is that if we desire to understand the cinema as an object of vision for a human viewer, the act in which the film is seen and through which it appears as the phenomenon it is provides us with the initial inquiry” (Sobchack, 1992, 129). In relation to this study, the act of viewing films functioned as a primary investigation into the identities of teachers.

What came of this investigation were conversations in which teachers explored issues they perceived as important. Teachers participated in dialogues during which they felt others listened, and even if they did not always agree, the listeners offered validation to the thoughts and feelings that were being expressed physically and through words.

Indeed, as Merleau-Ponty posits, “what has been said of external can equally be said of internal perception: that it involves infinity, that it is a never-ending synthesis which, though always incomplete, is nevertheless self-affirming” (1958, p. 445). Such self-affirmation is often impossible to attain in isolation and the group meetings offered a venue for its accomplishment. I suggest that self-affirmation is an important element for critical pedagogy in the making. In order for a person to truly explore and comprehend the world around her/him, s/he must first have a real confidence in who s/he is and in what s/he believes.

Furthermore, the types of conversations that the groups initiated seemed, from my observations and interpretations, to change with each passing meeting. For example, the discussions at the first meeting, especially for focus group one, seemed to skim the surface of issues that the film addressed. The film itself focused on issues such as challenging dominant thought in society and standing up for one’s beliefs. However, the discussions centered on the frustrations that the participants were having with their own students and with administrative (state and local) grievances. Rather than digging into an analysis of the film compared to reality or using situations in the film to create ideas for dealing with their own issues, the participants prominently used a language of defeat to narrate personal stories. However, by the fourth meeting, the participants were more inclined to discuss “what would happen if” and to respectfully and positively challenge each other’s thoughts. For example, when focus group one was discussing the high standards and expectations of the main character, Andrew, of *The Browning Version*, one participant said, “I like the quote that he would say, ‘You’ll get what you deserve, nothing less and certainly nothing more.’ What if we had that standard at Pence High

School? What if that were our motto?” Another member of that group said, “In the movie, Andrew apologizes for being a failure. Do you see him as being a failure?” Again another participant of that group said, “And what is best for our society,” in reference to culture. From focus group two, one member said, “As a teacher, is your fulfillment in the education and just the course work or that sympathy that Andrew failed to them?” Another member, as they were discussing their different perspectives on exactly how much sympathy to offer students, said, “Do you think my feelings [of wanting to be extremely sympathetic] are because of how few years I’ve had in teaching? Has that been hardwired in me? And you,” she said referring to an older member in the group, “probably learned how to teach before that pendulum swing?” As was noted in the data analysis, they were more likely to use questioning techniques to encourage other participants to think and to take part in critical discussion. There are several possible explanations for what seemed like a growing propensity for critical thinking. My first observation is that the initial group meetings were used as a forum for venting about frustrations related to teaching, mainly because the participants have no other venue for doing this as a group. In other words, the first meeting could have served as a type of self-initiated therapy. Therefore, at the subsequent meetings, once having aired most of their personal concerns, the participants found it easier to develop a more intellectual pace to the conversations. My second hypothesis for the seeming increase in critical thinking is that, after each passing meeting, the participants recognized that they were in a safe environment in which they felt comfortable to explore their intellectual thoughts without the threat of rejection or judgment. My third and final observation is that the participants were simply “out of practice” in using critical thinking and that each passing

meeting served as a juncture to reconnect with their abilities to discuss beyond the obvious. What I mean by this is that on a day-to-day basis, teachers are required only to stand and deliver content. There are rarely any intellectual interactions with students, as was demonstrated in the accounts of the dialogues from the focus group meetings. The teachers themselves also expressed that they feel they cannot afford to spend time on encouraging their students to think critically for fear that they will not have enough time to cover all of the information that might be on the standardized tests. Teachers are never questioned or asked to think about something and respond, especially spontaneously. Indeed, the atmosphere at Pence High School does not encourage teachers to sit down together to have intellectual conversations about, for example, where they would like to see the curriculum headed, mainly because that is mandated by the state. And even after school hours, as was reported by these participants, teachers do not typically have the energy or time to involve themselves with anything but grading papers, preparing for the next classes, attending extra-curricular school functions, and tending to family obligations. Whatever the reason, these types of group interactions, I contend, provide food for thought because the act of interacting with peers is intellectually stimulating, even when the topics are not of an intellectual nature. They provide a chance for teachers to reclaim their identities as intellectuals that have been damaged, if not destroyed, by the mundane and uninspiring environment at Pence High School. Quite assuredly, “the phenomenological world is not pure being, but the sense which is revealed where the paths of [one’s] various experiences intersect, and also where [one’s] own and other people’s intersect and engage each other like gears” (Merleau-Ponty, 1958, p. xxii). This

is precisely what occurred: the participants engaged each other like wheels on a clock and in doing so awakened each other's propensity toward critical thought.

Finally, these group discussions enable the participants to relive experiences through film, which brought to the forefront of their minds, through physical and emotion reactions, issues about which they felt passionate. Some of these issues were already at the surface of their concerns, while others had slipped into the recesses of their memories. In sharing their thoughts with the group after watching the films, the participants were experiencing yet another reliving of events that have shaped or were shaping who they are as teachers. Each re-experiencing provided the participants with multiple access to their thoughts and feelings, which offered them enhanced opportunities to re-position themselves as they were thinking and communicating. Merleau-Ponty says that

We shall need to reawaken our experience of the world as it appears to us in so far as we are in the world through our body and in so far as we perceive the world with our body. But by thus remaking contact with the body and with the world, we shall also rediscover ourselves, since, perceiving as we do with our body, the body is a natural self and, as it were, the subject of our perception. (1958, p. 239)

These group meetings offered the participants a chance to revive their experiences of the world through their discussions of their physical and emotional reactions to films, where they were also able to gain different perspectives about themselves and their positions in education.

Is There Evidence That Teachers, at the Conclusion of the Study, Show More Active Interest in Their Position in and the Current State of Education?

Merleau-Ponty says, "I am not the spectator, I am involved, and it is my involvement in a point of view which makes possible both the finiteness of my perception and its opening out upon the complete world as a horizon of every perception" (1958, p.

354). I contend that the members of these focus groups believe that they need to be involved in critical dialogue about their points of view so that they can reach out beyond the limitations of their classrooms, at the very least, to one another and, possibly, toward an emancipatory outlook on their teaching practices.

During the six months of this study, I noticed subtle and obvious changes in the focus group participants while they were on the job at Pence High School. First, there were the times that various participants would stop by my room for brief conversation about a myriad of topics, including happenings at the school, critiques on policies, and eventually to converse about how what they saw and discussed in the focus groups was manifesting itself in their thoughts and actions. The majority of participants who dropped by to see me were not colleagues who would historically do this.

Second, as I would see participants in the hallways at school, I noticed that they were talking to other participants from their focus groups. Again, this was unusual because before the focus group meetings, these teachers were only acquaintances. Several times as I approached the participants during their hallway encounters, I found that they were further discussing their thoughts related to the most recent film the group had seen. Every time that this happened, the participants would say something like, “I hope it is o.k. that we are talking about this,” to which I always enthusiastically replied, “YES!”

Third, after all state testing was concluded and the participants seemed more at ease, some began meeting in the mornings for brief discussions over breakfast or coffee. Because I was not a part of these discussions, I cannot testify to what they were about,

but some participants mentioned to me “great ideas” they had gotten from other participants during these informal meetings.

Fourth, as the scheduling for the next academic year began to take place, many of the participants volunteered to attend Advanced Placement training and to teach Advanced Placement or Honors courses that they have never taught before. Indeed, of the eleven teachers who will remain at Pence High School, seven of those whose subjects offer AP and Honors coursework at the school, five volunteered to take on teaching those courses that they have never taught before. Whether or not their interests in teaching these courses are related to their participation in this study is unclear; however, the fact that more will be demanded of these teachers in the area of critical thinking and critical pedagogy implies an interesting connection to the discussions of the focus groups. This is not to say that critical thinking and critical pedagogy do not exist in other levels of course work; it is merely to point out an increased interest in such as is exemplified by these participants.

Fifth, because the participants in the study showed excitement and interest in the film meetings and discussions, other members of the faculty became aware of our activities. Several faculty members not involved in the focus groups expressed their desire to participate in future events. One administrator actually said, “This is a really good idea. I think we will do it next year at school for some PLU credits.” Of course, none of the focus group participants are interested in converting our meetings into staff development activities—and who come blame them? That would defeat any and all freedoms that the teachers were experiencing—I thought this particular administrator’s

response was clearly reactionary, without any understanding of the purpose of the meetings.

Sixth, and finally, what the participants are interested in is a continuance of the focus group meetings. In fact, the groups wanted to meet a fifth time before the end of the academic term, so I planned an additional meeting during the last week of school. Interestingly enough, the participants in focus group two said that they wanted to meet with focus group one and suggested that we have only one meeting where they could all view the film at one time, together, and then afterwards have one discussion. For this meeting, I selected the movie *Half Nelson*, which depicts the life of a very intellectual teacher who, one might say, practices critical pedagogy in his lessons, but who is a somewhat functioning drug addict. About half of the participants were in attendance, the other half having already obligations to award ceremonies for their own children in elementary and middle schools. The discussion after the film was not very different in terms of participation but it did not include many personal narrations. At the conclusion of the meeting, the participants decided that we could continue to meet every few months during the next term, and I agreed to organize the meetings. I believe the instigation on the part of the participants to continue to meet is evidence that these teachers crave this type of interaction, which with every meeting was becoming more intellectual and more inclined to contain elements of the development of critical pedagogy.

Additional Reflections by the Researcher

Anti-Intellectualism and Surveillance

As has been demonstrated through the analysis of the focus group discussions, there is a general acknowledgement that intellectualism in society is not regarded as

something to be revered or touted. Undeniably even education is not valued nor is it regarded as a means of encouraging the development of the intellect. There is evidence of this, according to the focus group participants, in the language of defeat that they use to describe their situations at Pence High School. They related that the attitudes of the students at Pence High School show that they do not value the development of the intellect or education in that they are unwilling to do both minimum competency assignments and assignments that require thinking on the students' parts. In addition, the participants mentioned on several occasions how surveillance by the administration even calls into question the teachers' decisions concerning both teaching methods and behavior management techniques. No one in that environment, I suggest, based on the focus group discussions, demonstrates any interest in or support for the teachers as intellectuals. Even the teachers recounted that they do not have time to support one another. Quite certainly, the surveillance that occurs through such documentation as that of standardized local and state test scores and passing rates on a teacher's annual summative reports makes teachers feel coerced down a path leading away from intellectual activities in the classroom and toward that of prescriptive teaching.

It was clear during the discussions that the focus group members, physically and emotionally, feel pressure to conform. The many physical manifestations that participants described during the discussions and in their journals were in response to scenes of surveillance in the films. For example, several participants cited that they felt panic during the scene in *Mona Lisa Smile* when Ms. Watson is asked to turn in her lesson plans for the entire school year, that they clinched their jaws and felt their chests tighten when the nurse was dismissed over distributing contraceptives, and that their

muscles tightened during the scene when the president of the college tells Ms. Watson to stick to the traditional curriculum. Indeed all of these physical reactions to the surveillance in the film mirror what focus group one described as the normal response of students and teachers to one particular administrator at Pence High School. Being in an environment in which one does not feel comfortable or relaxed because of the fear of surveillance contributes to the already permeating anti-intellectual atmosphere.

I contend that there is one main element of surveillance in our culture and in our schools that perpetuates an anti-intellectual environment. This is the lack of opportunity for teacher autonomy. The focus group participants continually pointed out that they feel invariably tied to the content of state standards that appear on the numerous state standardized tests. The participants also made it clear that their creativity, energy, and spontaneity have all been trampled in the race to obtain just the minimum passing test scores. I purport that these state mandates, as well as other previously mentioned site-based policies, have stolen the identities of teachers who view or have once viewed themselves as intellectuals charged with the task of challenging students' minds. Surveillance in the form of standardization is taking intellectualism away from the teachers who must dedicate all of their time to the delivery of massive amounts of content and from the students whose minds are being slowly anesthetized by facts rather than stimulated by inquiry.

In addition, there is a culture of film in Hollywood that has even taken note of the rampant anti-intellectualism in American schools. In the four films that the focus groups watched, all valued intellectual development in the face of schools that did not. In *Mona Lisa Smile*, Ms. Watson brings her emancipatory critical pedagogy with her from

California to Wellesley College in hopes of teaching enlightened, intelligent young ladies but instead finds quick-tongued traditionalists who are there to snag husbands rather than opportunities for careers. Seeing this, Ms. Watson challenges the young ladies to think beyond the surface of the visual, in art and in life, but is slapped down by the board and president of the school for doing so. In *Finding Forrester*, Jamal hides his interest in the development of the intellect in order to fit in with the rest of the student body at his local school where only basketball is valued by the students while the teachers and administration seem to simply accept that type of behavior rather than challenge it. Even when Jamal goes to his new private school where he is to receive a better education, there is little difference. The students attend this school because it makes their families look good and the main teacher depicted is only there to make himself feel superior, which he does by belittling the students. In *The Ron Clark Story*, Ron goes in search of schools who want teachers to bring up the state standardized test scores of at-risk students and has a hard time finding any schools that are interested in hiring him for that task. The one principal that does finally hire him in Harlem is not interested in nor does he have confidence in the students' abilities for raised test scores: he merely just wants someone in the classroom to maintain order. And in *The Browning Version*, the students, colleagues, headmaster and Andrew's wife shun Andrew, who values rigorous studies and a challenge to the intellect above all, because of his devout dedication to academia. While all of those people talk about him behind his back as he is forced into retirement, he is left isolated and alone, save one small student who feels sorry for him. In the end, Andrew is made to feel so guilty for his ways that he breaks down and apologizes for his high standards and he is met with thunderous applause from the students, colleagues,

headmaster, and wife. What are these films telling the American society? I posit that they are simply revealing reality: these films are art as it imitates life and they are a reflection of what writers, producers, and directors see in the field education. These films introduce the idea that schools are not intellectual domains and that those educators who strive for the intellectual development of students are extremely rare. The role of film in making the public aware of anti-intellectualism is positive and important, but it can also be detrimental. Undoubtedly, the representation of teachers in these films advocates that there is only one teacher per faculty who is inspiring and creative and intellectual, which teaches the audience that the rest of the teachers out there are uninspired, uncreative, and anti-intellectual. These films actually work against the identity of teachers in this respect because they devalue the efforts of teachers who would be considered “normal.”

However, what is ultimately a creditable feat is that these films do tackle the task of disarming the power of anti-intellectualism.

This is the challenge to teachers as well as to curriculum theorists: there must be a concerted effort to re-intellectualize education. I propose that curriculum theorists must gear their work toward lay educators who teach in public schools so these teachers can gain insight and encouragement from someone in a different area of the field. This support is not being offered by the state or, in the case of Pence High School, by the administration. Curriculum theorists could shift the aim of their works by creating networks to teachers in the field through those with whom they already have acquaintance and through attending national teacher conferences such as the National Association of Teachers of French/Spanish/German, the National Science Teachers Association, and state teacher conferences such as the Georgia Council of Teachers of

English, or the New York State Theater Education Association. By attending and presenting at these types of conferences, curriculum theorists could help re-establish a connection between teachers and the intellectual community. At these conferences, they could make connections to local schools where they may also make presentations or at the very least circulate their work to help rebuild intellectualism in education. I suggest that raising an interest in a push for intellectual development is the first step to abolishing anti-intellectualism in society.

Language of Defeat Combined with Positive Language and Hope for the Future

Throughout Chapters Five and Six, the participants' language switched automatically from that of defeat to that of hope. Without missing a beat, these teachers related some of the most depressing thoughts and followed them with comments full of gratification and also vision for what will come. This consistent *mêlée* proffered insight into the how these teachers' lives at Pence High School are a confusing mix of experiences that at once beat them down and lift them up. For example, as the participants spoke of their memories of less cooperative students, they in turn spoke of chance meetings years later with these same types of students, when they are married with children of their own and supporting them successfully. Another example from the discussions concerns the teacher who holds high standards for his students and who says he feels like the character of Andrew in *The Browning Version*: he also acknowledged how the following year his students came back to hug him. Such struggle between one's perception of the present and the perception to come of the future is the complexity of life and of life in education.

The push and pull of defeat and hope mingle, opening new avenues of thought. Indeed, these contradictory feelings only enhance the experience of living and teaching because a teacher's feeling of defeat may cause her/him to reassess her/his ways of thinking and also may challenge her/his perceptions of the world and of her/himself. The teacher's hope for the future may also drive her/him to search for new ways of thinking, growing out of the experience of defeat. These types of challenges augment the intellect and lead to critical pedagogy.

Evidence of Critical Thinking and Steps Toward a Critical Pedagogy

The effects of anti-intellectualism and surveillance as they weigh on the teachers who participated in this study are multiple. These teachers feel defeat in dealing with their content areas, with students, and with administrators. Their comments during the discussions and in their journals reveal that some teachers lack confidence in the students' abilities to think critically. This in itself is a major obstacle that must be overcome if teachers are to revive value of the intellect. Teachers must be willing to risk a respect of test scores in order to give students the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills. If teachers will refuse to let their methods and pedagogies be dominated by such scores, they will open up a space to allow the value of the intellect to grow. If teachers will make time to focus more on helping students synthesize knowledge, they will engender inquisitive minds. Teachers must change their perception of the restraints of standards and testing so that they become secondary to educating the intellect in the classroom. I suggest that providing teachers the opportunity for discussions similar to the ones held during the focus group meetings of this study could be a step toward such a change. Many of the teachers in this study showed an increase in their own efforts to

analyze beyond the surface after meeting a few times with colleagues to discuss what was on the forefront of their minds. Indeed, one participant challenged the role of film in society when he said, “I don’t mind trying [to reach students in different ways], but what annoys me though, is that the lay people out there [watch movies like this and] start thinking that it is *that* easy and it puts more pressure on us for the impossible” (fg 2-3, p. 7). This comment demonstrates that he is looking beyond the fact that the character in the movie is experiencing success to the way that this portrayal affects how the general public views teachers and education. Discussions like this one are the key to developing a critical pedagogy that reaches toward an understanding of the causes and contextual perceptions that affect education in contemporary society.

Critical thinking cannot just be added to the list of things teachers need to include in their lesson plans: it has to be an initiative from the heart. Teachers have to replace their sense of obligation to the state and to the administrators with a sense of responsibility to the students who are being cheated out of a challenging and enjoyable education. Teachers have to make it their own priority to teach from the stance of a critical pedagogy that initiates critical thinking in their classrooms. Doing this will insure that students have the opportunity to look beyond the obvious in order to investigate, first, how and what and why what they are learning in school is important to them and, second, how and what and why the global community functions as it does.

Possibilities for Future Research

Analytic reflection does not merely grasp subject and object 'as an idea', but that it is an experience that by reflecting I put myself back inside that subject without finite limits, that I was before, and put back the object among the relations which previously subtended it.

----- Merleau-Ponty, 1958, p. 254

What this quote signifies for me is that no reflection on self or on the world, however analytical, can ever take a person to the limits of her/his being.

As I think toward possibilities for future research related to this dissertation, I use Merleau-Ponty's words as encouragement that there is value in exploration for the sake of exploration, as long as it is used for the expansion one's perception of the world. What is important thereafter, I suggest, is that some action is taken to assert the limitless versions of perception toward connecting with others and understanding them as perceiving and acting individuals. Turning my thoughts to the future, I conclude this chapter with ideas for future work.

First, I propose an enhanced study, similar to this one, involving focus groups consisting of teachers who watch and discuss films, but one in which the members participate in a directed reading prior to seeing each film. The readings should relate to issues addressed in the films and could be used to better direct the discussions of the participants after viewing the films. The focus of this type of study would be for the sole purpose of investigating and questioning teacher's critical pedagogies.

Second, I contend that teachers who are new to the field, with 0-3 years of experience could benefit from a similar study in conjunction with veteran teachers who are serving as their mentors. The first several years of teaching can be quite

challenging and although most systems require that a faculty member “mentor” new teachers, that mentoring is often based on teaching the new hire the school’s procedures and policies. I posit that the beginning of a teacher’s career is a very impressionable time during which a person molds or is molded into the type of teacher that s/he is going to become. I believe encouraging new teachers to place themselves in the midst of practicing critical pedagogy through a focus group study where directed readings and film are involved could open many avenues for positive experiences.

Third, I propose that teachers at Pence High School attempt to engage the administration in a type of professional yet personal conversation about the effects of standards, standardized testing, and their implementations on teacher identity. This discourse is missing from the conversations of Pence High School because, as was indicated in their discussions, the teachers do not feel that anyone truly listens to them. This causes the teachers to find confidences only among themselves, causing them to feel alienated and causing them to complain to one another rather than encouraging them to formulate ideas and plans of their own. To combat this type of divisiveness and make room for progress to take place, teachers at Pence High School must clearly voice their concerns in an appropriate manner that will promote a new line of open communication between the faculty and the administration.

Fourth and finally, I suggest that teachers perform their own focus group discussions within their classes, using popular culture, such as films, as the point of departure for discussions. With careful, critical preparation in relation to course content,

students can also benefit from viewing, analyzing, and discussing films in order to encourage critical thinking and to open up their minds to multiple perspectives of the world as presented in film and as held by their classmates. Encouraging these ways of thinking will not only help students connect their lived worlds with the course content, it will also afford them the opportunity to become critical consumers of the media in the present and for the future.

REFERENCES

- Alexander, R. (2000). *Culture & pedagogy: International comparisons in primary education*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Apple, M. (2000). The shock of the real: Critical pedagogies and rightists reconstructions. In P. P. Trifonas (Ed.), *Revolutionary pedagogies: Cultural politics, instituting education, and the discourse of theory (225-250)*. New York: Routledge.
- Aumont, J., Bergala, A., Marie, M., & Vernet, M. (1992). *Aesthetics of film*. (R. Neupert, Trans.) Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Balwin, T. (2004). Introduction. In M. Merleau-Ponty, *The world of perception (pp. 1-33)*. (O. Davis, Trans.). London: Routledge.
- Bazin, A. (1967). *What is cinema?* (H Gray, Trans.). Berkley: University of California Press.
- Benjamin, W. (1968). *Illuminations*. (H. Zohn, Trans.). New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Bergson, H. (1911). *Creative evolution*. (A. Mitchell, Trans.). Lanham, MD: Henry Holt and Company.
- Bogue, R. (2003). *Deleuze on cinema*. New York: Routledge.
- Bulman, R. (2005). *Hollywood goes to high school: Cinema, schools, and American culture*. New York: Worth Publishers.
- Carlson, D. (2002). *Leaving safe harbors: Toward a new progressivism in American education and public life*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

- Carman, T. & Hansen, M. (2005). Introduction. In T. Carman & M. Hansen (Eds.), *The Cambridge companion to Merleau-Ponty* (pp. 1-25). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Casey, K. (1990). Teacher as mother: Curriculum theorizing in the life histories of contemporary women teachers. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 20(3), 301-320.
- Cavell, S. (1971). *The world viewed*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Childress, H. (2000). *Landscapes of betrayal, landscapes of joy: Curtisville in the lives of its teenagers*. Albany, NY: State University of New York.
- Collins, J., Radner, H., & Collins, A. P. (1993). Introduction. In J. Collins, H. Radner, & A. P. Collins (Eds.), *Film theory goes to the movies* (pp. 1-7). New York: Routledge.
- Crabtree, B. F. & Miller, W. L. (1992). *Doing qualitative research: Multiple strategies*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Dalton, M. (1999). *The Hollywood curriculum: Teachers and teaching in the movies*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Deleuze, G. (1986). *Cinema 1: The movement-image*. (H. Tomlinson & B. Habberjam, Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze, G. (1989). *Cinema 2: The time-image*. (H. Tomlinson & R. Galeta, Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Dimitriadis, G. (2001). *Performing identity/performing culture: Hip hop as text, pedagogy, and lived practice*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.

- Dimitriadis, G. (2003). *Friendship, cliques, and gangs: Young black men coming of age in urban America*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Dimitriadis, G. & McCarthy, C. (2001). *Reading and teaching the postcolonial: From Baldwin to Basquiat and beyond*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Foucault, M. (1965). *Madness and civilization: A history of insanity in the age of reason*. (R. Howard, Trans.). New York: Vintage Books.
- Foucault, M. (1979). *Discipline and Punish*. (Alan Sheridan, Trans.). New York: Vintage Books.
- Freedman, D. (2000). (Re)presentations of education: Pre-service teachers' interpretations of Dangerous Minds through the lens of media cultural studies. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 62 (02), 533A. (UMI3004266)
- Georgia Department of Education. (2004, June 11). *Curriculum Frequently Asked Questions*. Retrieved July 6, 2004, from <http://www.georgiastandards.org/faq.asp#faq1>
- Giroux, H. (1993). Pedagogy, resistance, and politics in celluloid culture. In J. Collins, H. Radner, & A. P. Collins (Eds.), *Film theory goes to the movies* (pp. 37-55). New York: Routledge.
- Giroux, H. (2000a). *Stealing innocence: Corporate culture's war on children*. New York: Palgrave.
- Giroux, H. (2000b). Postmodern education and disposable youth. In P. P. Trifonas (Ed.), *Revolutionary pedagogies: Cultural politics, instituting education, and the discourse of theory (174-195)*. New York: Routledge.

- Greene, M. (1985). The art of being present: Educating for aesthetic encounters. *Journal of Education*, 166(2), 123-135.
- Hall, C. & Schulz, R. (2003). Tensions in teaching and teacher education: Professionalism and professionalisation in England and Canada. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative Education*, 33, 369-385.
- Heidegger, M. (1977). *The question concerning technology and other essays*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Heidegger, M. (1999). *Contributions to philosophy (from enowning)*. (Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly, Trans.). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Hodes, A. (1972). *Encounter with Martin Buber* (pp. 136-137, 140). London: Allen Lane/Penguin.
- Hofstadter, R. (1962). *Anti-intellectualism in American life*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Horkheimer, M. & Adorno, T. (1976). *Dialectic of enlightenment*. New York: Continuum.
- Jardine, D. (1998). *To dwell with a boundless heart*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Kasturi, S. (2002). Constructing childhood in a corporate world: Cultural studies, childhood, and Disney. In G. Cannella & J. Kincheloe (Eds.), *Kidworld: Childhood studies, global perspectives, and education* (pp. 39-58). New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Kellner, F. (1995). *Media culture: Cultural studies, identity and politics between the modern and the postmodern*. New York: Routledge.

- Kincheloe, J. (1997). Home Alone and “Bad to the Bone”: The advent of a postmodern childhood. In S. Steinberg & J. Kincheloe (Eds.), *Kinderculture: The corporate construction of childhood* (pp.31-52). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Kincheloe, J. (2002). The complex politics of McDonald’ and the new childhood: Colonizing kidworld. In G. Cannella & J. Kincheloe (Eds.), *Kidworld: Childhood studies, global perspectives, and education* (pp. 75-121). New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Marks, L. (2000). *The skin of the film: Intercultural cinema, embodiment, and the senses*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Marks, L. (2002). *Touch: Sensuous theory and multisensory media*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Marshall, C. & Rossman, G. B. (1999). *Designing qualitative research (3rd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mayne, J. (1995). Paradoxes of Spectatorship. In L. Williams (Ed.), *Viewing positions: Ways of seeing film* (pp. 155-183). New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Meloy, J. (2002). *Writing the qualitative dissertation: Understanding by doing (2nd ed.)*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1958). *Phenomenology of perception*. (C. Smith, Trans.). London: Routledge.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1964a). An unpublished text by Maurice Meleau-Ponty: A prospectus of his work. In J. Edie (Ed.), *The primacy of perception* (pp. 3-11). (A. Dallery, Trans.). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1964b). *Signs*. (R. McCleary, Trans.). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1964c). The primacy of perception and its philosophical consequences. In J. Edie (Ed.), *The primacy of perception (pp. 12-42)*. (J. Edie, Trans.). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968). *The visible and the invisible*. (C. Lefort, Ed.). (A. Lingis, Trans.). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (2004). *The world of perception*. (O. Davis, Trans.). London: Routledge.
- Metz, C. (1977). *The imaginary signifier: Psychoanalysis and the cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Mitry, J. (1997). *The aesthetics and psychology of the cinema*. (C. King, Trans.). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Nettles, S. (1991). Community involvement and disadvantaged students: A review. *Review of Educational Research*, 61(3), 379-406.
- Pinar, W. (2004). *What is curriculum theory?* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Reynolds, W. (2003). *Curriculum: A river runs through it*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Roy, K. (2003). *Teachers in nomadic spaces: Deleuze and curriculum*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Sobchack, V. (1992). *The address of the eye: A phenomenology of film experience*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Sobchack, V. (1995). Phenomenology and the film experience. In L. Williams (Ed.), *Viewing positions: Ways of seeing film* (pp. 36-58). New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Sobchack, V. (1998). *Screening space: The American science fiction film*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Sobchack, V. (2004). *Carnal thoughts: Embodiment an moving image culure*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Shor, I. (1992). *Empowering education: Critical teaching for social change*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Shusterman, R. (2005). The silent, limping body of philosophy. In T. Carman & M. Hansen (Eds.), *The Cambridge companion to Merleau-Ponty* (pp. 1-25). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Taylor, C. (2005). Merleau-Ponty and the epistemological picture. In T. Carman & M. Hansen (Eds.), *The Cambridge companion to Merleau-Ponty* (pp. 26-49). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Warshow, R. (2001). *The immediate experience: Movies, comics, theatre, & other aspects of popular culture*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Wear, D. (1997). *Privilege in the medical academy: A feminist examines gender, race, and power*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Weaver, J. & Britt, T. (2007). Experiencing life through the body of film: The convergence of phenomenology and cultural curriculum studies. In S. Springgay & D. Freedman (Eds.), *Curriculum and the cultural body* (pp. 21-38). New York:

Peter Lang. Webber, J. (2003). *Failure to hold: The politics of school violence*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Weber, S. (1996). *Mass mediauras: Forms, techniques, media*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Wrathall, M. (2005). Motives, reasons, causes. In T. Carman & M. Hansen (Eds.), *The Cambridge companion to Merleau-Ponty* (pp. 111-128). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

APPENDIX:
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FORMS

Georgia Southern University
Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Phone: 912-681-5465

Fax: 912-681-0719

Ovrsight@GeorgiaSouthern.edu

Administrative Annex
P.O. Box 8005
Statesboro, GA 30460

To: Tara D. Britt
115 Park Avenue
Statesboro, GA-30458

CC: Dr. John Weaver
P.O. Box-8013

From: Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

Date: January 29, 2007

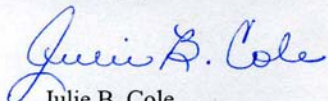
Subject: Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After a review of your proposed research project numbered: **H07130**, and titled "**An Inquiry into the Intellectual Persona Of Teachers**", it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable.

Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research.

This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter. If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the research protocol, you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,



Julie B. Cole
Director of Research Services and Sponsored Programs

GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARATION OF PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

For electronic submission: First complete the proposal narrative in entirety and “Save As” a word document to your computer or disk named “propnarr_Year_Month_Date_lastname, First initial.doc”. Then open and complete Cover page.

Please respond to the following as briefly as possible, but keep in mind that your responses will affect the actions of the Board. Clearly label your responses in sections that correspond to the specific information requested. You may insert your responses in each section on this page, leaving a space between the question and your answers. Narrative should not exceed 4 pages.

The application should be submitted electronically or 2 duplicate copies sent to the Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs, at P. O. Box 8005, Statesboro, GA 30460, and should contain, in this order: a signed cover page, the informed consent checklist page, the project proposal narrative, and the informed consent that you will use in your project. Additional information, such as copies of survey instruments, advertisements, or any instruments used to interact with participants should be attached at the end of the proposal clearly designated as an Appendix.

Personnel. Please list any individuals who will be participating in the research beyond the PI and advisor. Also please detail the experience, level of involvement in the process and the access to information that each may have.

There are no other participants other than the PI, Tara D. Britt, and her advisor, Dr. John Weaver.

Purpose. 1. Briefly describe in one or two sentences the purpose of your research. 2. What questions are you trying to answer in this experiment? Please include your hypothesis in this section. The jurisdiction of the IRB requires that we ensure the appropriateness of research. It is unethical to put participants at risk without the possibility of sound scientific result. For this reason, you should be very clear on how participants and others will benefit from knowledge gained in this project. 3. What current literature have you reviewed regarding this topic of research? How does it help you to frame the hypothesis and research you will be doing?

1. The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of how high school teachers view films that concern educational contexts.
2. This research will explore teachers’ abilities to think critically about their positions in education through the following questions: (a) Are teachers able to think critically about film as it relates to themselves and their profession? (b) Does group discussion among peers encourage teachers to think critically? and (c) Is there evidence that teachers, at the conclusion of the study, show more interest in their position in and the current state of education?
3. I have reviewed literature in the fields of curriculum theory, phenomenology, and film studies. This group of literature helps me to focus my study on the position of teachers in education, their perception of experience, and the importance of film in our society, respectively. Specifically, I have gained inspiration through the works of William Pinar and William Reynolds, both current leaders in the field of curriculum theory who argue for the need to examine the current educational milieu. Consequently, I am basing my

observations and research methods in the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who argues that a person's physical responses to stimuli are vitally important to their perception of reality. Coupled with that phenomenological perspective is Vivian Sobchack's work in film studies. She argues that we experience film with our entire being, with the first contact being our bodies. In essence, these main theorists' works support my interest in the exploration of how teachers can use their experiences of film to examine their perspectives and practices in order to work toward an educational framework of critical pedagogy.

Outcome. Please state what results you expect to achieve? Who will benefit from this study? How will the participants benefit (if at all). Remember that the participants do not necessarily have to benefit directly. The results of your study may have broadly stated outcomes for a large number of people or society in general.

I expect the study to indicate that teachers who participate in group discussions concerning critical pedagogy will experience an increased involvement in critical pedagogy outside of the study. Teachers, students, and the community at large will benefit from this study if it is found that teachers are able to reclaim a critical pedagogy because, as a result, the teachers will strive for autonomy and critical thinking in their classrooms. This, in turn, will produce a more rigorous education for students.

Describe your subjects. Give number of participants, approximate ages, gender requirements (if any).

Describe how they will be recruited, how data will be collected (i.e., will names or social security numbers be collected, or will there be any other identification process used that might jeopardize confidentiality?), and/or describe any inducement (payment, etc.) that will be used to recruit subjects. Please use this section to justify how limits and inclusions to the population are going to be used and how they might affect the result (in general).

There will be 14 participants, ranging in age from approximately 25 to 50 years old. There are no gender requirements. Participants will be recruited from a local high school by general invitation and the first to respond will be selected to represent 4 subgroups based on years experience teaching. (The subgroups are divided as 0-4 years experience, 5-11 years experience, 12-19 years experience, and 19+ years experience.) Data will be collected through audio and video recordings of focus group discussions and by pencil and paper journaling. When the collected data is formally transcribed for the study, the participants will be randomly assigned false names. There will not be any inducement used to recruit subjects.

Risk. Is there greater than minimal risk from physical, mental or social discomfort? Describe the risks and the steps taken to minimize them. Justify the risk undertaken by outlining any benefits that might result from the study, both on a participant and societal level. Even minor discomfort in answering questions on a survey may pose some risk to subjects. Carefully consider how the subjects will react and address ANY potential risks. Do not simply state that no risk exists, until you have carefully examined possible subject reactions.

There is no known risk involved in this project. However, I will inform participants of their right to remain silent or to drop out if they are not comfortable sharing their

thoughts and feelings with the group. Moreover, it is possible that participants might gossip about the focus group discussions with other teachers who are or are not participating in the study. This could result in the damage of personal and professional relationships. However, participants will be reminded of the Code of Ethics ruling over educators and this should help curb anyone's interest in gossiping. In addition, participants will sign a consent form that specifies that all discussions should be kept confidential.

Methodology (Procedures). Enumerate specifically what will you be doing in this study, what kind of experimental manipulations you will use, what kinds of questions or recording of behavior you will use. If appropriate, attach a questionnaire to each submitted copy of this proposal. Describe in detail any physical procedures you may be performing.

Participants will be involved in focus group discussions. The groups will meet four times. At each meeting, the groups will watch a film concerning educational context. Immediately after viewing the film, the participants will participate in group discussion. Each discussion will be audio and video taped. During the week following the film, the participants will journal about their reactions. The discussions and journaling will be guided by questions posed by the PI. Please see attachment for examples of the types of questions to be asked.

Special Conditions:

Research involving minors. Describe how the details of your study will be communicated to parents/guardians. If part of an in-school study (elementary, middle, or high school), describe how permission will be obtained from school officials/teachers, and indicate whether the study will be a part of the normal curriculum/school process. Please provide both parental consent letters and child assent letters (or processes for children too young to read).

This study does not involve minors.

Deception. Describe the deception and how the subject will be debriefed. Briefly address the rationale for using deception. Be sure to review the deception disclaimer language required in the informed consent. **Note:** All research in which deception will be used is required to be reviewed by the full Board.

This study does not involve deception.

Medical procedures. Describe your procedures, including safeguards. If appropriate, briefly describe the necessity for employing a medical procedure in this study. Be sure to review the medical disclaimer language required in the informed consent.

This is not a medical study.

Cover page checklist. Please provide additional information concerning these risk elements. If none, please state "none of the items listed on the cover page checklist apply." [Click here](#) to go to cover page for completion.

None of the items listed on the cover page checklist apply.

COLLEGE OF Education. Georgia Southern University
DEPARTMENT OF Curriculum Studies
INFORMED CONSENT

1. I am Tara D. Britt, a teacher at a local high school who is a doctoral candidate in the Curriculum Studies department at Georgia Southern University. I am conducting this research in fulfillment of doctoral degree requirements.
2. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of how teachers view films that concern educational contexts.
3. Procedures to be followed: Participation in this research will include voluntary participation in focus group discussions. Participants will watch four films: *Mona Lisa Smile*, *Finding Forrester*, *Coach Carter*, and *The Ron Clark Story*. After viewing the films, the participants will discuss the films. Participants will be video and audio taped during the focus group sessions. In addition, participants will be asked to journal about their responses to the films.
4. Discomforts and Risks: There are no known risks associated with participation in this study. Since discussions will focus on the participants' reactions to films concerning teacher characters, there will be a very low chance that any injury, physical or psychological, will take place.
5. Benefits:
 - a. The benefits to participants include involvement with colleagues in speaking about educational practice as well as opportunities for personal growth.
 - b. The benefits to society include a critical awareness on the part of the teachers with respect to their personal practical knowledge.
6. Duration/Time: The focus groups will meet 4 times. Each meeting will last 3 hours, which includes the time for viewing each film and time for discussion afterward.
7. Statement of Confidentiality: The researcher will keep all documents and tapes concerning this study in a locked cabinet in her home, to which only she has access to the key. **She will destroy those items by January 1, 2010. She will pull out all tape and cut it into pieces so that it will not be reassembled.** Data will be reported in the dissertation through the use of pseudonyms.
8. Right to Ask Questions: Participants have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. If you have questions about this study, please contact:
Principal Investigator: Tara D. Britt; 115 Park Ave. Statesboro, GA 30458; 9125410618; tbritt@bulloch.k12.ga.us
Faculty Advisor: Dr. John Weaver; P.O. Box 8013 Statesboro, GA 30458; 9128711709; jweaver@georgiasouthern.edu
9. For questions concerning your rights as a research participant, contact Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 912-486-7758.

10. Compensation: The only cost to the participants is the use of their time and energy. The researcher will provide snacks and sodas during the viewing of the films.
11. Voluntary Participation: Participants do not have to participate in this research; they may end their participation at any time by telling the person in charge, not returning the instrument or other options; they do not have to answer any questions they do not want to answer.
12. Penalty: There is no penalty for deciding not to participate in the study. Participants may decide at any time they do not want to participate further and may withdraw without penalty or retribution.
13. This study does not involve deception and the participants will have access to full knowledge of the study. You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study. If you consent to participate in this research study and to the terms above, please sign your name and indicate the date below

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

Title of Project: An Inquiry into the Intellectual Persona of Teachers

Principal Investigator: Tara D. Britt; 115 Park Ave. Statesboro, GA 30458; 9125410618;
tbritt@bulloch.k12.ga.us

Faculty Advisor: Dr. John Weaver; P.O. Box 8013 Statesboro, GA 30458; 9128711709;
jweaver@georgiasouthern.edu

Participant Signature

Date

I, the undersigned, verify that the above informed consent procedure has been followed.

Investigator Signature

Date