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What We've Got Here is a Failure to Communicate: A Postmodern Analysis of Representations of Higher Education in Cinema

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

WHAT WE'VE GOT HERE
IS A FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE:
A POSTMODERN ANALYSIS OF
REPRESENTATIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN CINEMA

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in

HIGHER EDUCATION

by

Carlos Enrique Gonzalez

2015

To: Dean Delia C. Garcia
College of Education

This dissertation, written by Carlos Enrique Gonzalez, and entitled What We've Got Here is a Failure to Communicate: A Postmodern Analysis of Representations of Higher Education in Cinema, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

Joy Blanchard

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Date of Defense: June 30, 2015

The dissertation of Carlos Enrique Gonzalez is approved.

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College of Education

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University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2015

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my late mother, Juana Aleida Gonzalez. Without the love and support she provided me I could have never made it this far. All the sacrifices she made for me have paid off and I know she is looking down on me right now, smiling and full of pride. I also dedicate this dissertation to my father Carlos Gonzalez who has always inspired me with confidence and constantly reminds that me I can do anything I set my mind to, even when I think I can't. He instilled in me a love of learning that still guides me to this day. Without the encouragement and guidance of my parents I would not have even started this process, much less have written this dissertation.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION
WHAT WE'VE GOT HERE IS A FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE:
A POSTMODERN ANALYSIS OF REPRESENTATIONS OF
HIGHER EDUCATION IN CINEMA.

by

Carlos Enrique Gonzalez

Florida International University, 2015

Miami, Florida

Professor Benjamin Baez, Major Professor

The primary purpose of this qualitative study was to explore representations of higher education in film. In order to achieve that objective this study consisted of a narrative analysis of the themes that emerged in films regarding higher education. This study focused on films from the 1950s to the present. The narratives that emerged from the analysis of the films were compared and contrasted to the scholarly literature regarding higher education. The analysis of the films also included juxtaposing the film narratives to the work of postmodern theorists such as Michel Foucault in order to inform the claims made by the researcher.

This study focused on seven main themes regarding higher education in the cinema. The higher education themes that were examined in this study were Students, Student Services, Admissions, Race, Finance, Faculty, and Gender. Overall, this study found that higher education in the cinema is not represented as a unified monolithic system. Instead, the findings indicate that the representations of higher education and its different parts were quite varied among the films. In spite of all the differences there was

one overall theme that remained constant. This study found that the cinema privileged the traditional, selective, four-year residential university as the model for a higher education institution.

An analysis of the representations of students in the films found that the depictions of students in the cinema also varied greatly over time. However, this study revealed that a major discursive student theme that was constant throughout the films was a focus on the sex lives of students. The analysis of the representations of faculty members also proved to be quite varied. This study revealed that the one major discursive theme that was constant in regards to faculty was that all of the faculty members remained employed as academics regardless of the difficulties they may have faced. This dissertation also includes a discussion of the implications of the study's findings and provides suggestions for future research.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Higher education in the United States has undergone many changes over the last few decades, and there are many on-going debates still raging regarding the role of higher education in our society. There have been many important works regarding universities and our higher education system and how it has evolved (see Kerr, 1982; Newman, 1982; Readings, 1996; Veblen, 1954 for seminal texts on universities). There have also been many public debates regarding our higher education system and various public policy measures that have been enacted based upon those debates. Despite the fact that there is much interest on the part of both the general public, and scholars regarding higher education, it seems that the discussions that abound are predicated upon very different perspectives.

Many of the debates about the role of education that occur outside the walls of academia are often based on notions of higher education as presented in popular culture such as films. These notions of higher education are often in sharp contrast to the scholarly research that has been done on higher education. Scholars conducting research into higher education are already, by definition as scholars, a part of the higher education system they attempt to study. This is a point that at first seems obvious but is worth emphasizing for several reasons. Since scholars studying higher education are working from within the system (and have essentially unlimited access to it) the research is based upon the materiality of the higher education system as seen from what is largely an insider's perspective (Reynolds, 2007). The current debates surrounding our colleges and

universities however, are informed not only by scholarly research, but also by popular notions of higher education found in popular culture and the media. Therefore, it seems to me to be imperative to understand how higher education is represented within popular media such as film and how those representations (accurate or not) can shape policy debates as well as broad cultural perceptions regarding higher education.

Background of the Study: Why study films?

In academia, film studies has evolved greatly from when academics first began studying cinema. In the beginning, film studies was focused primarily on the aesthetic qualities of film, and what defines a film, as a unique and important art form (Gunning, 2007). Over time those kinds of analysis of film have given way to modern film theory and analysis that is interdisciplinary in nature and relies heavily on theories of discourse, narratology, semiotics, and psychoanalysis (Gunning, 2007). This shift in film studies is related to a general overall shift in academia often referred to as the "postmodern turn" influenced by Steven Best and Douglas Kellner's (1997) book of the same name. Postmodernism has had a profound impact on research in the social sciences, including research in education (Cooper & White, 2012). Postmodernism (which I endeavor to explicate in more in detail later in this dissertation) does not refer to simply one method. Instead, postmodernism is usually made up of a combination of several methodological perspectives (Lee A., 1992). The emergence of postmodernism has had a profound effect on research done on objects of cultural production such as film.

This has led to films being an object of study for many in the social sciences, especially in fields such as psychology and sociology (Gunning, 2007). Studying films

has become essential for those of us that want to better understand the ways in which institutions are defined in the social sphere. Given this postmodern shift in regards to studying film, it is surprising that film is not a more popular subject for education researchers. There have only been three books written on film with regards to higher education, John E. Conklin's *Campus Life In The Movies* (2008), WL Umphlett's *The Movies go to College: Hollywood and the World of the College-Life Film* (1984), and David Hinton's *the Celluloid Ivy: Higher Education in the Movies 1960-1990* (1994). Those books, however engaging, are of very limited value to education researchers since they focus on references to education in film simply as an interesting thematic device without taking a more postmodern approach to examine how those representations intersect with cultural attitudes or public policy.

One study that helped to illuminate to me how scholarly research in film is important and how it can intersect with popular culture is not specifically about higher education but I mention it here because it does help to illustrate the ways in which I see that scholarly research on film is important and can intersect with the debate on an issue in the public realm. While conducting research on media and film I found several references (Miller, 2003) to a study published by the American Medical Association (Goldstein, Sobel, & Newman, 1999) which referred to the number of times that characters in G-Rated Disney films from 1937 to 1997 smoked cigarettes. The article merely provides a content study regarding depictions of smoking in Disney animated films. The study is quite meaningful, even though it does not make any connections between smoking in film to actual smoking habits. The article steers clear of such platitudes, but what is important is that the article received large amounts of public

attention including extensive media coverage in the papers (Miller, 2003). It even prompted an official press statement from the Walt Disney Company regarding the study (Miller, 2003). The effect of this study on popular discourse is significant to me as a researcher in that it further solidifies the knowledge that research based upon culture matters. Research can have an effect and make even large corporations such as Walt Disney respond to criticism. The fact that this article on film had such an impact helped prove to me that films and the way things are represented in films really matter. The way cinema represents things from smoking to education can reflect and interact with popular notions of how we see the world.

Time frame

This dissertation examined films in regards to what they say about higher education and focused specifically on films from the 1950s to the present. Groups of decades are commonly utilized by researchers to signify breaks in historical periods of time. Indeed, most of the work that has already been done regarding cultural representations of higher education is broken down into decades. The very first book about colleges and cinema, the *Movies go to college: Hollywood and the world of the College-Life film*, divides the films to be studied into decades from the 1920s to the 1970s (Umphlett, 1984). One of the most influential studies on representations of higher education in fictional writing, *Faculty Towers: The Academic Novel and Its Discontents* by Elaine Showalter (2005) also divided up the novels studied into decades starting with the 1950s. Showalter's (2005) decision to work chronologically beginning with the fifties heavily shaped my own decision to group the films into decades and begin examining

films from the fifties onward. Of course, novels, films, and other creative works are not created with regards to some strict adherence to standards that change every decade.

However, grouping cultural objects of study into decades gives researchers the opportunity to observe changes and patterns that develop over time.

The decision to focus on films from the 1950s to the present was important for me in order to help frame the films and better contextualize them. The main reason I chose to start the study with films from the fifties is because it is a period that is marked by the effects of legislative action that proved to be truly transformative to our higher education system. It was in 1944 that the United States government passed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act (more commonly referred to as the "G.I. Bill."), this bill transformed higher education by opening the doors to many students that would otherwise not have attended college and changed notions of access to higher education ever since (Thelin & Wells, 2002). The 1950s was also the decade that saw the end of segregation in education based on the decision on *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. Those events and their effects have been cited by many educational scholars as transformative for college policy makers as well as being culturally significant making it an appropriate starting point for this study. The Fifties therefore is a good starting point since many of the crucial elements of contemporary higher education that I will study emerged starting in the 1950s.

Finally, keeping the focus of the dissertation on films from the 1950s to the present also made the dissertation more manageable for me as a researcher.

Representations of higher education in film go all the way back to silent films, such as Buster Keaton's *College* which was released in 1927. There have been so many films

that represent and reference higher education that it was beyond the scope of this dissertation to effectively study them all. Therefore, due to the nature of the dissertation and the inherent limitations within, it was necessary to not cover the whole history of American cinema, but instead only focus on films during a set period of time.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to an understanding of the meaning that is popularly ascribed to higher education as a whole, and what it means in popular discourse to attend an institution of higher learning. This dissertation is relevant to the broader field of research in higher education because exploring how colleges are represented in popular cinema will help illuminate popular conceptions of how higher education institutions are defined. This project also highlights the role of higher education institutions in our society. There are a few studies in higher education that examine students' perceptions of their college experience and their expectations of college life. However, none of the research truly examines what those popular notions are, where they originate, and how they serve (or subvert) culturally accepted expectations. The available research also does very little to examine how college professors and administrators are portrayed in popular media to students. This study provides new insights regarding the use of cinema in education research and will add and expand upon previous research on cinematic representations of education by providing new perspectives on the topic.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this qualitative study was to explore representations of higher education in film. In order to achieve that objective I performed a narrative

analysis of the themes that emerged in films regarding higher education. The narratives that emerged from the analysis of the films were compared and contrasted to the scholarly literature on higher education.

Research Questions

The key questions that guided my inquiry are as follows:

- 1) How is Higher Education as a whole represented in popular cinema (including all of its parts such as students, faculty, and administrators)?
- 2) Have the representations of Higher Education in film changed over time?
- 3) What common themes emerge in these representations and how are those themes explored in the critical literature (if they are addressed at all)? Do the various representations reaffirm and/or subvert the dominant themes found in the research literature?

These questions although not exhaustive will served as a guide to anchor this research project. The study did not simply focus on the descriptions of higher education in particular films as has been the case in previous research. Instead, this paper focused on using postmodernist perspectives/critical theory to examine the broader discourse surrounding higher education, including the ways in which the media messages diverge, are accepted or rejected, and often contradict each other.

Delimitations

Due to the nature of this qualitative study there are certain delimitations that had to be made. The intent of this study was to examine the representations of higher education in popular cinema. Given this purpose then accounts of higher education in other areas such as documentary films, foreign films, music, and television were intentionally excluded for consideration of analysis for this study. The process of selecting the films was also an area of delimitation in which it was my responsibility as a researcher to make decisions that support the intended goals of the study. In this study (see the methods section of this paper for more information) I relied heavily on searches from IMDb (The Internet Movie Database), as well as movies identified by previous researchers to ascertain a preliminary list of films appropriate to this study. Given that it was possible that the sources from the critical literature or IMDb provided incorrect or incomplete data regarding the films I ensured that the films were indeed appropriate for this study by verifying the film information with a different source. For each film selected, I cross checked the information with IMDb, rottentomatos.com (an aggregator website that is an online repository of film reviews and information pulled from all over the Internet), Wikipedia (An online Encyclopedia that contains plot summary and general information regarding many theatrical films) and Leonard Maltin's (2009) movie guide for 2010. This was done in order to ensure that the selected films were indeed appropriate for this study.

Key Terms and Concepts

This section includes a list of some of the key words that I refer to throughout the dissertation; however, it is not intended to serve as a list of definitions. For many of these theoretical terms any definition of the concepts presented is the source of contentious debates in scholarly journals. Therefore this section seeks to not present commonly agreed upon definitions of terms but instead focuses on how the terms were used in my dissertation with some brief explanations as to the terms' importance. The terms are listed in alphabetical order.

Culture

This term is difficult to define within the confines of cultural studies, but one fairly simple way to think of culture in this context is that it is made up of "the shared meanings we make and encounter in our everyday lives" (Storey, 2005). That definition is useful in that it emphasizes the importance of making meaning when discussing culture. That helps to clarify that culture in this context is not something that is to be merely found or discovered, but instead that culture evolves and exists in the way we make meaning of numerous situations and cultural artifacts be they books, music, or films (Storey, 2005). One example of culture and meaning making that I found particularly useful to clarify this point is the following situation:

Australian factory supervisor assumes that workers know that Easter is close and that therefore everyone will have a holiday. Question to Vietnamese worker: You have five days off. What are you going to do? (Vietnamese worker may think he is being laid off)" (Jilka, n.d.).

That passage has been useful to me as a way of illustrating how culture (and cultural

knowledge) is used to make meaning of a situation. That passage nicely illustrates Jilka's (n.d.) assertion that "background knowledge structures for making sense of the world are culturally determined".

Discourse

This is probably the most difficult term to define from this list. Discursive theory and the various ways it is utilized make up a very complex theoretical framework that defies easy definitions. The concept of discourse is central to the work of two French philosophers in particular, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. It is from Derrida's theories that I have developed a working definition for use in this study. For Derrida, the words in a text such as a film are meaningful when seen within the confines of a specific discourse (Easthope, 1991). Indeed probably the simplest way to understand discourse in this context is to look at an example from Derrida. Easthope (1991) provides a great example of how Derrida uses the term when he examines a pivotal passage from Derrida's (1988) book *Limited Inc* where he looks at the words "I have forgotten my umbrella" (Derrida, 1988) and how depending on the discourse they are part of the sentence has a different meaning. When looking at that phrase Derrida (1988) asks if it would be different if it were "the beginning of a novel? a proverb? someone else's secretarial archives? an exercise in learning a language? The narration of a dream? an alibi? (1988, p. 63). The quote serves as an example of how the discourse surrounding words makes meaning and helps to illuminate the way I will use discourse in this dissertation. Through Derrida I have come to an understanding of discourse in which it is one of the ways in which we give meaning to a text (the text may literally be a written text, but it may also be a conversation, music, art, or video). This concept connects back

with my earlier definition of culture where I allude to culture as being made up of shared meanings. In this context then the discourse surrounding a cultural object is one of the things I analyze since it can create meaning.

Ideology

When the term ideology is used within the context of cultural studies research the essential thing to consider is that here ideology refers not to the more common definition which refers to specific personal beliefs that people hold (Irvine, 2005). Instead cultural studies researchers utilize a definition that is based upon Marxist theory in which ideology refers to a set of views of the world that circulate within a culture (Irvine, 2005). Martin Irvine (2005) nicely phrases Ideology as "the socially constructed sense of identity and values, functioning to obscure the real sources of power, and to reproduce/perpetuate existing power structures (by gender, race, class, nationality, etc.) ". This definition nicely explains how for cultural studies researchers the term ideology is essential when analyzing issues of who has power and control over media messages, and whether or not those messages serve to uphold (or subvert) the power of a particular institution (Irvine, 2005).

Narrative

One important distinction to make regarding how the term Narrative will be used in this study is that it refers to not only the stories themselves but also to the way in which the stories are told ("Approaches to Narrative Theory," 2010). This means that the term Narrative also includes how meaning is constructed for an audience to understand it ("Approaches to Narrative Theory," 2010). Narrative is sometimes used interchangeably

with the terms "plot" or "story" but even though they are closely aligned, they do not refer to the same concept (Fiske et al., 1994). In *Key Concepts in Communication* Fiske et al (1994) note that the term 'story' refers only to the specific substantive events in a text "A meets B; something happens; order returns (p. 195). Fiske et al (1994) make the distinction that the term narrative is different from terms such as plot or story in that it also covers how the events of a text are presented. It is also important to note that when examining films the Narrative is not just the events that occur in the film and the order in which they are presented. When examining films the narrative is also made up of elements such as "camerawork, lighting, sound, mise-en-scene and editing" ("Narrative Theory," 2012. p. 3).

Representation

This is another term that is used in a very specific way in cultural studies research. A definition of the term could be something as simple as "the depiction of someone or something in a work of art" ("Representation" n.d.). That definition would seem at first glance to be sufficient, but it does not do enough to convey the problematized nature of representation that cultural studies theorists are interested in studying. For example, when one sees a film with a person in blackface one does not merely view that act as a representation of blackness (Lee, O., 1999). That kind of representation is much more complicated since it is a distorted depiction of blackness that is meant to convey messages regarding race and class (Lee, O., 1999). It is that kind of problematized nature of representation that cultural studies theorists (and researchers like myself) are interested in analyzing.

Summary

This paper is organized into chapters with various sub headings. In the first chapter of this paper I focused on presenting the background that led up to my decision to engage in a research project on this topic. In this chapter I also laid out the purpose of my study and why I believe this study is important and how it will provide a significant contribution to the existing body of research on higher education (and film). I also introduced in this chapter the research questions that were examined throughout the study and consider the delimitations that exist due to the nature of my research project. I ended this chapter with a list of definitions presented to acquaint the reader with terms relevant to my study and end the chapter with this summary.

The second chapter of my paper is composed of a review of the critical literature relevant to this study. I begin by concentrating broadly on books and studies that directly relate to the research topic. I then moved on to a discussion of the critical literature on higher education and spotlight some of the important defining moments in higher education history during the decades my study focused on. The second chapter also provides an overview of the way representations of higher education have appeared in fictional novels. Afterwards, I enter into to a discussion of postmodernist theory, which is the broad theoretical framework underpinning this study. Finally, I end the second chapter by providing an overview of narrative analysis, which is the methodology I utilized in this paper.

The third chapter of this paper focuses on the methodology that was used to conduct this study. In this chapter I explain how I utilized narrative analysis to examine the films in order to address my research questions. This chapter also includes my

reflections on my own role as a researcher and how that fits into the study. The third chapter also includes a listing of the films that were included in the study and the process I underwent to select the films. I also provide an explanation of how I analyzed the films while maintaining data integrity in this project given the interpretive nature of this study. The rest of this dissertation, beginning with chapter four, focuses on the actual findings of this study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Despite the fact that colleges and universities have been a source of inspiration for countless filmmakers not much research has been done regarding representations of higher education in cinema. Extensive research turns up only three books devoted to higher education in cinema.

The Movies Go to College

The first book to explore the topic is Wiley Umphlett's (1984) *The Movies Go to College: Hollywood and the world of the college-life film*. Umphlett's (1984) book is a seminal work in that it is the first book to truly delve into the way that higher education is represented in film. The book is significant in that it is the first time someone successfully makes the argument that representations of higher education in film are something that is truly deserving of study. The book is effective in providing a solid overview of films that showcase the college experience. However, despite being a useful primer for studying depictions of college in film it is not successful in terms of what Umphlett (1984) himself stated he wished to achieve with the book. One of the goals of the book according to Umphlett (1984) is to "set out to examine how movies inspired by the collegiate scene have revealed our changing social tastes and values over the years and to determine why these changes have taken place" (p.9). Umphlett (1984) decides that in order to achieve this, he would narrow the book down to films divided into decades from the 1920s to the 1970s. The book is then broken down into four chapters. The first chapter covers films from the 1920s, the second the 1930s, the third the 1940s

and 1950s, and the last chapter covers the 1960s and 1970s. Each chapter provides the reader with detailed descriptions of films during those periods that deal with college life. The descriptions provide seemingly fair and accurate details regarding the way in which the selected films depict collegiate life. However, Umphlett's (1984) attempts to connect the film's depictions of education to the values of the times are not clear and are mostly ineffective. Despite beginning the first chapter with a kind of historical overview of the period the book fails to make meaningful connections between films and broader societal trends at the time.

There are moments where Umphlett's (1984) depiction of the films read more like that of a popular film critic than that of a scholar attempting to examine collegiate representations in cinema. For instance, when discussing the 1953 film *The All American* Umphlett (1984) examines whether or not he thought the film was entertaining and how the film's plot was influenced by earlier melodramas. Umphlett's (1984) discussion of the movie fails to truly delve into any analysis of the issues relating to college life that are represented in the film.

Perhaps one of the reasons that the book is not ultimately successful in making connections with the world outside of the cinema is due to Umphlett's (1984) perspective regarding the films as a genre. Almost immediately in the book's preface Umphlett (1984) states that "for one reason or another, we have never really taken this genre as seriously as we have, say, the Western, or the gangster film of the 1930s"(p.9). It is clear then from that statement that for Umphlett (1984) there is a specific defined film genre of 'collegiate films'. Classifying films into distinct and defined genres certainly has its advantages. The Hollywood film industry uses genres to help them market their films. By

classifying films into genres, movie goers can more easily select films that they want to watch. Classifying movies as part of a genre can also help to bring attention to a class of films and add a kind of legitimacy to those films (Altman, 1984).

By saying that these films that depict higher education constitute a genre means, by default, that the films all share certain similarities and characteristics in order to have been grouped together. Umphlett's (1984) book however, spends so much attention connecting the films and their similarities to prove that it should be considered a genre that he often neglects to examine the broader issues in higher education represented in the films. As Callenbach (1985) noted Umphlett's book seems to be "Another attempt to establish a doubtful genre-surveying college-life movies" (p.40). In discussing the various films in the 1920s that delve into collegiate sports Umphlett groups them all together noting that essentially they all have a similar plot. Umphlett (1984) finds that the films all follow the general trajectory of having a football player on a college team that has to overcome adversity in order to score a winning touchdown. These kinds of observations do seem to hold true as they are also noted by other film critics of the period. However, these reflections do little to engage an examination of college or collegiate athletic programs.

Umphlett's (1984) book serves as a good start when thinking of these movies as a film genre, but it is a task that needs more attention devoted to it. Umphlett (1984) does not take into account the many dissimilar kinds of films he reviews. Some of the films he examines are devoted to college life in relation to sports, others in relation to Greek life, and yet others are devoted to the romantic experiences of students. In order to truly make

the case for a genre classification all of these disparate groupings must be accounted for when examined. Certainly the work of genre theorists like Todorov, Levi-Strauss, Propp, and others have considered in detail, the ways in which to reconcile these aspects of films when considering genres (Altman, 1984).

The case for considering fiction writing about academia as an accepted genre has been successfully examined by literary critics (Showalter, 2005; Williams, 2012) and perhaps a similar approach could be taken by academics interested in higher education in cinema. Perhaps Umphlett (1984) could have started his book with a consideration of genres and engaged with genre theory in the very beginning of the text. That could have left the rest of the book to delve into the issues brought up by the films and the ways in which they intersect (or don't intersect) with higher education. The book never delivers on its promise to delve into the ways that film depictions influence (or are influenced by) the material events of higher education institutions. Ultimately, the book seems to do little more than provide a primer for future scholars to further consider these films and their impact.

Higher Education in Movies 1960-1990

The next book to consider colleges in cinema was *The Celluloid Ivy: Higher Education in the Movies 1960-1990* which was written by David Hinton (1994). He based the book on a dissertation he wrote on the topic as part of his doctoral degree at Vanderbilt University. The book focuses on a series of American films that were released in theaters from between 1960 to 1990. By examining a broad array of films spanning a 30-year period Hinton is able to examine a multitude of movies and scrutinize various representations of college education in a broad base of films over time (1994). Hinton's

approach is to view the films as sociological documents that serve as snapshots of time frozen in celluloid (1994). The films serve as documents that preserve information on the beliefs and concerns of that period of time. Indeed for Hinton films are always seen as a product of their time (1994). For Hinton films also bear a great amount of power in society (1994). Hinton saw films as being vehicles that could help sway the public's beliefs and attitudes on a given subject. They were therefore more than representations of a particular period's beliefs, but also had the enviable power of being able to shape and redirect public perception on a given matter. For Hinton(1994) "feature films possess enormous ability to mold, shape, and direct popular beliefs and attitudes" (p.2). The persuasive power of film (later researchers in the field will also focus on this) is something that Hinton truly believed in. Even though Hinton (1994) did not delve into great length in his book on how (or perhaps more importantly who) is doing the persuading, he did ascribe great importance to film due to its purported ability to influence public opinion.

Contextual, Textual, and Thematic Analysis

The approach he used to study films was largely borrowed from the fields of literary and film studies. Hinton (1994) employed "contextual, textual, and thematic analysis" (p.23) in the analysis of the films he selected. The book therefore examines the films from three varying perspectives. When examining a film from a contextual viewpoint, he is examining films according to their relation to the broader social, cultural, economic, and historical context during which the film was released (1994). By attempting to 'contextualize' the films Hinton was able to examine the films in terms of

the broader context of what was going on in society at that time (1994). For example, films dealing with collegiate themes that were released during the sixties may best be understood in light of the Vietnam War. The Vietnam War led to large numbers of young people entering college to avoid a draft and during the war and there were many notable anti-war protests held on college campuses throughout the country during that time. Since those events certainly made a mark on higher education during that period Hinton's approach to 'contextualize' and attempt to reach an understanding of those films in terms of that context seems to be a sensible approach to employ when examining those films. Hinton also employed textual analysis on some of the films he analyzed in his study. Textual study can be seen as almost the opposite of a contextual study. In a textual study a film is studied in isolation and the researcher focuses on the film's narrative structure, characterization, direction, and mise-en-scène¹ (Hinton, 1994). The focus of a textual study is to focus on the content in the film. This type of analysis truly allows the researcher to enter into an in-depth analysis of just what is actually in the film and how colleges and universities are depicted on screen.

The final method that Hinton utilizes when examining films is referred to as a thematic analysis (1994). In this type of analysis (borrowed largely from genre studies in literature and film) the scholar attempts to isolate dominant or recurring themes and motifs that emerge in a film (Hinton, 1994). This type of analysis sometimes can result

¹Mise-en-scène is a French term that was borrowed from the theater. In film theory, it refers to the arrangement and composition of everything that appears in front of the camera such sets, props, actors, costumes, and lighting (Film Department, Brooklyn College, 2012).

from a combination of first performing both textual and contextual analysis of a film which can allow for the researcher to see the broad themes that emerge from a film.

While the book is useful in providing numerous examples of higher education in the cinema it seems that more research needs to be done in order to further understand the role of educational representations in film. The book contains several very poignant examples of how college education is represented such as in his discussion of the film *The Graduate*. However, the book does not delve into some of the ideological concerns that more contemporary thinkers with a more postmodern perspective have begun to focus on. The book stays away from questions of representation that involve the actual viewer and his/her role in the creation of meaning. The three methods he uses to examine the films do not provide him with the ability to examine his own assertion that “By studying the films, as well as critical and popular reaction to them, we may discern the extent to which each film molded and shaped opinion, the intent of the filmmakers, and the films ability to flow successfully with popular currents” (Hinton, 1994, p.6). That power that he ascribes to film is unchallenged in the book (and the dissertation that led up to it) and his understanding of how film asserts its power is never fully explored. The book is most successful when engaging in contextual analysis where the author utilizes film reviews, box-office figures, and film credits (1994) in order to contextualize the films and help the reader to better understand the broader discourse surrounding the events depicted in the films. However, despite the moments where the book is very effective in providing contextual analysis the book still leaves the reader wondering about some of the big picture questions such as how the often competing messages found in the films can be reconciled (if they even can be reconciled).

Campus Life In The Movies

Another book that delves into the subject of Higher Education in film is John E. Conklin's *Campus Life In The Movies* (2008). This book was released in 2008, so it is much more recent than Hinton's book and at first glance it would seem to be a much more ambitious project than what Hinton set out to do. It is certainly a much more expansive project in terms of the number of films viewed. Conklin "watched 589 feature-length films about the collegiate experience set in the United States and released between 1915 and 2006" (Cohen, 1989, p. 97). Conklin (2008) certainly viewed a large number of films in an attempt to truly watch every American film that deals with Higher Education. Despite the fact that it is impressive due to the sheer number of films mentioned, it seems to be lacking in terms of critical analysis. Conklin (who is a professor of sociology at Tufts University) perhaps should have spent more time in the book using his Sociology background in an attempt to understand the importance and significance of the films and the themes that emerged. Since there are so many films mentioned, it seems that every film is discussed in such a quick and shortened overview that it is difficult to establish the importance of the film. It is difficult in the book to contextualize the films in any real way in terms of what was going on in society since the references to the films are so cursory that it is difficult to gauge the themes that emerge in the films.

The book is divided into chapters which suggest a kind of thematic approach to analyzing the films. Chapters with titles such as "Getting In", "Freshman Year", "Higher Learning", and "The Activist" (p. vii) may lead the reader to assume Conklin (2008) is attempting a critical exploration of higher education themes through cinema. However,

what one finds is more akin to a laundry list of films with a brief synopsis of the plots of the films. The titles of the chapters all seem to be pertinent themes to explore in higher education through film, but unfortunately the book does little to explore those themes in any relevant detail. For example, chapter five “Love Story” is devoted to exploring romantic and sexual relationships in film. However, many of the movies in that chapter only receive a line or two of plot synopsis and offer little to no critical perspective of the films' themes. The book makes no attempt to discuss how the films' presentations of sexuality are related to higher education as a whole. One example is the film *I Shot Andy Warhol* which centers on the true life story of Valerie Solanas, a radical feminist that eventually shot Andy Warhol. The film is clearly not about higher education nor does it even really make any significant reference to higher education. The film is included in Chapter 5 due to a short encounter in the film where Solanas comes on to a female psychologist and has her same sex advances rejected by the therapist (Conklin, 2008). That scene may be important if one is examining films in search of themes regarding lesbian identity and societal attitudes regarding same-sex attraction. However, the mere fact that the person in question is a psychologist and therefore vaguely linked to Higher Education brings into question why the film was included in the book. Other than the fact that the psychologist must have a college education there is no clear connection to higher education. The scene does not cite the therapist as a professor or much less make Solanas a student at a college campus. The book's reference to the scene from *I Shot Andy Warhol* is in the same paragraph as a discussion of *I Think I do*. That film at least does delve into issues of same-sex relationships and college. Even though *I Think I do* is not set at a college (or portray much of anything regarding college life) it at least revolves

around characters that were roommates in college. Their college experience does factor into the film's plot making it appropriate for the study.

In the paragraph before this, the book provides a plot summary of the film *threesome* in which the film is indeed set on a college campus dormitory and contains college students that are delving into issues of same-sex and bi-sexual relationships on campus. It is this mixture, with some movies where higher education is central to the film alongside others where higher education is an outlier that weakens the book's usefulness as a guide to the themes presented. Since there are so many films mentioned and there is so little time devoted to a discussion of the emergent themes, the book is more useful as a very thorough bibliographical reference of films that have at least minimal references to college life generally. The book does not delve into any kind of critical discussion of higher education themes and lacks the kind of critical depth necessary to make any truly lasting impact on Higher Education Scholarship.

Higher Education as depicted in the films of the 1990s

One other notable study that examines cinematic representations of higher education is a doctoral dissertation. The dissertation titled *The end of the summer at the end of the century: The cultural mosaic of higher education as depicted in films of the 1990s* was written by J. K. Dittus and was submitted for his doctoral dissertation in Education at Loyola University Chicago. The dissertation delves into various ways in which films can help provide an understanding of the cultural perceptions surrounding higher education. The dissertation analyzes how colleges and college life were depicted in a set of films that were theatrically released during the 1990s (Dittus, 2007). The

stated objective of the paper is to provide a greater understanding of how colleges are viewed as cultural institutions in America (Dittus, 2007). The dissertation is significant in several ways. One way in which the dissertation is significant is in that the critical approach that Dittus uses to analyze the films breaks away from the previous studies. In this case the author does incorporate some aspects from the field of cultural studies. The paper carefully outlines the cultural studies framework laid out by Brummett (1991) in his influential book *Rhetorical Dimensions of Popular Culture*. This is significant in that Dittus is one of the first education researchers to apply approaches from cultural studies to education research. The first chapter of the dissertation is devoted to defending the utility of using cultural studies methods in higher education research (Dittus, 2007). The second Chapter of the dissertation provides a detailed historical and analytic analysis of cultural studies methods generally and uses that as a framework to defend the appropriateness of Brummett's method (Dittus, 2007). In the third chapter of the dissertation the author delves into great detail on to how to apply Brummett's methods to educational research (Dittus, 2007).

Brummett and the Rhetorical Dimensions of Popular Culture

Brummett's method however, is not simply grounded in Cultural Studies. It is (as implied by the title of his book, *Rhetorical Dimensions of Popular Culture*) also interested in the role of rhetoric² in critical and cultural studies. The connection to Rhetoric in Brummett's work makes it rather different from some of the other theorists associated with cultural studies. Rhetoric is intimately related to the concept of

²Rhetoric is usually associated with discourse and can broadly be seen as studying the ways in which one attempts to persuade, inform, or otherwise convince an audience (Brummett, 1991)

'persuasion' and as such implies that when examining a text such as a film one should play close attention in trying to find the way in which the text (in this case a film) is attempting to persuade the audience. The implication here of course is that there is someone doing the persuading and someone else at the other end being persuaded. Brummet himself acknowledges that a simplistic understanding of rhetoric such as this does not take into account all the dimensions involved in the consumption of popular texts. In order to extend rhetorical studies to include this broadened understanding of cultural texts Brummet employs the idea of the "mosaic" (1991). Brummet's mosaic contends that as we move through our everyday lives we are not necessarily deferring to a discrete text's definition of something (1991). We are exposed to a series of pieces of information that include not only the movies and books we read, but also include whom we associate with and comments that we overhear, where we live, as well as the social norms of the time (Brummet, 1991). By focusing on this complex "mosaic" that helps to define meaning Brummet is able to make the case that the act of persuasion that he is looking for can come from outside of the text and can be influenced by a complex mosaic of objects within the broader social system. This broadened and more expansive view of rhetoric makes it quite a bit easier to examine the complex meanings that can be gleaned from objects of cultural production such as films. It allows for a more expansive view where the various methods used in cultural studies can be used to understand objects such as films. When Brummet speaks of mosaics he is referring to various kinds of rhetorical manifestations and the functions that they perform together (1991). For Brummet, the complex mosaic when examined can help the researcher to see patterns of meaning (1991). The struggle then for rhetoricians is to attempt to figure out which patterns to

employ when assigning meaning. He also makes it clear that some of the patterns that develop will serve the interest of certain groups in society, while other patterns serve other competing interests (Brummet, 1991).

An example of the way in which Dittus uses the critical framework provided by Brummet in his paper is in his discussion of the film *Higher Learning*. Dittus' analysis of *Higher Learning* calls particular attention to an important theme in the film. Early in the film there is a particular sequence in which the film makes note of the kind of willing separatism that can sometimes exist on college campuses. In the film a character refers to the ways in which the students on campus segregate themselves into small groups and surround themselves with other students that are similar to themselves. The character in the film points to areas frequented by specific racial/ethnic groups and refers to them in quite derogatory terms. The area where the Asian students congregate is referred to as "china town" while Hispanic students congregate "south of the border" and the white students are in "Disneyland". The African-American students meanwhile are in "the black hole" (Dittus, 2007). Dittus' effectively notes the kind of racial/ethnic segregation displayed and how that creates an effective backdrop to denote the polarization of the various ethnic groups in the film leading up to the final act of racial violence that the film culminates with (2007).

What is significant is that Dittus then makes the argument in his dissertation that this kind of willing segregation as depicted in the film and the racially fuelled violence that later ensues is important in that viewers seeing these kinds of exchanges on film will expect to see similar events on campus (2007). Dittus notes that:

College administrators would probably be better prepared to handle racist

situations that arise on campus if they were aware of the synergistic relationship between racist incidents and these perceptions, many of which are fueled through media and film. Simply put, if students come to campus expecting tension between the races because that is what they see on TV and the silver screen, then it should not come as a surprise that when a situation arises tensions are likely to escalate because students expect tension. Interestingly enough, much of the tension exists because people expect to find in real life the tension they see in films and television programs. (p. 168)

The author is making quite an important contention in that passage. The argument he is making is that since the film portrays racial violence occurring on college campuses that colleges should in turn expect racial violence. . This is where I must diverge from Dittus' dissertation and his findings. Dittus is making a presumptive leap (based upon Brummet's concepts) that it seems to me needs further exploration. For Dittus (2007), the audience of the film has been "persuaded" by the film that racial violence and tension are a given on college campuses after seeing the film. However, after reading and examining the works and theoretical perspectives of other theorists in cultural studies Dittus' leap may be a bit too one-dimensional a reading of the importance or power of a film. Dittus' assertion that because someone sees an event in a film that the person will then expect to see it in real life does not seem to take into account the complexity that is involved in decoding the effects of media texts by the public. The cultural studies theorist Stuart Hall wrote extensively regarding discursive practices and the reception of media texts asserting that "Before this message can have an 'effect' (however defined),

satisfy a 'need' or be put to a 'use,' it must first be appropriated as a meaningful discourse and be meaningfully decoded" (Hall & During, 1993, p. 93). Hall like many other cultural theorists would argue that the meaning of a text is dependent on a number of factors and that the final meaning of a media text may depend on factors external to the actual media text itself. A student may enter college with the expectation that he/she will encounter racial tension if perhaps his/her own personal subject positioning would make that discourse meaningful. If the student attended a high school where there was racial tension and then saw it portrayed in a film then perhaps that would be a reasonable expectation for that student. A person's understanding of a film is bound with that person's understanding of culture, identity, social/economic position, and gender.

In *Postmodernism and Popular Culture* Angela McRobbie (2004) takes a postmodern perspective to address similar questions of media and culture and makes the argument that "it is no longer possible, living within postmodernism, to talk about unambiguously negative or positive images" (p. 21). In other words, postmodernism questions this idea that texts have a specific fixed and absolute meaning that exists outside of the world of the media text. From a postmodernist perspective, the meaning of a text is bound up with the viewers understanding of the world and rejects notions from previous theorists that texts are understood separately from the 'real world'. McRobbie's (2004) contends that "we do not exist in social unreality while we watch television or read the newspaper, nor are we transported back to reality when we turn the TV off to wash the dishes or discard the paper and go to bed"(p. 211). This is meant to emphasize the point that from a postmodern perspective, real life experiences are intertwined with media texts, and the distinction between the two is often blurred. This means that

studying media texts is important not because they create set depictions about college, but because the messages in mass media are intertwined with the existing understandings of college. Studying these representations then can help understand the popular cultural meanings that exist regarding college. Given current postmodern understandings of mass media, Dittus' (2007) readings of film seem to provide too simplistic a viewpoint. Dittus' (2007) argument that films can create certain fixed expectations in a student's mind about college (and that universities must try to counteract those media created expectations) needs more research.

I see the study of representations of higher education in film as much more complex than what is presented in Dittus' dissertation. Dittus' analysis seems to not acknowledge that films are all different and that competing messages exist in popular culture. I am interested in studying representations of colleges in films not simply to focus on student expectations of what college will be like because it seems to me that those expectations are much more complex than a study of film could entail. Those expectations are clouded by much more than the effect of a film (the personal experiences and stories of friends, relatives, teachers, and others weigh heavily into college expectations as well). Individual films may present negative or positive depictions of college life, but what seems more compelling to me are the themes and depictions that may recur in more than one individual film and continue to reappear in various films. The way in which those depictions may vary from one film to the next and the ways in which those representations can be culled together to form a view of what as a culture we think about higher education seem to me to be more compelling than what Dittus had in mind in his dissertation.

The dissertation's reliance on Brummet keeps the analysis couched within a rhetorical framework in which there is an act of persuasion of the viewer that must be countered and confronted. Brummett's own concepts however, seem more complex than what is presented in the dissertation. Indeed Brummet himself, urges the critic to consider "the political or ideological interests served by ordering a rhetorical transaction in a certain way" (1991, p. 98) but that is a topic that Dittus shies away from discussing in his dissertation. The focus on persuasion/rhetoric (however useful) excludes from the analysis situations in which there is no persuasion anywhere to be found. It belies the possibility that there may be moments when no one benefits one way or another from the meaning of a cultural text. Brummet's expanded view of rhetoric does allow for readings of texts where the message either supports the status quo or perhaps provides a space for resistance to the hegemonic viewpoint on a particular subject. Dittus' dissertation however, does not seem to allow for interpretations of these types. There are certainly cases in which a cultural object neither reinforces nor questions the cultural or social structure it refers to. It seems possible that there can be readings of cultural objects in which some aspects of the status quo are upheld and others are at the same time questioned. These more complex and multifaceted readings of cultural objects seem to move further and further away from Dittus' work towards more intricate moments of meaning creation where persuasion cannot be attributable and cannot even be found.

Despite Dittus' (2007) reliance on critical theory steeped in an interest in a moment of rhetorical "persuasion" the dissertation does provide many valuable insights into how higher education is portrayed in film. The dissertation provides a very compelling exploration of the way diversity is presented on college campuses through his

analysis of the film *Higher Learning*. While the dissertation does provide important glimpses into how certain aspects of higher education are presented in the film it seems it is limited in scope since it leaves several large questions untouched. The dissertation does not even attempt to address larger systemic questions as to how higher education institutions are presented and how or who may benefit (if it all) from those representations. It also shies away from exploring how diverging representations can (or cannot) be reconciled when thinking about how colleges are represented. The dissertation does a fairly effective job of utilizing certain aspects of cultural studies and it does provide some interesting insights in its analysis of the films. However, the dissertation also leaves the reader with numerous additional questions. The dissertation falls short of being able to ask some of the larger philosophical questions regarding educational representation, leaving room for further research to be done.

Fiction and Representations of Higher Education

This study focuses on representations of higher education in film, but higher education has been a subject of interest for fiction writers long before filmmakers noticed colleges. Indeed, several books and studies have already been written that study fictional novels (see Showalter, 2005; Williams, 2012) and focus on their representations of the collegiate experience. There is actually quite a long historical tradition of writing that focuses on higher education. Much like their counterparts in film there is much variation among the fictional works that delve into college life. There have however been enough fictional novels written about higher education (and discussion about them) that they are usually referred to as the literary genre of the “Academic Novel”, “College Novel”, or

“Campus Novel”. Williams (2012), in his article "The Rise of the Academic Novel" provides an important primer into studying fiction writing regarding higher education. One important contribution he makes to the field is to mark an important distinction among the types of fiction works and break them down further into two distinct varieties. Often the two terms “Academic Novel” and “Campus Novel” are used interchangeably by literary scholars and publishers, but Williams (2012) argues for thinking of them as distinct sub-genres. Williams (2012) divides them up suggesting that the term “campus novels” be used in reference to books that refer to college life on college campuses. These novels are often coming-of age tales and focus mostly on young adults as they transition from their teen years and into adulthood (Williams, 2012). Many of these books are specifically about the transition to being in college and about how the students grow, learn, and mature while in college (Williams, 2012). The other genre of writing Williams (2012) proposes scholars look at could fall under what he refers to as “academic novels”. These are novels that feature professors and academics as their main characters instead of students. Williams (2012) categorizes these novels as being mostly centered on adults (since the focus are the professors) and their lives as academics. These are works in which the college itself may not be a central feature of the novel. Indeed, many of these novels may focus on themes of marital relationships, midlife crisis, and anxieties regarding work-career versus home life (Williams, 2012).

William’s (2012) notes that many of the more notable early examples of collegiate fiction writing focused heavily on the student’s perspective. Many of the early examples, such as Owen Johnson’s *Stover at Yale* (1912), focused squarely on the student’s perspective in college. In the novel which was originally published in serialized

form in 1911 the fictional character Dink Stover presents the trials and tribulations of his life at Yale. When it was released it was viewed by many as a guide to the world of higher education even though it was in some ways also critical of it (Williams, 2012). In 2012 to mark the 100-year mark since the novel was first published Alexander Nazaryan (2012) wrote a book review of Stover in which he bemuses how much some things seem the same. Nazaryan (2012) begins the review by noting that:

Owen Johnson published his novel ‘Stover at Yale’ a century ago this month, and I wonder how much has changed since then – not just in New Haven, but the greater groves of academe. Reading the book today, just weeks after colleges announced their acceptance rates with the pride of disease-eradicating epidemiologists (only 5.9% at Harvard!), I fear that the answer is obvious: not very much (p.1).

Indeed given the basic plot of Stover, some things have not changed that much. In the novel a main point of the plot is how Stover is pulled between sticking to the Status Quo at Yale (and improving his social status) versus really taking advantage of Yale to get an education. This is a narrative thread that can be seen in many later novels (as well as films) about the college experience. In the end Stover succumbs to the call of wanting to gain social clout and power and chooses that over a more radicalized option where he would be more concerned with education and social change. In the end of the novel he is even vindicated by being tapped into the Skull and Bones society (the same infamous society that many presidents are rumored to have joined). Indeed, the Yale in Stover is presented as an elitist institution. It is an institution where students often seem more concerned with social climbing and how to make lots of money than what they are

learning in any specific course. As Nazaryan (2012) astutely points out the Ivy League institutions (which are still the subject of much fictional work) are often presented as elite places where one goes in order to join the ranks of those who run the status quo, not overturn it. Much of this narrative impetus could also be applied to other novels at other universities since the theme of apathy among students regarding their studies is commonplace in fictional literature (Williams, 2012).

All of Williams' (2012) discussions of the higher education themes found in literature are useful, but it is his call for thinking of the works as being divided into two groups (students and faculty) that is for the purpose of this study his most significant contribution. Indeed, his call for splitting the literature into these two sub-genres influenced me directly as I thought of this study. When I examined the films for this study I looked for representations of both faculty and students and find it useful to conceive of them as related, but as having distinct features. It is also significant to note that despite the fact that many American filmmakers have delved into these themes, no scholar has successfully identified it as a distinct genre of filmmaking. Although Umphlett (1984) referred to the films as a distinct genre and highlighted the similarities in the films his work fell short of providing a critical assessment of the films as a genre. Williams' (2012) work engages with the available scholarship on genre theory and separates the novels into groups making a persuasive argument regarding their classification.

Faculty Towers

Williams' (2012) work is quite recent and he was certainly not the first to examine these themes in literature. His ideas were built upon the work of other literary scholars before him that had already studied and identified higher education themes in literature. The most notable of those studies is Elaine Showalter's (2005) *Faculty Towers: The Academic Novel and Its Discontents (Personal Takes)*. Showalter's book takes a rather personal approach to examining what she refers to as Academic Novels by at times interjecting her own college experiences into the discussion. The book is significant in that it also delves into the ways in which at times these novels in some ways reflect broad changes in higher education and society.

Showalter's *Faculty Towers* presents a fairly cohesive overview of academic novels and serves as a very thorough compendium to any researcher interested in fictional writing regarding academia. Showalter does not make the kind of distinction between novels regarding faculty versus students that Williams makes. However, Showalter's (2005) book is much more heavily slanted towards accounts of novels that deal with professors instead of student accounts of college. Although the book does discuss several novels that deal with students the majority of the novels discussed deal with academia and the professoriate. The emphasis on the professoriate is not due to a lack of novels that deal with the student experience. Instead, the focus of the book is based upon Showalter's own personal interests. In the introduction called "What I read and what I read for" Showalter (2005) details her own preoccupation with faculty depictions in novels. Showalter (2005) intimately describes her own experiences of having initially read many of the novels as guides as to the world of academia when she

was a young academic. Despite the imbalanced focus on academia away from students the book serves as an extremely important guide to academic fiction. Following the introduction the book is conveniently divided up into chapters that detail academic novels divided into decades. The first chapter focuses on novels in the fifties, the second chapter looks at the sixties and so on culminating with Chapter 6 which is devoted to twenty-first century novels (2005).

1950s Fiction

In the first chapter Showalter (2005) enters into in depth discussions of all of the major academic novels from the fifties. Showalter's (2005) overall view of the academic novels in the Fifties is of novels that depict a universe that is in many ways separate from the rest of the outside world. Academia is seen as a world with its own sets of customs and morays that are detached from the outside world of the period (2005). The universe surrounding academics in the fifties is presented as a wonderful positive environment full of possibilities in some novels, such as in Carlos Bakers' *A Friend in Power* (Showalter, 2005). The novel was published in 1958 and is set at the college campus of the fictional Enfield University. Showalter (2005) and others however point out that 'Enfield' is actually nothing but a thinly veiled version of Princeton University where Bakers was a professor of English Literature. The novel presents the world of the university as a pleasing environment with faculty truly dedicated to grand intellectual pursuits (Showalter, 2005). The plot of the novel details the search for a new university president and instead of focusing on issues of ambition and power, as a contemporary reader may expect, the novel takes a much more idealized perspective (Showalter, 2005). The search

for a college president moves towards an academic who is called upon to take up his public duty to be president while weighing it against his desire to continue to serve as an academic devoted solely to his intellectual pursuits (Showalter, 2005). However, even in the fifties where idealized depictions of colleges and faculty prevailed there were novels that provided other perspectives.

In other novels from the fifties the isolated world of academia is full of rules and regulations that constrict freedom and creativity. In *Lucky Jim*, (which was published in 1954) the main character is a lecturer at a British University that has a very difficult time understanding and adjusting to the academic world around him, which seems pretentious and tedious (Showalter, 2005). Indeed, much of the novel's plot centers on Jim's desire to leave the academic world which he finds so stifling (Showalter, 2005). The novel goes against other 1950's novels such as *A friend in Power* and *The Masters* written by CP Snow in 1951. While those novels present romantic notions of professors who enjoy lecturing and are moved by a true love for knowledge, *Lucky Jim* presents pedantic professors and satirizes the way in which academics engage in petty squabbles over power (Showalter, 2005). *Lucky Jim* was turned into a feature film a few years later (it is one the films I will analyze in this study) and there are some interesting changes that were made to the plot as it was transformed into a film.

In general the novels in the period are also usually focused on large groups in academia, such as the faculty, the students, or the university itself. This stands in sharp contrast to later novels that often focus just on one department or discipline at a university. In the novels during this period the professors are depicted as being loyal not only to their departments or disciplines, but the university itself.

1960s Fiction

Those idealized picture of colleges, their faculty, and their presidents that can be found in some of the fifty's novels does not last very long as one enters the next decade. In the second chapter when Showalter (2005) dwells on the academic novels of the sixties changes emerge as Showalter finds a number of works of fiction that now focus on academic departments. English departments specifically seem to be of great interest to the novelists of the period (Showalter, 2005). Interestingly, it is worth noting that academic novels of the sixties, at least according to Showalter (2005) do not seem to pay much attention to the civil unrest and strife that much of the sixties is known for. Even though much of the changing political and social climate in the sixties happened (as much, if not more so) on college campuses the majority of the academic novels written during that period do not reflect the social unrest that characterized much of the period (Showalter, 2005). Certainly novels such as *The Department* embody a strange disconnect between the fiction of the period and the current events unfolding outside the pages of the novel. *The Department* was written by Gerald Warner Brace and was published in 1968. The novel itself looks back at the life and career of Sandy Sandlerling who is a Harvard graduate and professor of American literature. The novel portrays an English Department which could just as easily have referenced an academic department twenty years prior to the time of the novel (Showalter, 2005). The novel's main character is a fairly unremarkable faculty member and although the novel comments specifically on the English Department and faculty members, it is completely oblivious of the changes undergoing academia and English Departments at the time. The novel follows Professor Sandlerling as he writes his retirement speech and therefore looks back at his career in

academia. The novel then purposefully portrays academia in a nostalgic light with very little acknowledgment of the changes being experienced in academia. It is ironic as Showalter (2005) points out that in 1968, the same year of publication of *The Department*, there were several English Professors arrested at the Modern Language Association (MLA) Conference. The MLA is the professional organization of Literature faculty members devoted to teaching and scholarship in literary studies. Those professors were arrested in protest of the MLA conservatism and lack of change in light of an interest in broadening the cannon to include non-white, non-European, non-male perspectives in literary studies. There were also protests regarding the treatment of students that were anti-war protesters. In retrospect, it seems odd to find that so many of the academic novels published in the sixties ignored the pressing social issues of the day such as, the war, race relations, and feminism to instead present rather dated notions of academia to readers.

1970s Fiction

It seems it was not until the academic novels of the seventies that the social unrest and change that came about in the sixties finally crept into the academic novel. However, even though some of the changes that began in the sixties found themselves appearing in the academic novels of the seventies, some changes had yet to register in this period's novels. Indeed, the University of the Academic Novel of the seventies was not the solid ivory tower of before. Universities were now fragile and had vulnerabilities (Showalter, 2005). The cracks behind the ivory walls were really being seen for the first time in fiction during the seventies. The seventies at least began a period where academic novels

began to earnestly look at portrayals of professors that were nontraditional (or at least non-protestant). During this period English departments and literature professors continue to be an object of fascination. It is during the seventies that the great American novelist Philip Roth began writing novels that fall under the broad category of the Academic novel. Roth published two novels in the seventies under the broad category of the academic novel, *The Professor of Desire* in 1977, and *The Ghost Writer* in 1979. Roth's novels provide readers with a focus on what was previously considered as a marginal perspective in literature, that of the Jewish experience. In *The Professor of Desire*, the main character, the professor David Kepesh, is significant for his connection to his Jewish identity as well as for his sexuality and desire which are a large part of the novel. Indeed, the protagonist Professor Kepesh even attempts to combine sexuality with his academic pursuits as he fantasizes about having a meeting with Franz Kafka's prostitute while on a vacation in Prague.

Despite the more open discussion of sexuality and the inclusion of more non-traditional non-WASP characters in the seventies; academic novels still did not seem to catch up with changes in regards to the changing role of women and the rise of feminism (Showalter, 2005). It seems that even when the specter of feminism appears in the academic novels of the period the novels are quick to support the status-quo with men in power and women depicted as the wives of academic men providing support to their husbands (Showalter, 2005). The lack of support of the burgeoning women's movements could not be more clearly stated than in a passage from *Poetic Justice*, which was published in 1970 and again had the English department at a university as its setting. In *Poetic Justice* (written by Amanda Cross in 1970) even though there are female

professors they quibble regarding feminism “There is now even an organization for liberating women -utter nonsense. Women are liberated the minute they stop caring about what other women think of them” (as cited in Showalter, 2005, p.51). Clearly one can see from passages such as this that the academic novels of the seventies were still rather hostile to feminism rather than supportive (Showalter, 2005).

1980's Fiction

In the eighties the academic novels finally started to really notice women. This is a period of time where the academic novels of the day still focused largely, much as they did in the previous decade, on English Departments. This is also the period when literary theory and women’s studies really became a serious and accepted part of academia (Showalter, 2005). What seems most interesting at this time is that even though now women are portrayed as serious forces in academia vying for tenure track positions (and suddenly being respected) the female characters in fiction are rather ambivalent towards their ambition and new competitive desires (Showalter, 2005). In the academic novels written by women it seems especially true that the female characters are portrayed as extremely conflicted regarding power and status and their relationships to co-workers and academia in general (Showalter, 2005). One of the most important academic novels during this decade is the 1981 novel *Death in a Tenured Position* by Carolyn Heilbrun. It is a novel that dwells on feelings of alienation, depression, and isolation (Showalter, 2005). Heilbrun’s female characters are presented as uncomfortable towards feminism and feminist theory and feel isolated and out of place in academia. This can be seen when the character Kate states “women, at least around here, live in a never-never land, not

certain where they belong, where their allegiances lie, not even what their hopes are” (as cited in Showalter, 2005, p.72). In passages such as this it is clear that academia during the eighties is not presented as an inclusive and accepting place of learning and teaching for women as it has been presented for men. Instead it is a place where women feel alienated and out of place without a sense of belonging even if they are tenured faculty (Showalter, 2005).

1990's Fiction

In the nineties novelists continued to see an interest in English Departments as a topic of fiction. The English Departments in the nineties were portrayed as places that are full of disillusionment and where faculty and students feel overcome with frustration (Showalter, 2005). The novels in the nineties rather than ignoring the changes that had been occurring in English Departments across the country focused on them. Indeed, in many of the novels such as in Shannon Olson’s *Quieter than Sleep* (1997) and the *Northbury Papers* (1998), the schism that was growing between faculty members in English departments was of great interest. In John L’Heureux’s novel *The Handmaid of Desire* (1996), the novel portrays the English Department divided into two rival factions. On the one hand, there are older faculty members that hang on to teaching the great literary cannon and focus on art, prose, and the great themes of literature (Showalter, 2005). These older faculty members are often presented with ridicule for their unwillingness to be open to new literature and for their disdain for popular culture. The novel also portrays the other extreme as well. The book presents young superstar faculty members that are only interested in theoretical perspectives (Showalter, 2005). Their

extreme postmodern perspectives no longer have time or an interest in literature as great art. As presented in L'Hereux's (1996) the *Handmaid of Desire*, these faculty members want to deconstruct everything "whether it was Flaubert's *Bovary* or a 1950 tax form or the label on a Campbell's soup can" (as cited in Showalter, 2005, p.90). In Hereux's (1996) novel the postmodern faculty propose to completely remove the English Department and instead replace it with a new department called the department of "Theory and Discourse" (as cited in Showalter, 2005, p.90). The perceived schism of English Departments makes for an interesting trope for writers and seems to mark another shift in the academic novel away from the intrusion of more worldly concerns and towards novels that are once again about the insular world of academia and its peculiarities.

Literary Fiction in 2000's and Beyond

Once Showalter (2005) moves into a discussion of academic novels in the twenty-first century one finds that in that there have definitely been changes in the genre. During this period many celebrated major novelists wrote significant academic novels and brought the genre to large recognition in literary circles. The novels of Saul Bellow, Philip Roth, Coetzee, Mamet, and Francine Prose brought critical attention to the genre which had previously been given very little serious consideration (Showalter, 2005). The novels no longer truly display the academic universe as a separate world outside of the rest of society. It seemed during this period that the mythic world of academia was not really all that different from the rest of the world surrounding it. The academic novels of the period became much more dreary and dismal in nature than the novels of the previous

decades (Showalter, 2005). The novels were much more than merely bleak; they also seemed to reflect distrust in all social institutions (of which higher education is just one piece). The professors in the novels in this period are often undergoing a mid-life crisis, while others are unable to write, having affairs, or are ineffective in the classroom (Showalter, 2005). These professors were emblematic of a feeling of distrust towards the universities and society as a whole. They were becoming ineffective at educating and seemed to be out of sorts and unable to effectively govern their own lives (Showalter, 2005).

Saul Bellow's *Ravelstein* (2000) is a great example of this shift in the academic novel of the twenty first century. The novel is a work of fiction, but is loosely based upon real life characters (Showalter, 2005). Within its pages one finds a rather dismal portrayal of the life of an academic. The main character Abe Ravelstein is strikingly similar to the real life Alan Bloom, a close friend of Saul Bellow's. He is presented as an eccentric professor that bemoans the way that the university has turned away from liberal education to focus on technical training and careerism (Showalter, 2005). The novel is also significant in that it portrays the professor dying of AIDS (this also mirrors Allan Bloom's real life death from AIDS as well). Many critics appreciated Bellow's admiration for his dead friend and also praised the novel for dealing with the AIDS crisis and bringing that crisis into academia (Showalter, 2005). It is also important to note that by commending and eulogizing his friend Bellow also effectively outed Allan Bloom as a homosexual. This also helped to bring homosexuality in academia into the public consciousness. The real life academic Allan Bloom was most famous for writing the extremely popular treatise on higher education *The closing of the American Mind* in

1987. Bloom's (1987) book included a preface by Saul Bellow and was critical of higher education in many of the same ways that are presented in Bellow's novel. Bellow's (2000) work along with the works of other prominent contemporary authors truly brought the concerns of the outside world into academia. These works served to break down that mythical divide that existed between the isolated world within the university and the outside world. Higher education institutions were presented in the novels of the period as mishandling many contemporary issues such as homosexuality, gender equality, and the AIDS crisis. This led many authors to question the very authority of these institutions.

One can see from this overview of fiction writing that academia has been an important source of inspiration for many novelists. It is significant to note that despite the vast number of collegiate films that have been made, cinematic representations have not received the in depth scholarly attention given to fictional novels. Showalter's (2005) work on academic fiction in particular has illuminated for me ways in which representations of education can be considered in relation to the scholarly knowledge and historical trends in education. Works such as Showalter's (2005) and Williams (2012) provide useful primers on how to conduct thoughtful scholarly insights into the intersection between fictional representations and the critical and historical events they reference.

Critical Overview of American Higher Education

The University

Since my dissertation focuses on representations of higher education it would be useful to include a critical examination of Universities since they are the place that higher

education occurs. Indeed, many of the films in this study use college campuses as the location for their films. The first step then is to attempt to arrive at a definition of the university in order to come to a better understanding of what it truly is. How one defines a university depends largely on who is asking the question, and the question itself has been the source of much scholarly debate. Despite that, one useful starting point to pin down the university comes from Cardinal Newman back in 1854 when he first published the *Idea of a University*. He referenced a clear popular definition of the university “I suppose the primâ-facie view which the public at large would take of a University, considering it as a place of Education, is nothing more or less than a place for acquiring a great deal of knowledge on a great many subjects” (Newman, 1982, p.128). Even though that definition was published in 1854 in many ways, it still seems to be applicable today. Certainly, since universities are places of learning that definition is still appropriate.

The University in Ruins

Upon further study many of the definitions one finds in the academic literature are based on a historical understanding of the university. In *The University in Ruins* Bill Readings (1996) makes the case that we are still often dealing with the same issues now as we were last century (and even before that). Readings (1996) contends that we should be looking back towards Humboldt, Kant, and Schiller to gain a better understanding of the current state of the University. Readings (1996) revisits the German philosophers and how they deliberated on the role of the University and the way in which they conceived of the concepts of the University and culture. The term “Culture” is defined in many different ways (and is defined and used in a different sense in this very dissertation.

Readings (1996) is basing his definition on a specific concept taken from the German philosophers where Culture is “the unity of all knowledges that are the object of study; it is the object of Wissenschaft (scientific-philosophical study)” (Readings, 1996, p.64). For Readings (1996), this definition of culture is useful in terms of thinking of the project of what he believes that the modern university should attempt to accomplish.

Readings (1996) found that the German idealists believed that this concept of Wissenschaft was essential for the University and for the nation state as well. It would benefit the state indirectly by creating educated citizens that understood a common body of knowledge and could make informed decisions that would be better for the state overall (Readings, 1996). Readings (1996) notes that the German idealists believe this process will occur through the pedagogical process of “Bildung” in which the professor teaches (if that word can be used here) the process for learning and how to acquire knowledge instead of teaching sets of facts. This kind of rhetoric is not new to modern thinkers of education and is often cited when discussing the value of general education courses. Many educators argue that the United States University system which relies on students taking a set of general education core courses in a broad set of subjects is superior to that of other nations. The belief is that since US students gain critical thinking skills that are important to all subject areas even if they do not always truly master the broad areas covered in general education courses (Krueger & Kumar, 2004).

Readings (1996) looks back to get an answer (or at least a better understanding) for the modern questions regarding the University, but it seems to me that the answers cannot be found there. After Readings’ discussion of the German idealists, the questions

still remain. The debate regarding the utility of general education courses, and a liberal arts education, has not ended and actually seems to be as hotly debated now as ever (Krueger & Kumar, 2004). The broader point that rises from Reading's thoughtful look back to the German philosophers is the idea that universities should strive to unify knowledge and provide an interconnected view of learning to their students. This concept is also a point of contention, considering the way in which most modern universities are divided into a number of schools and departments that are often totally disconnected from each other. Readings' (1996) initial definition of the University is useful in providing a philosophical context to the university in terms of what the goals are (or should be) for the university. However, it appears that even he realizes that those definitions are problematic and do not truly define the university anymore. Indeed, much of the rest of Readings' (1996) book is devoted to problems with that early definition.

The Multiversity

Another scholar that provides an important vision of the university is Clark Kerr. Kerr, which was president of the University of California System and Chancellor of UC Berkeley is credited for transforming Higher Education in America and ushering in the modern American University (Hechinger, 2003). In Clark Kerr's (1982) seminal book on higher education *The Uses of the University*, he makes a great contribution to the overall discussion in helping to come up with an explanation of what the modern university really consists of. Kerr (1982) also finds that the definition of a university is still often based on notions that date all the way back to Cardinal Newman (1982) and his understanding of the university. He contends that in those very traditional definitions of a

university there are essentially only two main constituents to contend with, the faculty and the students (Kerr, 1982). Those are indeed the two most visible components of a university, but as Kerr points out the modern university is made up of many more components than that (1982). Those other components, even though they are not as visible as students and faculty, are essential to the functioning of the modern university. The modern university is made up of a “series of communities and activities held together by a common name, a common governing board, and related purposes” (Kerr, 1982, p. 1). Indeed, a modern university includes not only students and professors, but also a large group of administrators and staff members, scientists and researchers, alumni, sporting organizations, sports fans, and outside commercial enterprises that are all interwoven at the university. These different constituents often have very different specific interests that are at odds with each other (Kerr, 1982). His view of the university as a place full of complexities where there are competing interests from different members of the university is a key insight that will help inform the basis of this study in order to examine the representations of universities found in cinema.

The term that Kerr is famous for coining, the “multiversity” (1982), boils it down to one useful word that emphasizes that the multiple conflicting aspects that make up a university are essential to an understanding of it. This multifaceted view of universities will guide my own research as my dissertation will examine universities through depictions of those facets such as students, faculty, deans, and administrators in order help illuminate how higher education as a whole is represented.

It would be beneficial for the university to have a simple and universally understood definition as to how it functions and what its role is in society. However,

given the varying ways that universities are defined in the academic literature a straightforward and uncomplicated definition is not possible. The critical literature does provide researchers with useful ways to think of the university that together provide a more thorough understanding of it. Kerr's (1982) work depicting universities that are being pulled in different directions by divergent groups have led many higher education scholars to examine the various factors that are most influential to the modern university.

Business Interests in Higher Education

As alluded to before, the last half of Readings' (1996) book is devoted exploring the ways that previous definitions of the university are inadequate. Readings (1996) then builds upon Kerr's (1982) work and explores what he sees as one of the most important influences to the modern university. Readings (1996) focuses on how the interests of business have encroached upon the universities' mission and corrupted it and left it in "Ruins" as suggested by the title of his book. Readings (1996) cites an example of a partnership between Ohio State University and the Ford Motor Company in which the two were working towards "total quality management in all areas of life on campus," (p.20). This partnership and others like it are perfect examples for Readings of how business interests have become commonplace in universities across the country. The point that Readings (1996) wishes to emphasize is that by making partnerships such as the one between the Ford Motor Company and Ohio State there is an implicit understanding behind the agreement that the two are essentially the same. This is extremely problematic for Readings (1996) who sees the purpose of the university as being quite different from that of a business. The Ford Motor company has a long

heralded history in the United States. One of the things that the Ford Motor company is known for is for truly having revolutionized manufacturing of cars by using an assembly line for production which increased productivity and minimized costs for production. While this kind of system is clearly advantageous for a business it is not necessarily in line with the definition of the university put forth by Readings in the first half of his book or by Newman and others. If the goal of a university is to teach students how to learn and reason that would seem to many to be a process that cannot be streamlined and mechanized. That goal is not as straightforward as the goal of having a car at the end of a production line. Of course, as some have argued if one is to view the goal of a university to simply grant a degree then perhaps that revised goal could be thought of in terms of modes of production (Readings, 1996).

Excellence

There is another concept related to corporate influence in education that has been cited by many scholars as being important. Readings also notes its effect and refers to it as one of the concepts that is leading the way to the ruin of the university. The concept is the term “excellence”(Readings, 1996). The term has been adopted as an important buzzword by universities across the country, but it defies an easy definition. Readings (1996) points out that the concept is actually void of any real meaning. The best example in Readings (1996) book of how the term really is simply a buzzword is when he cites that Cornell University provided an award of excellence for its parking services. The question for Readings (1996) is of course, what does that actually mean? In the context of the actual case it means that the parking services staff did a superb job of enforcing the

parking rules and keeping people from parking in designated areas (Readings, 1996). A faculty member however may say that an award of “excellence” for parking services should mean that parking services was able to procure additional parking spaces for faculty instead. Despite the ambiguity of the term Readings (1996) notes that universities across the country have adopted the term as their new mantra. Every university it seems is interested in improving their rankings and be thought of as promoting excellence (Readings, 1996). Universities want to accept only the best students, the ones that have shown a commitment to excellence (Readings, 1996). Universities often openly talk about promoting excellence in academics as well as on the field in their sporting events and in cultural offerings (Readings, 1996). The term has become a way for Universities to keep a capitalist corporate structure in place that is acceptable to the needs of the larger corporate system (Readings, 1996).

Readings perceives the lack of a clear definition of the term as useful for universities. Since it can mean different things it can be used to justify all sorts of corporate influenced adjustments to the university to improve its reputation instead of improving academics. For a university that is not particularly rich, excellence may mean a campaign to gain more money from alumni and corporate donations (Indeed, most universities use such campaigns for capital funds and name their buildings after corporations or donors). At a different university the quest for excellence could mean the university is attempting to push its faculty to write more grants and receive more grant money. At yet another institution it could mean that the university will tighten admissions and only focus on admitting students that will strive for excellence in college. All of these things could be polices used to improve a university’s reputation and ranking. What is

significant however, is that in their quests for excellence many institutions are not searching for better ways to improve overall learning. Readings' (1996) critical portrayal of the university sees it as a place that has moved away from its original definition to be redefined by corporate based policies. Those policies, which operate under the guise of excellence, focus on ways that universities can gain power and improve their reputation. Readings' (1996) contention that universities often enact policies based on their own self-interest to become bigger and more influential (more like a corporation) is an important scholarly contribution and will help guide my understanding of university motives throughout this study.

Academic Duty

An essential part of any university is of course, the faculty. Faculty members are the ones entrusted with teaching at the university, but that is clearly not their only responsibility. The duties that faculty perform also depends largely on where they are teaching. There have been many studies looking at faculty at both large research universities as well as at community colleges and small liberal arts colleges. An innumerable amount of books and studies have been written regarding university professors, but many of them focus on very specific aspects of the professoriate. One book that takes a large and expansive view of the university faculty and the issues surrounding their profession is Donald Kennedy's *Academic Duty* (1997). Kennedy's book examines the professoriate from not only the perspective of himself as an academic, but also as a member of the administration (Kennedy was president of Stanford University from 1980 to 1992). Kennedy's book provides some essential insights into the

reality of being a faculty member at a research university. The chapters in Kennedy's book provide a snapshot of all the differing duties that faculty must balance in their daily lives. One of the aspects of the book that makes it unique in representing the various aspects of the professorate is that the book uses real world factual examples of the topics discussed along with fictional case study examples (Rhodes, 1997). Kennedy's various cases provide specific details on the ways in which faculty truly expend their energies. He faithfully describes the process in which teaching can often take second place to concerns over publishing and research. He notes that it is especially an issue for younger un-tenured faculty (Kennedy, 1997). There are times in his narrative when the conflicting duties of a professor (such as publishing versus teaching) encroach upon each other, while at other times, they seem to co-exist peacefully. One aspect of these competing duties however, that Kennedy cannot seem to fully explain is how his own tenure as president intrudes on his discussion of faculty. Frank Rhodes (1997), president of Cornell University, reviewed Kennedy's book and found that the book was extremely thorough when covering all the major areas of importance for the professorate. While Rhodes review is accurate in citing the thoroughness and importance of Kennedy's book it seems to me that is also significant to note that the review is from one college president to another. Nevertheless, Kennedy (1997) adeptly showcases ways in which faculty can balance their interactions with students along with their research interests. The book also makes a strong case for academic freedom while reflecting upon the responsibilities that come along with that freedom (Kennedy, 1997).

Another reason the book is insightful for this dissertation is his insight into how he believes the outside world (specifically mass media news outlets) often perceive or

misunderstand the university. As a case in point Kennedy provides the example of a period when in 1994 Stanford was internally debating making changes to their grading system (1997). Kennedy found that this topic which he believed would be of little interest outside the Stanford community was picked up by the news and led to articles in the *New Times* which he felt were hostile to the academic community (1997). The example highlights how there is an idealized depiction of faculty hidden away in their ivory tower and that there is a clear interest by those on the outside to attempt to come to terms with what goes on inside the University.

Kennedy's depictions of the hostility of mass media towards academia however, does not seem to be completely un-biased. One area of extreme interest in this book is his discussion of the so-called "Stanford Scandal" (Ray, 1997). Kennedy published *Academic Duty* after his tumultuous tenure as president of Stanford University, from which he resigned amid a scandal involving alleged misuse of government funds (Ray, 1997). The book actively engages in a discussion of media coverage regarding the university in relation to the case, which he himself was involved in. His discussion of the details of the case even includes specific mention of news programs such as 20/20 and a critique of their coverage of the events (Ray, 1997).

Ultimately, Kennedy's book provides a compelling vision of faculty at large research universities, including the vicissitudes that faculty can encounter. It is his complex vision of faculty and their various and sometimes disparate duties that provided a basis for this study as I address faculty representations in film. Kennedy himself was already quite interested in mass media and their views on colleges and their faculty so he would probably find my project to be of extreme interest.

This dissertation has so far focused on the various ways in which scholars on American Higher Education have devoted critical attention to the role of the university and what it means and represents as an American institution. Based upon these critical observations one can see the definition of the American university has changed and evolved over time as it is influenced by various changes in American society. The insights provided by Readings (1996) regarding the role of corporate influence in higher education and its emphasis on excellence provide an intricate understanding of the way higher education is evolving in the United States. Readings (1996) conception of the University, coupled with Kerr's (1982) view of the multiversity, and Kennedy's (1997) view on the role of college faculty together provide a complex view of our higher education system that despite its many virtues contains various rifts that many scholars are still attempting to fully comprehend.

History by Decades

As I previously mentioned, it is clear from the critical literature on higher education that our current college and university system is a complex grouping of very divergent institutions that have over time been influenced by changes in society as well as shifts in educational policy. This can make examining the various depictions of Higher Education in popular culture a difficult undertaking. The critical literature I examined previously presented general depictions of our Universities which are vital to achieving an understanding of American Universities. Since my study specifically study films broken down into decades it is useful at this point to provide a brief overview of the major events and trends in higher education broken up into decades. This will help to

illuminate the general state of Higher education from the 1950s to today in order to be able to place the critical literature and films in context.

The most important scholar devoted to studying the history of higher education is John Thelin (2004) whose seminal work, *A History of American Higher Education*, is still considered one of the most influential and complete accounts of American Higher Education from a historical perspective. Thelin's (2004) book along with the chapters to other books he was involved with (Thelin & Wells, 2002; Thelin & Gasman, 2010) are the main source of the historical accounts presented herein. These historical accounts are not intended to provide precise specific historical records and dates. Instead, this will serve to highlight important trends across the decades that will be compared and contrasted to the films in this study.

Higher Education in the 1950s

Many scholars studying higher education have noted that there were many important changes in American higher education that began in the 1950s (Thelin, 2004). Thelin and Gasman (2010) contend that in the 1950s, a number of states, especially those with large populations (such as California and New York), wanted to increase the number of students they could admit into their universities. This was largely due to a sudden and growing amount of interest in higher education in society overall. The emphasis therefore for many states was to create new commuter universities and community colleges in order to handle the large numbers of new students. There was also subsequently a shift away from opening new traditional residential universities in order to fund these new institutions. The authors point out that these institutions did not just add

more students to the higher education system. They were enrolling students that were almost always first generation college students. Ironically, it is these students that would probably benefit the most from the kind of social support structure that more traditional universities often provide. These institutions were also much more likely to have disproportionately higher numbers of African American and Hispanic students when compared to more traditional universities. Thelin and Gasman (2010) also note that these institutions were also usually characterized by their low completion rates and even lower rates of student retention.

The 1950s was a period that also saw the growth of many large multi-campus universities running under one system versus distinct single campus research universities. During this period many agreements were also made to assist students from community colleges to transfer into senior universities in order to help students complete their upper level coursework towards a bachelor's degree. Thelin and Gasman (2010) point out that changes such as transfer agreements for community college students are still being written today. Indeed, when conducting research many of the topics I find being discussed in regards to contemporary issues in higher education seem to have started during this period.

The 1950s however, are significant not only because of trends that began there and continue today. In the book *Higher education in the United States: An encyclopedia* John Thelin and Amy Wells(2002) note other reasons that the 1950s are significant. In 1947, the Report of the President's Commission on Higher Education, *Higher Education for American Democracy* had a huge impact on Higher Education (Thelin & Wells, 2002). While the report's conclusions and findings were non-binding the report was

never the less extremely influential. The report from the Truman Commission was significant because it effectively made the case for the United States government to become involved in creating programs to help increase access to higher education beyond the GI Bill. The document reads as a precursor to many government programs that generally promote the idea that higher education isn't something that should be strictly reserved only for the upper classes. Thelin and Wells (2002) trace the advent of programs such as the federally funded Pell grant and our modern financial aid system back to the report. President Truman supported the report and the states ultimately created many programs based upon the report's findings in order to promote higher education. By the end 1960s a number of federally funded programs that were first conceived of in the report had already been put in place (Thelin and Wells, 2002). Although it took a bit of time for many of the ideas in the report to be implemented many of the concepts from that report are in place today.

There is another issue of great importance that arose in the 1950s that must be underscored. The changes in American race relations that began in the 1950s had a profound effect on higher education. The Supreme Court's decision in *Brown vs. the Board of Education* ushered in numerous far-reaching changes to American Education (Young & Young, 2004). That landmark decision eventually led universities to open their doors for African-American students to be able to pursue higher education alongside white students. It is during this period that for the first time a genuine interest in higher education for all Americans, regardless of race, began to emerge.

Higher Education in the 1960s

The 1960's was a period during which the Federal Government became heavily involved in higher education. There were a series of important federal programs that developed during this period that made profound changes to the higher education landscape. Some acts of governmental involvement such the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the Higher Education Act of 1965 marked a pivotal shift in higher education. The Higher Education Act provided a framework for providing financial aid to students while the Civil Rights Act opened up higher education which had profound and lasting effects on colleges and universities (Thelin, 2004). Even though the growth of community colleges and commuter schools continued to increase this is the period where the new idealized vision of a large research university was championed by Clark Kerr (1964) with his concept of the "Multiversity". Kerr's (1964) vision of the multiversity (see my previous discussion of Kerr earlier in this chapter) ideally would be a large research institution that could still provide the individualized and focused instructional attention that many students need. This perfect idealized university however, did not seem to exist during this period (and it seems we don't truly have one like it even today). The lingering problem that still remains is how to provide more open access to higher education and improve student graduation rates while providing personalized attention and keeping costs in check.

The increase in numbers of students meant there were many growing pains and some of them were felt very directly by the students. Across the country students began to voice their objections regarding taking large impersonal courses in lecture halls and the cramped on-campus housing systems at various universities. Many students rejected the

claims of virtue of Kerr's (1964) Multiversity by countering that those large universities often mean that students were isolated and distanced from the ability to engage with other students and faculty in other disciplines. At times, students were fragmented even with their own academic areas as they were spread out in separate buildings far from each other across multiple campuses. However, as Thelin and Gassman (2010) point out, those complaints although valid, did not garner much press since there were larger overarching problems during the period that lead to massive student protests.

The sixties was an extremely tumultuous period for higher education as it was, of course, for many other social institutions in the United States during that time. There were many protests fueled by student concerns over the Vietnam war, the military draft, and the civil rights movement. All of those protests lead to a new and unprecedented period during which student clashes with administrators sometimes even turned violent (Thelin & Gasman, 2010). There were protests at all the major universities in the country, including notable protests at the University of California Berkley. There were also many protests at universities such as Harvard and Columbia on the east coast as well. There were also many notable protests in and around Southern Institutions related to the civil rights movement. Thelin and Gasman (2010) point out that these events truly marked the sixties in regards to colleges and universities so much so that the period immediately conjures up images of student protests, violence, and civil unrest.

Higher Education in the 1970s

The seventies began with continued confrontations much like in the sixties. Indeed, in 1970 there were two major incidents of violence on college campuses related

to student protests. One of the most notable was the Kent State Shootings in which student protestors were killed by the national guard. This was followed by the similar killings of student protestors at Jackson State in Mississippi. These were major tragic events that changed the perception of colleges and universities (Thelin & Gasman, 2010). Universities were no longer places that were thought of as safe and removed from society's ills. They were places where young student protestors were railing against the status quo and their institutions. During this period the media seemed to highlight young student protestors who were gaining more and more media attention. The media during the 1970s also focused much of its attention on the generational divide that had grown between students and faculty at American Universities (Thelin & Gasman, 2010).

During the seventies there was increased concern on the part of state governments that many university presidents could not control their institutions. This was due the often negative publicity that occurred during the period of student protests during the sixties. Thelin and Gassman (2010) assert that this lead to the negative effect of state governments not being supportive in terms of funding their higher education institutions. None the less, the seventies was a period known for federal government investment in higher education through a series of programs developed during this era. The seventies saw several federal financial aid programs emerge that were designed to help improve access to higher education. Programs such as the Basic Educational Opportunity Grants (BEOG), which later became the Pell Grant, as well as the Supplementary Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG) were implemented during this period (Thelin & Gasman, 2010). Other programs such as the federal Title IX program in 1972 were implemented to help women and other underrepresented student groups achieve their goals of a college

education. All of these programs lead to changes on our college campuses. These programs further opened up the campuses to students that otherwise could not afford to attend college. However, Thelin and Gasman (2010) note that Even though the 1970s saw increases in student financial aid, college costs were still an issue of concern. While government investment increased, institutions saw decreases in funding overall as inflation rose and there was economic uncertainty throughout the nation.

The number of minority students also continued to increase during this period as enrollments of all types of students increased. This of course also led to further questions as to how well the universities were handling these new students. Universities began to reach out to these students during this period and it worked in providing many universities with a steady flow of students. These new students from groups that were previously underrepresented helped the universities maintain high enrollment numbers. This meant that despite the fact that many universities saw cuts in funding the increase in enrollment of underrepresented students and non-traditional students helped to ease the pain of those cuts. The increase in new students even led to growth at some institutions (Thelin & Gasman, 2010).

Higher Education in the 1980s

The 1980s did not initially see much variability from the trends that began in the 1970s. There was continued financial pressure placed on the universities during the 1980s. While many universities proved to be very resilient and found creative ways to adapt to the funding challenges they faced, those challenges could not really be ignored. During this period colleges and universities saw the beginnings of challenges to

funding that called for increased accountability measures to be in place (Thelin & Gasman, 2010). This is another trend that has continued into subsequent decades. Since the period saw marked increases in enrollment the universities also had to contend with increasing criticism that perhaps colleges and universities were lowering their standards in order to accommodate the large numbers of new students. The Universities were able, for the most part, to stave off these criticisms and they did not lead to any major changes in curriculum. However, the questions regarding standards and academic rigor that began to be asked during this period would continue to be asked throughout the next several decades as well (Thelin & Gasman, 2010).

Higher Education in the 1990s

In the 1990s Colleges and Universities finally started to see their budgets and enrollments increasing. Many universities were finally leaving behind the decreases in funding that characterized much of the seventies and into the eighties (Thelin & Gasman, 2010). During this period colleges continued to struggle with the rise of adult learners that were becoming more and more common. Many adults began to return to college to finish that degree they may not have been able to finish as young adults. There were also many adult students returning to college to start brand new careers in a different discipline or just seeking to try to keep up with advances in technology with a few courses (Thelin & Gasman, 2010). Colleges and Universities were also scrambling to keep up with accommodating the new needs of students in terms of technology by increasing the number of computers and making sure their campuses were connected to the internet.

Higher Education 2000s to the present

Once one enters the new millennium one finds that the increasing number of non-traditional students continues to increase and cause real challenges to notions of college life and the college experience. The number of students commuting to college instead of having the more traditional experience of living on campus was pervading even the most traditional university campuses (Thelin & Gasman, 2010). Some researchers and scholars in higher education had trouble reconciling the new differences in student demographics. Researchers began to divide up their work by studying only residential colleges or community colleges instead of studying them together since they were not able to easily reconcile the extreme differences in their college experiences (Thelin & Gasman, 2010).

In the new millennium there was also an increased interest in women in college. The number of female students at many colleges was larger than the number of male students making them the majority at many campuses across the country. Despite the increase in female students, many critics during this era raised concerns over the way in which male sports continued to take up a large amount of athletic budgets while female athletics were often underfunded (Thelin & Gasman, 2010). This was going on despite women making up a larger overall group of students in terms of enrollments.

The most significant change during the new millennium is something that actually started in the 1990s but truly became significant in the new millennium. In the early 1990s, the only for-profit accredited university traded on the stock market was DeVry Inc., (Lucas, 2006). Just a short decade earlier, for profit educational involutions were small and did not make up a very large part of overall enrollments. Most large colleges up until this point were non-profit entities that were bound and connected to their

communities. Now with the increase in online education, proprietary colleges such as the University of Phoenix and DeVry have become huge players in the US educational system (Lucas, 2006). The interest in online (or distance education) has been instrumental in this increase in for-profit proprietary colleges. The explosion of online education has proven to be truly transformational in many ways. Students now expect to see course offerings online or at least incorporated with their more traditional face to face classroom courses. This marks quite a significant change in US higher education. At first online institutions were ignored by the established colleges and universities, but now even most of the Ivy League Universities have some online offerings (Lucas, 2006).

All of these changes have made it very difficult to identify a discernible college culture such as had been so often studied in the past. Some students are attending traditional residential colleges, while others attend commuter institutions or community colleges. There are also many students attending fully online or for-profit institutions with mini campuses in office parks. The student profiles and experiences are now so diverse it has become quite challenging for those studying and working with college students to come to an understanding of the new undergraduate experience (Thelin & Gasman, 2010). New approaches are being developed in which institutions have refocused on co-curriculum experiences and the ways in which they can incorporate learning even outside of the classroom and integrate a student's various experiences into the classroom (Thelin & Gasman, 2010).

The 2000s will also be marked historically by extremely tragic events on college campuses. In April 2007, a student at Virginia Tech University opened fire on his campus and killed 32 people. This violent event was followed by another student shooter in

February 2008 at Northern Illinois University which left five people dead. These college campus mass shootings shocked the nation despite occurring after the much publicized Columbine school shooting in 1999 in which a group of high school students shot and killed 13 people. The shooting at Virginia Tech truly changed the educational landscape in higher education institutions. Those shootings lead to major changes in the ways in which institutions of higher education approached crisis events by attempting to lock down large multi-campus institutions based upon threats of violence (Fox & Savage, 2009). The shooting at Virginia tech also placed a much larger emphasis on mental health issues on college campuses. Before the Virginia Tech shooting many large universities had placed very little emphasis on mental health care for students, aside from a few clinics used by students studying counseling. Following Virginia Tech, many universities improved their counseling facilities and implemented emergency warning systems in which students are notified of possible threats on campus (Fox & Savage, 2009).

The historical overview I presented in this section is broken down into decades that match the time periods of the films that I were analyzed for this study. This brief overview was extremely useful to me as a researcher in order to provide a context for the films that I analyzed. In addition to allowing me to contextualize the films, the inclusion of a historical overview is linked to my theoretical perspective. From a postmodernist perspective knowledge cannot be easily separated from the larger historical context that created it.

Theoretical Framework

In order to help further establish the goals of this study and the design behind it, this section of the literature review will be devoted to a brief introduction to the theoretical framework that served as the foundation for my dissertation. For this study which is so heavily interpretive, it was essential for me as a researcher to identify the underlying philosophies, theories, and assumptions regarding knowledge that shape my beliefs regarding the aims of my research (Thomas, 2010). In this case the theoretical framework that influenced my methodological choices and my overall approach is postmodernism.

Postmodernism is not a unified and centralized set of beliefs or methodologies, but instead encompasses various viewpoints that draw from different disciplines. In spite of what some note as a lack of formal cohesion; it became extremely influential as soon as the movement began in the late 1960s (Cooper & White, 2012). Postmodernism has been influencing and changing the way qualitative researchers conduct studies by forcing them to think about aspects of research that previous scholars often ignored. Questions regarding the researcher and the role that the researcher has on a study have been brought to the forefront of qualitative research largely due to the influence of postmodernist theories (Cooper & White, 2012).

Modernism

Postmodernism emerged in a large part as a reaction against modernism which is the theoretical perspective that came before it. (Cooper & White, 2012). In order to better explain the postmodern perspective it may be useful to first briefly discuss

modernism. The term modernism can have several different meanings depending on the context. Modernism can sometimes refer to the cultural experience of living in the modernist period. In other instances it may be used in reference to a series of creative and artistic works that are associated with modernity (such as in references to modern art) (Barker, 2004). However, for the purpose of distinguishing it from postmodernism I refer to its meaning in relation to philosophies of knowledge. In relation to knowledge, Barker (2004) in his Dictionary of Cultural Studies concisely notes that as “As a philosophy of knowledge, modernism has been associated with an emancipatory project through which Enlightenment reason would lead to certain and universal truths that would lay the foundations for humanity’s path of progress.” (p-125).

From a modernist perspective, it is believed that a researcher can through detailed and critical inspection, gain true knowledge regarding an object of inquiry. The Modernist perspective relies heavily on the belief that a reliance on utilizing science and reason can lead to essential truths about the human condition that will lead to true progress (Barker, 2004). Even when the object of study is subjective in nature, a modernist would contend that there is a true hidden meaning that a researcher can expose through careful and systematic study. Modernist studies are associated with a reliance on language as a kind of neutral way of studying cultural objects that can provide objective meanings. Modernism relies on structuralist techniques of studying language in which systematic structural methods can be applied to texts. For Modernists it is through these ordered structural types of analysis that one can reveal a true understanding of a text (Bleakley & Gale, 2006).

Structuralism

The methodology that is most frequently associated with modernism (and is sometimes used synonymously with modernism) is structuralism. The advent of Structuralism is attributed to the work of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. It is Ferdinand de Saussure who is most often credited with developing the science of semiotics which is devoted to the structural linguistic study of signs (Barker, 2004). Semiotics is a structuralist endeavor in that it calls for a structured analysis of language in which the actual words are not the object of study (Barker, 2004). Structuralism takes as its object of study the actual structure of language as a system instead of the terms or what the actual language refers to. For Ferdinand de Saussure studying only the structure can lead to true knowledge and understanding (Bleakley & Gale, 2006). In Ferdinand de Saussure's concept of semiotics words themselves have no intrinsic meaning in and of themselves, instead they only have meaning in opposition to other terms. This means that for example, the term (or sign) 'boy' only has meaning in relation to its difference to the term 'girl' (Bleakley & Gale, 2006). Semiotics is an important turning point in epistemology in that it is seen as the first real move away from essentialist philosophies of meaning. Essentialism which can be traced all the way back to an Aristotelian understanding of meaning is a system where objects have an essential meaning behind them. Before Semiotics, the underlying philosophy of essentialism prevailed in philosophy. Essentialist theories contend that words have stable meanings that refer back to an essential quality of an object (Barker, 2004). From an essentialist viewpoint the term 'dog' is understood because it refers to an essential, universal, and stable notion of a dog as an animal with four legs that barks. The word makes sense because it refers back

to that essential meaning. Structuralism was a sharp break from that perspective.

However, the structuralists claim that knowledge can be derived from systematically studying language is one of the main points of contention for the postmodernists that follow.

Postmodernism rejects the modernist notion that there is empirical knowledge that can be discovered through the study of language systems. Postmodernists stand against modernism by asserting that researchers often do not uncover truths but instead construct truth. From a postmodern perspective truth is not static. Truth in the postmodern is relative and is influenced by the subjective position of the researcher. Postmodernism rejects the notion that language is neutral and instead points to the role that language plays in creating knowledge versus the modernist perspective where language merely describes knowledge.

Postmodernism is in some ways like modernism in that it is not a totally cohesive philosophical movement. It is instead is a conflux of different perspectives all placed under the larger umbrella of postmodernism. However, what keeps postmodernism together as a group is that all postmodernist theories agree on a rejection of modernism. The two most important figures associated with postmodernism are Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault (Bleakley & Gale, 2006). They both share a general association with postmodernism because they both stand in opposition to some of the tenets of modernism. However, the two theorists took rather different approaches to opposing modernism and this led to two different strands within postmodernist thinking (Bleakley & Gale, 2006).

Derrida is most notable for his development of the concept of “deconstruction”. Derrida's opposition to the modernist/structuralist claims to knowledge lead him to develop his method of deconstruction which is aimed at (as the name implies) deconstructing texts. The objective is to deconstruct and break down the opposing binaries that were identified by modernists (Barker, 2004). Since (as noted earlier) structuralists such as de Saussure believe that knowledge existed through binaries and oppositions such as 'boy/girl' Derrida's objective is to deconstruct those oppositions and show how they do not need to function as opposites. Deconstruction highlights the aspects of texts where meaning cannot be derived through binary oppositions and seeks out meanings that fall outside of those binaries (Barker, 2004). This also paved the way for later feminist theorists such as Judith Butler to deconstruct texts to show how the existence of binaries such as 'male/female' privilege one half of the binary as superior to the other and support unequal structures of power.

Foucault took a slightly different approach in opposition to modernism and focused not on how the binary oppositions of structuralism are problematic, but instead focused on how history and social context create knowledge. For Foucault, knowledge is interconnected with power (Bleakley & Gale, 2006). Foucault completely rejected the modernist belief that there is progress and rejected the idea that relying on reason alone could lead to any kind of progressive change or essential knowledge. He rejected the modernist idea that by studying language one may discover some previously misunderstood hidden meanings or truth. Foucault is most often associated with the term 'discourse' and focused much of his work on studying the discourses surrounding various aspects of humanity in order to expose how they create and enforce systems of power. In

Foucault's *Power/Knowledge* (1980), he explicitly rejects the idea that knowledge can be neutral and asserts that knowledge changes over time and is expressly influenced by structures of power. From Foucault's (1980) perspective, excluding certain claims to knowledge is implicit in preserving power. Foucault (1980) contends that by rejecting certain claims to knowledge and making them subordinate increases the legitimacy of the dominant power structure. In his work, Foucault (1980) also emphasized the importance of historical context in determining knowledge. Foucault (1980) maintains that what counts as knowledge and truth today may not remain as knowledge in the future. This concept of the historical specificity of truth further served to undercut the modernist idea of essential truths.

Both of the Postmodernist thinkers Derrida and Foucault converge in agreeing that “knowledge is not a question of discovering that which already exists, rather it involves the construction of interpretations about the world that are taken to be true” (Barker, 2004, p. 158). For Foucault the aim is to expose how it is those in power that get to decide what is considered knowledge. In Foucault's work knowledge must be contextualized by historical events (1980). Derrida remains closer to the 'linguistic turn' in philosophy and proposes deconstructing the various discourses surrounding truth claims and resisting hierarchical oppositions and binaries in order to construct knowledge.

These positions of postmodernism as I outlined above are important to my own conceptual understanding of knowledge and truth and influenced my choices in relation to how this study was conducted and what will be gained by this study. Following a postmodernist conceptual framework regarding knowledge means that as I analyzed the

films for this study I will not be discovering some underlying truth. Instead through my analysis I will help to create new knowledge regarding the understanding of higher education in popular media. My research project also includes references to critical understandings of historical movements in higher education in order to help contextualize my findings, as suggested by postmodernist thinkers that emphasize that knowledge is not stable but is instead influenced by external events.

Narrative Analysis

Given the postmodern conceptual orientation that has influenced my understanding of how to conduct this study I needed to employ a methodological system that will allow me to analyze the films accordingly. In this study I employed Narrative Analysis as the research methodology I decided to utilize to analyze the films. Narrative Analysis as a methodology is compatible with postmodern concepts of knowledge and truth as can be found in the postmodern approaches to narrative analysis found in Michael Connelly and D. Jean Clandinin (1990) in their *Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry* as well as the way in which Czarniawska (1998) applies a postmodern approach to Narrative Analysis in the highly influential book *A Narrative Approach to Organization Studies* (Creswell, 2006).

Narrative analysis is not a simple straightforward methodology because it is by its very nature interdisciplinary. It is made up of a variety of techniques pulled from different disciplines. It has been effectively used by researchers in a variety of disciplines besides Education such as Psychology, Sociology, Criminology, Political Science, and Health Policy Studies (May, n.d.). It has become a well-established methodological

choice for researchers in many fields and there is even a scholarly journal called *Narrative Inquiry* devoted just to research done using narrative analysis. Narrative analysis is also featured as a viable approach for researchers in a vast number of textbooks on research. It is one of the five approaches highlighted in Creswell's (2006) seminal book on research design *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. The book heavily influenced my own understanding of how to effectively utilize Narrative Analysis in research studies. Creswell (2006) provides examples of qualitative studies that were conducted utilizing five different methodological approaches to qualitative research and showcases their strengths and weaknesses for different kinds of studies. The five approaches in Creswell's book are 1) narrative analysis, 2) phenomenology, 3) grounded theory, 4) ethnography, and finally 5) case study (2006). After examining the different approaches in the book it became clear to me that narrative analysis is the most appropriate for this dissertation.

One of the reasons why I selected Narrative Analysis may seem obvious at first but narrative analysis is extremely useful in helping to make sense of the world through the study of stories (May, n.d.). My research project involves making sense of stories told about higher education in film. The stories in the films are presented in a narrative form so it makes sense for me to utilize a methodology that allows me to study the narratives in the films in order to come to an understanding of them. In general, all commercially distributed films present information in a way that is not random. Events occur and are linked to each other in some meaningful way and follow some sort of chronology (even if the plot moves back and forth through time). This is the narrative flow of a film and it is precisely in those narratives that I will find what will be the basis for my dissertation.

Another reason that I chose to use Narrative Analysis for this study is because as May notes “Narrative analysis can be used to examine how narratives both reflect and shape social contexts”(May, n.d., p.9) and that is one of the aspects of film I wish to address. Indeed, one of my research questions deals with the way in which the representations in film differ from the scholarly research.

Summary of Chapter Two

This chapter began with an introduction to the scholarly works that directly address American higher education and the cinema. The review entered into an in depth review of the books devoted to the subject and addressed the various contributions provided by the texts as well as the ways in which the texts leave room for further study such as this dissertation project.

The next section of the literature review examined the ways in which fictional novels have represented higher education and the kinds of scholarly research that has been done regarding them. The section provides helpful insights into ways in which representations of universities in novels may be similar or different to film. This section also suggests ways in which films could be analyzed that are similar to the manner in which collegiate novels have been studied.

After discussing depictions of academia in fiction the literature review moves on to present some of the pertinent scholarly research done regarding American colleges and universities. I began that section by discussing the ways in which several influential education scholars attempt to define the university and its changing role in American society. Scholars such as Readings (1996) note several key concepts such as the rise of

corporate influence on Universities as well as their adoption of terms such as excellence. These trends along with Kerr's (1982) understanding of the multiversity all aid in creating a composite view of American universities that will be compared and contrasted to the representations I analyze in films later in this study. In addition, Kennedy's (1997) insights into the duties of college faculty members also informed my own understanding of professors as I analyzed the films.

The next section of this chapter contained a brief historical overview of influential events and movements in American Higher Education by decade. The section is divided up into parts that mirror the decades of films that I analyzed in this dissertation. This historical overview helped me to contextualize the films and the representations that I discuss.

The literature review then entered into a discussion of the theoretical perspective that guided my choices and understanding of knowledge. In the literature review I identified postmodernist theory as the perspective that serves to support my analysis of the films and the ways in which my findings will add new knowledge to this field of study.

The final section of this chapter was devoted to an introduction to the methodology that I utilized in the study. In this section I explained why I have chosen Narrative Analysis as the methodology that informed the way I analyze the films and the ways in which my results are obtained and presented. This chapter therefore concludes the overview of the research that was conducted and leads into the next chapter which will discuss the specific methods I used to conduct the finalized study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction to Chapter Three

This chapter focuses on Narrative Analysis as the methodology that was utilized in conducting this research project. The emphasis in this chapter is on the specific manner in which Narrative Analysis was applied in this study. This includes an overview of the data collection techniques that were employed in this study. The chapter includes a description of the coding methods that were implemented and the use of reflective journaling in the process of data collection and analysis. The discussion regarding data collection will be tied to the ways in which the data was analyzed in the completed study. This chapter also includes a list of the films that were studied along with a brief plot summary of each film. That is followed by a discussion of my own role as a researcher and its impact on this dissertation. The chapter then discusses issues of data integrity and ends with a chapter summary including my final reflections on this dissertation proposal in its entirety.

Research Questions

In the literature review I examined the research that has already been done representing higher education and film and presented the ways in which this study will diverge from those studies. As I mentioned in my introduction, this study will examine the following research questions: 1) How is Higher Education as a whole represented in popular cinema (including all of its parts such as students, faculty, and administrators)? 2) Have the representations of Higher Education in film changed over time? 3) What

common themes emerge in these representations and how are those themes explored in the critical literature (if they are addressed at all)? Do the various representations reaffirm and/or subvert the dominant themes found in the research literature? I will continue to reference these questions throughout the dissertation project as I examine the films so that the project remains focused on how I will address these questions.

Data Collection

The data for this study will be the actual films. It seems necessary at this point to disclose that there are certain films that I had already considered analyzing for this study when I first began to think of this topic. It seemed relevant for me to think of films that could work in the study before even beginning since if I could not think of any films to examine that would mean I would not be able to conduct the study at all. I re-watch those films along with the new films I have selected to analyze their narratives in the same way as the other films.

The decision process in terms of what films to select for this study is essential to the study. In fact, the selection of the films is undoubtedly be the most important decision I made for this study. Despite the attempts of Umphlett (1984) when researching this project I could not just search for films in a particular genre (such as westerns or horror, for example). There is no clear-cut film genre called “films regarding higher education” that I can search for (Dittus, 2007). This made my selection process to be more laborious than it may seem at first glance. That said, Internet database searches made the process much easier for me than it has been for researchers that have worked on similar projects before me. I began the search process with the Internet Movie Database (IMDb). The

IMDb is an online database which is a vast repository of information related to films. IMDb allows the user to conduct searches for keywords such as colleges, universities, higher education, professors, college admissions, college students, college campuses, and similar terms in various ways. Searches for these and other keywords were conducted through basic keyword searches at first looking at official plot summaries provided by IMDb as well as searches through specific sections such as plot outline, plot synopsis, and plot keywords. There is also a section of IMDb with data provided and updated by Internet users through their message boards. These contain in depth plot summaries, including spoiler warnings to alert users that reading such reviews may include plot twists and turns that some readers may consider to “spoil” watching the movie for the first time. Those warnings appear so that readers know they may not want to continue reading if they have not yet seen the film.

For a researcher such as myself these plot synopsis including spoilers provide invaluable information since I will not be watching these films for aesthetic enjoyment. I am instead looking for references to specific themes and content. Therefore these in depth summaries included information to help me determine if I should watch a film that I might have overlooked based merely on a more brief and direct plot summary.

The other reference I used in addition to IMDb is Leonard Maltin's Movie Guide 2010 Edition (2009). Leonard Maltin's (2009) guide provides extensive movie reviews and plot synopsis of films that can be easily searched through for movie information and reviews in order to complement the information found in IMDb. In addition to IMDb and Leonard Maltin's Movie Guide 2010 Edition (2009), which were my main sources of

movie data, I corroborated their data with movie facts found in wikipedia.org and (Turner Classic Movies) tcm.com to further ensure the film information was accurate. Narrative analysis was not performed on the data retrieved from these Internet database sources. The movie data was used in order to assist in selecting the films to watch. The actual films are the object of this study and they will be examined using the narrative analysis techniques outlined in this paper.

The other resource that was essential for this study during the data collection phase is the website Netflix.com. Netflix is an entertainment company that for a monthly flat-fee rate provides access to rent DVD and BLU-ray Discs. As a Netflix subscriber I created a list, called a rental queue, of movies to rent which were then mailed to me so that I may watch those films. The choice to use Netflix seems obvious to me due to their extensive repository of almost every film released on DVD being available for rental. Their selection of films is so vast that it is quite unlikely that any film that I determine that I should watch will not be available for me to view. Netflix also offers a large selection of films available via Internet streaming which provide me with instant access to some of the films selected. In addition to having Netflix send me DVDs I also utilized their movie database information as a supplement to selecting films I identified from IMDb as an additional source of information when putting together the list of the films to use for the data set.

Upon searching through Netflix.com I found that some of the films I determined were appropriate for this study were not available for rental. Some either had no current DVD release or were simply unavailable for rental through netflix.com. In the case of

films I could not find on netflix.com I turned to a different website in order to find the films. <http://www.lovingtheclassics.com> is a website devoted to assist film collectors find rare and out of print films as well as older films that may have fallen into the public domain. I searched their film repository and through email contact with them I was able to ensure that I could gain access to films I identified as appropriate for this study but were unavailable to rent from Netflix.

I completed a preliminary search of films on IMDb that matched the search criteria process regarding higher education that I laid out above. Based upon that search I created a list of 30 films, 5 per decade that that I watched for this study. Those films were selected because they all contain elements related to higher education making them worthy of consideration for a study of this sort. However, after viewing the films I realized that some of the movies have such a very specific and narrow focus that they did not truly touch upon elements of higher education in a significant way. I then revised the list of films to include the 18 films that are analyzed in this study.

As alluded to earlier, in this project I analyzed and contextualized the films based upon various phenomenon regarding higher education identified in the critical literature for that period of time. Therefore, the following list of films is broken down into the decades that the film was released. The films are listed here in alphabetical order so as not to place more importance on one versus another. In the following section I also am including descriptions of the films I selected in order to further demonstrate their validity for this study. These short descriptions are close paraphrases based upon entries for each film from the following sources: IMDb.com, wikipedia.org, (Turner Classic Movies) tcm.com, and Leonard Maltin's 2010 Movie Guide (2009).

Films in the 1950s

A kiss before dying (1956). This film follows a college campus that turns to murder when he kills his wealthy girlfriend upon finding out she is pregnant and will probably lose her fortune. His preoccupation with wealth however, continues to motivate him. Then in an attempt to still marry into the family fortune, the college student then tries to date the dead girl's sister ("A Kiss Before Dying (1956)" n.d.; Maltin, 2009).

For men only (1952). The movie focuses on a college student who dies and has his death labeled as purely accidental. After the student's death a professor at the college investigates hazing incidents on the campus to see if the student's death was truly simply an accident ("For Men Only (1952)" n.d.; Maltin, 2009).

People will talk (1951). The film centers around a professor (Dr. Praetorius) who is persistently troubled by another professor who does not approve of his unconventional perspectives on medicine. Dr. Praetorius also becomes romantically involved with a student who is suicidal upon finding out she is pregnant from an old boyfriend who died in the Korean conflict. The film also highlights other professors in other disciplines such as his best friend who is a physics professor ("People will talk (1951)" n.d.; Maltin, 2009).

Films in the 1960s

College confidential (1960). The film revolves around a college professor conducting research study on student behavior. The subject of his research creates a storm of controversy because it regards the sexual behaviors of his students. Rumors begin to circulate that the professor may be having an affair with a student and a reporter

begins to investigate the professor and finds that he is hiding a secret from his past ("College confidential (1960)" n.d.; Maltin, 2009).

Get yourself a college girl (1964). Besides devoting time to her studies this film follows a young female college student that also writes pop songs. Once the college finds out the student must contend with the college's disapproval of her budding career as a song writer. She must also deal with being chased around by her publisher ("Get yourself a College Girl (1964)" n.d.; Maltin, 2009).

Where the boys are (1960). This film influenced many young college students to follow in the footsteps of the protagonists in this film who head to Ft. Lauderdale for spring break. The four young ladies in the film leave the confines of their college in the Midwest to meet boys down at the Florida beaches. There the girls meet an assortment of male students from other colleges including some from ivy league schools and grapple with the changing sexual morays of college students at the time ("Where the Boys Are (1960)" n.d.; Maltin, 2009).

Wild wild winter (1966). In this film, the male students at a small college attempt to get a friend to lure a young female student into being more accepting of the dating rituals of the men on campus. The female student (which is also the dean's secretary and head of a sorority) is seen as an influential leader for the other girls on the campus. Therefore, the male students exert great effort towards trying to convince her the male students on campus are not as bad as she thinks they are ("Wild Wild Winter (1966)" n.d.; Maltin, 2009).

Films in the 1970s

Breaking away (1979). This film follows the lives of young men who grow up and live in a college town in the shadows of the university. They are referred to in derogatory terms as "cutters" and have several negative run-ins with the more wealthy students who attend the university. One of the young men is an Italophile that is huge fanatic of an Italian cycling team and dreams of being a cyclist and wants to compete against the college students in a cycling competition ("Breaking Away (1979)" n.d.; Maltin, 2009).

Butley (1974). Set almost entirely in the office of a college professor, Butley is about an English professor whose personal life is in complete disarray leading to conflicts with students and other professors at the college ("Butley (1974)" n.d.; Maltin, 2009).

The Harrad experiment (1973). This controversial film centers on a college where some students are placed into co-ed living arrangements that are specifically designed to attempt to force the students to come to terms with issues surrounding sexuality and relationships. These situations are all part of an experiment run by one of the college's professors with his wife ("The Harrad Experiment (1973)" n.d.; Maltin, 2009).

Animal house (1978). This film was extremely influential when released and spawned a whole series of films that followed where the plot lines revolved around the antics of a fraternity house. In this film the main plot line follows a fraternity house that is extremely lacking in respectability in the campus community. They are at odds with another fraternity that is portrayed as being full of as self-righteous hypocrites. However, that fraternity has the support of the Dean at the college and they unite in an attempt to

ban the infamous fraternity from the campus. ("Animal House (1978)" n.d.; Maltin, 2009).

The paper chase (1973). Law school is the primary focus of this film in which the main character (Hart) is a student at Harvard Law. The movie centers around his relationship with his favorite professor. The professor's sharp intellect drives the student to work extremely hard to impress him and prove his worth to him. While dealing with his feelings of inadequacy in school Hart also attempts to have a romantic relationship with a woman that turns out to be the austere professor's daughter ("The Paper Chase (1973)" n.d.; Maltin, 2009).

Films in the 1980s

Back to school (1986). In this film an older wealthy (and rather crass) businessman begins attending college. He does so in order to provide support to his son who is attending college and is having a difficult time adjusting to collegiate social life and the academic demands of school ("Back to School (1986)" n.d.; Maltin, 2009).

How I got into college (1989). Applying for college is the central theme of this 80s film. The movie is the account of two high school students as they attempt to decide where to go to college. One student Jessica, is a high achieving student with good grades who is school class president. She wants to attend a small liberal arts college instead of going to a large research university which her parents alma matter. The other student has a crush on Jessica and tries to do anything possible to get into the college that Jessica selects even though his poor grades mean he is probably ineligible to attend any of the

selective universities that Jessica may wish to attend (“How I Got Into College (1989))” n.d.; Maltin, 2009).

Films in the 1990s

Higher learning (1995). All the major topics of contention regarding college life are explored in this film. The film centers on three different freshmen on campus and their various struggles. The film touches upon the controversial topics of race relations among students on college campuses by following the interactions of a freshman African American student with his Black professor and other politically conscious older African American students on campus. Another freshman student on campus, a White female student, confronts issues of gender differences when she is raped and confronts the campus community following the incident. The third student is a White male from a small town who feels lonely and confused upon entering college and ends up being recruited by a racist neo-Nazi organization that provides him with a sense of community (“Higher Learning (1995),” n.d.; Maltin, 2009).

PCU (1994). This comedic film touches upon the rise of political correctness on college campus culture. The movie follows a high school senior who spends a weekend visiting a college he intends to attend upon graduation. He finds the college divided into various factions from the politically correct students and their organizations to the ultra-conservative fraternities and other students that simply wish to party during their time on campus (“PCU (1994),” n.d.; Maltin, 2009).

Films in the 2000s and beyond

Larry Crowne (2011). The film follows a mild mannered middle aged man who is laid-off from his job and finds himself becoming discouraged after having a difficult time finding new gainful employment. He decides to return to college to improve his employability skills and enrolls at a local community college. At the college he becomes friends with several young college students that assist him with the transition back to college. Once at the college he takes a speech course with a professor that greatly influences and inspires him. The professor is undergoing a life crisis questioning why she is a professor at a community college. The two find mutual solace in each other and a relationship develops between the speech professor and her student (“Larry Crowne (2011),” n.d.; Maltin, 2009).

Van Wilder (2002). This film centers on a student at a selective residential college that has been there for seven years and has not graduated. The student is extremely popular on campus and is involved in many extracurricular activities on campus. However, since the student has been there so long and has not finished, the student’s father decides to stop paying for his college tuition. Faced with a large tuition payment, and possibly having to leave his beloved college, the student (along with the help of a foreign exchange student from India) scrambles to raise money by throwing parties and other schemes. The student also becomes romantically interested in a young woman that is writing an article about him for the school newspaper (“Van Wilder (2002),” n.d.; Maltin, 2009).

The films listed above provide the actual data I used in this study. In the next section I will explain in more detail the process I underwent while examining the films and how I utilized Narrative Analysis to study the films.

Narrative Analysis

As previously mentioned, I utilized techniques from Narrative Analysis in order to analyze the films in this study. The data analysis process for qualitative research, especially for a narrative analysis, is not something that is conducted the same way in every study (or by every researcher) (Cresswell, 2006). There is a need for the qualitative researcher to fine-tune the data analysis process in order to use what best corresponds with the goals of the research study. As alluded to in the previous chapter John Cresswell's (2006) book *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* has served as an important guide for me in this study. Cresswell's (2006) book helped me develop the procedure I used for data analysis for this study. One important concept that Cresswell (2006) notes is that "to analyze qualitative data, the research engages in the process of moving in analytic circles rather than using a fixed linear approach. One enters with data of text or images (e.g., photographs, videotapes) and exits with an account or a narrative. In between, the researcher touches on several facets of analysis and circles around and around". (p. 150). This idea of circling with the data is also partially based on the concept of hermeneutics and hermeneutic circles (Bennett & Royle, 2004). This means that instead of being linear, the notes in my reflective journal contain various data points and codes compiled in a circular fashion as I viewed the films.

Reflective Journal

Once I began to watch the films, my first step was to keep a reflective journal based upon my viewing of the films. According to Morrow and Smith (2000), using a reflective journal can add rigor to qualitative research as the investigator is able to record his/her reactions, assumptions, expectations, and biases during the research process. I annotated my own reactions to the films including how I thought I could potentially analyze the films. In the journal I identified and kept track of specific higher education themes and the ways in which they are portrayed in the films. I also used the journal to write down questions I had as I viewed the films which sometimes led me to re-watch a particular scene of a film.

The data I collected in the reflexive journal is the essential building block that my study was based upon. It is the information in my journal that I engaged with in order to analyze the films. Therefore after I finished viewing a film I examined and evaluated the data (the thoughts, observations, comments) I collected in order to prepare to use it in my analysis. The decision to review my journal notes right after I completed viewing a film is a practical one. I wanted to ensure that if any of my notes needed further clarification or more details that I may go back and re-watch the particular sequence of the film if needed before I move on to viewing the next film. At times I also paused the films as I wrote about them in my journal and then replayed parts of them as I continued journaling. This process ensured that when I wrote the final analysis my journal entries would be full of thick and meaningful depictions of the events in the films so that I could more easily analyze my findings.

Coding

As I wrote notes in my journal, I was also be coding my notes. The decision to begin coding while collecting data is in accord with Merriam (2001) who contends that the best way to analyze qualitative data is to do it simultaneously with the data collection process. I had two broad types of codes to start as I wrote in my reflective journal. I initially created codes regarding which higher education categories the film touches upon (such as students, faculty, and administration). I used these Higher Education category codes to assist me in identifying common higher education themes as I analyzed my journal entries. I also had categories regarding the narrative structure of the films that I utilized as I analyzed the narratives in the films and how they work.

Five Narrative Categories

The narrative categories I used are heavily influenced by the work of Roland Barthes (1974). In *S/Z* Roland Barthes (1974) undertakes an in-depth analysis of a short story from Honoré de Balzac called *Sarrasine*. In the book Barthes (1974) systematically explains and utilizes a system of codes to analyze the Balzac story. Barthes (1974) identifies a set of five codes for narrative analysis which are: the Hermeneutic Code, the Enigma/ Proairetic Code, the Symbolic Code, the Cultural Code, and the Semantic Code. I borrowed the five codes that Barthes (1974) referred to in his book for use in my own study of narratives for this project. Barthes identifies these codes not in order to create a rigid formal structure to conduct semiotic analysis of texts. As alluded to earlier Roland Barthes is associated with postmodernism and poststructuralism (even though he started

out as a structuralist). Roland Barthes was opposed to the idea of strict adherence to using one approach to narratives. Indeed, Barthes (1974) noted that:

The primary evaluation of all texts can come neither from science, for science does not evaluate, nor from ideology, for the ideological value of a text (moral, aesthetic, political, alethiological) is a value of representation, not of production (ideology "reflects," it does not do work: pp.3-4).

The primary evaluation of texts and ultimate meaning comes from the person interacting with the text. What matters is coming to an understanding of what is represented in the text in a way that is not predetermined by ideology or anything else. Indeed, that is what I endeavored to do in this dissertation. My analysis therefore does not mimic a strict semiotic analysis as done by earlier structuralists. Instead, my analysis allowed for me to let my data guide me to develop my ultimate findings.

The Hermeneutic code. In this section of the chapter I will explain how I utilized the narrative codes that were created by Barthes (1974). First, I began by looking at the Hermeneutic code (which I coded in the journal as [HER]). One simple way to understand the Hermeneutic code is to see it as the code which "which governs the proposing, sustaining and resolution of enigmas" (Novak, 1997, p. 27). This code can be used to identify when a narrative does not disclose all the facts "in order to drop clues in through out to help create mystery." ("Barthes Codes Theory," n.d.). Understanding this aspect of narrative structure assisted me in my analysis by helping me to pinpoint when a film provides hints to a larger theme that is not immediately articulated. The ability to identify these narrative hints was useful to me as I analyzed the content of the films.

The following is an example of how I coded Barthes' Hermeneutic code in this dissertation. In *S/Z* (1974), Roland Barthes (1974) defines the Hermeneutic code by stating:

Let us designate as Hermeneutic code (HER) all the units whose function it is to articulate in various ways a question, its response, and the variety of chance events which can either formulate the question or delay its answer; or even, constitute an enigma and lead to its solution. (p.28)

In Chapter six of this dissertation I analyze the film *Breaking Away* (1979) in which the local townspeople are repeatedly referred to as *cutters* (Yates & Levinson, 1979). The term *cutters* immediately raised questions for me as I watched the film. The word implies cutting so that when I first heard it, I wondered what is being cut and who is doing the cutting. Whenever the term *cutters* appeared in the film I coded it as [HER] for Barthes Hermeneutic code. One of the characters in the film eventually explains that the name refers to the local town's people that worked on cutting the limestone that was used to build the campus. The name *cutters* provided a clue to an important theme in the narrative of the film. The locals cut the limestone and in return the university cut-out the local townspeople by making them feel unwanted at the university. Using the Hermeneutic code to reference to the term *cutters* assisted me in identifying this theme as I analyzed the film. The sense of there being a cut between the university and the locals ultimately became an important part of my analysis and understanding of the film.

The Semantic code. The next code I utilized is the Semantic code (which I coded in the journal as [SEM]). This code was useful to me because it “points to any element in a text that suggests a particular, often additional meaning by way of connotation which

the story suggests” (“Barthes Codes Theory,” n.d.). It was particularly useful in my analysis to see the underlying message, or meaning that may be found in a film that is implied through an understanding of the significance of events outside of the straightforward plot points (Barthes, 1974).

The following is an example of how I utilized Barthes’ Semantic code in this dissertation. In Chapter six of this dissertation I analyzed the film *The Paper Chase* (1973). The film focuses on a Harvard law student and the often harsh teaching style of his professor. The film makes explicit the assertion that law school is valuable because it helps future lawyers learn important analytic skills (Parslow, Paul, Thompson, & Bridges, 1973). The professor tells his students that he is there to teach them how to think like lawyers (Parslow, Paul, Thompson, & Bridges, 1973). However, the film also suggests a theme that counters that line of reasoning. At times the film suggests that it does not matter what a student learns. The film suggests that what is important in order to be successful is simply to get a law degree. Even the title of the film *The Paper Chase* suggests that law school is all about chasing that elusive paper (the law degree). As I reviewed the film I coded [SEM] all the instances when the film suggested the degree was more important than the education received in order to help me gain a more complete understanding of the film. This was an important aspect of my ultimate analysis of the films in the 1970s.

The Symbolic Code. I also employed the use of Barthes (1974) Symbolic code (which I coded in the journal as [SYM]). I utilized this code to identify large and broad symbolic sets of meaning that emerged from the films. This category is some ways

similar to the Semantic code I mentioned earlier. However, this code does have an important difference from the Semantic code as used by Barthes (1974). This code is used to identify the use of sometimes contradictory meanings that help create an understanding of a specific theme (Barthes, 1974). There are times in a narrative thread where opposing views are presented to provide a kind of balance to a narrative (Barthes, 1974). These contradictory themes are not merely suggested by the narrative like in Semantic code. These conflicting themes are explicitly stated in the narrative. For example, this could be when a film presents a sequence of events again from the point of view of a different character. I used this code to identify these moments and see if they pointed to a larger symbolic meaning regarding the subject matter.

One example of the way I used this code was in my analysis of the film *Higher Learning* (1995). In *Higher Learning* (1995) the audience is presented with a group of students attending the same institution but that have completely different experiences and attitudes towards college. Understanding the way in which the narrative thread of the film presented an act of violence on the campus from the differing perspectives of various students was essential for me to make sense of the film. I used [SYM] when coding to identify when the film presented an event from a different viewpoint in order to help me pinpoint those changes. Understanding and tracking the multiple student perspectives that are presented in the film was crucial to my ultimate analysis of the film for this dissertation.

The Cultural Code. I also coded with Barthes' (1974) Cultural code (which I coded in the journal as [REF]). Barthes (1974) uses this code to reference the cultural

knowledge that the audience of a text relies on in order to make meaning out of a text.

This code is also interconnected with the Semantic code, however here the emphasis is on the way in which the audience may have certain scientific, ideological, historical, or cultural understandings that may influence the way the films may be understood (Barthes, 1974). In S/Z Roland Barthes (1974) defines the Hermeneutic code by stating:

this code is one of the numerous codes of knowledge or wisdom to which the text continually refers; we shall call them in a very general way cultural codes (even though, of course, all codes are cultural), or rather, since they afford the discourse a basis in scientific or moral authority, we shall call them reference codes (REF).

(p. 18)

I relied on this code heavily when conducting my analysis of the film *College Confidential* (1960). The film *College Confidential* (1960) focuses on a morals case brought against a professor for asking his students to fill out a questionnaire regarding their sex lives for a research study. The film makes numerous references to scientific knowledge and defers to scientific inquiry as a source of knowledge that can be trusted. For my analysis of the film it was essential for me to identify the moments where the narrative appealed to scientific knowledge. In my analysis of the film for this dissertation I identified the moments where the narrative appeals to scientific knowledge to help me contextualize the film within the broader cultural context of the time. This allowed me to highlight attitudes towards scientific inquiry in the social sciences presented in the film.

The Enigma/ Proairetic Code. The Enigma/ Proairetic Code [ACT] is the narrative code that Barthes (1974) uses to denote when a narrative creates a sense of

suspense or strain based upon the interplay of opposing elements in a narrative. When this narrative element is presented the viewer is left to wonder how that tension will be resolved. This code invokes the viewer's own understanding of the narrative and can be useful in trying to identify how the viewer may attempt to surmise possible endings to a narrative (and how those may differ from the actual film ending). This code directly addresses some of the possible ways that the audience creates meaning in relation to the cultural object of study (Barthes, 1974).

One example of the way I utilized this code was when I watched the film *For Men Only* (1952). Much of the narrative of the film is driven by the tension surrounding one of the main characters, a college student named Todd. When Todd speaks up against a fraternity and goes against the status quo, the plot of the film focuses on what happens to Todd. Using the code [ACT] when watching the film allowed me to note specific moments of tension in the film related to Todd's actions. The chain of events that unfolds after Todd's decision to not conform is essential to an understanding of the plot of the film and was fundamental for my analysis.

These narrative codes that I borrowed from Barthes (1974) will not be listed and identified as such in this dissertation. I used them in the coding process in order to assist me in identifying the various ways in which the narratives of the films work. My actual understanding and interpretations of the films are the final result of my study. The completed dissertation with my findings, which is told in a narrative form, includes my understandings of how these narrative elements are found and employed in the films.

One must also remember that, as I mentioned earlier, these are not be the only codes I inserted into my journal. I was also noting thematic codes in my reflective

journal. I was coding for specific higher education themes regarding what aspects of higher education the film touches upon. I utilized thematic codes such as (FACUL) to denote parts of a film that deal with professors. I also utilized the codes (STUDENT), (ADMIN), (UNIV). Those codes (and others) were used by me to identify when films reference students, administrators and the larger university structure. Once I finished categorizing and coding all my data, I began the final analysis of the films and completed writing the final study.

The Role and Background of the Researcher

How did I come to select Representations of Higher Education in film?

Selecting a dissertation topic can be a daunting task for many doctoral students. There are so many factors that enter into picking one's dissertation topic that many students spend hours upon hours fretting over their decision and whether or not they will be able to write upon their topic of choice. In my case, I entered the doctoral program with my topic already in mind, hoping that I would be able turn it into a dissertation (or at very least a substantial paper). I came into the program already having a deep appreciation and passion for cinema with a keen interest in all sorts of films ranging from classic, art-house, and independent cinema, to contemporary Hollywood blockbusters. I have always had a broad curiosity regarding film and an awareness of its cultural influence.

A broad interest in films however was not enough to make an impact when selecting a dissertation topic so the idea for my topic really started to coalesce when I began working at a community college in South Florida. Besides holding various staff

and administrative positions at the college I also taught several freshman composition courses and during my time there I often found myself reflecting on how different the college experiences of the students I worked with were from what is often represented in film. This led me to really start to think critically about the way in which higher education is represented in contemporary cinema. Research regarding the differences between student expectations of college and the lived reality of it has already been documented in research literature (Terenzini et al., 1996). Indeed, even though various theories and studies regarding student expectations about college versus their actual experiences have been written (Terenzini et al., 1996) not much research has been done looking at representations of colleges in film.

Since in my dissertation I have chosen to examine representations of higher education in film the methodological choices I made were selected to help address my questions. As I alluded to earlier the types of questions one asks not only drive methodological choices, but the questions themselves can often say something about the ideological positioning of the person asking the question. Questions often carry hints as to the ideological position of the person asking because they often contain a priori assumptions within them about the answers they are supposedly seeking (Althusser, 1979). Indeed, if one takes a sample question such as “Would Prince Charles make a good king?” (Davis, 2004) the question itself contains various clues as to the ideological positioning of the person asking, even if the person asking the question is not aware of it. That question presupposes that the monarchy in and of itself is a good thing. Seeking an answer to that question would not allow for someone to question the role of the monarchy

or much less ask if there should be a king at all (Davis, 2004). The question presupposes that there should be a king and there are qualities that could make a person a “good” or “bad” king. The question itself contains its own logic about the “truth” out there in the world.

It therefore seems important to acknowledge that one’s theoretical perspective often filters the way in which one views reality and in a study often even guides the type of data that one decides to examine. In some studies a theoretical perspective may emerge from the phenomenon being studied itself; for example, studies guided by Glaser and Strauss’s (1967) notion of grounded theory are those types of studies. In the case of this particular study my theoretical perspective (Postmodernism) is explicitly presented and applied in order to interpret the phenomenon being studied. This does not mean that I entered into the study with a particular bias. Instead, I am entering into the study acknowledging that the theoretical perspective that used in my study. However, it did not dictate the results that I found. Instead, my perspective assisted me in reaching an understanding of those results. I believe that being aware of my own subjective position and viewpoint as a researcher does not produce a liability, instead it enhances my research. Being upfront about one’s theoretical perspective also allows for it to be put up for scrutiny by readers of the study who may want to know why a particular perspective was utilized (Kilbourn, 2006).

This discussion leads me to ask the question, what then do my research interests say about me? In my case, since I have chosen to explore film as a way of attaining information about higher education it clearly posits me as being someone who believes that these kinds of studies of culture can be useful. In my own previous graduate studies

in the literature department at a large research university I frequently utilized postmodernist perspectives in order to examine issues of race, gender, and identity. I was therefore already aware of ways to utilize these methodologies in research. In my graduate studies here at Florida International University I have taken graduate coursework in both quantitative and qualitative research and found that the coursework that I took helped me to understand the various research techniques available to me as a researcher and how to select the one that best suits my study. It became especially clear as I took qualitative research coursework that methodologies such as narrative analysis would be appropriate for conducting this particular study. I also took various courses as a graduate student at the University of Miami that have assisted me in understanding how to analyze film including a course on 20th century criticism and theory in which I analyzed a film as part of the coursework. Given my experiences analyzing film and understanding of qualitative methodologies I am confident in my ability to effectively analyze the films selected for this dissertation.

Data Integrity

This study is by its very nature interpretive, but I would like to examine it for a moment from a more empirical perspective. In a qualitative study such as this the researcher is charged with providing a detailed account of how the study is conducted in order to provide a sense of trustworthiness and integrity to the study. Given the nature of narrative analysis studies there is not one generic one size fits all guide as to how to achieve that. The criteria one utilizes to judge the quality of a qualitative study must be dependent on the specifics of the study. This particular study is inherently interpretive in

nature and therefore will require a way of thinking of its goals that is specific to the study. I will be relying upon the framework provided by Whittemore and colleagues (2001), as interpreted by Polit and Beck (2010) in order to provide the reader with an understanding of how to understand and evaluate the integrity of this study.

According to Whittemore and colleagues (2001) (as cited in Polit and Beck , 2010) there are four broad categories that should be addressed by qualitative researchers , as well as six secondary criteria which may not be appropriate to every study, but can also be considered in order to supplement the four main categories. The main categories that Whittemore and colleagues (2001) list (as cited in Polit and Beck , 2010), are “credibility, authenticity, criticality, and integrity” (p. 493). The additional sub-categories that Whittemore and colleagues (2001) identify (as cited in Polit and Beck , 2010) are “explicitness, vividness, creativity, thoroughness, congruence, and sensitivity.” (p. 493). Polit and Beck (2010) point out that Whittemore and colleagues (2001) first two concepts, credibility and authenticity, are based upon Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) concepts in their framework. Polit and Beck (2010) note that Whittemore and colleagues (2001) added criticality and integrity to the first two concepts taken from Lincoln and Guba (1985) to complete their four essential primary criteria for validity. Addressing these broad categories can help the qualitative researcher to provide a vehicle for a qualitative study to be accurately evaluated.

I will address those four main categories in order to provide a sense of how they were addressed in this study. The first concept, that of credibility, may at first seem difficult to assess in a study of this sort. Polit and Beck (2010) generate questions that are relevant for assessing a study based upon their understanding of Whittemore and

colleagues (2001) and Lincoln and Guba (1985). When considering credibility, Polit and Beck (2010) ask “Do the research results reflect participants’ experiences and context in a believable way?”(p. 495). The question of credibility in this study will be answered through two of the sub-categories noted earlier, vividness and creativity. Given the nature of this study I reflected upon the events on screen from the films instead of human participants but it is still essential that I present those cinematic events in a believable way.

In this study I relied heavily on providing thick vivid descriptions of the findings and their interpretations. I was explicit in providing vivid descriptions of the events in the films and how those narratives are presented in the film. Indeed, providing thick descriptions of the plot lines in the films are a primary focus of my study. It is through the thick and vivid descriptions that I provide evidence that those narratives are important to my study. My own experience with the methods I have selected and my own qualifications as a researcher also assist in providing credibility to the findings of this study.

The interpretive nature of this study means the results are somewhat personal. This means that there was a certain amount of creativity on my part in the detailing of my findings. This study is quite different from previous studies that have been done before and therefore makes use of a certain amount of creativity through the use of impactful and evocative writing in order to convey the results of this study. It is also important for the reader of the study to keep in mind the creative aspect of this project. The study presents a new and novel way to approach studying higher education that may stand in opposition to the more traditional approaches currently used in higher education studies.

The reader must be willing to acknowledge these perspectives on higher education research that include studying higher education as represented in film.

The next category that I focus is on is that of authenticity. In this study unlike studies that focus on the use of interviews it will be easy for a fellow researcher to verify the authenticity of the films themselves. The films I explored are available on DVD or online streaming service so that anyone that wishes to verify a scene or merely wishes to view the scene in its entirety may obtain a copy of the DVD of the film. This ensures authenticity in terms of the raw content of the actual scenes of the films I make reference to in the study.

The next category I focus on is the concept of criticality. In essence, the term refers to the researcher's "critical appraisal of every research decision" Whittemore and colleagues (2001) (as cited in Polit and Beck , 2010). In the case of this study I have provided specific detailed explanations detailing the reasons why I have chosen the methodology and theoretical framework I utilized in this study. During the design phase of this study I spent much of my time reflecting on the best way to conduct this study and if I should conduct the study at all. The reader of this study will find that I was very self-reflexive in noting the difficulties and personal nature of this study as one of the factors that makes this study unique and ultimately valuable. It was indeed after much careful and thoughtful review on my part regarding how to best approach the subject of representations in higher education that I came upon selecting the methodology that is presented here. After thorough readings of the critical literature on the subject and looking at other studies I came to the conclusion that the methodology and set of procedures I have selected are appropriate and warranted for this study.

The final category of interest that Whittemore and colleagues (2001) (as cited in Polit and Beck, 2010) note is the concept of Integrity. This is very closely connected to the previous concept of criticality (Polit & Beck, 2010). I performed extensive and on-going self-checks regarding my findings in regards to the content of the films. Throughout the study I made judicious use of quotations from the films when necessary, in order to affirm the findings and provide a sense of integrity to my conclusions. As I noted earlier, my interpretations are presented through thick descriptions of the films and my findings (although personal) will be firmly found to arise from the data.

Conclusion

In this chapter I endeavored to clarify the methodology I followed in writing my dissertation and how I conducted this study. The components that I identified in this chapter are particularly significant in that they lay out the specific ways in which I conducted this research project in order to attempt to answer my research questions. The chapter included a brief reintroduction to the conceptual framework of Narrative Analysis, which is the basis for my ultimate methodological choices. This chapter stressed the way in which my methodology is linked to my larger conceptual framework and how all of the various aspects of this proposal are interconnected and come together in my dissertation. That discussion led into the most critical part of this chapter which details the methodology I followed in my dissertation and how I made critical choices such as choosing the films to study and how I coded and the films. After that I entered into a discussion of own role as a researcher and how my own background influenced me in choosing this topic and the way I have decided to conduct this research.

In the next chapter of this dissertation I start to provide the findings of this study. The chapters containing my findings are in order by decade. Therefore, I begin Chapter four with my analysis of films from the 1950s. The findings of this study continue with an analysis of films from the 1960s in Chapter five and the findings continue with the next decade beginning after that in the subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE CINEMA: THE 1950s

Students in the collegiate films of the 1950s

The 1950s has proven to be of great interest to social scientists and education scholars. It is a period during which American values began to shift away from encouraging thriftiness which was highly valued during the depression era and through World War II (Young & Young, 2004). Thriftiness was replaced during the 1950s with a new-found acceptance of conspicuous consumption. Big business and making money to buy a wealth of new consumer goods became the new American dream. The image of the business man as the dominating cultural aspiration in America was personified by Sloan Wilson's 1955 novel *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, which was quickly followed up the extremely popular 1956 movie of the same name (Young & Young, 2004).

The 1950s is also a significant period in the history of higher education due to the unprecedented amount of growth that occurred throughout the decade (Thelin & Gasman, 2010). Despite all of the growth that occurred in the higher education sector during the 1950s some scholars have found the period is not particularly noteworthy when studying college students. The youth of the 1950s are often better known by historians for how they seemingly contributed very little to American culture. Unlike the youth of the counter-culture generation which followed, the youth of the 1950s were seemingly quite accepting of the broader cultural landscape of America. This has led to them being dubbed by many scholars as the "Silent Generation" (Young & Young, 2004). Many historians have observed that the youth of the 1950s are generally considered to be one of the most conformist generations in American history (Young & Young, 2004). Despite

the lack of interest in the youth of the 1950s by scholars, there is much useful information that can be discovered regarding higher education by examining the college students of the period as depicted in popular cinema. There were several films during the 1950s that were devoted to collegiate life. These films present a more complex view of the youth and the culture of the 1950s than the scholarly work suggests. An examination of the representations of college students in the films of the period finds that the youth were certainly not silent. An analysis of these films actually finds that college students in the 1950s had much to say about the period culturally and about the changing higher education system.

In the 1952 film *For Men Only* the idea of college students being conformists is at the forefront of the plot of the film. The film focuses on Todd, a young college student at Wake College. The film begins in the dark of night with a group of young men calling Todd a scum and ordering him to jump off a pier and swim back and forth continuously until they call time. Todd swims back and forth endlessly until the young men finally call time and he emerges from the water soaking wet and exhausted. The young men are hazing Todd as part of an initiation ritual in order to be admitted into a fraternity. In the next scene of the film it is daytime and Todd shows up to class 45 minutes late. He is holding a sign around his neck with the word scum scrawled on it and holding a paddle along with his books. Todd goes through an extreme amount of physical and psychological stress throughout the film as part of the initiation process to be admitted into the fraternity. Todd endures increasing amounts of hazing culminating in hell night which is the final night of the initiation process. At hell night, the fraternity members want Todd to kill a small dog. When he refuses they ridicule him and kill the dog

anyway. Then they try to force Todd to drink the dog's blood. At that point Todd cannot take it anymore and rebels against the fraternity. Todd's act of rebellion ostracizes him from the campus community. The school newspaper ridicules him in a comic strip and students won't come near him except to bark at him and push him. The students eventually scrawl messages on the windshield of his car and when he tries to drive away from a group of students that are chasing him he cannot see past the writing and has a car accident and dies. Todd therefore ends up paying the ultimate price for his lack of conformity.

Throughout the film one question that emerges is why a person would allow himself to be mistreated and hazed so severely. Todd's girlfriend Kathy advises him to simply drop out of the running to join the fraternity. When Kathy asks Todd if all of the harassment is worth it just to join a fraternity and Todd merely replies "I think so, so do the other pledges" (Henreid & Nassour, 1952). The film makes it clear that joining a fraternity is what young college men are expected to do and that these young men are not supposed to change the system. They are supposed to merely accept the system as is and endure it.

One scholar that can perhaps be looked at to help better understand the ways in which conformity worked in the youth of the 1950s is the work of the sociologist Max Weber. Weber, along with Karl Marx and Emile Durkheim, is considered one of the founding fathers of modern Sociology (Apple, Ball, & Gandin, 2009). An important part of Weber's (1946) work is devoted to a focus on the form in which modernity has changed the ways that modern man makes decisions. In his work, Weber (1946) focused on the rise of highly structured bureaucratic organizations and their influence on society.

These bureaucratic organizations exist in different levels throughout society such as government, schools, the workplace, social organizations, and so on (Apple, Ball, & Gandin, 2009). These bureaucracies restrict the behavior of their members by relying on the concept of “instrumental rationality” (Oakes, 2003). For Weber (1946), the idea is that individuals make decisions based upon a dedication to rationality that is instrumental to the functioning of the larger bureaucratic organization. Weber’s (1946) critique of this reliance on instrumental rationality is that it is designed to do what is rationally best for bureaucratic organizations, not necessarily individuals. Weber (1946) laments this devotion to instrumental rational decision making because it replaces other kinds of rational thinking that people could rely on for decision making. The alternative style of decision making that Weber refers to is “value rationality” (1946). For Weber, value rationality takes into account one’s own personal values and experiences and judges them rationally instead of only relying on a bureaucratically imposed rationalized thinking.

Weber’s (1946) concepts of instrumental rationality and value rationality can help to explain the behavior of Todd in *For Men Only* (1952). He undergoes hazing that is against his own values, but justifies it because it fits into the needs of the fraternity. The fraternity hazes its new incoming applicants in order to teach them obedience and how to conform to the fraternity’s rules. Todd’s following the rules of the fraternity is instrumentally rational for the fraternity since it serves to promote the needs of the organization. The fraternity itself runs as a highly bureaucratic organization with a top-down power structure that is patterned much like a corporation. The fraternity runs so much like a corporate bureaucracy that they sent a letter to Todd’s mother releasing the fraternity of any responsibility if Todd were to be injured during Hell Night. The

fraternity understands that it could be liable if someone is injured and therefore asks their pledges to get this waiver signed in order to protect the fraternity. Todd's mother begrudgingly signs the waiver after first asking Todd's professor Dr. Bryce if she should sign it. Dr. Bryce advises Todd's mother to sign the affidavit because Todd would be upset if it was used against him and he is not allowed to join the fraternity.

Weber's (1946) thoughts on rational thinking styles can help to illuminate some of the behaviors of conformity exemplified in *For Men Only* (1952). However, the fact that Todd attempts to conform to the fraternity's rules is not what truly drives the film. What truly drives the film is Todd's decision to go against the fraternity and how the university community rejects him. Todd pays the ultimate price for refusing to conform to the rules. Dr. Bryce also at first conforms to the rules of the fraternity by asking Todd's mother to go along with signing the affidavit that waives the fraternity of any responsibility if there is an accident. However, Dr. Bryce also changes his mind and begins a campaign calling for a ban of all hazing practices at Wake College. His decision to go against the status quo gets Dr. Bryce into serious trouble. The university president tells Dr. Bryce that "the initiations are as harmless and American as baseball" (Henreid & Nassour, 1952). When Dr. Bryce calls a meeting to propose banning hazing the university president makes it clear that his involvement with such a campaign could cause him to no longer be in the running for the Dean's position. Dr. Bryce's wife also urges her husband to not become involved in disturbing the status quo so that he may become dean. His wife becomes so upset with his decision to fight hazing that she leaves her husband. The film makes it very clear that going against the existing power structures during the 1950s was not something that should be taken lightly. To merely find that students during the 1950s

were conformists does not tell the entire story. The story of college students during the 1950s is also the story of a period that had a very rigid social structure that tightly controlled dissent.

The collegiate films of the 1950s in many ways are about the dark side of a culture that required conformity. In *For Men Only* (1952) Todd's story serves as an extreme example of the challenges one can face when going against the status quo. In the 1956 film *A Kiss before Dying* the viewer is presented with a college student yet again serving as an example of the dark side of the 1950s. The film follows the plight of Bud, a young college student that is at first glance much like any other young man in college during the period. The ultimate goal for Bud is to make money and eventually become wealthy. He follows society's rules and attends college in order to achieve his goal. However, Bud finds that becoming rich is not as easy it seems. He wonders if there isn't an easier and quicker way to get rich. He decides that instead of graduating from college and becoming a business man he could just marry into money. While in college Bud meets Dory, a young lady from a wealthy family and makes plans to meet her family and ask for her hand in marriage. Bud's plans however, are shattered when Dory tells him she is pregnant. If he marries Dory because she is pregnant her father will disown her and Bud will not have access to the family fortune. Dory still expects Bud to marry her but without any money he no longer needs her. Since her unexpected pregnancy ruins his plans he devises a new plan. He kills Dory and makes it look like a suicide. With Dory dead, he no longer needs to worry about marrying her and can continue with his plans to marry for money. After Dory's death Bud courts Dory's sister in order to get to the family's wealth through her. This collegiate film noir puts up the ideal of a young man

with drive and ambition to become rich and takes it to its extreme. The society's rigid rules of non-conformity make it impossible for Dory to be able to marry Bud and have her family accept him (and share their fortune with him). Dory's life is effectively over for not conforming to society's rules, and getting pregnant before being married. Since Bud knows that Dory's pregnancy out of wedlock is so unacceptable then it could be totally believable that a young woman found to be distraught after boy troubles and pregnant may kill herself. She would be outside of society's norms and see no way out. He knows that the family of a young woman (especially from a wealthy background) would not make public many details of her death since suicide was also taboo. All of these rigid rules towards conformity made it easy for Bud to commit a crime and leave very little suspicion of foul play. Although Bud's actions are obviously condemned in the film they arise from an allegiance to values that were praised during the period. The 1950s praised and valued the idea of accumulating wealth and consumerism. Even though what Bud does to try to get rich is reprehensible, his end goal had he not been caught was praised by the culture at large.

College students during the 1950s are therefore much more complex than some scholars may suggest. While the students were often much more willing to conform to the broad social structures at hand, it also seems that non-conformity was accompanied by such severe punishment making resistance extremely difficult. The work of Max Weber (1958) can be used to help understand how conformity became so entrenched in the psyches of youth in the 1950s. In Weber's (1958) book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* he famously introduced the concept of the "Iron Cage" to help explicate his understanding of the effects of bureaucratic organizations on modern man.

One way to perhaps better understand Weber's ideas may be to translate from German his concept of *stahlhartes Gehäuse* into English as "Steel Shell" instead of "Iron Cage" (Wells, 2001). This more updated translation of the term can help to explain how subtly the need to conform becomes a part of one's way of thinking. A steel shell is something that placed upon a person, but is a part of the person. Much like the shell on a crab is a part of a crab modern man has a shell placed upon him by modern bureaucratic society that becomes a part of the person (Wells, 2001). The shell is not natural to man, but none the less becomes a part of man and becomes necessary to live within modern society (Wells, 2001). This metaphor can help to explain how it seems so natural for the youth during the period to conform. This almost natural urge to conform is so common that the collegiate films of the period focus on instances and dangers of non-conformity. By focusing their attention on college students that do not conform they serve to showcase how difficult it is to be a non-conformist. The films also show that resistance can be possible setting the stage for future generations to question society and attempt to break off their steel shell.

Student Services in the collegiate films of the 1950s

Student Services, sometimes also referred to as Student Affairs, can broadly be thought of as all the elements at a college that deal with students that are not instructional. While in college a student will have interactions with a number of other contingent elements at the university besides professors. Students often must engage with other areas such as admissions, registration, advisement, student deans, counseling services, and financial aid just to name a few. While these various departments and their

services are a common sight at contemporary universities during the 1950s colleges and universities did not have such clear departments and divisions set up in the same way as modern universities. Much of the research done on the importance of student services on the overall college experience and retention rates has been done subsequent to the 1950s. The interactions that students had with the other elements at the university were not seen as important and their role at the university was not clearly defined. The different areas of student services however, are essential to the overall operations of the university and the ways in which colleges interact with students.

The film *For Men Only* (1952) does not really focus much on student services. Actually, and the lack of emphasis on student services in the film serves as a clear warning of the problems that arise when colleges do not provide enough student support services. As mentioned earlier, the film focuses on Todd and his experience of hazing at the hands of the fraternity. The university's various departments are completely uninvolved and largely unsympathetic to his plight. In fact, they are not only unmoved and uncaring in many ways they are complicit in the hazing that Todd experiences. After the events at Hell Night when Todd finally rebels against the mistreatment he has received by the fraternity he is ostracized by the entire university community. The university never steps in to attempt to see if Todd is all right. There seems to be no college administrator that Todd can turn to for help. The university administration is aware of the problems Todd is experiencing since the college newspaper publishes an article about Todd in which they call Todd a coward. It is, of course, a stalwart of the first amendment that student newspapers have freedom to express themselves without censorship regarding campus matters. However, it is also within the bounds of the college

to at least reach out to a student once they published an article about him. This is especially important since the article publicly ridicules him. Someone from the university should have at least attempted to contact Todd. When the president of the university begrudgingly has a meeting to see if the fraternity did anything wrong, he immediately dismisses Todd's accusations. The fraternity shows the president a completely different dog as proof that they never killed a dog. They merely tell the president that it was all just a joke and that the gun had blank bullets. The president sides with the fraternity and actually disapprovingly hints that Todd should be careful to falsely accuse people of misconduct.

To protect the rights of students and to try to help them stay in school to graduate should be one of the highest priorities at a university. However, in *For Men Only* (1952) Wake University seems completely uninterested in their students and that they are treated fairly and equitably. Perhaps having student services staff available to intercede on behalf of students when problems arise could help in situations such as Todd's before it is too late.

Admissions in the collegiate films of the 1950s

Despite the research that has been done regarding admissions procedures during the 1950s none of the collegiate films of the period examine the college admissions process in much detail. There is however much that can be discovered by looking at the way admissions policies are presented in the films of the 1950s. The lack of interest in collegiate admissions during the 1950s by filmmakers is, in and of itself, important. What seems surprising is not just that the films of the 1950s do not delve much into college

admissions, but the extent to which they seem to ignore the process. In *For Men Only* (1952) Todd wants to be a medical doctor and is completely focused on achieving that goal. Todd is attending Wake College to get an undergraduate degree in Medicine. By the 1950s medical schools had already undergone many critical reforms regarding admissions (Ludmerer, 1999). In the 1950s medical students were already required to first receive an undergraduate degree to be able to then apply to enter medical school. This means that Todd needed to do well in college in order to later be admitted to Medical School. It is therefore quite striking that that during the film there is no mention of his need to apply to medical school in the future. The course that Todd is taking with Dr. Bryce is a course on Hematology that is clearly designed to prepare students for future training in medical school. All of this makes it surprising that when Todd's mentor Dr. Bryce does talk to Todd about his grades, it is not because he is concerned with Todd's future admissions into Medical School. Dr. Bryce asks Todd what the minimum GPA is that he needs to be admitted into the fraternity Omega Nu. The question of GPA is not raised in terms of being admitted to medical school, but instead in regards to being let into a fraternity.

The lack of interest in medical school admissions during the period is especially striking given the contentious history of medical school admissions. Medical schools were the first to try using entrance exams for admissions purposes (Borst, 2002). The MCAT (Medical College Admissions Test) introduced in the late 1920s was an important but extremely controversial part of applying to medical school (Borst, 2002). However, in 1936 the AMA's (American Medical Association) Committee on Education and Hospitals denounced the use of the MCAT as a primary way of screening medical school applicants

(Borst, 2002). It is significant to note that the medical establishment thought that relying heavily on test scores was not an effective way to select candidates for medical school. On the other hand, the debate over using standardized tests for general college admissions for undergraduates was taking a very different turn. During the 1950s, many colleges were changing their former admissions criteria in order to incorporate standardized exam scores as an important criterion for undergraduate admissions (Beale, 2012). By 1960, 75 percent of US colleges considered exams such as the SAT as an essential tool to be used in the admissions process (Beale, 2012). During the 1950s, the use of exams such as the SAT truly took hold across the country in admissions offices throughout the nation. College admissions requirements, at least in regards to undergraduates, became fairly uniform during the 1950s. This uniformity is in part due to most schools using standardized exams as part of the admissions process. Given that during the 1950s entrance exams truly became the norm, it is surprising that there is no mention of them in any of the collegiate films. Perhaps one reason why the films fail to mention admissions in much detail is related to the culture of the period. As noted before, the youth of the 1950s are known for the perception that they were often unwilling to call into question the status quo. The lack of information regarding college admissions may be due in part to a culture in which the status quo, especially from authority figures such as college officials were taken for granted. The idea that the universities know best who should, or should not, be admitted into a program was not questioned. Despite the fact that during the 1950s admissions procedures were still rather secretive, there was very little movement during the period towards questioning who was admitted into college and who was rejected.

Admissions policies during the period were largely unquestioned even though there were clearly issues regarding inequality. In the 1952 film *People Will Talk* the setting is a medical school and the film closely follows several professors at the medical school. The film does very little to lift the veil of secrecy regarding being admitted into medical school during the 1950s. There is no interest in the film regarding how the students that are admitted to the institution got there. There is also essentially no mention of the plight of African-American students that wish to become doctors. The lack of interest in admissions in the film overall implies that medical school admissions is not an issue since and that it does not deserve much attention. The reality of the period however points to definite patterns of inequality in medical school admissions. White medical schools in the south did not want to accept African-American students during the 1950s (Leffall, 2006). In the 1950s African-Americans that wished to pursue medical careers were basically limited to attending two institutions, Howard University in Washington, D.C. or Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee (Leffall, 2006). For example, in 1950 there was a grand total of 133 African-Americans that completed their medical studies in the U.S. ("A Half-Century", 2000). In order to place those numbers into perspective, one must consider that those 133 graduates made up a paltry 2.4 percent of all medical school graduates that year ("A Half-Century", 2000). To have 133 graduates from a total of 5,553 students that graduated from medical school in 1950 certainly points to ongoing problems with medical school admissions procedures during the period ("A Half-Century", 2000). Given all of the issues that surrounded admissions during the 1950s, the culture of conformity that existed during the period seems even more insidious in that it allowed for admissions policies to go unquestioned for most of the decade.

Race in the collegiate films of the 1950s

The 1950s was a period of great significance when examining race relations and its convergence with education in America. In 1954, the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown vs. The Board of Education* profoundly altered the American consciousness and ushered in the beginning of the civil rights movement (Young & Young, 2004). By deciding that "separate but equal" was unconstitutional, the Supreme Court forced Americans to confront the inequality that was a part of daily life in America (Young & Young, 2004). A year later in 1955 Rosa Parks decided to not give up her seat on a bus to a white man to huge media attention further forcing America to confront its racist policies (Young & Young, 2004). The Supreme Court's decision truly woke America up from its racist slumber. Before the Supreme Court's decision there was very little real progress towards racial equality. In the collegiate films of the period it is as if race relations were not an issue at all, or at least not an important one. In the 1952 film *For Men Only* there are no black students anywhere on camera. In fact, there are no African Americans to be found anywhere in the film. Not only are they not students, but they are not faculty or staff or anywhere else. It is as if African-Americans are invisible or simply do not exist in the world of the film. The film was only released two years before the landmark 1954 decision and by watching that film it would be difficult to guess that just two years later race and education would become such a central issue in America.

The film *A Kiss Before Dying* was released in 1956 two years after the pivotal supreme court case, and yet it seems that the film could be been made and released before the Supreme Court's decision. The film does not display any African Americans anywhere in the film. It is once again still as if nothing has changed and race relations are

not an issue on college campuses or college students simply do not care. The integration of schools was a hotly debated issue across America that led to several confrontations. In 1957 (just a year after the release of *A Kiss Before Dying*) federal troops had to be sent in to Arkansas to protect high school students as the High School was being integrated. Similarly, in the 1951 collegiate film *People Will Talk* race relations are never discussed or brought up by anyone in the film. The film which delves into questions of ethical behavior among faculty at a Medical school never sees the ethical dilemma surrounding the racial inequality around them.

The collegiate films of the 1950s signal just how difficult it was for America to accept the racial inequality that existed. The films all effectively pretend that there was no racial divide by ignoring the topic completely. In *For Men Only* which was released right before the 1954 decision there is not a single suggestion that there was any kind of debate in place regarding race and education. In *A Kiss Before Dying* (1956) which was released two years after *Brown vs the Board of Education*, it is as if that decision had never occurred. The film makes no mention of it or any kind of reference regarding any issue of race. It seems as if America's way of handling race through most of the 1950s was to simply ignore that it was even an issue of importance.

Finance in the collegiate films of the 1950s

The 1950s was a period of time that was fairly stable from an economic standpoint (Young & Young, 2004). The great wars had ended and that allowed for American colleges and universities to be able to focus more on growth and making needed improvements (Guthrie, 1983). The question that arises when one thinks of

growth is where is the money for growth going to come from. In the collegiate films of the 1950s, the answer seems to be from alumni donations. In the film *For Men Only* (1952) when Professor Bryce suggests a meeting be called with the board of regents to propose the abolishment of hazing the college president emphatically says no. The college president tells the professor that they should under no circumstances say that hazing or anything else is a problem at the college. At first, the Professor does not understand why they cannot approach the Regents to abolish hazing. The president tells the professor that he has no idea how many people are affected by bringing up anything remotely negative about the university. He tells the professor that “the alumni association would freeze up their checkbooks at the hint of something wrong” (Henreid & Nassour, 1952). The professor suddenly understands and responds by expressing his dissatisfaction that everything seems to revert back to issues with money. The president clearly replies that indeed the problem ultimately does boil down to money. He clearly tells him: “How do you think we got our new buildings? Who do you think gave the money to build this new medical school you are interested in heading? Do you think we won it in a lottery? The money came from tuition, yes, but mostly from those people on the outside. And I refuse to jeopardize the future of this college now for your sake” (Henreid & Nassour, 1952).

The president of Wake College is clearly interested in growing the college and he believes that the way to do so is to reach out to wealthy donors to give the college money. He wants the university to remain, at least to outsiders, as scandal free as possible. The great fear is that any scandal or negative publicity about the university could jeopardize future donations. Later in the film when a female student makes an accusation against Dr.

Bryce in retaliation for his rejecting her advances the college president decides to fire Dr. Bryce in order to ensure that there is no possibility of any bad publicity. The president makes it clear that any student or faculty member is expendable to the university in order to ensure the university maintains the image it cultivates for donors. The president is not even completely sure if the student's accusations are real. It does not matter to him if she is telling the truth or not. Once there is an accusation the damage is done. The decision to fire Dr. Bryce is clearly not to protect students. After the student made the accusation a faculty member tells her that he hopes that she was telling the truth. She simply replies that she plans on leaving the university the next morning. The college president and faculty member do not reach out to the student and tell her she should continue to study after the incident. If they believed she was truly a victim she should not have to drop of school. The president and the faculty do not care if she drops out or is telling the truth or not. The president is only interested in eliminating any possibly damaging press that could result from an accusation. It does not ultimately matter if the university is right or wrong in its policies, what matters for the continued growth of the university is that it can continue to court money from wealthy donors.

It seems that despite the economic stability of the 1950s colleges are still very concerned about their finances. In the films of the 1950s economic uncertainty coupled with a society that enforces rigid rules of conformity led to examples such as the one at Wake College where a college president is willing to cover up the death of a student and fire faculty over a mere accusation (that was false). All of this is done in order to maintain a pristine image for donations to continue to pour in.

Faculty in the collegiate films of the 1950s

The 1950s was a period of time during which America faced a shortage of college professors (Thelin, 2004). This shortage was partially due to the large influx of new students that started entering college as a result of the GI Bill (Thelin, 2004). College professors during the 1950s faced new pressures since they often had to teach more courses than usual to accommodate all the new students. One of the most influential books regarding the professoriate and the pressures placed upon them is Donald Kennedy's *Academic Duty* (1997). Kennedy's book provides valuable insights into the duties of a college professor and the ways in which universities and faculty have changed over time. In the book Kennedy reminisces on his own experiences as a graduate student at Harvard during the 1950s and shares his vision of what a better university should look like. Kennedy's (1997) book provides several examples of what his ideal university would look like but focuses on one main tenet: "Its central feature was the nearly complete collapse of most of the hierarchical traditions" (p. 285). Kennedy's (1997) book points to the 1950's university as a place where the largest issue for faculty is not related to students or academic work, but rather the hierarchical and bureaucratic organizational system of the university.

Kennedy's (1997) view of the 1950s university as having a highly authoritarian administrative structure can be seen in the collegiate films of the 1950s. The films of the 1950s present college professors skillfully juggling a number of different duties at the college without issue in regards to students and academic life. In the film *For Men Only* (1952) one of the main characters in the film is Professor Bryce. The film first introduces the viewer to Dr. Bryce in a classroom setting. The scene begins with Dr. Bryce in front

of a group of students looking into microscopes working on a class project. Dr. Bryce walks around the room checking on the students and their progress on the assignment. He quizzes students to see if they are grasping the course content and provides encouraging words to the students as they continue to peer into their microscopes. When Todd shows up to class late he takes Todd aside and speaks to him candidly about his grades. He knows Todd is under stress while he is a pledge for the Omega Nu fraternity and asks him to open to him about his troubles. He tells Todd that he can confide in him not just as a professor but as a friend. Dr. Bryce is presented as an effective professor that mentors his students and has an open and trusting relationship with them.

The problems for Dr. Bryce begin when he tries to stand up for Todd and rallies against the fraternity hazing of Todd. The university pushes back against Dr. Bryce and his attempts to change the university's approval of hazing practices. The university does not want to make any changes despite Dr. Bryce's clear arguments on the matter. The university would prefer Dr. Bryce, an effective professor; leave the university rather than make any changes or concessions to him.

However, in the collegiate films of the 1950s, the issues and conflicts that faculty are confronted with are not only related to the university's administration. The films also point to the difficulties and rivalries that faculty members face in relation to each other. In *For Men Only* (1952) when Dr. Bryce meets with other faculty members in order to garner their support against hazing the other faculty members refuse to support him thinking of their own careers and their own self-interest. When Dr. Bryce decides to continue his fight against hazing his wife warns him that he is not the only professor that wants to become Dean and that many other professors are courting administrators for the

Dean's position against him. The faculty members in *For Men Only* are presented as motivated mostly by their own self-concern and are in competition with each other for promotions and accolades.

In the 1951 film *People Will Talk* the viewer is presented with a similar representation of rivalries among faculty members. The film focuses on the travails of Dr. Noah Praetorius, a faculty member at a Medical school. The film features the uncertainty Dr. Praetorius faces at the university as he hears rumors that another colleague is attempting to file some sort of charges against him at the university. The film opens with professor Elwell running late to class and Dr. Praetorius stepping in to cover the lecture until he arrives. The reason Dr. Elwell is late to class is that a woman is in his office wishing to have a meeting with him. That meeting was set up by a private investigator that Dr. Elwell hired to find out anything he could about Dr. Praetorius' past that could be used against him. The woman is a former housekeeper for Dr. Praetorius and Dr. Elwell interviews her in an attempt to uncover any unsavory details about his past that could be used to discredit Dr. Praetorius. Dr. Elwell is out to ruin Dr. Praetorius' reputation at the university and hopes to have him forced out of the university in disgrace. The university's administration instead of stopping the petty rivalry allows Dr. Elwell to hold a misconduct trial against Dr. Praetorius. The charges are eventually cleared up during the hearing, but the overall message is that faculty members are not to trust each other and that they make professional gains as much by discrediting each other as they do by actually making new academic strides in their field.

Kennedy (1997) makes the case in his book for the perfect university where he would like to teach. His vision of a university lacks the strict bureaucratic structure of the

1950s university. The difficulties that faculty members encounter with a rigid hierarchical administration are evident in the collegiate films of the 1950s where college administrators want to fire faculty that don't keep quiet and allow professional rivalries to flourish. The collegiate films of the 1950s however, point out other problems for faculty that Kennedy's (1997) idealistic "Good Guy U" (p. 285) does not seem to address. The films present self-interested faculty members locked in rivalries for promotions and those problems with faculty campus culture may not necessarily be corrected by mere reform of bureaucratic structure.

Gender in the collegiate films of the 1950s

The 1950s is a period during which the roles of men and women were highly regulated. Women during the 1950s were attending college and earning degrees but society did not have the same expectations for women once they graduated college when compared to men. For example, during the 1950s, female graduates from Radcliff would often enroll in a private secretarial school on campus upon graduation in order to ensure they would have skills that would be useful in the workforce (Rimer, 1997). The message seems clear; women could aspire to be secretaries but were not to aspire to be leaders. This was happening at Radcliff which was the top school for women during that time, since during the 1950s women were not yet being admitted as undergraduates at Harvard University (Rimer, 1997). However, even though women were not yet officially admitted as undergraduates many women were taking courses at Harvard during the 1950s through Radcliff College (Rimer, 1997). Harvard shared courses and resources with its neighbor Radcliff College setting the stage for Harvard to eventually merge Radcliff into Harvard's

fold (and finally become coeducational) in 1977 (Rimer, 1997). Women attending Radcliff during the 1950s were therefore effectively taking courses at the nation's top university, but were not technically Harvard students. Women during the 1950s were making strides in higher education, but it seems that the society was not ready to acknowledge their achievements and contributions.

The representations of female college students in the films of the 1950s can help to provide an additional lens with which to understand the roles ascribed to women in higher education during that period. In the film *A Kiss before Dying* (1956) the film introduces the viewer to Doris a female college student that comes from a wealthy family and is attending the fictional Stoddard University. She is dating a fellow student Bud and becomes pregnant with his child. This poses quite a problem for Bud who is only dating Doris in order to marry into her family and have access to her wealth. As mentioned previously, if Bud and Doris marry due to her being pregnant her father will disown her and Bud will not be able to acquire any of the family's wealth. Since Doris is no longer useful to Bud and his ambitions for attaining wealth he kills her so that he can try and date her sister instead and access the family fortune through her. Doris' sister suspects that her sister's death was not a suicide and elicits the help of Doris' college tutor in investigating her death as a murder. Doris is portrayed as a naive young girl that is in college to meet a man in order to get married. The film presents Doris' main ambitions in life to be marriage and motherhood. The film never makes note of any career ambitions Doris may have, or what is expected of her after she graduates. The only expectation for Doris seems to be that she will marry and have a family. It seems a wealthy young woman of her social standing is expected to attend college but the goal is not a career but

instead preparation for marriage and motherhood. It also seems significant that the person that helps investigate her death is her tutor. The fact that she has a tutor clearly lets the viewer know that she needed help with her studies and further emphasizes the idea that she was not to be perceived to be at the top of her class scholastically.

Similarly, in the film *For Men Only* (1952) the focus of the film is clearly on the male college students. The only female college student that the film spends much time focusing on is Tracy. Tracy is presented as an attractive young lady that comes from wealthy family. The film is unconcerned with her as a student and only focuses on her as an object of desire for the men. She is portrayed as dangerous for expressing her sexual desires. The portrayal of Tracy is quite an unflattering portrayal of a female college student. She shows an interest in her professor Dr. Bryce and despite his being married attempts to seduce him. When Dr. Bryce wants to hold a rally to call for the abolishment of hazing practices on campus Tracy offers him her father's mansion to hold the meeting. After the rally, she finally confesses to Dr. Bryce that she wants a sexual relationship with him and he rejects her. Upset that he rejected her she turns against Dr. Bryce and brings up a fake charge against him claiming that he made a sexual advance towards her. The charge leads to Dr. Bryce being let go from the university on morality charges.

Both of the female characters, Tracy and Doris, share certain similarities. They are both white females from privileged wealthy backgrounds. There are no representations of working class female students in films from the 1950s. This is quite different from the male college students represented in film. Bud in *A Kiss Before Dying* (1956) is definitely not wealthy; he is in college to make something of himself. Even if his wealth comes from marrying a rich woman it is clear that wealth is the ultimate goal,

regardless of how he attains it. Todd in *For Men Only* (1952) is also presented as middle-class and is in college studying hard to become a doctor and raise his socio-economic status. It seems that while college is seen as a way for men from lower socio-economic classes to achieve upward social mobility women are a different matter. Women in college during the 1950s are mostly represented as already wealthy and are in college not to gain a career but instead meet a suitable future husband.

Summary

This chapter detailed my findings as I examined the various representations of higher education in the films of the 1950s. In this chapter I analyzed the following films *A Kiss before Dying* (1956), *For Men Only* (1952), *People will talk* (1951). In my analysis of the films I focused on seven main themes in higher education. The themes I examined were Students, Student Services, Admissions, Race, Finance, Faculty, and Gender. My analysis of the films in this chapter included references to the critical scholarly works of the period in order to help contextualize my findings. This chapter also made reference to the ideas of scholars such as Max Weber (1946) to provide additional perspectives to help explicate my findings. The next chapter delves into my findings when examining the representations of higher education in the films of the 1960s.

CHAPTER FIVE
HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE CINEMA: THE 1960s

Students in the collegiate films of the 1960s

The 1960s is a period of time that is frequently associated with vast cultural change in the United States. College students during the 1960s are very often associated with the counterculture movement that was burgeoning during this period (Bailey & Farber, 2001). News coverage in both print and television during the 1960s focused a vast amount of attention on American youth and referred to anyone that was sympathetic to the counterculture as "hippies"(Bailey & Farber, 2001). The hyperbole found in press coverage regarding youth culture during the period emphasized the gulf that had developed between college students and the rest of society. Small glimpses of ideas from the counterculture movement could be found creeping in to the popular cinema of the 1960s. In the wildly popular science fiction film *Planet of the Apes* (1968) one of the main characters proudly proclaims "Remember, never trust anybody over 30" (Jacobs & Schaffner, 1968). That line is a direct reference to a quote from the 1960s student crusader Jack Weinberg who first coined the phrase in 1964 (Cohen & Zelnik, 2002). Jack Weinberg was an activist at the University of California Berkley that was part of a protest movement that complained that UC Berkley was limiting the free speech rights of students (Cohen & Zelnik, 2002). The 1960s counterculture movement did have a huge and lasting effect on popular culture in the United States. The influence of the counterculture was especially noticeable in music. The influence of the counterculture on popular music has been well documented by historians and musicologists (Bailey & Farber, 2001). In cinema, it took a while for the studios to be heavily influenced by the

youth counterculture. It was not really until a short period of time from 1969 to 1971 that Hollywood began to release films that were actively geared towards the youth market and acknowledged the counterculture movement (Bodroghkozy, 2002). The most important and well known of the movies associated with the counterculture was *Easy Rider* (1969). The film which followed two young men as they rode their motorcycles across America was extremely influential in bringing the ideas of the counterculture into American cinemas. It is important to note however, that *Easy Rider* (1969) does not address college students during the 1960s. Despite the influence of the youth counterculture on college campuses the films of the 1960s do not address the influence of the counterculture on higher education.

By merely watching the collegiate films released during the 1960s it would be difficult to tell that the counterculture movement had any influence on college campuses. None of the collegiate films released during the 1960s make any reference to the countercultural movement of the period. In the film *College Confidential* (1960), the students are certainly not associated with any kind of countercultural movement. The students are never seen engaging in activities that would call into question the status quo. The students represented in the film all seem to be interested in having fun and relaxing together with most of their conversations revolving around sex and dating. They do not discuss politics or society in any meaningful way. They do not make any significant statements regarding the world even though the plot of the film focuses on a survey that is meant to gather information regarding student views on contemporary society.

In the film *Where the Boys Are* (1960) students are also represented as completely uninterested in questioning the existing state of affairs. Much like in *College Confidential*

(1960), the only area in which the students seem to differ in any substantial way from the older generation is in regards to their views on sex and morality. The female co-eds in *Where the Boys Are* (1960) seem preoccupied with sex and espouse a much more progressive view of sexuality, including pre-marital sex, then would have been seen during the previous decade of the 1950s.

In *Wild Wild Winter* (1966) much like in the other films, the students are rather conventional. It is their preoccupation with sex and their more liberal views regarding pre-marital sex that is the only aspect of student life that is remotely controversial. All three films represent students in a very similar way presenting students that are carefree and uninterested in promoting social or cultural change other than perhaps easing some of the taboos and restrictions regarding sex.

It seems that once the youth counterculture movement became an undisputed force in American culture Hollywood released films that moved away from college campuses. In the popular 1967 film *The Graduate* there are clearly references to the counterculture's influence on American youth. The main character, Benjamin Braddock, is a recent college graduate that displays a general feeling of mistrust of American institutions. That distrust emerged as an influence of the youth counterculture. However, the film is set just after Benjamin has already graduated keeping the film's story away from the college campus. The plot of the film focuses on Benjamin having an affair with an older woman. In the film Benjamin presents much of the angst felt by the college youth of the period, but the film focuses on him after college staying away from the college campus.

Even though films in the late sixties such as *Easy Rider* (1969) and *The Graduate* (1967) bring some of the concepts of the youth counterculture to the big screens they did so away from college campuses. This means that, despite the youth counterculture having had a profound effect on college campuses, filmmakers were not interested in its effect on colleges and universities. When it came to examining college campuses filmmakers during the 1960s preferred to focus on the sexual mores of college co-eds and not tackle the cultural changes that were occurring in youth culture during the period.

Student Services in the collegiate films of the 1960s

The 1960s is a period of time when even though universities were already beginning to offer various services to students to help them succeed there seems to have been very little awareness of them. The collegiate films of the 1960s seem to focus on faculty as the only aspect of the university that students ever come in contact with. In the film *College Confidential* (1960), the only employees of Collins College that are represented are Professor McInter and his superior Henry Addison (the chair to the Sociology department). It seems striking that there is not a single dean or other college official represented anywhere in the film. One reason it seems striking is that the film showcases the trial of Professor McInter for corrupting his students. The trial makes news all over the country bringing to the small college town a bevy of famous reporters to cover the hearing. The trial is certainly big news in the small town with the hearing site full to the brim with curious townspeople as spectators. The Magistrate actually has to send a woman away from the crowd who brings her seven year-old daughter with her to watch the proceedings. The magistrate sends her home because he says the topic of the

hearing is for adults and is not appropriate for a seven year old to hear. Given that the entire town, as well as big city reporters, are showing interest in the hearing it seems odd that the university administration is not more invested in the hearing. One may expect that perhaps the college president (or some other important official) would be at the hearing, after all, it is one of their professors that is on trial. The trial is highly publicized and the results of the trial could potentially be damaging to the college's reputation. At the trial the only people present from the college is Professor McInter himself and his boss Henry Addison.

In *College Confidential* (1960) one of the students, Gogo, is presented as an exchange student yet there is no indication that the college provides any services to assist her in the transition to being in the United States. There is no indication in the film that there are no services other than the actual college courses that are provided to students. While in *College Confidential* (1960) college officials and administrators are oddly absent from the film they are represented in different 1960s collegiate films. In *Get Yourself a College Girl* (1964), the dean and the college's board of trustees are represented in the film. However, in the film they are certainly not there to help students. The plot of the film centers on a young female student that is also a singer songwriter. The college dean and board of trustees find out about her music career and are scandalized by the lyrics of her songs. They meet with her and threaten to dismiss her from the college over her indecent music in order to prevent a possible scandal at their institution. The college officials represented are all much more concerned with upholding rigid moral standards and enacting strict discipline than with what is best for their students. The college's extremely conservative administration is represented as

attempting to stifle creativity and the freedom of speech of students instead of trying to provide services to assist them. The college's reaction against the student's somewhat feminist lyrics provide the viewer with a sense that college administrators during the 1960s are averse to change and opposed to promoting student self-expression.

In the collegiate films of the 1960s, college officials do not appear at all to defend a professor against a morality charge related to his work. The only time college officials are present in a film is when they are there to punish a student for enacting her rights to self-expression. The lack of interest in student success by college officials in these films seems to be at odds with the federal government's policy during the period. The 1960s is a time during which the federal government was interested in promoting student success and access to a college education. In 1963, the Federal Government started a program to promote building construction at what were referred to as "developing institutions" (Brock, 2010, p. 111). Most of the institutions that were recipients of those funds were historically black colleges and universities and community colleges (Brock, 2010). In 1965, the Higher Education Act made for the first time provided financial aid to needy students that wanted to get a college degree (Brock, 2010). All of these changes pointed to a government interest in funding programs that promote student access to higher education and student success. Given that all of these programs were geared towards funding changes in higher education it is interesting to note that the institutions represented were unconcerned with student success and were represented as extremely conservative and opposed to change.

Admissions in the collegiate films of the 1960s

The 1960s was a period that saw great changes in college admissions. This is the period that saw the emergence of admissions officers in colleges across the country as a real profession (Howard, 1987). There were several reasons why the 1960s saw the emergence of admissions officers as essential to the university, but the main reason was the extraordinary growth in higher education that was experienced during the period (Howard, 1987). The Admissions officers during the 1960s were quite different from the modern admissions officials we see at universities today. The belief during the 1960s was that admissions officers should not only be experts in deciding who gets to attend college but that they also should be an integral part of the university's academic programs as well (Howard, 1987). A survey of admissions officials conducted in 1963 found that 50% of those in charge of college admissions were also faculty members teaching students (Howard, 1987).

Admissions officials during the period were in charge of not just accepting and denying students but were also involved in portraying an image of their particular university as the right kind of institution for certain kinds of students. In previous decades, students merely attended the university that would accept them, assuming they could afford it. Students during the 1960s were faced with the newer challenge of attending the right college for them. This denoted a kind of cultural shift in the college admissions process. Since there was so much growth in college admissions it was believed that students needed guidance in being directed to the right institution. At Harvard a faculty report on admissions from 1960 criticized the university's brochures and publicity items (Thelin, 2004). The faculty report warned that the "chilly Puritan

prose” (Thelin, 2004, p. 47) found in their promotional materials sent out the wrong message. The way the pamphlets and promotional materials were written seemed to the faculty to imply that Harvard only wanted conservative (and perhaps rich New England) students. Those materials made Harvard seem old fashioned and not open to a new more varied student body. Even Harvard was behaving like all the other institutions during the 1960s and wanted to take advantage of all the new students entering the higher education system.

However, all of these important changes that were occurring surrounding college admissions during the 1960s seemed to not be visible in the public imagination during this period. None of the collegiate films of the 1960s really mention college admissions in any significant way. It seems that despite the changes that were occurring internally at universities regarding admissions the broader culture did not yet perceive of college admissions as a subject of great concern. In the film *College Confidential* (1960) there is no mention of the process to be admitted to Collins College or any reference as to how students get admitted to the institution. Despite the fact that overall the films do not directly depict admissions policies and procedures they do offer an important glimpse into the perceptions of how different students select to attend different universities. The film *Where the Boys Are* (1960) can provide some insight into how the broader culture believed that some students select attending a particular school over another. In this wildly popular film four female college students from an all-female mid-western university decide to go together to Spring Break in Ft Lauderdale, Florida. Ft Lauderdale Florida was the capital of spring break throughout the 1950s and 1960s until the city actively moved to change its reputation and other cities in Florida and elsewhere started

to pick up spring breakers leading to a variety of spring break destinations for today's college students.

On the way to Ft Lauderdale one of the girls in the film, Melanie, expresses what she would like to happen on spring break. She acknowledges that she wants to go down to Ft Lauderdale to meet boys. However, she is not just looking to meet any boys; she has a specific type of boy she would like to meet. Melanie specifically tells her friends in the car that she wants to meet "an Ivy Leaguer, Wouldn't that be the end? A date with an Ivy Leaguer" (Pasternak & Levin, 1960). She is actively hoping to go on dates with an Ivy-league boy further emphasizing the idea that these are the boys that are the most desirable for college girls. The film lets the viewer know that the ivy-league boys are of a higher status than the other boys. One of the leading male characters in the film is Ryder Smith who is presented to the audience as an extremely sophisticated and charming rich young man who attends Brown University (an Ivy-League institution). The film makes it clear to the viewer that rich young men are the ones that attend Ivy-league schools. In contrast to Ryder the other leading male character in the film is TV Thompson. The young women meet him on the side of the road hitchhiking holding a sign that says he wants to get to Ft Lauderdale. TV reveals that he is a junior at Michigan State. The contrast between the two young men could not be greater. TV is found hitchhiking to Ft Lauderdale while Ryder is vacationing in comfort. The film lets the viewer know that when it comes to admissions as students are selecting where to go to school the rich students are the ones that apply to and attend the Ivy-League schools while middle class students are more likely to attend a State university. This is an important distinction because during the 1960s it began to become clear to academic scholars that admissions was not simply a

one-way street where students were admitted or denied by an institution (Howard, 1987). Admissions also involves students selecting where they wanted to attend college as well. This nuanced change which could be seen reflected in the Harvard report where the faculty wanted the tone of their admissions materials updated marked a substantial difference in thinking about college admissions (Howard, 1987). The films of the 1960s seem to acknowledge that students select where to go and the films portray that selection as largely based upon socio-economic status. The films depict wealthy students attending ivy-league institutions while other students seem to select to attend state universities. This trend in self-selecting based on socio-economic status is in many ways still an enduring theme that has continued to influence admissions decisions for students across the country to this day.

Race in the collegiate films of the 1960s

The 1960s is a period that saw change and upheaval in terms of race relations in the United States. Many historians see the civil rights movement as beginning in 1954 with the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown vs. the Board of Education* which called for an end to segregation in schools. The civil rights movement grew and gained momentum during the sixties leading up to the voting rights act in 1965 which is generally considered to be the most important piece of civil rights legislation enacted in the US (Bailey & Farber, 2001). Given all the important changes that were occurring in the 1960s regarding the way Americans thought about race relations and the way it affected college campuses, it is interesting to note that the collegiate films released during the period do not seem to be concerned with issues of race. In *College Confidential* (1960),

the film does not focus on race in any significant way. A viewer watching the film would be hard pressed to see any indication in the film that it was made during a time when the United States was actively re-evaluating the way that African Americans are treated. The film does however provide glimpses into the way in which American college students thought about people of color. In one scene in which Sally is describing professor McInter's home she tells them that "it's fixed up with books, records, do it yourself furniture, wood carvings, only I don't think you can call it carvings because they are savages, aborigines, man calls them creatures of the primeval" (Zugsmith, 1960). The description certainly points to a Eurocentric and racially biased view of people of color. She refers to aborigines as savages implying that they are uncivilized. The description even goes so far as to call them creatures not even referring to them as humans in order to further emphasize the point that they are so unlike the civilized European white man that they are creatures (more like animals) instead of human. When Sally's father goes to the college to confront Professor McInter for supposedly keeping his daughter out all night he tells the professor that things are certainly different from when he was in college. Professor McInter replies that "oh yes indeed, customs do change, not as formal as in your day or mine but, I suppose the basic purposes, drives and instincts are the same" (Zugsmith, 1960). The professor tells him that college has changed because it is less formal, but interestingly fails to mention that there have been controversial changes related to the opening up of higher education to blacks. In fact, when watching the film it would seem that the civil rights movement had not begun yet since there are no African-American students anywhere in the film. There are no African-American students, faculty, or anywhere to be found in the film. There also do not seem to be any African-

American college students on spring break in the 1960 film *Where the Boys Are*. It seems the only time an African-American is prominently featured in a collegiate film during the 1960s is in the 1964 film *Get Yourself a College Girl*. In that film, there is a musical scene featuring the famous jazz musician Jimmy Smith playing the organ. It is unfortunate that one of the few representations of an African-American in a collegiate film is of a musician and not a student. It seems that filmmakers during the 1960s thought there were no African-American college students. The films therefore suggest that African-Americans during the 1960s were making a mark in music, but not academics.

Finance in the collegiate films of the 1960s

The 1960s is a period during which college construction was definitely on the rise with colleges focusing much of their attention towards garnering the finances needed to fund growth for new buildings. There was so much physical growth on college campuses during the 1960s that Thelin (2004) notes that a journalist looking back on the period thought that the protests which are often associated with the period are not truly representative of college campuses in the 1960s. The journalist proposed that perhaps a better symbol for colleges during the 1960s would be a construction crane in order to denote the expansive physical growth of colleges during the decade (Thelin, 2004). All of the construction that occurred during the period is of course tied to the funding needed to pay for it. The 1960s is a period during which universities spent much of their time courting federal funds in order to grow their intuitions. Given all of the growth that historians and scholars note was occurring on college campuses it is interesting that the collegiate films of the 1960s do not make reference to construction and the finances

needed to support that growth. None of the collegiate films of the 1960s feature buildings under construction or make reference to institutional finances. There is however, discussion of college finances in the films of the 1960s, but unlike in other decades it is all related to college student finances, not institutional finances.

In the film *College Confidential* (1960), the first student the audience meets is Sally Blake when she comes home at 3 AM after staying out late with her boyfriend. Throughout the argument that ensues Sally and her parents refer to the issue of money and college several times. During that argument as Sally tries to blame her professor Steve McInter for coming home late, she is surprised that her father does not know anything about Sociology. Sally asks her father “I thought you went to college” (Zugsmith, 1960). Her father tells her that he had to drop out after one semester because he and his parents could not afford to continue to pay the tuition in order for him to stay in college. He complains to his daughter how expensive it is to pay for Sally’s clothing and college expenses. He tells her that if they could afford it they would have her stay in a dorm on campus which might provide more discipline and tighter curfews than what she receives at home. Clearly the Blake family is making a sacrifice just to pay the tuition to send their daughter to college.

The Blakes however, are not the only ones in the film that mention the financial pressures placed on them by paying for college. After Sally gets professor McInter in trouble by lying about being out with him she does not want to attend a party with the other college kids at his home. Her boyfriend however insists that they go anyway because he is having a lot of financial pressures and going to the party would provide free entertainment and free snacks for them. Sally’s college boyfriend does not have the

money to take Sally out on a proper date and therefore would rather take Sally to the party despite her being upset with the professor. All the college students in the film are displayed as having fun at the lake by the professor's bungalow. The students are never seen going anywhere that would cost them any money. All their free time seems to be spent in groups together by the lake which is a place they could go to for free to congregate instead of say a coffee shop, restaurant, or other establishment where they would have to pay to be there. When Professor McInter contemplates leaving town rather than going through the trial brought against him he calls for a taxi to take him to the bus depot. Much to the professor's surprise the taxi cabdriver asks him about his research study. When the professor asks him how he had heard of it the cabbie tells him that he is a student at Collins College. The taxi driver tells him he has to drive a Taxi to pay for his tuition. He tells the professor that if he had the time he would have volunteered to help him with his research study, but that he is currently too busy working to pay for tuition to help.

Faculty in the collegiate films of the 1960s

A college professor has as his/her primary role at a university to be an educator. It is however, also important to remember that research universities in the United States are entrusted not only with educating new students but with creating new knowledge as well. Therefore, Professors at research universities routinely engage in various types of research projects in addition to their teaching duties. Many scholars such as Donald Kennedy (1997) have examined the research responsibilities of college professors in great detail. Despite the fact that professors do much more than merely teach most

collegiate films focus on faculty members in relation to their role as instructors. The cinema rarely represents college professors engaged in research. The 1960 film *College Confidential* is actually the first film that showcases a college professor heavily engaged in research. The plot of *College Confidential* (1960) actually focuses mostly on Professor McInter's research project instead of his teaching. The trial that is at the center of the film stems from his being charged with corrupting the morals of minors. The supposed corruption of morals occurred not in a classroom; the supposed corruption charge stems from the questions the professor asked his students as part of his research study. Professor McInter's sociology study on the attitudes and social habits of college students is at the center of all of his problems. The film *College Confidential* (1960) highlights the way in which research, in the social sciences in particular, has evolved since the 1960s.

One important aspect of research that is showcased in the film is who gets to approve the kinds of research studies that are done. In the film when a parent complains about the professor's questionnaire as being too racy his girlfriend urges him to stop conducting the study. Professor McInter talks it over with his boss, Dr. Addison, the chair of the Sociology department. Dr. Addison suggests he dispassionately consider stopping the study to avoid trouble but he does not force him to end the study. During the trial the professor notes that the questionnaire he was using was approved by the head of his college department of Sociology. In fact, in the film Dr. Addison is the only person at the university that professor McInter ever consults with about his sociological study. This seems quite different from what a contemporary researcher in a sociology department would encounter.

Any contemporary research study that involves human subjects conducted at a university in the United States would be subjected to some sort of Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval before being allowed to begin (Schrag, 2010). IRB committees are broadly entrusted with ensuring that protocols are in place to ensure human subjects are not harmed during a research project (Schrag, 2010). The need to protect subjects in research studies was a burgeoning issue during the 1960s, but did not really become a serious concern until the 1970s (Schrag, 2010). The need to be protected from research studies entered the public consciousness after the Tuskegee syphilis experiment where it was revealed that African-Americans with syphilis were withheld penicillin (a common treatment) in order for researchers to continue to study the disease (Schrag, 2010). Some of the participants of the Tuskegee study (which ran from 1932 to 1972) died leading to calls for reform in medical studies (Schrag, 2010). Although the use of IRBs emerged mostly from abuses in medical trials, it has been adopted for use in the social sciences as well. The usefulness of IRBs in the social sciences is still hotly debated. There are numerous scholars that claim that it can stifle social research in some areas such as in ethnographic research and in studies that rely on oral histories (Schrag, 2010).

The film *College Confidential* presents Professor McInter as a faculty member that is conscientious in conducting his study and presents his sociology study as not harming any of his subjects. No one in the trial, including the magistrate, suggests that the study should have been vetted ahead of time by any kind of committee or organization to ensure no one is harmed. The professor is presented as someone who is trusted to act ethically and does not need the additional oversight of an IRB board to approve his study before he can begin. In an interesting twist in the film, it seems that the

only person in the film that is shown to be harmed by a research study is the professor himself. Throughout the film there are references to a secret that the professor is hiding. During the professor's monologue at the end of the film he reveals the secret. Professor McInter recounts having been involved in a study doing research on the homeless. He explains that in order to gain the trust of the homeless men he spent large amounts of time with them getting to know them. He narrates how many of the men drank heavily and in spending time with them, he began drinking as well and then as a result he became an alcoholic. In this case the researcher in the process of conducting his research is the one that is harmed. Certainly a researcher studying drug addiction should not himself become addicted to drugs in the process. That would be considered an ethical violation and would put into question the credibility and objectivity of the researcher. In the film however, this lapse is presented as an example of the professor's commitment to science and advancing knowledge. The film presents the audience with a faculty member that is devoted to advancing knowledge even at his own personal expense. There is never a suggestion in the film that additional oversight is needed for social science professors when conducting research studies. Despite the fact that professor McInter shrugs personal responsibility for his alcoholism blaming it on his research he is presented as an ethical professional that is committed to advancing science. The film presents professors engaging in research as committed to gaining knowledge even if it can harm them. The film does not present researchers engaging in unethical practices that could damage subjects despite growing concerns during the period regarding subjects being injured due to participation in studies.

Gender in the collegiate films of the 1960s

The 1960s is a period during which America started to see changes emerging in attitudes towards gender roles. Indeed, many scholars see the 1960s as the period that sparked the beginning of the second-wave feminism movement (Bailey & Farber, 2001). The catalyst for much of the interest in gender roles during the 1960s came from the publication in 1963 of *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan. Friedan's book sparked the imagination of women all over America who began to question their role in society and the rigid roles women were allowed to inhabit (Bailey & Farber, 2001). By examining the collegiate films of the 1960s one can get a sense of the ways in which gender roles were changing and evolving during the period. All of the collegiate films of the 1960s seem to provide insights into female college students during the period, albeit in different ways.

The film *College Confidential* (1960) centers on a trial that is largely focused on sex. Much of the film focuses on the questions that Professor McInter asks his students as part of a sociology study. What seems significant is that when one hears the actual questions they do not seem particularly racy or scandalous at all. There are several references throughout the film in which the professor's study is compared to the famous Kinsey reports on sexuality. The Kinsey report is actually made up of two books, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (Kinsey, 1953). The books were both published before the 1960s and were actually much more graphic and asked much more specific questions that were considered taboo regarding human sexuality. The questions asked of the young female students in the film are much tamer than anything asked by Kinsey. One of the questions

asked in the film was in regards to virginity. When the topic of virginity was brought up the audience is heard gasping in shock at the mere mention of the topic. One announcer even makes the remark that the trial would be enough to make Dr. Kinsey blush. Once Sally actually reveals the question that she was asked the audience is not quite as shocked. The professor does not even ask the young ladies whether or not they are virgins. The question posed to the young ladies is whether or not they would marry a man that wasn't a virgin. Even the magistrate conceded that the question is of a personal nature, but that he could not object to the question being asked. All of the questions are centered on the responses of the young women since the film is not interested in the responses of the young men. The trial is not even interested in seeing whether or not young men were asked any sexual questions. In the ultimate example of a double standard, a young man offers to testify about the questions he was asked and the magistrate dismisses him and says he is not interested in his testimony. The film lets the viewer know that it does not matter if men are asked questions regarding sex, but that young women on the other hand must be protected from questions involving sexuality.

Despite the moralizing and almost infantilizing nature of the trial the young women are far from naïve regarding topics of sexuality. After all, the event that triggers the investigation is Sally coming home at 3:00 am after spending the night out with her boyfriend and then trying to blame it on Professor McInter. The female college students in the film are depicted as being extremely interested in meeting young men and that is presented by the film as the main reason why they are attending college. In one poignant scene a young man plays a guitar and sings a song about a female college student and proclaims that

She just arrived on the campus scene, but she knows her way around if you know what I mean, and she ain't looking for knowledge. She ain't a Phi Beta Kappa and it's plain to see, she couldn't be bothered with a PhD, all she wants is her M-R-S. degree, and that's why she goes to college (Zugsmith, 1960).

The film clearly lets the audience know that the perception of female college students is that they are more interested in families than a career. A similar sentiment is shared in the film *Where the Boys Are* (1960). In the car ride down to Ft Lauderdale for spring break one of the young ladies in the car proclaims that they should be honest about why they are heading to Ft Lauderdale. She proudly proclaims that they are only going there for one reason, to meet boys (Pasternak, & Levin, 1960).

Despite the rather stereotypical depictions of boy crazed female college students presented in 1960s films those same films also provide small glimpses into the societal changes that were occurring in regards to women. The reporter that is investigating and writing an article on Dr. McInter is a woman. She is presented as a smart, intelligent and professional woman with a career. She is a strong open-minded woman that listens to professor McInter, while carefully observing all the events that are unfolding. She ultimately proves to be a useful ally to the professor. Her character provides a useful counterpoint to the notion that women only attend college to meet men and provides a positive example of a professional educated woman with a career.

Summary

In this chapter I presented my findings based upon my analysis of the various representations of higher education in the films of the 1960s. In this chapter I analyzed the following films *College confidential* (1960), *Get yourself a College Girl* (1964),

Where the Boys Are (1960), and *Wild Wild Winter* (1966). In my analysis of the films I focused on seven main themes in higher education. The themes I examined were Students, Student Services, Admissions, Race, Finance, Faculty, and Gender. My analysis of the films in this chapter included references to the critical scholarly works of the period in order to help contextualize my findings. The next chapter delves into my findings upon examining the representations of higher education in the films of the 1970s.

CHAPTER SIX HIGHER
EDUCATION IN THE CINEMA: THE 1970s

Students in the collegiate films of the 1970s

College students during the 1970s were quite different from the students that came before them in the previous decade. While college students in the 1960s are often associated with being active in political protest movements, it seems that during the 1970s college students were largely uninterested in political protests (Horowitz, 1988). In Helen Horowitz (1988) insightful book on college students *Campus life: undergraduate cultures from the end of the eighteenth century to the present*, she finds that there was a definite shift away from and outright rejection of the values of the 1960s by students during the 1970s. It seems that college students during the 1970s were uninterested in protest movements that questioned the status quo. A large part of the lack of enthusiasm on the part of college students in politics during the 1970s was due to the end of the Vietnam War and the compulsory draft (Horowitz, 1988). Many students during the 1970s may have felt there was no longer a need for protests or student activism. This of course begs the question of what replaced student activism for these students and helped to define their generation. Horowitz (1988) finds that an interest in social or political reform was replaced by a kind of "Grim professionalism" (Horowitz, 1988, p. 245) a phrase she took from Yale president Kingman Brewster as a way of describing college students during the 1970s. College students during the 1970s were studying during a time of economic instability and stagnant job growth. These college students were worried about their future job prospects. Many of them may have seen talented older brothers and sisters that went away to college during the 1960s and joined protest movements now

wasting time on jobs with low wages (Horowitz, 1988). Many of the students during the 1970s may also have been children of fathers that attended college through the GI Bill. When those men went to college they often shunned the more social aspects of a college education focusing on their courses and on getting a degree as a tool for upward mobility.

It seems that students during the 1970s were very focused on getting a college degree as a way of warding off the effects of a shrinking economy. During the 1970s many students chose to attend college to then enter into one of the professional schools (Medicine, Law). Those were seen as the safe bets to a good paying salary. Many students also began to major in Business believing that it would help them get a competitive edge in the job market. This led to growth during this period in business programs all across the country. Despite the financial troubles that colleges and universities were facing during the 1970s Business programs did see growth. Thelin notes that during the 1970s faculty saw their students consumed with interest in a "new vocationalism" (Thelin, 2004, p. 227) which was characterized by students that wanted courses that would prepare them for the workforce. Undergraduate students during the 1970s wanted courses that would help them land jobs or help get into graduate programs in business, medicine, or law.

Given that students in the 1970s were generally uninterested in social activism it is not surprising that none of the collegiate films in the 1970s display students engaged in protest activities. One of the most popular collegiate films ever made was the 1978 film *Animal House*. Despite being set in 1962, the film reflected many of the same attributes that scholars have found when studying college students during the 1970s. The setting in 1962 was right before the protest movements of the 1960s had really begun to transform

college campuses so the film does not deal with issues of political activism on campus. The students in Animal House were largely focused on going on to professional school programs reflecting the wave of careerism overtaking students in the 1970s. When the Delta house members are brought up on trial Otter calls for a break based upon parliamentary rule. When one of the other fraternity members asks him if he knows what he is doing he tells him to trust him because he is a pre-law major. The other student turns to him and says "I thought you were pre-med" (Reitman, Simmons, & Landis, 1978). Otter merely replies by saying "What's the difference?" (Reitman, Simmons, & Landis, 1978). For Otter there is no difference between majoring in either pre-med or pre-law. This scene is a clear example of the kind of careerism that is associated with students during the 1970s. Students want to go to college to become lawyers or doctors so that they will have careers that will provide them with high wages. They are not picking their major based upon a specific interest in that field. Whenever the major of one the fraternity members is mentioned, it is always either pre-law or pre-med. The only time a college major is mentioned that is not pre-law or pre-med is when the fraternity men go on a road trip and meet girls that attend Emily Dickinson College. Dickinson is satirized as being a liberal institution where students major in areas that do not lead to any marketable job skills. One of the girls they ask about at Dickinson college died in a kiln explosion satirizing the dangers of being an art major. Being an art major is satirized as dangerous not just because you may become a starving artist, but because you may literally die for your art. When Larry asks one of the girls from Dickinson what her major is she replies that she is majoring in "Primitive Cultures" (Reitman, Simmons, & Landis, 1978). This further satirizes the idea of Dickinson as an institution that allows students to

major in non-traditional areas that do not lead to a career path. It is also important to recognize that Emily Dickinson College is an all-female school suggesting that female students may be more apt to waste their time on frivolous subjects while men should be in college preparing to be doctors or lawyers.

Given all of the emphasis that is given to getting a degree from one of the professional schools it is then not surprising that the other highly popular collegiate film from the 1970s is the *Paper Chase* (1973). The film centers on a first year student at Harvard Law and his interactions with his austere professor and the professor's daughter who he is dating. The professor is extremely intimidating and harsh with his students and the students are constantly worried and full of anxiety about their grades. The film presents the viewer with college students who believe that the point of college is not to learn and gain knowledge. The point of going to class is to get good grades and make it through the program in order to graduate and become a lawyer. The professors and the classes are just obstacles to endure in order to get to their ultimate goal. None of the students in the *Paper Chase* (1973) express being in law school due to a passionate interest in the law or the criminal justice system. The focus for the students is simply good grades so they can graduate and be successful. The students in the film are perfect examples of what Horowitz refers to as the "grinds" (1988). The students in the film form study groups where they spend countless hours studying material and sharing notes in order to hopefully get good grades. Good grades are so important that in the beginning of the film a more experienced 3rd year law student gives Mr. Hart a kind of primer on the rules of the school. During his introduction he gives him one key piece of advice "All that

stuff about grades is true. You gotta work like hell. No kidding. Nobody jokes about grades" (Parslow, Paul, Thompson, & Bridges, 1973).

The collegiate films of the 1970s provide insights into college student culture that is quite different from the previous decade. College students in the films from the 1970s value school primarily for the purpose of getting a professional degree and making money. They prize grades, but not as a kind of marker of having gained knowledge. Grades are important merely because they will help the student get to achieve their end goal of graduation, nothing more. In *Animal House* (1978), the students at the Delta house are the undesirable students that like to party unlike the idealized students that spend hours studying. However, even in *Animal House* (1978), those undesirable students understand the importance of good grades and share the same value towards high marks as the other students in the film. In the film the Deltas are seen sifting through the trash looking for a discarded answer key for their mid-term. The reason they fail their mid-terms is because another fraternity found the answer key first and switched the papers in the trash. In *Animal House* (1978), even the supposedly good students are cheating further emphasizing that grades matter not as a kind of marker of what a student knows. Instead, grades are merely something of value only in so far as it gets students into a professional school and getting their degree.

Student Services in the collegiate films of the 1970s

The 1970s was a period of time during which there were many changes occurring on college campuses. Colleges and universities across the country began to expand upon the services they offered students beyond the classroom. One area in which there was a

large shift was in regards to providing career services. As noted earlier, the 1970s saw a significant change in the higher education sector at a time that also experienced an economic downturn (Thelin, 2004). Before the 1970s many students and parents felt getting a college degree was enough to ensure employment (Mcgrath, 2002). Career Services at colleges and universities were very limited leading up to the 1970s. They were usually small offices that kept students files in case a student might need a recommendation and occasionally referred students to interviews whenever a company would contact the school looking to hire students for entry level positions (Mcgrath, 2002). The 1970s changed all of that. Students were no longer certain that graduating meant they would get a job (Mcgrath, 2002). Since there were more students entering higher education that also meant there was more competition for jobs in a tight economy. Before the 1970s universities felt that their responsibility was to give their students a quality education and not necessarily to help them find jobs (Mcgrath, 2002). During the 1970s, universities adopted a new philosophy where it was assumed that they were there to help prepare students for future careers and that included providing services to assist them (Mcgrath, 2002). Colleges and universities became more selective and sometimes even used their career services as a marketing tool to point to potential students that they are there to help them find work once they graduate (Mcgrath, 2002).

All of these changes during the 1970s that emphasized providing services to help find employment did not seem to find their way into the collegiate films of the period. In the Film *Animal House* (1978) there is no mention of any career services at the college. Similarly, in *Breaking Away* (1979) there is not even a suggestion that the university will help its graduates get a job once they finish. In *The Harrad Experiment* (1973) the focus

is mostly on sexuality and college curriculum and not on what types of work students may be able to find once they graduate. In the *Paper Chase* (1973), the students are all in law school so their career trajectory is fairly certain. Even in this film there is no clear indication that the students will go to a career center once they get ready to graduate. The emphasis is definitely on just getting the degree. The film implies that jobs are assured if they can finish. All the films seem to reflect a belief that getting a college degree would lead to a job even though historical and scholarly data on the period indicate that there was growing skepticism that just having a degree would ensure finding a job. College graduates during the 1970s experienced rates of unemployment and underemployment that were significantly higher than students during the 1960s (Mcgrath, 2002). Despite these changes it seems that the collegiate films of the 1970s still represented colleges and universities that held on to the notion that graduating students was their only job. Students were to be on their own after that.

Admissions in the collegiate films of the 1970s

College Admissions was a topic of heated debate during the 1970s. In the film *Breaking Away* (1979) the subject of college admissions and the decision to attend college is an important part of the film. The film closely follows four young men living in the college town of Bloomington Indiana (home of Indiana University). The young men do not attend college after graduating high school and feel as though they are outsiders in their own home town. They have several altercations with the wealthy college students that refer them pejoratively as "cutters" (Yates & Levinson, 1979). The name refers to the local town's people that worked on cutting much of the limestone that was used to build

the campus. When Dave's father asks his son if he took the college entrance exam Dave merely replies that he and his friend took it. Dave tells his father that one of them did well, but it doesn't matter because he is not going to college. He tells his father that he is not ashamed of being a cutter. His father then asks him if he is afraid to go to college. The young man does admit that he is afraid. The young men in the town feel that they do not belong at the university and are not wanted there. They also feel conflicted with the way their own community would perceive them if they join those that look down upon them. Dave's father earlier in the film tells his wife "He used to be a smart kid. I thought he was going to go to college" (Yates & Levinson, 1979). His wife replies "I thought you didn't want him to go to college." (Yates & Levinson, 1979). He quickly replies to his wife by saying "Why should he go to college? I didn't go to college" (Yates & Levinson, 1979). Dave's father does want him to attend college but also fears that his son may look down upon him much like the current students look down on the townspeople. He confesses to his wife that he fears his son will "thumb his diploma at me" (Yates & Levinson, 1979). The decision to enroll in college or not is multifaceted and there are a number of factors involved. The film *Breaking Away* (1979) skillfully presents a group of young men and their thought process in deciding to attend (or not attend college). The film ends with Dave enrolling at Indiana University after a boost to his self-confidence upon winning a bicycle race in which he beat out the college students that shunned him.

In the film the university does not attempt to reach out to the local community and makes no effort to encourage the local townspeople to attend the university. The university is completely isolated from the town and its townspeople. Dave's father tells his son that "It was like the buildings were too good for us. Nobody told us that. But we

just felt uncomfortable. Even now. I'd like to be able to stroll through the campus and look at the limestone but I feel out of place" (Yates & Levinson, 1979).

Indiana University in the film *Breaking Away* (1979) is presented as uninterested in engaging with the broader community, but during the 1970s the issue of universities and their relationship to their community was on the minds of many. In 1969, a group of activists made up of students, faculty and members of minority communities took over City College complaining that City College which overlooks Harlem should admit more Latino and African-American students (Crain, 2003). The complaint was that the student body was largely white, even though the surrounding community was mostly made up of minorities (Marshak & Wurtemberg, 1981). At first the university attempted to merely ignore the demands of the local community (Crain, 2003). The protesters were undeterred and continued to demand that City University be more engaged with the broader community that surrounds it. The protests of local community leaders led to a radical change in City College's admissions policy. In 1970 City College became the first large four-year university to institute an open door admissions policy. They enacted a policy whereby any student that graduated from a New York City High School could attend City College regardless of test scores for college readiness (Crain, 2003). This was a radical policy shift in admissions policy for the institution. By opening up City College to all the students graduating high school in New York City they provided a large number of minority students access to attend an institution that they would not have attended otherwise. This shift was significant because it occurred at a senior four-year institution and not at a junior college. This policy truly allowed students from the surrounding communities in Harlem to attend City College. This was not just a policy meant to

increase minority enrollment. It was specifically crafted in order for City College to engage with the community that surrounds it. This policy of course led to quite an increase in student enrollment which strained the university financially (Marshak & Wurtemberg, 1981). It did however succeed in making City College an institution that was actively engaged with educating the citizens of the communities that surround it. Part of the mission of City College also changed in order to include providing remediation in order to help ensure students could be successful once they enrolled (Marshak & Wurtemberg, 1981). The open admissions policy remained in place until 1999 when it was decided that City College would no longer offer developmental coursework (Crain, 2003). Starting in 1999 students from New York high schools that were not found to be college ready would have to attend one of the city's community colleges and then transfer into one of the upper division universities. Students are no longer allowed to enter directly into City College like they were during the 1970s. It seems therefore that the 1970s was a period during which university engagement with its surrounding community when crafting admissions policy was an issue of interest on and off screen.

Race in the collegiate films of the 1970s

Race relations on college campuses during the 1970s while not quite as tumultuous as in the previous decade were still in flux. Freshmen entering college campuses during the 1970s would all have been born around the time of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954 that called for an end to segregation in schools (Ogletree, 2004). This means that the incoming freshmen during the 1970s just out of high school were among the first groups of students to have grown up in a time during

which racial segregation was no longer legal. Of course, many of those students attended high schools that were segregated racially not by law, but by geography. Despite the attempts by some districts to utilize bussing to integrate schools many American schools were far from inclusive with Blacks living in mostly all-black neighborhoods and whites living in all-white neighborhoods leading to segregated schools (Ogletree, 2004). Notwithstanding all of this when examining the collegiate films of the period it seems that very little had changed in race relations on college campuses from the previous decade. For the most part the collegiate films of the 1970s do not address any changes in race relations on campus. The films all focus on white students in college and do not directly address African-American students attending college during the 1970s.

The 1978 film *Animal House* is the only 1970s collegiate film that can provide some insight into attitudes on race and college students during the 1970s. The film's focus on fraternity life begs the question of what happens with students of color and the fraternity system. The film opens with two new freshmen students, Kent and Larry, both attending an open house recruiting new freshman pledges for the Omega house fraternity. Once they arrive and are greeted it becomes immediately clear that they are outcasts and not part of the wealthy upper class social group that makes up the fraternity. All the men in the fraternity are white, with thin athletic builds, well dressed, and have perfectly cut hair. Right after they walk one young lady in the fraternity house comments to the other "a wimp & blimp" (Reitman, Simmons, & Landis, 1978) in reference to Kent being overweight and Larry being rather un-athletic and unimposing. Doug Neidermeyer, the chairman of the Omega membership committee takes the young men around introducing them to the other members. Despite there being a room of men gathered around the center

of the room casually talking Doug takes the freshman to a corner and introduces them to a group that are sitting silently in a corner. In that corner he introduces them to "Mohammet, Jugdish, Sidney and Clayton" (Reitman, Simmons, & Landis, 1978). The camera pans towards the group made up of a Black student wearing a turban, a blind student, and a student of Arabic descent all sitting quietly in the corner being ignored by the rest of the fraternity members. These students are clearly meant to be the outcasts and none of the fraternity members are talking to them or interacting with them in any way. The film makes it clear that students of color are outcasts and even though they are allowed to attend college they are outsiders. They are not welcome to participate in many of the activities associated with collegiate life and will not be accepted into the fraternity. Even though no one is overtly racist towards them it is clear that they are not wanted in their fraternity. The black student in this scene is the only reference in the film to their being any black students attending the university. This short scene serves to emphasize that students of color are outsiders at the university.

While that is the only scene with a black student in the film there are other African-Americans portrayed in the film. There is a large party at the Delta house with a musical performance by a band that is comprised of African-American musicians. The fictitious band Otis Day and the Knights performs a lively rendition of the Isely Brothers "Shout" (Reitman, Simmons, & Landis, 1978) with all the white fraternity members dancing and singing along. Later in the film the young men spot the name Otis Day and the Knights on a sign at a nightclub and decide to enter the club to watch them perform. When they enter the nightclub everyone stops to look at them and even the band stops performing. They are starrng at them because they are the only white people in the entire

club. Immediately one of the young men turns to the others and says "we are gonna die" (Reitman, Simmons, & Landis, 1978). After the band resumes playing one of the African-American gentlemen in the club asks if they may dance with their dates. He then yanks out the table in front of them to put his hand out to the white girl to dance with her. The young white men run out the club screaming leaving the girls behind.

That scene epitomizes the sense of African-Americans as the "other" (Fanon, 1967) that is expressed in the film. The white students are scared of these African-Americans that are so different. The film explicitly presents African-Americans as distinctly separate from the larger white society. They can study at white universities, but cannot join their fraternities. They may perform at a white party, but they still do not mix with the broader white culture. This visual representation of African-Americans as "other" is significant because it is not value neutral. Many important cultural theorists such as Frantz Fanon (1967), Homi Bhaba (1994), and Edward Said (1979) have written on the problem of otherness and the effect it has on society. One of the more important theorists to write about the condition of otherness in terms of people of color is Frantz Fanon (1967). In his highly influential *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967) he describes the experience of people of color as other in a colonial setting. Fanon relies on psychoanalytic theory to help explain how being different is a negative attribute "Jung consistently identifies the foreign with the obscure, with the tendency to evil: He is perfectly right" (Fanon, 1967, p. 190). Fanon cites numerous examples of the ways in which people of color are associated with the other, which is linked with evil. It is therefore unfortunate that the popular film *Animal House* focused on representing

African-Americans as the "other" since that kind of representation links them with such negative attributes.

Finance in the collegiate films of the 1970s

The 1970s is a period of time during which higher education institutions faced numerous challenges. This was a period of overall financial distress in the higher education sector. It was characterized by colleges and universities of all types and sizes struggling to keep operating costs within their budgets (Thelin, 2004). There is not one simple reason that led to the financial downturn in higher education during the 1970s. However, one of the main reasons is that higher education is more closely linked to the broader economy than the institutions themselves wanted to admit (Thelin, 2004). As the economy grew during the 1950s and 1960s higher education expanded along with the rest of the economy. Consequently, as the overall economy shrank during the 1970s this means that the higher education sector also saw sharp declines (Thelin, 2004). Many colleges and university officials were so accustomed to seeing yearly growth that they initially attempted to resist making difficult decisions regarding financial cutbacks (Kissler, 1997). The colleges and universities that were most successful in weathering the economic downturn were those that did not attempt to resist making changes but instead were proactive and made an effort to address their fiscal problems in a timely manner (Mingle & Norris, 1981).

Deciding what cuts need to be made at an institution is of course extremely difficult for university leaders. The way an institution makes decisions regarding what gets cut brings to light many of the power struggles that exist at a university. At some

universities the need to make cuts to programs with low enrollment meant that university officials adopted a strict hierarchical structure to making those decisions (Kissler, 1997). Administrators at these institutions took charge and used all the power available to them in order to make the cuts they saw fit and the various constituents at the university were left to simply deal with their decisions. If one is to accept Clark Kerr's vision of the multiversity (1982), then there are numerous constituents at a university that may have different needs and concerns that are affected by university cuts. Having numerous university constituents to deal with means that university administrators may want to take a balanced approach to making cuts, allowing faculty, students, and staff to be involved in part of the process (Kissler, 1997). By allowing input from various constituents the university may perhaps find they do not have to make drastic cuts to a program but can instead make structural changes and reallocate funds in ways that may be less damaging to the overall morale of an institution (Kissler, 1997).

Even though none of the collegiate films of the 1970s directly address the fiscal pressures that colleges and universities were feeling during the period the films can provide some important insights into how institutions make decisions during difficult times. In the film *Animal House* (1978) there is no direct reference to the financial instability that universities were facing during the 1970s since the film is supposed to be set in 1962. However, the film does provide some interesting insights into how universities make decisions and their consequences. In the film *Dean Wormer* is intent on removing the Delta house fraternity from the campus. In a conversation with Gregg, the president of the rival Omega house, Dean Wormer discusses his plans to kick the Delta house off campus. Gregg asks him how he is going to kick them out if the Delta house is

already on probation. The Dean responds by saying that if they are already on probation then "as of this moment, they're on double secret probation" (Reitman, Simmons, & Landis, 1978). When Gregg gives him a puzzled look Dean Wormer explains that "there is a little-known codicil in the Faber College Constitution which gives the dean unlimited power to preserve order in times of campus emergency" (Reitman, Simmons, & Landis, 1978). This exchange although meant to be humorous does in some ways provide an example of the kinds of decision making that some college officials were undertaking in regards to the financial pressures of the 1970s. In *Animal House* (1978) Dean Wormer decides to give himself special powers and basically make up a new category of probation in order to move forward with his plans to remove the fraternity. Similarly, during the 1970s, some university leaders simply took the power to slash programs and enacted changes in secret only revealing the changes once they were already well planned (Kissler, 1997). In *Animal House* after Dean Wormer places the fraternity on double-secret probation he holds a hearing which is basically only symbolic. The decision to remove the fraternity was already made. During the hearing the Delta house is not allowed to truly make the case for keeping the fraternity on campus. The hearing parallels real life events at colleges and universities during the 1970s where faculty expressed dismay at decisions seemingly being made ahead of time despite supposed calls to allow faculty to have input regarding budgetary changes (Kissler, 1997). In *Animal House* Dean Wormer's autocratic governance style ultimately backfires. After being expelled the students from the Delta house decide to go a public rampage and destroy the school's homecoming parade. This kind of public backlash also has parallels in events during the 1970s. In 1975 through 1976 there was a nine month long public battle and ensuing

campus take over from a group of faculty, students, and staff devoted to saving New York's Hostos Community College from budget cuts (Jimenez, 2003). The group began with small meetings that eventually escalated to utilizing "aggressive militant tactics" (Jimenez, 2003, p. 99) in order to protest the closing of the campus. Despite the all odds the Coalition to Save Hostos Community College ultimately prevailed and the college was spared from being closed and dismantled (Jimenez, 2003). The coalition was able to publicly push back and keep the doors of the campus open in spite of the smaller fiscal budget.

At first it may seem surprising that the collegiate movies of the 1970s do not directly address the financial instability of colleges and universities during the 1970s. The only time that the finances of a college are directly addressed in a collegiate film during the 1970s is when in *Animal House* (1978) Dean Wormer agrees to pay a "nice little honorarium from the student fund" (Reitman, Simmons, & Landis, 1978) to the mayor as a bribe in order to hold the college's homecoming parade in the city streets. In some ways, it is not that surprising those financial pressures were not expressed in the films. Many institutions during the period (as well as contemporary institutions today) believe that despite the difficulties encountered higher education is a growth field and that it will continue to grow regardless of the overall economy. However, this kind of optimistic thinking may keep universities from examining structural changes that can be made that will allow for a college to better weather the next cyclical economic downturn.

Faculty in the collegiate films of the 1970s

The collegiate films of the 1970s provide some very interesting and quite divergent views regarding the professoriate. In the film *Paper Chase (1973)* the professor and the adversarial role he takes towards his students is a very important part of the film. Professor Charles W. Kingsfield Jr. is a professor at Harvard Law School, and is presented as extremely severe and tough on his students. On the first day of class, he grills a student on a reading assignment and is so rough on him that when the student leaves class he ends up vomiting from the stress. On a different occasion Professor Kingsfield repeatedly questions a student and ends up berating and humiliating him by saying "Mr. Hart, here is a dime. Take it, call your mother, and tell her there is serious doubt about you ever becoming a lawyer" (Parslow, Paul, Thompson, & Bridges, 1973). As the student is leaving he turns around and tells the professor "you are a son of a bitch, Kingsfield" (Parslow, Paul, Thompson, & Bridges, 1973). The professor's response to Mr. Hart is surprising at first. He tells him that it was one of the most intelligent things he has said in class and invites him to stay in the class after all. The professor makes it clear in that exchange that Mr. Hart got it; they are not supposed to like him. As a professor he does not want to be liked by his students. Professor Kingsfield is not there to mentor his students or form a bond with them. He is not going to have his office door open for them to ask for his advice and counsel them on life's difficulties. Kingsfield's role as a professor necessitates his being tough, aloof, and distant from his students. His task is simply to challenge them in class and make them think. Professor Kingsfield specifically says "You teach yourselves the law, but I train your minds. You come in here with a skull full of mush. You leave thinking like a lawyer" (Parslow, Paul, Thompson, & Bridges,

1973). Kingsfield's pedagogical strategy, which often involves humiliating his students, necessitates him being detached from them. It would after all be quite difficult for Kingsfield to use abusive tactics on his students if they were indeed friends.

The role of Kingsfield as a mean professor was quite popular during the 1970s and led to the actor John Houseman reprising the role again in a TV series based on the film that ran for four seasons on different networks. In spite of the popularity of the strict task-master as a professor there were other very different representations of the professoriate available in the cinemas during the 1970s. In the film *The Harrad Experiment* (1973) Professor Philip Tenhausen is certainly presented in a very different light from that of Kingsfield in the *The Paper Chase* (1973). The professor in *The Harrad Experiment* (1973) would certainly never berate a student or attempt to embarrass a student in class. He is open to discussing student assignments and tells students that they can always come and see him or his wife if they have any problems. He is affable and congenial with his students and tries to be supportive in his comments to comments. Unlike Kingsfield he wants to form a bond with his students and wants them to trust him. However, Tenhausen's motivation it seems is not so much student learning and achievement as much as it is the research he is conducting regarding them. Professor Tenhausen is interested in changing society's antiquated views on sex and uses his students as part of an experiment in order to study how that change could be enacted. He needs to create a harmonious environment for the students to be comfortable and trust him and his wife so that the experiment works. His interest in his students is not really in them per se but in the experiment. His focus is on finding a way to advance his ideas regarding sexuality and the students are important to him as an object of study much

more so than as actual people. The professor's interest in doing research on sex is the focus of the film and his interest in advancing his beliefs on sexuality are what is most important for him as a professor.

It also seems ironic that Tenhausen is presented as a kind of guru for modern views on sexuality, or anything else, considering that he is in many ways presented as a very traditional college professor. He wears glasses and smokes a pipe as he oversees discussion and holds lectures with his students in a fairly traditional manner. The students have reading assignments and reports due and the course itself follows a somewhat conventional format. The topic of group marriage and free love may be different but Professor Tenhausen is still presented to fit into a fairly traditional view of the professoriate. His rather radical views on sexuality do not truly change his role as a professor. His interest in his research is the guiding force for him and it meant he had to make changes such as adding nude yoga to the curriculum. However, it did not necessitate him making any radical changes to his teaching style or adopt other more modern and progressive teaching techniques.

In the 1974 film *Butley* (1974), the viewer is also presented with a very different representation of a professor from the other films mentioned. Ben Butley is a literature professor that is supposed to be working on a book on the British modernist poet T.S. Eliot. *Butley* is a film adaptation of a play so that almost the entire film takes place in one location. Therefore, except for a few short scenes all the events in the film occur in his office at Queen Mary's College in London. Butley's relationship with his students is extremely antagonistic. Butley finds teaching and the duties that go along with it a chore and simply does not want to be bothered by students. While arguing with his office mate

Joey, Professor Butley goes in his bag and pulls out an empty bottle of gin, a sock, and a student's MA thesis. Joey is shocked to see the manuscript and asks him if he had forgotten to return the thesis to the student. To that Butley quickly replies "no not yet, so far I have forgotten to read it, forgetting to give it back comes later" (Landau, Plaschkes, Weinstein, Goldston, & Pinter, 1974). Professor Butley hates reading and grading student work, but it is not just grading he is averse to. He also dislikes having to deal with the students themselves. In the beginning of the film, a student comes to see him and he quickly sends the student away. He tells the student that they have just returned from a break and that during the first week back after a break there is simply too much administrative work to be done and therefore he cannot see any students. He tells the student to come back in a week. He uses the excuse that he is too busy with administrative work to attend to students quite often. Not long after he kicked out the first student a female student shows up to the office. She tells Professor Butley that she is replacing Mrs. Granger, a student that did not get to see him often due to administrative problems. Butley then asks "Mrs. Granger got into administrative tangles?" (Landau, Plaschkes, Weinstein, Goldston, & Pinter, 1974). The student replies "No, you, Mr. Butley" (Landau, Plaschkes, Weinstein, Goldston, & Pinter, 1974). Butley then realizes he must have sent Mrs. Granger away so many times claiming he was busy with administrative work that she changed professors. Butley then goes into an insincere speech about how if the administration would only leave him alone and let him teach it would be so much better. The student then asks him when she can see him. Butley tells the student to ask Mrs. Granger when she was scheduled to see him and closes the door on the student to make her leave. After the student leaves Butley tells Joey "I didn't care

for that one at all. There was an air of mad devotion about her that reminds me of my wife's mother, the mad monk" (Landau, Plaschkes, Weinstein, Goldston, & Pinter, 1974). Throughout the film Butley shows a general disdain for students and academic work and seems disconnected from it all. The film presents the viewer with a professor who is quick witted and intelligent, but is also not particularly connected to his work as a college professor.

One film depiction of interest in the 1970s is that of Professor Dave Jennings in *Animal House* (1978). *Animal House* provides yet a different view on the professoriate. In a classroom scene in *Animal House* (1978) Professor Jennings is seen trying to connect with his students which are having trouble connecting to the readings in his literature class. Students are seen doodling in class and struggling to stay focused on his lecture. Professor Jennings tries to keep them interested in his discussion on Milton's *Paradise* and he even admits to his students that even he finds some parts of Milton as boring as they do. He acknowledges "It's a long poem, written a long time ago, and I'm sure a lot of you have difficulty understanding exactly what Milton was trying to say" (Reitman, Simmons, & Landis, 1978). He lets them know up front that he understands what their reservations are to *Paradise Lost*, but they are covering it in class and he wants to help them understand it. Unlike some of the other professors from 1970s films Professor Jennings wants to make a connection with his students and wants them to like him. However, in the case of Professor Jennings he seemingly took his love for students a bit too literally and has an affair with one of the coeds in his class. He also has a group of students over to his apartment to smoke marijuana and drink with him. The depiction of professor Jennings is intriguing in that he seems to want to help students learn and relate

to his literature class, but he is also represents a transgressive figure that gets high with his students and has sex with them.

The collegiate films of the 1970s provide such varied accounts of the professors of the period that is it difficult to piece them together and see how they all fit. The one way in which all the representations come together can be found in the scholarly literature on professors during this period. The 1970s saw the rise of the Faculty Development movement in Higher Education. Researchers found that during the 1970s college professors did not feel a sense of having a clear professional identity (Freedman, 1973). Faculty members throughout the nation during the 1970s felt that things had been changing on college campuses and they felt ill at ease and ill equipped to adjust to those changes (Freedman, 1973). College students also seemed different after the freedom of speech movement at the University of California. That movement paved the way for students to question their professors and the curriculum they were being taught (Freedman, 1973). Many college professors interviewed during the period felt that "They do not seem to have a sense of belonging to a body of professionals with shared goals, shared procedures for attaining them, and agreed ways of estimating their realization" (Freedman, 1973). Faculty members and scholars believed that many faculty simply did not know how to become more effective professors in the classroom (Freedman, 1973). During this period there was a keen interest in researching what techniques were actually effective in a college classroom and which were not. Colleges across the country began to hold workshops for their faculty in order to keep them up to date on new research on pedagogy and changes to their profession. Before this movement began in the 1970s some of the very basic aspects of being a college professor were often not being taught to

faculty in a systematic way. Faculty often did not have the tools necessary to be effective at managing class discussions or advising students (Freedman, 1973). A teaching style, if a professor had one, was a very personal matter that could not be easily articulated and therefore was almost impossible to assess.

It also seems that one of the after effects of the upheaval of the 1960s were students in the 1970s that were much more willing to ask charged questions of their professors and their coursework. Students during the 1970s were also more apt to questioning the political and social implications of a professor's lectures. Given that it seems that college faculty members during this period were often blindly trying to figure out how to best teach a changing and more diverse student body it is not surprising that academics began to develop programs to train faculty on how to handle these changes. Perhaps it should not be so surprising that the representations of college professors in 1970s cinema were as varied as they were. Perhaps it should be expected that the professors depicted in film would all be so different given that during the period faculty were feeling disjointed from each other, their profession, and their students.

Gender in the collegiate films of the 1970s

The 1970s was a period during which a definite shift seemed to be occurring in terms of the moral compass of the country in terms of sexuality. Numerous polls conducted during the 1970s showed that Americans in general had become more accepting of pre-marital sexual relations (Horowitz, 1988). The shift towards more relaxed views on pre-marital sexuality during this period was most evident among college students. Studies conducted during the 1970s found that almost half of college students

were accepting of living together and having sexual relations before marriage as long as they "like each other" (Horowitz, 1988, p. 248). This shift in attitudes regarding sex had an impact on colleges and universities during this period. One fairly important change was that colleges and universities during the 1970s began to ease and remove many of the parental restrictions that were in place during the 1960s (Horowitz, 1988). Colleges and universities no longer meddled much in a student's private life after class. Most colleges removed curfews from their dormitory rules so that students could more freely come and go as they pleased and stay out overnight allowing for more opportunities for sexual intimacy (Horowitz, 1988).

This shift in sexual morays among college students during the 1970s was clearly evident in the films of the period. One film in particular is focused specifically on this very topic. The plot of the 1973 film *The Harrard Experiment* centers on a group of freshmen at Harrard College and their views on pre-marital sex. The students involved were very carefully chosen by Professor Philip Tenhausen and his wife Margaret to be involved in a kind of experiment. The experiment is a one year control group study where the Tenhausens study the views of their students regarding pre-marital sex. Once the students arrive on campus they are paired up with roommates of the opposite sex that were carefully chosen by the Tenhausens. The students must cohabituate with those roommates for at least a month and after that they can switch and take on a different roommate if they so choose. The Tenhausens let them know upfront very clearly that the students should be exploring their sexuality while at Harrard College. During the introductory speech that Philip gives the new students welcoming them to Harrard, he tells the students that "during this year you are going to be expected, well not really

expected, you are going to be encouraged to have sexual intimacy" (Marshall, Sokolow, Stevens, & Post, 1973). Besides pairing the students up with roommates of the opposite sex, the Tenhausens also have other ways of encouraging the students to explore their sexuality. In addition to a course on human values where they can discuss issues regarding sexuality the student's course schedule also includes a totally nude yoga class in the hopes that this will help the students to loosen their inhibitions. Philip tells the students that they are going to question the prevailing ideas regarding pre-marital sex and question concepts such as adultery and fidelity and asks them "Can a free society remain truly free without a constant renewal of its values?" (Marshall, Sokolow, Stevens, & Post, 1973).

The broad-minded views towards pre-marital sex that are expressed in the film are not the only important views expressed in *The Harrard Experiment* (1973) in regards to sexuality and gender. The film also presents the viewer with some interesting perspectives regarding the role of women in society during the 1970s. Despite all of the talk of sexual freedom that is encouraged in the film issues of women's equality are not quite as liberal. The film advances the idea that women are free to choose their sexual partners and not constrained by outdated notions that women should be virgins when they get married. However, the film also supports a kind of duality (to borrow a term often used by Judith Butler) where men and women are not really equal (Butler, 1993). The film portrays both male and female college students exploring their sexual desire but the film makes it clear that the male students are the ones that are expected to fully express their sexual urges. In the beginning of the film one of the female students, Sheila, expresses concern that her male roommate has not shown up yet. She asks the

Tenhausens if perhaps her future roommate has changed his mind and is not going to show up. Rather surprised by the question Margaret Tenhausen quickly answers "Sheila, he wouldn't do that, we expected some of the girls to change their minds maybe, but not the boys" (Marshall, Sokolow, Stevens, & Post, 1973). Remarks such as this reinforce the idea that in spite of the principles of free love that are expressed throughout the film the male college students are more in control of their sexuality and are freer to express their sexual desires than are the female students.

The female students in *The Harrard Experiment* (1973) are also not provided with a female role model that is truly equal to her male counterpart. The experiment in the film is conducted by both Philip and Margaret Tennhausen, but they are not presented as true equals in the film. When the students first arrive Philip delivers a long introductory speech to the students explaining the experiment to them. He then introduces his wife Margaret who briefly reiterates Philip's comments and reassures the students that they can always come to her or her husband whenever they want to talk. The subtle order of the speakers and the amount of time they speak makes it clear to the students (and the audience) that it is truly Philip's project. Philip Tenhausen is clearly the one in charge and the students and his wife know it. Margaret is an important character in the film, but it is Philip who teaches the courses and leads the discussions. Philip is presented as the erudite scholar quoting Nietzsche while leading discussions on group marriage. Margaret supports her husband and the experiment but it is his experiment and her role is to support him. Margaret's scholarly knowledge and abilities are never explored and she is generally presented as second to Philip, not as his true equal.

This representation of women as more free sexually but not truly equal to men seems to be reflected in much of the historical scholarship of the 1970s. The women's equality movement made significant strides during the 1970s but true equality remained elusive at least from a legal standpoint. In 1972 for example, the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) made it through congress and then moved on to the next step for the states to ratify it (Kyvig, 1996). In many ways this was quite an accomplishment since the first time the ERA was originally brought up was in 1923. At first everything seemed to go well and many believed the amendment was sure to pass in the early 1970s. However, a deadline for the states to ratify the amendment was set for 1979 and at that point, there were still a number of states that had not ratified and it (Kyvig, 1996). The movement actually seemed to lose momentum with some states actually rescinding their support for the amendment. This has left the ERA as an amendment that was proposed but has never been legally adopted (Kyvig, 1996). The legal battles over the ERA during the 1970s seem to present a view that is similar to what is presented in *The Harrard Experiment* (1973) where women in America seemed to gain some sexual freedom during the 1970s, but that freedom is far from the same as equality.

During the 1970s a similar quest for equality emerged from a different group of people that felt marginalized by American society. The 1970s marks the beginning of the gay rights movement. There were small organizations in California such as the Mattachine Society before the 1970s that proposed wider societal acceptance of gays (Hall, 2010). However, the turning point was the Stonewall riots in New York's Village in 1969 (Hall, 2010). The raid on the Stonewall Inn and the ensuing riots and unrest were the spark that began the gay rights movement that ran through the 1970s (Hall, 2010).

The 1970s was the first time gays and lesbians in American felt empowered to come out and admit their sexual identity. This period also saw the rise of Gay Pride marches being held yearly in major cities in the United States and across Europe. Despite the new-found visibility and sense of pride the 1970s did not really win many major battles during the period. One major battle that was won was the removal of Homosexuality from the DSM-III as a sociopathic personality disturbance in 1973 (Silverstein, 2009). This was significant because the DSM is the main reference work used by mental health professionals to diagnose mental disorders (Silverstein, 2009). By removing homosexuality from the DSM it was no longer consider a mental problem that needed to be fixed.

The new discussions regarding sexual orientation lead to the topic of homosexuality to become a significant part of one of the collegiate films of the 1970s. In *Butley (1974)* homosexuality plays a central role in plot of the film. In the film Professor Butley shares his office with Joey Keyston a lecturer in the department. Throughout the film Butley is engaged in a tense, but witty verbal battle with Joey who also lives with Butley. Butley continually antagonizes and bullies Joey regarding his wanting a promotion in the English department. However, in many ways the argument they are having all returns to Butley being upset that Joey went away with his boyfriend for the weekend and did not even call Butley or return to their home before the break ended. In the film Butley's life unravels as his estranged wife tells him she wants to marry another man (which is a man he already dislikes). Things only get worse after that as the argument with Joey escalates and Joey leaves Butley as well to be with his boyfriend. This is significant in that the film portrays Joey as a professor that is gay and it is not a

horrible secret that must be held or a disease he must cure. Despite the fairly open and un-judgmental way that Joey's homosexuality is presented one can still see that homosexuality while more often discussed is not acceptable. The film is after all, about Butley not Joey. Butley mercilessly berates Joey for leaving him alone over the weekend to be with his boyfriend. Butley also insults Joey's boyfriend Reg and makes fun of his accent. Despite all of these clear signs of jealousy the film never explicitly says that although they live together they are sleeping together. Butley shows all the signs of a jealous lover, but is never allowed in the film to actually say he is sleeping with Joey. Butley is presented as estranged from his wife and therefore may be straight. Butley is the main character of the film and he never explicitly says he is gay. The film obviously implies that he is gay and has a romantic relationship with Joey but never comes out and says so. Similarly, In *The Harrard Experiment* (1973) the one question that is never asked is in regards to same sex attraction. Much is made of the coed living arrangements, but the film makes no mention whatsoever of same sex students perhaps wanting to experience the same kind of sexual freedom as heterosexual students. Butley's relationship with Joey never being fully disclosed along with the refusal to acknowledge same sex attraction in *The Harrad Experiment* (1973) show that despite the many advances that gays made during the period when discussing homosexuality there was much that still remained in the closet.

Summary

This chapter detailed my findings as I examined the various representations of higher education in the films of the 1970s. In this chapter I analyzed the following films

Breaking Away (1979), *Butley* (1974), *The Harrad Experiment* (1973), *Animal House* (1978), and *The Paper Chase* (1973). My analysis of the films focused on seven main themes in higher education. The themes I explored were Students, Student Services, Admissions, Race, Finance, Faculty, and Gender. My analysis of the films in this chapter included references to the critical scholarly works of the period in order to help contextualize my findings. The next chapter delves into my findings upon examining the representations of higher education in the films of the 1980s.

CHAPTER SEVEN

HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE CINEMA: THE 1980s

Students in the collegiate films of the 1980s

The first view of the college campus in *Back to School* (Endler et al., 1986) is significant in that it sets up for the audience the ideal of what a college campus should be. Grand Lakes University (the name of the fictitious college in *Back to School*) is presented as having a tranquil campus full of co-eds chatting as they go to class. When Mr. Melon arrives on campus to visit his son and walks around the campus for the first time he promptly declares:

Boy what a great looking place, when I used to dream about going to college this is the way I always pictured it". The son then interjects "Wait a minute, when did you dream about going to college?" to which Mr. Melon promptly quips "when I used to fall asleep in high school" (Endler et al., 2008).

Numerous scholars and film theorists have written about scenes such as this. There are numerous books and articles regarding the narrative filmmaking practice of comparing an image to reality in a film. In Gilles Deleuze's (1986) book *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*, the author ruminates extensively on the meaning of images in film. In the book Deleuze (1986) provides commentary on specific films as well as engaging with the writing of other media critics and filmmakers. Deleuze (1986) provides an important understanding of the films and writings of the Italian writer/director Pier Paolo Pasolini that can provide useful insight into this scene from *Back to School* (Endler et al., 1986). Deleuze's (1986) writing engages with Passolini on the concept of what he calls free indirect discourse. This is a concept in which there are several events occurring at the

same time in a scene. In this narrative model of filmmaking a character is presented on screen and the audience is to understand that the character comes with a specific and particular worldview (Deleuze, 1986). While the audience is watching the character on screen, the camera is also watching the character on the screen. The camera however, can often present a different point of view from the character. The images on the screen may showcase the world from a perspective that is different from what the character expresses. This process where there is an on screen vision that differs from that of the character is at the center of the concept of free indirect discourse (Deleuze, 1986).

However, Deleuze's (1986) discussion of the concept of a free indirect discourse, focuses only on when there is a difference between the image on the screen and the character's perspective. In returning to the example from *Back to School* (Endler et al., 1986), the importance of this scene lies in the way in which the character has a concept of college that is effectively validated by the images on screen. Mr. Melon imagines college a certain way and the images on screen validate that concept. If providing images that differ from a character's viewpoint lead to a kind of discursive ambiguity then when the images in a film coincide with the character's views, one can say that the film is providing an extra sense of validity to that viewpoint. That short exchange in the film lets the viewer know that the college campus with its peaceful green areas and students leisurely walking across the quad is not just an idealized version of what people expect a college campus to look like. The film attempts to impress on the audience that it is a true representation of what a college campus is like in real life. The film tells us that Mr. Melon envisioned college that way while he was still in high school with no plans at the time to attend college himself. This makes it a vision of college that could be shared by

college students and non-college students alike. The film makes a concerted effort to present this traditional view of college as the vision of college that the audience should accept as reality.

Mr. Melon's tour of the college and its idyllic setting is interrupted by his son Jason's admission that he is not happy in college and wants to drop out. Jason tells his father that he wants to leave because he does not fit in. He confides in his father that he only has one friend (Derek) who in turn has no other friends on campus. Jason tells his father that the fraternities don't accept him and that the girls on campus do not like him either. Mr. Melon tries to cheer up his son and tells him that at least he is in college getting an education to which Jason replies "dad, last semester I got nothing but 'C's'" (Endler et al., 2008). Jason's admission of dissatisfaction with college points to several different problems in higher education in the 1980s. The fact that he is in college getting an education is not enough to keep him motivated to stay. His feeling of being detached from the larger campus culture leaves him with a sense of dissatisfaction that is strong enough that he wants to abandon college altogether.

Jason's feeling of disconnect to college life is similarly noted by scholars studying college culture in the 1980s. In Michael Moffat's 1989 study *Coming of Age in New Jersey* the author found that students at Rutgers in the 1980s did not really feel closely connected to the school's football team or other college wide activities. In Moffat's (1989) writings he found that many students felt that rooting for the college team was much like rooting for the New York Giants professional football team. The college team was seen as a distant activity separated from the daily lives of undergraduates that did not inspire the kind of interest that one may at first assume (Moffat, 1989). Indeed, Jason's

roommate Derek at a later point in the film invites him to an anti-pep rally. His roommate tells him that they want to point out that "violent ground acquisition games such as football are in fact a cryptic-fascist metaphor for nuclear war" (Endler et al., 2008). This exchange serves to poke fun at the kind of liberal jargon that is often associated with college campuses but also serves to highlight sectors of the college campus that are not connected to university sanctioned activities.

In the exchange between Jason and his father he also notes that he has been earning "C" grades citing that he feels that although his grades are passing he is not doing well in college. He senses that he is not earning grades as high as should be expected. It is certainly the case that college students in the 20th century have been very aware of their grades as the main signal of their progress in higher education (Horowitz, 1988). The importance placed on grades varies among students, but clearly the grade a student receives is the main indicator of how well a student is progressing in college. However, much of the scholarship on the 1980s seems to focus not on students and their anxiety regarding grades, but rather the way that grade inflation was becoming a growing issue. In one of the more significant studies on grade inflation 22, 792 undergraduate students were studied during the 1980s and 1990s (Hu & Kuh, 1999). The researchers found that even after controlling for the unique makeup of student backgrounds and differing types of intuitions overall grades did seem to increase at research universities and selective liberal arts colleges (Hu & Kuh, 1999). That study also found that grades seemed to decrease during the same period at less selective liberal arts colleges, and comprehensive colleges and universities (Hu & Kuh, 1999). That decrease was most especially notable in the areas of the humanities and the social sciences (Hu & Kuh, 1999). The study seems to

indicate that concerns about grade inflation during the period are not uniform across all types of institutions. The issue of grade inflation is one which some scholars even argue is not much of an issue at all (Becker 1995, as cited in Kuh & Hu, 1999). The research does find some degree of grade inflation although it seems to be confined for the most part to selective universities. Even though the film's fictitious Grand Lakes University is not a member of the Ivy-League, it is presented as a highly selective research university. Therefore it seems that Jason's sense that his average grades are actually inadequate is in line with the research on grades from this period.

The growing level of disconnect to college life that some scholars have noted in the 1980s (see Thelin, 2004; Horowitz, 1988) is not presented in the film as the only factor leading to Jason's feelings of anxiety. Another source of Jason's anxiety and feelings of discomfort in college seem to be related to managing his father's expectations. Before Mr. Melon arrives on campus for a surprise visit he calls his father and during that phone call Jason lies to his father and tells him that he successfully pledged a fraternity and is on the school's diving team. Mr. Melon is surprised when he arrives on campus to find that his son is not living in a frat house, but in a regular dorm room and is the towel boy instead of being on the diving team.

There have been numerous studies on the subject of parent expectations regarding their children that are attending college. Jason's feelings in the film are echoed by studies that find that discrepancies among parent expectations of their children in college and student performance can cause or exacerbate affective distress. (Kanter A., & Renk, K. 2008). The feelings of distress Jason feels however seem to go beyond simply not living

up to his father's expectations. A closer look at the film suggests a different phenomenon may be at the root of the problem.

Jason's father in the film seems to be exhibiting signs of a phenomenon now commonly referred to as helicopter parenting. Interestingly, the term helicopter parent was not even part of the vocabulary until 1991 (Somers & Settle, 2007). The film's depiction of helicopter parenting in the 1980s predicts a phenomenon which it took academics quite a while to actually acknowledge and study. Despite the term being picked up by mainstream media with publications such as Newsweek in the 1990s there still has not been much research on the topic (Somers & Settle, 2007). A review of the literature on the subject shows that much of the information on helicopter parenting is largely anecdotal. One of the seminal studies on the subject done by Patricia Somers and Jim Settle was not published until 2010. That study divides helicopter parents into five distinct types (Somers & Settle, 2007) and Mr. Melon falls into several of the typologies cited in the study.

Mr. Melon displays behavior consistent with Somers & Settle's (2007) category of helicopter parent, the Consumer Advocate. These are parents that advocate for their children as consumers and use factors such as payment of tuition to leverage for their children and view their transactions with the college as similar to that of a consumer with a company. These parents suffer from a fundamental misunderstanding of higher education in attempting to equate education to a strict business transaction and often suffer from what is sometimes referred to as the Burger King mindset where they believe they can get an education their way (Somers & Settle, 2007). Mr. Melon's view of college as a business transaction can be seen as soon as he is allowed to enroll. When attempting

to become a student the Dean tells Mr. Melon that that since he does not have a High School diploma or SAT scores it would be difficult for the college to allow him to enroll. Mr. Melon then donates money towards a new building and is allowed to attend the university. This enforces the idea that a college education, much like other goods and services in the marketplace can be simply purchased if one has enough money.

Mr. Melon is also associated with the helicopter parent category referred to by Somers & Settle (2007) as the Vicarious College Student (Somers & Settle, 2007). These are parents that missed out on the college experience and now as adults wish to have that college experience with their children. This is certainly applicable to Mr. Melon since in much of the film he is seen partaking in college student activities and even competing on the college's diving team and helping to win a tournament.

The film also depicts Mr. Melon as exhibiting characteristics pertaining to the category of helicopter parent referred to by Somers & Settle (2007) as the equity or *Fairness Advocate*. These parents are found to advocate for their children to have equitable treatment and often call for their children to have the best housing accommodations, best course schedules, and overall best opportunities (Somers & Settle, 2007). The category's name refers to these parents as interested in fairness, but in reality as Somers & Settle (2007) point out they are not interested in equity (despite what the name implies). They are actually advocating for preferential treatment for their children instead of equal treatment for all students. Mr. Melon clearly advocates for his son to have preferential treatment as he converts their dorm room into a luxurious apartment and stages a massive distraction for the student body in order to free up the lines in registration so that he and his son have their pick of courses and register without crowds.

Mr. Melon's enrolling in college can indeed be seen as the ultimate example of helicopter parenting. Mr. Melon's decision to enroll in college to help his son finish is extreme but it does point to a growing acceptance that parents often become closely involved in the college education of their children. In the film his decision to enroll to help his son is not really questioned and is quickly accepted by the students and staff. The film effectively predicts a change in the way parents think of their college aged children. This shift can now be seen growing at universities across the country in students from all socioeconomic backgrounds irrespective of race and ethnicity (Manos, 2009). Colleges and universities around the country have actually begun to draft plans on how to deal with helicopter parents and their effects on campus culture. Manos (2009) cites Colgate University as an example of an institution that actually puts out a statement directed at the parents of incoming students that emphasizes how important it is for students to learn to be self-reliant. The university highlights it as one of the skills that students should be learning while in college.

The film *Back to School* (Endler et al., 1986) is also unique from other college films in that it focuses on both the college experience of Jason and his father. His father moves from (as previously noted) being a helicopter parent to becoming an actual student facing the challenges of college for himself. Jason and his father have quite different experiences as college students and represent very distinct attitudes towards college. As noted previously, Horowitz (1988) categorized college students into three broad groups: college men (women are also included), outsiders, and rebels. Horowitz (1988) also asserts that beginning in the 1980s, there is another group (which she calls the New Outsiders) that becomes the most prevalent group of all during the 1980s. The author's

contention is that difficult and uncertain economic conditions are what lead to the rise of the New Outsiders during the 1980s (Horowitz, 1988). Horowitz asserts that this new group values college only because it is believed to be important to increase their future earning potential. However, Horowitz's (1988) new category which is supposed to epitomize college students in the 1980s does not seem to coincide with the representations of students in *Back to School* (Endler et al., 1986). For example, Jason shows a keen interest in college as a place of learning, growth, and discovery. Throughout the film Jason continuously shows that he really wants to learn something from his courses. His interest in gaining knowledge places him outside of the category of the New Outsiders since he never views college simply as a way to increase his future earning potential. Jason wants to gain an education in college and the knowledge he acquires does not necessarily have to translate to specific career training. Jason's ideals are therefore incompatible with Horowitz's (1988) category of the New Outsiders.

Jason's views towards college are also completely different from his father's. While Jason is in college to study Mr. Melon is there to party. Once Mr. Melon becomes a student at GLU he immediately begins to socialize with the other students on campus. On a night he agrees to meet his son at the library to study Mr. Melon instead ends up at a local bar near campus drinking and partying with other college students. Later that evening Derek convinces Jason to go the bar as well and when they arrive they find Mr. Melon drinking and singing on stage with a bar band.

Jason also stands in direct opposition to his father as he attempts to cheat his way through college. Mr. Melon offers to help his son cheat as well, but Jason quickly rebukes

his father's offer letting him know he is in college to learn. Mr. Melon's character clearly takes a different view of college from his son but also defies being categorized as one of Horowitz's (1988) New Outsiders. Mr. Melon shuns the idea that college is useful to secure a higher earning potential. He tells students in class that what they are learning is useless in the real world when attempting to make money. Mr. Melon instead focuses on the college party experience and is completely uninterested in learning. Mr. Melon values college for the fun party experiences it provides and does not ascribe to the belief that a college education will enhance future earnings. Even Jason's friend Derek defies being categorized as a New Outsider. Derek like the other students in *Back to School* (Endler et al., 1986) does not see making money as the main reason to attend college. Derek instead is there to learn how to change the world and study about alternative ways the world could be run.

The representations of students in *Back to School* (Endler et al., 1986) provide a useful counterpoint to Horowitz's view of college students in the 1980s. Horowitz's (1988) assertion that in the 1980s the New Outsiders effectively describe the dominant attitude of college students during the period does not match with the representations of students provided in *Back to School* (Endler et al., 1986). The students highlighted in *Back to School* (Endler et al., 1986) effectively defy being compartmentalized by Horowitz's (1988) student categories. Despite the fact that the student accounts in *Back to School* (Endler et al., 1986) are fictional, it is quite useful to compare her categories to the characters in the film. The ability to imagine students in the 1980s that do not fall under the categories from her book at the very least problematizes Horowitz's (1988) accounts of student culture, and calls into question how useful her categories are. While it

may at first seem inadequate to compare Horowitz's (1988) assumptions on college life to the fictional representations in the film, it is important to note that her book also relies heavily on fictional works in order to validate her view points. For example, Horowitz (1988) elaborates in great detail on the ways in which the 1912 novel *Stover at Yale* provides examples of the student groups in her book. It is therefore quite fitting to examine her theories on college student culture in relation to other fictional student accounts such as the film *Back to School* (Endler et al., 1986).

Student Services in the collegiate films of the 1980s

The role of student services (or lack thereof) is essential to an overall understanding of *Back to School* (Endler et al., 1986). Jason's desire to drop out of college is the main event that propels the plot of the entire film. That event ties the main plot of the film to the lack of student services at GLU since Jason really has no one to turn to other than his father when he is considering dropping out of college. Jason's desire to drop out of college also notes a major shift that was being seen across college campuses in the 1980s. Institutions during the 1980s had to for the first time begin to pay attention to the attrition rates of their undergraduates. This was a big change from the 1950s to the 1970s during which there was very little concern by the part of institutions as to their graduation rates (Thelin, 2004). The 1980s saw a number of new student services put in place, including advisors, learning centers, labs, and other new tools to supplement classroom teaching in an attempt to improve graduation rates (Thelin, 2004). Despite the fact that academic scholars cite these new programs popping up throughout colleges in the 1980s they do not make their way into the film. Indeed, in the film there

does not seem to be any help available to Jason from the college. No one at the college seems to be paying attention to Jason's problems and one does not get a sense from the film that the university would do anything special to help him succeed. There have been many studies done on college students during the 1980s regarding the different factors that seem to be related to low persistence rates in college. A number of studies point out that first generation college students when compared to students that have college educated parents are much more likely to leave college during their freshman year (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004). The research of the period addresses students such as Jason and points to initiatives undertaken to help students like him. The film however, never even hints at any programs for college student success suggesting that such programs are actually either non-existent or unknown to students.

Grand Lakes University's seeming lack of interest in student services is not just visible through the absence of resources for struggling students. When the film does specifically reflect upon an aspect of student services, it is quite an unflattering portrayal. When Jason, his roommate, and Mr. Melon are getting ready to register for class they enter into a giant hall full of students waiting in extremely long lines. The scene is chaotic with students waiting around hoping to get into courses before they are full. The students in the film are visibly frustrated by the long disorganized lines. The students from fraternities are portrayed as attempting to get ahead in line by looking for people they recognize and asking if they can cut in line with them. Overall, the registration process is presented as cumbersome, overly bureaucratic, and lacking order. It is definitely not geared towards promoting student success since the college is presented as not being interested in ensuring students get to register for the courses they need. The students in

the scene are seen registering for courses without any real idea what the courses cover and essentially pick their courses from whatever is open. During this scene the young lady that is presented in the film as Jason's love interest registers for Astronomy with him merely because botany was closed. Later in the film the young lady (Valerie) confesses to Jason that when she registered for the course she did not realize it was actually an astrophysics course and did not know that it required intensive study in math and science. Student confusion regarding course material such as that could be cleared up ahead of time by an advisor or other member of student services that could help to explain requirements, pre-requisites, and general course competencies ahead of time as is suggested by much of the critical literature on the matter (Thelin, 2004).

The lack of resources available to help students is also spotlighted when Mr. Melon begins to try to study after being accused of cheating. He needs help to study and learn the material for his courses in order to pass an oral examination. He receives help from one professor but the rest of the faculty and staff are indifferent at best towards his struggles with his coursework and his lack of preparation for college.

Admissions in the collegiate films of the 1980s

In *Back to School* (1986) there is no question that Mr. Melon was only accepted as a freshman at the university because of his money. In the sequence leading up to the ground breaking ceremony for the new building, the Dean acknowledges the ethical dilemma that accepting Mr. Melon as a student creates. He specifically tells Mr. Melon in a meeting that as a person with "no high school diploma, no transcripts of any kind, no SAT scores, and you are 30 to 40 years older than our average freshman. How can this

university ever see its way clear to accept you as a student?" (Endler et al., 2008). That scene ends and then cuts to the next scene which displays a sign that signals the future site of the Melon school of business administration. That is how the university can see a way to accept him. Mr. Melon is admitted to the University solely based upon his ability to donate a large amount of money. This happens, despite the Dean's speech earlier in the film where he tells Mr. Melon that the University only accepts the highest caliber students handpicked from around the country. That official statement regarding the university's admissions policy is of course undermined by the admission of Mr. Melon, which even the Dean admits is unprepared for college. It is important to note that there is no significant discussion regarding admissions in the film in relation to Jason or the other students. Mr. Melon is the only student whose admissions status is explored in the film.

The only other time the topic of admissions is explored in a collegiate film in the 1990s is in *How I got into college* (1989). The film opens with two runners racing towards a finish line. The cheers of the spectators disappear once the narrator begins speaking. The narrator asks:

In the final moments of a marathon two runners 'A' and 'B' pass a point that is 100 meters from the finish line at the same time...How many meters will be left in the race when 'A' reaches the finish line?"

(Cantillon, Herbert, Shamberg, & Holland, 1989).

While the narrator ponders the question the two runners attempt to provide a response to the question and begin to fight over the correct answer. The convoluted fictional question is meant to satirize the types of math questions that are often posed to students on standardized exams. The entire marathon scene is actually a glimpse into the mind of a

student as he is taking the SAT exam. Providing a visual re-enactment of the questions on the SAT provides the viewer with the sense that the exam is divorced from the real world and is not a good measure of scholastic ability. When the scene cuts away from the marathon one can see the student in the testing room trying to imagine the two runners in order to figure out the answer. The student is frustrated and cannot figure out how to solve the math problem. Visualizing the question does not help causing the student to wonder if it is a trick question. The scene then pans across the room to other students who are feverishly trying to bubble in their answers. Students are so stressed out that the test proctor is seen handing a tissue to a distraught student that is crying during the exam.

There have been numerous research studies devoted to questioning the validity of relying heavily on the SAT for college admissions. One of the critiques of relying on test scores for admissions come from a number of studies that correlate higher-socioeconomic status with higher SAT/ACT scores (Atkinson & Geiser, 2009). Scholars point out that students from families with higher incomes can afford to pay for their children to have expensive exam preparation services that are designed to improve SAT scores (Soares, 2012). The film *How I got into college* (1989) provides an example of this very critique of the SAT. In the film the student that was seen unsuccessfully visualizing the SAT question is later pushed by his father to enroll in a test preparation service to improve his SAT scores.

The film seems to predict much of the scholarly debate regarding the use of standardized testing. Later in that same decade the release of James Crouse and Dale Trusheim's 1988 book *The Case Against the SAT* sparked serious doubt regarding the validity of the SAT when predicting college success. Although the 1980s saw use of the

SAT & ACT in college admissions remain fairly constant, policies regarding admissions exams have been slowly evolving (Atkinson & Geiser, 2009). In 2008 Wake Forest University (a selective university routinely ranked in the top 30 in the nation) changed its admissions policy to make admissions testing optional (Atkinson & Geiser, 2009). It is interesting to note that there is one change that the film, and probably no one else in the 1980s could have predicted. There has been a very sharp and pronounced increase in the use of standardized testing in the K-12 education system (Roach, 2014).

Race in the collegiate films of the 1980s

Much of the critical literature regarding admissions policies during the 1980s however, also points to another set of concerns besides entrance exams. Questions regarding the racial diversity of college applicants were a major topic of interest during the 1980s. The film *How I got into college* (1989) highlights the way that some institutions during the 1980s were supposedly making an effort to improve diversity. The film presents the viewer with a college recruiter as she talks to a high school football star. The recruiter is from Ramsey College, which is a fictitious selective liberal arts college in Pennsylvania. During the recruiter's interview with the student, and his coach, it becomes clear that Ramsey does not have the money to compete with the larger schools that are offering the student money to enroll. However, during the interview the recruiter notices a young African-American student sitting in the library studying. She asks the young lady about her college plans and if they include Ramsey. The student expresses doubt that she would be accepted into Ramsey. During her conversation with the student the recruiter realizes that the student is passionate about continuing her education. The recruiter makes

a real effort to convince the student that she should apply to Ramsey. The recruiter then provides an impassioned speech to the admissions committee regarding her application. She convinces them that despite her numbers being lower than the average at Ramsey that the student would be a great addition to the college. Following several heated debates regarding the student the film ends with the student finally being admitted to Ramsey.

At first, the college's acceptance of the African-American student seems to point to a real commitment to racial diversity by the institution. However, there is another impassioned speech brought to the admissions committee about a student whose grades are below average. The white upper-middle class student that is seen at the beginning of the film struggling with the SAT is also admitted to Ramsey College. He has low test scores and is also admitted under the rationale of promoting a more diverse student body. The film provides the audience with a recruiter making a fervent attempt to try to get that student admitted to Ramsey as well. The recruiter pressures the committee to give the student a chance. That recruiter even quits in protest to the committee's refusal to watch a video about the student. Ultimately, the film shows both students being admitted to Ramsey. Admitting both students minimizes the notion that the college is truly interested in promoting racial diversity. Promoting diversity at Ramsey College seems to be related to admitting students with less than perfect SAT scores. It does not seem to be based on a specific commitment to increase enrollment of racial minorities.

The 1980s was a period during which issues regarding admissions and the role of race and affirmative action programs were quite significant. The 1980s saw a growing scrutiny regarding affirmative action programs (Lipson, 2011). In what has come as a surprise to some scholars, many universities during the 1980s instead of backing down

and removing affirmative action policies actually continued them (Lipson, 2011). Many universities advocated for the need to use racial diversity as a value that admissions officers should consider as part of their reviews of incoming classes of freshmen (Lipson, 2011). In a study conducted by Daniel Lipson (2011) examining the policies at the University of Texas at Austin, the University of Wisconsin—Madison, and UC Berkeley during the 1980s he found that these institutions stood up to the increased scrutiny and mistrust that was growing against affirmative action programs. He concluded that these institutions made explicit arguments for the value of racial diversity in college admissions during the 1980s (Lipson, 2011).

The collegiate films of the 1980s seem to provide the viewer with institutions that lack any true commitment to improving racial diversity. Indeed, race is a topic that is often ignored by the films during this period. The only 1980s film that provides the viewer with African-American students actually attending college is *School Daze* (1988). However, that film is set at a Historically Black College (HBCU). Due to historical patterns of racial segregation the fictional HBCU in the film would already be committed to admitting African-American students. Except for the HBCU in *School Daze* (1988) none of the other films feature any students of color attending college. While the film *How I got into college* (1989) provides an example of an African-American student being offered admissions, it is unclear if the student ever enrolls at the institution. Despite presenting the student working at a fast food restaurant and demonstrating that she comes from a low income background the film does not mention how the student will afford to pay tuition at the institution. The fictional Ramsey College extends an offer of admissions to the student but does not offer her any specific financial assistance. The film *Back to*

School (1986) which is set entirely on a college campus does not showcase any African American students at all in the entire film. The lack of any African-American students (or for that matter, Asian, Hispanic, or other non-white students) brings up the question as to why non-white students are excluded from the film. One simplistic answer to this question may be that the exclusion of students of color from the film was not a conscious choice at all. This would mean that the writers/directors/filmmakers/casting agents merely did not consider race when making this film. There is of course, an alternate view to that line of reasoning in which the lack of race is not seen as a neutral decision. In the book *Critical Theory Today*, there is a chapter that explores similar questions when looking at the lack of race in F Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (Tyson, 2006). Tyson's (2006) writing delves into why *The Great Gatsby*, a novel set in the Jazz Age and specifically associated with New York City, does not make mention of Harlem. Harlem is after all, the place where Jazz was flourishing at the time. The author's contention is that the omission is deliberate on the part of Fitzgerald (Tyson, 2006). By not exploring the role of African Americans in the Jazz Age Fitzgerald serves to imply that Jazz was a white cultural product (Tyson, 2006).

This comparison is introduced as a way to show how the lack of diversity in *Back to School* (Endler et al., 1986) should be scrutinized and the effect of that omission is quite significant. The lack of diversity in *Back to School* (Endler et al., 1986) can be seen as having the effect of (consciously or unconsciously) making higher education in the 1980s seem as something only whites participated in (unless it is at a HBCU). Ignoring race in higher education in the 1980s seems like a glaring omission given the critical literature on the period. As noted earlier in this study, there are several studies on higher

education in the 1980s that deal with issues of race in terms of affirmative action and overall inequity in our higher education system (Lipson, 2011). These factors make it seem unlikely that no one involved in the making of the film at least considered that racial diversity was an issue on college campuses in the 1980s making its exclusion highly problematic.

Finance in the collegiate films of the 1980s

Stop wasting my time. / You know what I want. / You know what I need. / Or maybe you don't. / Do I have to come right flat out and tell you everything? / Gimme some money! Gimme some money!

(Murphy, K., 1984, *This is Spinal Tap*)

Higher Education policy in the 1980s was focused on making improvements following the economic slowdown of the previous decade. Higher Education institutions and politicians during the 1980s ascribed to the idea that higher education (and spending on higher education) provided numerous benefits to society as a whole, including assisting in the broader economic upturn (Thelin, 2004). This policy was adopted partially to counter the slowdown in higher education spending that occurred during the previous decade (Thelin, 2004). Once the 1980s did see improvements in the broader economy higher education institutions started to make the case that spending on higher education should not only be restored but increased (Thelin, 2004). The idea that a strong and robust higher education system benefited society as a whole was not new (see Newman, J. H., 1982). There were already several examples of the ways in which universities can promote economic growth in surrounding communities. Administrators

pointed to Silicon Valley as an example since it was reliant on neighboring Stanford and Berkeley for most of its talent pool (Thelin, 2004). What is significant however was the way in which politicians and college presidents embraced the idea that colleges and universities can play a critical role in the improvement of the broader economy.

The notion that colleges and universities should be concerned and involved in economic growth outside of their walls is often cited in the scholarly literature on the period. In *Back to School* (Endler et al., 1986) the topic of university funding from outside sources is explicitly addressed as a major part of the plot. As noted earlier, the film depicts Mr. Melon's admissions as a new student as being based solely upon his ability to pay and give money to the institution. During the groundbreaking ceremony for the new building the dean's speech is emblematic of the idea that money is what makes the world (and the university) go round. His speech presents a university that is not really that different from a private business. In his speech at the groundbreaking the dean states that

As Calvin Coolidge once said 'the business 'of America is business' and the business of an educational institution such as ours is to create young minds that understand that the business of America is the kind of business that it actually is. So whatever it is that I have said here today, the point is that we are here to honor our most generous benefactor and newest freshman, the man who has made it possible for us to break ground here today, Mr. Thornton Melon.

(Endler et al., 2008).

That intentionally convoluted introduction to Mr. Thornton Melon humorously showcases the relationships that colleges often hold in courting their benefactors for money. The dean's comments present a philosophy of higher education that some scholars may find quite controversial, and runs counter to much of the research on higher education. The speech posits higher education institutions as a place where students are to learn that America is run by big business and that the interests of business reign supreme. The speech lets the audience know that business interests are what truly matter. That becomes the lesson that students at the university are to learn. The speech specifically notes that the college's 'business' is to train young men and women to understand the nature of business in America. This serves to specifically align the interests of the University with the interests of big business. The university is to graduate students that understand and will support the interests of big business in the future. The underlying belief is that in return big business will donate money to the university to educate a new cohort of students that will also conform to big business' interests. In the film the university does not make the claim that the growth of the university is good for the growth of the economy as is found in the critical literature. Instead, the film suggests that the growth of the university is good because the university shares the values of big business and will promote those values to their future students.

Dean Martin's speech (the pun on the name is intentional) in which business interests are aligned with the university is exactly what much of the scholarly literature rails against. Much of the critical writing regarding the relationship between higher education and the interests of businesses suggest that a University's mission is often at odds with the interests of commerce and industry. Certainly scholars such as Readings

(1996) and Kennedy (1997) (both of which are discussed earlier in the literature review of this project) would find a speech such as the one from Dean Martin extremely detrimental to the mission of a University. Many educational scholars believe a University's mission to educate and foster new knowledge is inherently different from a company which is concerned with profits (Readings, 1996). Dean Martin's speech calls into question the importance of an institution funding academic pursuits that are not tied to business concerns. The idea that institutions have a duty to pursue scholarly interests irrespective of business concerns is a concept which many scholars cite as a fundamental tenet of a research university. *Back to School* (Endler et al., 1986) takes the anxiety that many scholars have expressed that the corporate world is encroaching upon higher education and pushes it the next level where universities expressly state that big business and their interests are what matter most.

However, the view that higher education is subservient to big business is not totally uncontested within the film. The introduction to Mr. Thornton Melon thanking him for his generosity is immediately rebuked by the Dean of the School of Business who resoundingly objects to Mr. Melon's admission. Dean Barbay immediately speaks up at the ceremony stating that "I just want to get it on record that I am totally against this, I don't think that selling admission to an obviously unqualified student is very ethical or honorable" (Endler et al., 2008). Dean Martin's dismissive response to his objection is merely "but I would just like to say in all fairness to Mr. Melon here, It was a really big check" (Endler et al., 2008). Dean Martin clearly states that the amount of money donated trumps any concerns or reservations that the institution may have regarding the ethical concerns that may arise from accepting a student based upon money instead of academic

merit. Since Mr. Melon is ultimately accepted as a student the implication is that in the end, business interests and money are ultimately more important than any ethical concerns a university may have.

It also seems significant to note that in the film the topic of finance is basically limited to the university accepting money from Mr. Melon. There is no discussion of the cost of tuition that students pay or the role that financial aid plays in terms of the college's finances. The university's finances in the film are tied up with corporate interests and not the students who pay tuition. The lack of any discussion of tuition charges is surprising since many scholars note that during the 1980s, the cost of college had gone up to twice the level of inflation (Mead & Peck, 1991). During that period the costs associated with attending college increased faster than that of many other sectors of the economy such as health care or energy (Mead & Peck, 1991). The film's lack of interest regarding these aspects of university finance suggest to the audience that tuition is not as important to the university as are its ties to the business world.

Faculty in the collegiate films of the 1980s

If the cornerstone of a quality education is the faculty members of an institution then *Back to School* (Endler et al., 1986) poses some important questions in regards to educational quality. The film presents the viewer with several opposing views as to how college faculty teach and the type of education students can expect to receive. The representations of faculty are quite varied among the different types of professors presented. There are three different professors presented in the film and each provides contrasting views of academia. Mr. Melon's first class is an economics class. The

professor is Dr. Barbay which is the person that openly objects to his being admitted as a student. During the first class session Dr Barbay devotes the session to setting up the parameters of what the course will cover. Professor Barbay begins by stating that in order to teach the concepts of the course they will focus on creating a fictional company from the ground up. As the professor discusses the terms and set up costs of starting the fictional company Mr. Melon continually interrupts the professor providing what he considers "real world" costs that the professor has omitted. While Mr. Melon speaks the students in class turn to him and start taking notes on what he is saying instead of what the professor is saying. Despite the interruptions the Professor continues by saying that the next question they should ask themselves about their fictitious business is where to build their factory. The question is quickly answered by Mr. Melon who interjects " How about fantasy land?" (Endler et al., 2008) which leads the students in the class to laugh out loud.

The film presents the material in Professor Barbay's course as highly theoretical and removed from the "real" world of doing business. Mr. Melon is presented as a real business man who has true knowledge. His knowledge is presented as more important than what the professor has to say and the students trust his knowledge and start to take notes on what he says. The students believe they can learn more from Mr. Melon and ignore the professor. The idea that the college's curriculum is disconnected from the business world is countered by the professor who denigrates Mr. Melon's comments as being incompatible with the legitimate business world (Endler et al., 1986). The professor tells the class that Mr. Melon's ideas represent a set of illegal and unsavory business practices that students should steer clear from (Endler et al., 1986). Professor

Barbay espouses a view of the university as a place that values fairness, equality, and high ethical standards. This view of the university however, is lambasted by the college's actions since the university only accepted Mr. Melon as a student due to his money equating it to a form of bribery.

The subsequent representations of professors in the film seem to provide even more disparate and confusing examples of college faculty. Mr. Melon's second class is a course in contemporary American History taught by Professor Turgeson. The professor is a heavysset man with long hair and a hat who begins the class with a short introduction about himself and historical studies. In the introduction the professor tells the class that although people may think that history is just facts, he sees it as more important and personal than that. He explains that history is sacred for him, similar to the way in which Christians hold the bible as sacred, or people hold up their marriages as sacred. Following his introduction on the sacred role that history plays for him he asks the class a question "can someone tell me why in 1975 we pulled our troops out of Vietnam?" (Endler et al., 2008). A young female student then raises her hand and provides a very academic answer that sounds like it was memorized from a textbook. After her answer the professor looks around the room and asks the other students if her answer was correct. He says that a lot of people like to believe in the answer she gave. He says that he wishes that he could believe it but that he was there. He disapprovingly tells the class that he wasn't in a classroom during the war. He begins yelling loudly that he was up to his knees in rice patties with guns, while students were back in college partying, putting head bands on and doing drugs (Endler et al., 1986). The female student looks like she is about to cry as the professor continues to scream at her. The

professor gets louder and louder screaming violently at the class. The professor eventually loses control of his temper and breaks the top of a desk.

This odd and rather frightening encounter with a professor presents faculty in quite a different light from the previous one. The history professor is presented as emotionally and mentally unstable as he screams and yells seemingly having a flashback from his time in Vietnam. The film references higher education in the 1960s when the counterculture and anti war movements were heavily associated with college campuses (Thelin, 2004). In contrast to the business professor who is presented as being out of touch with his field this professor is traumatized by the events he is teaching after having lived through them. The classroom is presented as place where the professor's personal life events shape and control the subject matter and the professor's own mental state is a subject of concern. The professor's moment of crisis is presented as scary but seems to be accepted by the students as fairly normal. When Mr. Melon mentions to his son that he has a class with Mr. Turgeson Jason tells him that the Professor is very committed, and perhaps had been committed, hinting that perhaps the professor had been previously hospitalized. Mr. Melon and Jason simply accept the professor's actions and never even consider informing the university of the professor's erratic behavior.

Overall, the critical research regarding college faculty members is very different from the representations of faculty in *Back to School* (Endler et al., 1986). Much of the critical literature on faculty in the 1980s focuses on the ways in which during that period they are becoming more connected with the larger outside world. In the 1980s scholars noted a trend that began in the United States after WWII and seemed to take hold quite strongly in the 1980s. Faculty across the US began to focus their research and

coursework on ways to connect it to the broader international community beyond the borders of the United States (Barber & Ilchman, 1980). During the 1980s social science programs became much more international in scope and humanities programs became much more inclusive of non-European literature and culture (Barber & Ilchman, 1980). Humanities programs were especially prone to move beyond merely teaching the western canon of literature and thought (Barber & Ilchman, 1980). During this period faculty members in relatively newer interdisciplinary fields such as international studies were increasingly being hired and receiving very high rates of tenure when compared to other non-science faculty. This move on the part of different disciplines and faculty towards a more international curriculum is certainly not reflected in *Back to School* (Endler et al., 1986) where the faculty is not interested in the broader international community. In fact, they are not really interested in even connecting with their local community or anything beyond their own narrow interests and concerns.

In Donald Kennedy's influential book on college faculty, *Academic Duty* (1997), he devotes an entire chapter (Chapter 9, To Reach Beyond the Walls) to the subject of how faculty negotiate their time and their commitments to their work within the university and the world outside academia. In *Back to School* (Endler et al., 1986) the faculty members that are highlighted do not seem to be engaged in any research in their disciplines. There is one only scene in *Back to School* (Endler et al., 1986) in which university research is briefly acknowledged. In that scene, Mr. Melon enters a room that is full of chimpanzees and television screens. In the lab he meets the professor (Dr. Borozini) and introduces himself to him. The professor is depicted as absent minded and completely confused. He immediately tells Mr. Melon that he knows who he is mistaking

him for a professor that delivered a paper on brain waves at a conference in Montreal. Once Mr. Melon points out that he is in fact, a student there to complete lab hours, Dr Borozini tells him that he is attempting to teach the chimpanzees how to read and write. He tells Mr. Melon that all he has to do "is put a new tape in the video machine every hour and observe the animals"(Endler et al., 1986). He then leaves and tells Mr. Melon that he will be back in a few hours to see the progress the chimpanzees have made. The scene which ends with Mr. Melon eating pizza and watching wrestling with the chimps serves to poke fun at the research agenda of the university. The character of Dr. Borozini reinforces the trope of the absent minded-professor doing meaningless research. The only thing the research seems to do is to provide menial work for students such as Mr. Melon who baby-sits a room full of chimpanzees.

Gender in the collegiate films of the 1980s

The next encounter with a faculty member presented in the film *Back to School* (1986) is also quite different from the previous encounters. The representations of faculty continue when Mr. Melon and his son attend a literature class. The first thing the viewer will notice is that this time the professor is woman. It seems significant since up until this point in the film all the school faculty and administrators have been male. The class begins with the professor reading a poem. As the professor recites the poem to the class Mr. Melon is completely enraptured, however, his interest is not in the poem. The film cuts to a very vivid daydream that Mr. Melon is having while the professor recites the poem. In the daydream sequence the professor is sitting in a field with Mr. Melon. Both of them are dressed in white lying atop a white blanket with a herd of sheep frolicking

behind them in the field and he kisses her while she holds a glass of wine. He then interrupts her class reading by screaming Yes! Yes! and the class chuckles. The poem she reads is actually not a poem but a passage from James Joyce's *Ulysses*. The piece she recites is the final words of the novel. That final passage of the novel is written in a kind of stream of consciousness in which the reader enters into thoughts of the character Molly Bloom. The words are written on the page in one large piece without any punctuation to stop the flow of her thoughts (Sternlieb, 1998).

It seems significant that the passage that is read is Molly Bloom's final soliloquy since it is in some ways representative of how women are presented in the film. Throughout Joyce's novel Molly Bloom's inner thoughts regarding sexuality and men are often revealed to the reader. Indeed, the character's concern for her own sexual pleasure and her attitudes towards men were rather controversial when the novel was first released in 1922 (Williams, 1971). However, as literary critics have since noted the character serves to preserve a stereotypical version of women in which women only exist in terms of their relationships to men, childbirth, and motherhood (Williams, 1971). Despite the novel's unique, and at that time radical, presentation of a woman's thoughts, the women in the novel are seen through the eyes of men. Molly's own thoughts are mediated through James Joyce's own views regarding women (Sternlieb, 1998). Molly Bloom's final soliloquy has been hotly debated by many feminist critics. A number of scholars have decried it as emblematic of a misogynistic viewpoint instead of as a progressive representation of a female voice (Sternlieb, 1998).

Given the critical unease that some literary critics have with Molly Bloom's final soliloquy, it seems quite fitting that it was selected as the passage to be read aloud by

Professor Turner. She is the only female character of significance in the film and is a female professor at an institution that is presented as dominated by men. That may lead one to believe that her character would be associated with a feminist perspective of women given the increasing importance of feminism in academia during the 1980s. However, the character of Dr. Diane Turner expresses very traditional views regarding women. In a discussion with Mr. Melon regarding the changing role of men and women after the rise of feminism Dr Turner says that she thinks it is men that have changed for the worse. She complains that men have become too in touch with their emotions and she wishes men would act more like the traditional men of the past.

Dr. Turner is significant to the plot of the film mostly as an object of sexual desire for the men. In that very first scene, her reading of James Joyce is interrupted by Mr. Melon's daydream of her as a sexual object. The film's focus on the professor as an object of sexual desire ignores and downplays her role as an academic. She is the object of desire for both Mr. Melon and Professor Barbay. In the beginning of the film she is presented as being in a relationship with Dr. Barbay in which she voices her dissatisfaction with him after he tells her that they are made for each other. Dr Barbay uses very academic business language describing their relationship as a merger. Her response is that they should just have fun. Indeed, she is consistently presented as seeking fun and not associated with serious work. The serious work is presumably left up to the men. Dr. Turner is much like Molly Bloom's character, which at first glance seems to represent a liberal view of women. However, upon closer inspection the character actually serves to reinforce a male dominated perspective of women. It also seems important to note that Dr. Turner teaches literature which seems to reinforce a sexist trope

in academia in which women are associated with the humanities instead of other disciplines that are sometimes mistakenly considered more rigorous (Riegle-Crumb & King, 2010). There is a vast amount of critical literature devoted to exploring the lack of women professors in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields so that it is not very surprising to find Dr. Turner teaching literature (Riegle-Crumb & King, 2010).

The very traditional viewpoints parroted by Dr. Turner certainly run counter to the scholarly literature on women in academia during the 1980s. The period is full of accounts of women's studies programs beginning to take hold and gain respect throughout academia (Katzenstein, 1990). The humanities disciplines especially begin to be influenced greatly by feminist thought. During this period feminist understandings of literature begin to become more commonplace as an acceptable form of literary criticism. It became important enough that at the MLA (Modern Language Association) conference in 1987 feminist criticism was cited as the technique that had the most influence on college curriculum (Kolodny, 1988). The rise of feminist critiques during this period is cited by many education scholars as one of the most significant changes in academia during the 1980s (Kolodny, 1988).

Summary

This chapter provided my findings based upon my analysis of the various representations of higher education in the films of the 1980s. In this chapter I analyzed the following films *Back to School* (1986), and *How I Got Into College* (1989). My analysis of the films focused on seven main themes in higher education. The themes examined were Students, Student Services, Admissions, Race, Finance, Faculty, and

Gender. My analysis of the films in this chapter included references to the critical scholarly works of the period in order to help contextualize my findings. The next chapter presents my findings upon examining the representations of higher education in the films of the 1990s.

CHAPTER EIGHT
HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE CINEMA: THE 1990s

Students in the collegiate films of the 1990s

The 1990s was a period during which the broader culture defined college students in a very particular way. The young men and women that entered college as freshmen during the 1990s are often referred to collectively as part of Generation “X” (Marshall, 1997). The term Generation “X” became the default term to describe these students after the release of Douglas Coupland’s (1991) novel. Coupland’s (1991) novel *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture* was published in 1991 and described the emerging youth culture of the time. The novel quickly became extremely influential and was cited by many as a prime literary example of the mindset of the youth culture of the 1990s (Marshall, 1997). The letter “X” in Generation “X” was used because it is a common reference for what is unknown in mathematics (Marshall, 1997). In most beginning algebra problems the letter “X” is the unknown letter that must be solved for in a mathematical equation. The term Generation “X” therefore refers to the way in which the adults that were part of the Baby-Boomer generation saw these new youth as part of an unknown culture that was foreign to them (Sacks, 1996). The “X” in Generation “X” also implies that these youth lacked a point of reference in society that could help them to understand their own experience and place in society (Marshall, 1997). The Baby-Boomer generation before them often viewed this new generation as unmotivated and Generation “X” youth were frequently associated with the term “slackers” to denote their supposed lack of drive and desire (Sacks, 1996).

In Sacks (1996) influential book, *Generation X Goes to College: An Eye-Opening Account of Teaching in Postmodern America*, he contends that college students during the 1990s are the first generation of college students that can be called postmodern. He makes the claim that the term postmodern should be taken from beyond the abstract world of the humanities and philosophy and used as a tool to understand college students in the 1990s. His argument is that there is a change in American society that can be seen reflected in these college students. That change is what he refers to as the postmodern shift. As noted earlier in this dissertation the term "postmodern" defies any kind of easy definition and all the definitions currently available are highly contested. Most scholars do not dispute the basic assumption that postmodernism is not really a unified set of theories or ideas (Sacks, 1996). The fact that postmodernism defies an easy definition immediately links it to the so-called Gen "X" generation since they also defy being easily defined.

In Jean-Francois Lyotard's (1984) *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* there is a chapter called *Lyotard, Answering the Question: What Is Postmodernism*. In that chapter, Lyotard attempts to answer the question of what postmodernism is and begins the chapter by saying that "This is a period of slackening"(Lyotard, 1984, p.71). This seems significant since the term "slackers" is so often used to characterize young people that are part of Generation X. The way that Lyotard uses the term slackening however, is in a different context than the way it is used when applied to members of Generation X. When used in reference to these young people the term is generally used to refer to the idea that they are lazy and unmotivated (Sacks, 1996). The way Lyotard (1984) uses the term in his book is in reference to the

production of art in a postmodern society. Lyotard (1984) makes the argument that art made under a postmodern sensibility is slackening because it places less value on traditional values of aesthetics which often place high esteem on the skill and technique involved in creating art. For Lyotard (1984) art made under a postmodern framework shifts the value of art to its monetary value.

In many ways Sacks (1996), finds that there was a kind of slackening among the college students he taught in the 1990s. Sacks (1996) extends Lyotard's metaphor to apply it to Generation X students experience in college. Sacks (1996) found that Generation X college students entered college expecting to receive high grades without having to work particularly hard for them. In Sacks (1996) book, he chronicles his experience as a college professor during the 1990s. He found that although he was grading fairly his students would give him negative evaluations because he was not giving out enough good grades. In the book he chronicles an experiment in which he decided to be a more lenient grader and how that led to his evaluations improving (Sacks, 1996). Before that he was on the verge of not getting tenure, but by being more lenient and in line with his student's expectations he is offered tenure. Sacks (1996) book is in many ways devoted to his concern over the way that colleges respond to complaints made by Gen X students. He believes that colleges should not pander to these students and their supposed expectations (Sacks, 1996). Instead, Sacks (1996) feels that colleges should respond by strengthening academic standards and avoid falling down the road of grade inflation just to keep students happy. Sacks (1996) finds that Generation X students feel that they need to be entertained by their college courses and that they expect institutions pander to their needs.

The film *Higher Learning* (1995) strays from some of the descriptions of college students found in Sacks (1996) book, but does provide a similar depiction of college students during the 1990s in regards to their attitude towards grades. The film features a scene in which Malik argues with Professor Phipps because he feels he deserved a better grade. He accuses the Professor of not even reading his paper suggesting that a Teaching Assistant probably read his paper. When Professor Phipps maintains that his grade is correct Malik tells the professor that he is holding him to a higher standard because of his race. Malik provides Professor Phipps with various reasons why he is being too hard on him in an attempt to have him raise his grade. Despite Malik's various attempts to make Professor Phipps understand why he deserves a higher grade Professor Phipps does not change his mind. Shortly after that scene the film returns to Professor Phipps who is now meeting with Kristen. Kristen also goes to see him upset that her grade was not as high as she expected. In this scene once again Professor Phipps defends his grading standards while Kristen attempts to convince him he is being overly demanding. Professor Phipps tells Kristen that she is in college to learn how to think and how to develop her own critical opinions. Kristen however, clearly does not understand Professor Phipps explanation. Kristen takes notes during their conversation in order to use the professor's comments as ideas for her next upcoming paper. Professor Phipps ends the meeting by chiding Kristen and telling her to come up with her own ideas for her next paper.

Besides the supposed role of gen "X" differences there was another important movement to consider when examining college culture during the 1990s. The 1990s saw a rise of political correctness at colleges and universities along with an increased interest in multicultural politics among students and faculty (Newfield & Strickland, 1995). The

term political correctness seems to originate from the work of the politically conservative writer Dinesh D'Souza and his book *Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus* (1991). The author's main premise is that an interest in multiculturalism on college campuses was leading educators towards censorship and the loss of free speech on campuses across the country (D'Souza, 1991). The book was quite polarizing and the response to the book was often tempered by the reader's own political viewpoints. D'Souza's work was lauded for its insights by Christian neoconservatives but panned by most liberal critics as nothing more than conservative political rhetoric disguised as education theory (Jacobsen, 2004). However, D'Souza's ideas did generate quite a bit of public interest in political correctness and it entered popular culture in the 1990s in many ways. Indeed, one of the most popular collegiate films of the 1990s was *PCU* (1994). The title of the film seems at first to be based upon the initials of the fictional Port Chester University that is featured in the film. However, since most of the film is devoted to poking fun at political correctness gone awry it becomes clear that the title is actually a reference to calling the university "Politically Correct University" (Sabath, Schiff, & Bochner, 1994). Many social critics and commentators eventually found that the effects of political correctness were extremely overblown if they ever even had a significant effect on college campuses at all (Jacobsen, 2004). Nevertheless, the idea of political correctness seems to have had quite an effect on the popular imagination of the country, especially in terms of envisioning college campuses. In many ways, ideas and concepts concerning identity and politics were an overshadowing concern over much of the discussion of higher education during the 1990s.

When discussing themes of multiculturalism, identity, race, gender, ethnicity, and social class, one may see the term identity politics being used. While the term Identity Politics is frequently used when discussing these themes, it is often times used in a pejorative or derogatory way. However, in this study the term identity politics will be used when referring to instances where identity and politics converge, without any negative connotation.

The film *Higher Learning* (1995) introduces the issue of identity politics as a central concern for college students at the fictional Columbus University. The students in *Higher Learning* (1995) actually spend the majority of their time in the film struggling with issues of personal identity. One of the aspects of *Higher Learning* (1995) that is striking is that the students' issues with identity are not specifically related to their being college students. The students are never seen having trouble adapting to being in college. The freshman students move in and don't really display any sense of homesickness or difficulty adjusting to being away from home for the first time. Instead, the students immediately try to figure out where they fall in terms of their racial and gender identity on campus. Early on in the film the viewer is presented to Fudge who is an African-American student and is one of the older students on campus. The film notes that Fudge has been there six years and has not yet graduated. Fudge provides Malik and the other African American freshman a lesson regarding the college. The lesson has nothing to do with adjusting to being away from family and friends or how to best handle the academic requirements ahead of them. Fudge instead takes them on a tour of the campus and stops to point out the way the students have congregated. He points to a group of white students and calls the group "Disneyland" (Singleton et al., 1995). Fudge then points to a

group of a group of Asian students talking by a tree and calls that “Chinatown” (Singleton et al., 1995). He continues his characterizations of students by pointing out a group of Hispanic students and calls that area “South of the Border” (Singleton et al., 1995). The lesson concludes with Fudge saying that their group is the “Black Hole” since the group is comprised of black students (Singleton et al., 1995). Fudge’s description of the various groups, although insensitive and racially denigrating, does provide the students with an important lesson regarding the college’s culture. The lesson teaches the students (and the audience) that race and racial identity is the most important thing that one must figure out while in college. Racial identity is of the utmost concern to the students at Columbus University. The students at Columbus University for the most part do organize into groups by race. A student’s racial category is the primary category that seems to determine who a student will congregate with on campus. Indeed, the main complaint that the white student Remy has about being in college is that all the students on campus seem to stick together in groups that are defined by race. The students in *Higher Learning* (1991) do not have any sense of being united by being part of the same generational group. They do not even seem to be united by the experience of being in college together. They are instead interested in forming their own personal identities that are largely influenced by race and gender instead of their particular place in time historically in terms of their generation.

Overall, the representations of college students in the 1990s found in *Higher Learning* (1995) help to debunk the overly simplistic description of Gen “X” as slackers. By using Lyotard’s (1984) understanding of postmodernism and Sacks’ (1996) descriptions of college students, one can find parallels in the film in terms of the grading

expectations of students. However, the more crucially defining element of college students in the films of the 1990s seems to be their interest in identity politics and their subsequent quests for identity. In *PCU* (1994), the students are divided by their positions on identity politics, and whether they are vegetarians, feminists, conservatives, or liberals. Similarly, in *Glory Daze* (1995) the film is propelled by a group of students that are attempting to define themselves as they near graduation. The film *Higher Learning* (1995) also finds that the issue of identity politics is central to college life during this period. The “X” in Gen “X” does after all reference the unknown and the college students represented in the films of this period all seem to be engaged in identity politics to help define that “X”. The quest for self-definition seems to be even more central to these college students than the generation before them, and it is that quest for identity that seems to best define them.

Student Services in the collegiate films of the 1990s

The different areas of Student Services are not a major part of the plot that propels any of the collegiate films of the 1990s. However, in the film *Higher Learning* (1995) there is an element of student services that is important to an understanding of the film. The area of student services that is specifically represented in the film is the financial aid department. There is a poignant scene in *Higher Learning* (1995) that is set in the financial aid office. The camera pans through the office and there are students patiently waiting in long lines. The camera sweeps towards the front of the room where students are speaking to financial aid advisors who are looking into computer screens. As the scene continues a student is heard saying "are you sure? I mean, I don't understand this"

(Singleton et al., 1995). That exchange along with all the looks of frustration seen on the faces of the students emphasize the sense of confusion felt by the students. The scene then focuses on Malik when he goes up to the counter and sees a financial aid advisor. When he sees the financial aid representative he nonchalantly pulls out a credit card "never leave home without it he says smiling" (Singleton et al., 1995). Malik's laissez-faire attitude denotes that he expects to merely be paying for some sort of student fee. Malik does not argue over the fee; He does not even ask how much the fee is. He is ready to simply pay the fee and return to class. The person at the financial aid counter however tells Malik that there is a problem "It says here you got a partial athletic scholarship. Better talk to your coach" (Singleton et al., 1995). Malik is in absolute disbelief and insists that it is simply some kind of mistake. He reassures the financial aid counselor that he has a full scholarship and tells the advisor to check again. The financial aid advisor tells Malik that she is merely telling him what the computer shows and that she cannot help him. She tells Malik that he must go to the department and get it cleared up with them. Afterwards, Malik goes to the track to see the coach whose response to Malik is ""You want what? A full scholarship, [chuckle] alright I'll see what I can do" (Singleton et al., 1995). The film makes it clear that Malik believed for that entire time that he had received an athletic scholarship that fully covered his tuition. Malik only finds out he has a partial scholarship when he is sent to financial aid because the total balance for his classes has not been paid. At that point Malik has already moved into student housing and registered for classes. The university is represented as completely unconcerned that Malik is confused by the terms of the scholarship he received. No one in financial aid or any of the other student services areas made any real effort to reach out to him so that he would

understand what his share of the tuition would be ahead of time. Malik is then left hoping that he can convince the coach to give him a full scholarship; otherwise he will have to leave the university.

Malik is not the only student that is confused by the amount of financial aid received. Kristen is also frustrated when she is in the financial aid office. Kristen is seen almost in tears as she talks to her financial aid counselor. Kristen's experience with financial aid is very much like Malik's. The financial aid counselor that is helping Kristen does not attempt to offer Kristen any options that may be available to her. The person behind the desk never provides possible alternatives such as additional grants, or scholarships, or even additional loans. Instead, the financial aid officer's advice to Kristen is merely that she should get a job. Kristen, like Malik, is only finding out that she is short for tuition when she has already moved into the college and is already registered for classes.

The way in which the financial aid office in the film shows little concern for how students ultimately pay their tuition seems emblematic of a problem that appears to be on the rise in the 1990s. The research on financial aid in 1990s seems to point to a shift regarding the way in which financial aid is distributed to students. Financial Aid was previously awarded mostly to students at the lowest income levels, but increasingly it seems that in the 1990s it was being awarded more and more to students in the middle class as well (Miller, 1990). One study that examined selective private universities found that 21 percent of the students that were receiving financial aid had reported family incomes of over \$60,000 a year placing them well above the lower end of socio-economic groups (Miller, 1990). Studies cite several possible reasons why more middle

(and sometimes upper-middle) income students were receiving more financial aid (Miller, 1990). One reason less students at the lowest family income levels were receiving aid was due to cuts to the financial aid system overall (Miller, 1990). The increase in financial aid to students in the middle class may also be related to the belief that middle class students are more likely to persist than their lower income classmates (Miller, 1990). Some universities awarded financial aid to students that were less needy because it is in their own self-interest to do so. Universities sometimes believe that a student that is coming in from the middle/upper middle class is more likely to have the resources in the future to give money back as a donor which helps to keep the cycle going (Miller, 1990). Universities also use financial aid packages as a way of luring more talented students. A student may choose to attend a university that is less prestigious than another if the lower-ranked university offers a better financial aid package. This may happen even if the student's family can afford to pay the tuition at the more expensive university. All of these factors seem to influence the way in which financial aid was being awarded during the 1990s and unfortunately had the effect of decreasing aid to the neediest students. The scenes from *Higher Learning* (1995) where no one at the university is interested in how students pay their tuition seems to coincide with research on financial aid during the period. Indeed, the film highlights students with a demonstrated financial need that are not given clear information regarding their tuition bill before they enroll. The university's complete lack of concern for low-income students is regrettably a position that many universities during the 1990s seemed to share.

Finance in the collegiate films of the 1990s

The 1990s was a decade during which colleges and universities were certainly concerned with issues of finance overall. In the first part of the 1990s, the American Council on Education posed various questions to some of the top college leaders in the country. One of the questions posed to the college leaders was for them to cite the three main challenges they believed they would be facing during the next five years (Miller, 1990). The top three challenges cited by the group of leaders were all related to collegiate finance (Miller, 1990). However, despite the anxiety that college administrators seemed to be facing in regards to their fiscal soundness the films of the 1990s do not deal with issues regarding philanthropic donors and their role in the world of collegiate finance. That is definitely unlike films during the 1980s such as *Back to School* (1986) where the role of donors and philanthropy is clearly showcased. In fact, none of the collegiate films of 1990s such as *The Freshman* (1990), *Glory Daze* (1995), *The Mirror Has Two Faces* (1996), *PCU* (1994), or *Higher Learning* (1995) represent college donors in any significant way. In *Higher Learning* (1995) there are no references whatsoever to alumni donors. This is despite a trend that was growing during the 1990s where universities would provide wealthy alumni with estate planning services (Miller, 1990). One possible reason as to why universities during the 1990s may have been expecting to rely less on donations is that the stock market crash in 1987 decreased the amount of expendable money many possible donors would have available to give away (Miller, 1990). Another possible reason for the decrease in institutional attention towards donors in the 1990s is that changes in tax law enacted during that period made it less beneficial for the wealthy to donate to universities as a charity in order to receive a tax break (Miller, 1990).

The possibility of shrinking donations during the 1990s only seemed to heighten the anxiety that colleges and universities felt regarding their finances (Miller, 1990). It is curious that despite all of the nervousness regarding the fiscal state of colleges during the 1990s, the only aspect of finance that the film *Higher Learning* (1995) focuses on is on the collection of money from tuition. As mentioned earlier, the film makes it a point to focus on the way in which the university is extremely concerned with collecting tuition payments. The sequence in the financial aid office where confused students are trying to scramble to get their tuition paid is preceded by a rather striking scene in Professor Phipp's classroom. In that scene, the professor asks Malik to call out the names of various students from a list (Malik is among the names called). The students whose names are called are asked to stand. Then Professor Phipps tells those that are standing that they have been identified as owing money to the university for their tuition. He tells them that they must leave the classroom that they cannot return to class until their financial debt with the institution is resolved. That scene is the only time in any film on higher education where students are actually asked to stand in front of their peers and be humiliated by having everyone know they have an outstanding debt to the university. The extreme tactic of shaming students to make sure they pay their tuition has not been replicated in any film on higher education before or since.

The way in which the film *Higher Learning* (1995) focuses on tuition payments presents a rather distressing view of collegiate finance during the 1990s. The film presents the viewer with a university which is focused on making sure students pay their tuition. It is of course essential for an institution that student tuition is paid. However, there are many ways in which colleges can assist by providing students with options and

alternate sources of funding to help students attend. Most colleges and universities understand that education is different from other kinds of industries. The goal at a non-profit university is not to collect as much tuition as possible. The ultimate goal is (or arguably should be) to educate students. Today, most colleges and universities strive to provide information regarding the cost of tuition and how much money a student will owe after financial aid and scholarships before students commit to enrollment. In *Higher Learning* (1995) Malik does not even know his scholarship is partial until he is already enrolled and attending Columbus University. The focus on collecting tuition coupled with not providing timely information regarding financial aid options in *Higher Learning* (1995) provide a view of colleges during the 1990s that seem more interested in collecting money than they are interested in student learning.

Admissions in the collegiate films of the 1990s

None of the major collegiate films of the 1990s devote much time to issues of college admissions. It is actually quite surprising that so little attention is paid to the topic of admissions. College admissions is certainly a topic of interest during the 1990s, and there is a large amount of scholarly research that has been done regarding college admissions policies during the 1990s (Long, 2004). The film *Higher Learning* (1995) does not make specific reference to the admissions process that students underwent in order to be accepted into the university. It also does not delve into the decision making process that was involved when the students chose to attend Columbus University. However, the film does make specific reference to several aspects related to college admissions that are of great importance.

In the beginning of the film *Higher Learning* (1995) a pep rally is held for new incoming freshman and the speaker at the rally asks the crowd “how many of you came here to change the world? You are the few, the proud, the next incoming freshman class to go to this university” (Singleton et al., 1995). Columbus University is therefore clearly selective in terms of admissions since it specifically tells the students they are a part of the few that were admitted to join the freshman class that year. The university clearly has high expectations for their students and assumes that the students themselves are coming in with high expectations for themselves. The university expects that they are coming in ready to change the world and make an important contribution to the world based on their experiences at Columbus University.

Columbus University is presented as a national university that pulls students from various parts of the country. Remy makes reference throughout the film that he is from Idaho and does not know anyone at the university. When Kristen first meets her roommate Monet, the two notice that they are different not only because they are different racially, but because they are from different places. Monet asks Kristen where she is from and she tells her she is from Orange County. Monet has no idea where that is and Kristen has to explain that it is near Disneyland. Seeing that Monet is unaware of where things are in California she asks Monet, "You are not from around here are you?" (Singleton et al., 1995) to which Monet nods in agreement. Columbus University is therefore clearly not a regional university that pulls most of its students from the local region where it is located. Given that the students in the film come from all over makes it more notable that the film does not delve into the process that the students underwent in selecting to attend Columbus University.

During the 1990s, the issue of college admissions was of great interest to academics largely due to some important events in California. One very important change that occurred in that regard was when in 1995 the University of California system decided to remove all affirmative action programs that were in place that considered race or gender when making admissions decisions (Long, 2004). The debate over affirmative action in college admissions then became part of the public and political sphere when Proposition 209 was approved by voters in the State of California in 1996 (Santos, Cabrera, & Fosnacht, 2010). Proposition 209 banned colleges in the University of California system from using race during the college admissions process (Santos, Cabrera, & Fosnacht, 2010). The University of California system is home to some of the best and most selective public universities in the country and admissions to some of the institutions in the University of California system is quite competitive. There have been several studies done on the role of college admissions and the role of affirmative action most of which site proposition 209 as a pivotal moment that changed the way colleges thought about using race in college admissions (Santos, Cabrera, & Fosnacht, 2010). In *Higher learning* (1995) the film does not directly address the question of admission to the fictional Columbus University, however, it does make a statement of importance in regards admissions policy. It is significant that Columbus University is presented as a selective private university. Proposition 209 only affected public universities and did not have any legal standing for private universities. Private universities were not affected by proposition 209 and could continue to use race as a criteria for admissions. There was indeed much fear after the passing of proposition 209 that it would have a negative effect on minority applications and college admissions at private universities as well (“Has

Proposition 209”, 1999). In legal studies one may see the term *terrorem* used to denote such unintended effects of a law (“Has Proposition 209”, 1999). The term is often used to describe situations where people (or institutions) act in ways that arise out of a fear of legal retribution or future legal battles (“Has Proposition 209”, 1999). There was great fear that proposition 209 signaled such a specific disapproval of attempts to improve minority college enrollment that minority students would apply in smaller numbers to private institutions as well as public institutions (Santos, Cabrera, & Fosnacht, 2010). There was a sense that minority students would feel they are not welcome or may assume that they will not be admitted to a university (Grotsky, Kurlaender, 2010). There was also widespread fear that private universities would follow proposition 209, despite the fact that it did not directly address them or force them to make changes to their admissions policies (“Has Proposition 209”, 1999). In the end it seems that much of the research done has pointed to proposition 209 having the unintended effect of bolstering minority student enrollment at selective private universities in California (Grotsky, Kurlaender, 2010). It seems that African American students may have felt unwanted at UCLA or UC Berkeley and may have shifted towards applying to Stanford instead (“Has Proposition 209”, 1999). Selective private universities such as Stanford (which is perhaps the most selective and well known of the privates in California) saw the number of African-American freshman increase after the passing of proposition 209. Institutions such as Caltech, Claremont McKenna College, and Pomona College which are also highly selective all seemed to show increases in African American student enrollment as well (“Has Proposition 209”, 1999). The simple fact that *Higher Learning* (1995) is set at a selective private college in California seems to signal a sentiment growing during the

1990s that selective private universities are perhaps more hospitable places for African-American students to be admitted into than some of the more selective public universities in the University of California system. Indeed, the film focuses on a private university, even though it was filmed on location at one of the selective public universities in California (UCLA). Based upon the social and racial climate that emerged during the 1990s, the film *Higher Learning* (1995) was seemingly able to predict that African-American students would find private selective colleges in California more inviting than their public counterparts.

Race in the collegiate films of the 1990s

Issues regarding race in higher education were quite important during the 1990s. Without a doubt race and race relations are central to the film *Higher Learning* (1995). The entire film focuses on the racial tension on campus that ultimately leads to tragedy in the end of the film. The film posits that much of the racial tension found at the university is something the students themselves seem to bring with them to the university. The film begins with a pep rally which leads to a scene where the freshmen students head to their dorms for the very first time. In that scene, a White female student (Kristen) walks into an elevator and an African-American male student (Malik) walks in after her. During the few moments they are in the closed elevator together Kristen looks over at Malik and immediately holds her purse close to her. Malik notices her reaction to him and shakes his head in disapproval. That short exchange is emblematic of the way that race is represented in the film. The film presents a college campus full of racial tension and divide. However, much of the racial tension is tied to racial conflict that is not specific to

the university. In that scene, the students have not even moved in yet and their views on race are already being examined. As the film progresses and the racial divide on campus increases Remy's views become more radicalized under the influence of Nazi skinheads that are not even students at the college. The racial tension on campus is again heavily influenced from outside of the college. The attitudes on race that manifest themselves at Columbus University are presented as representative of larger societal problems with race relations in America during the 1990s. It is the racism that the film implies is present overall in American culture that is indicted in the film.

The film *Higher Learning* (1995) certainly presents the viewer with meaningful insights into the overall racial climate in America during the 1990s. However, for those of us that are interested in Higher Education it is important to also look at the ways in which the university is complicit in reinforcing those racial tensions. In the film the university never really attempts to address the racial tensions that develop throughout the film. The only time that the university is even remotely involved in attempting to address the racial divide on the campus is when it allows Kristen to hold a peace rally. The peace rally is organized by Kristen as a response to Remy pointing a gun at Malik and threatening him. Since there was no response from the university to that event Kristen decides to take action and set up and organize the rally. Other than the university allowing Kristen to have the rally on campus the university does not address the incident at all. No one from Columbus University ever actually even acknowledges the problem much less make any attempt to address it. The peace rally ends with Remy going on a racially motivated shooting spree killing Mailk's girlfriend and then ending his own life. It is only after that violent end that the University makes any comment on the racial

tension on campus. The problem with Columbus University is not merely that it does not address or acknowledge issues of racial hostility and intolerance on campus. The university is actually involved in reaffirming and exacerbating many of the problems behind the racial tension on campus.

In order to illuminate the ways in which Columbus University is complicit in worsening racial tensions this dissertation will rely on the works of the philosopher and cultural theorist Michel Foucault. Michel Foucault's work has been very influential in a variety of branches of knowledge ranging from sociology, psychology, philosophy and literature. His work has also played an important part in reshaping scholarly work in education as well. One of the works from Foucault that has proven to be extremely influential in terms of education theory is *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1979). In that book Foucault (1979) discusses the ways in which the systems that society has in place to punish those that don't follow the rules are employed. Foucault (1979) looks at the ways in which systems of punishment have evolved and changed from the past when public executions were commonplace. The book provides insight into how in our modern society has transitioned from those earlier forms of punishment to the more postmodern system of discipline that we have today (Foucault, 1979). For Foucault (1979), our postmodern understanding of punishment has changed from being motivated mostly by revenge towards a sense that there is a need to change and correct a person's inappropriate and unacceptable behavior (Gutting, 2005). Foucault also cites the ways in which forms of punishment have changed from being based upon particular laws calling for specific punishments for crimes (Foucault, 1979). Foucault (1979) finds that

postmodern systems of punishment involve the input of experts to determine the length and type of punishment a person should receive (Gutting, 2005).

The importance of Foucault's work however, extends well beyond modern fields of study such as criminal justice and law. What makes his work so important is that part of the thesis of his work is that the postmodern systems of discipline and punishment we currently have are in use by most of our modern institutions (such as hospitals, schools, and businesses) in order to maintain control (Gutting, 2005). Indeed, many educational scholars have taken Foucault's premise from *Discipline and Punish* and have used it to study our modern systems of education (See Saltman & Gabbard, 2011). Foucault's writings on discipline are therefore suitable to help provide an understanding of the ways in which Columbus University is complicit in exacerbating the racial tensions found in the film *Higher Learning* (1995).

By applying Foucault's (1982) concepts, one can see the ways in which the university is a system in which one can find a whole array of complex power structures in place. A university is a place in which everything that occurs is tightly regulated by a strict power scheme in which the university is in control. However, it is not a system in which there is a totalizing power from the top down that controls everything in the way a king controls his subjects. Instead, in a modern university power is dispersed down to different agents at the university that maintain power over the university's various constituents. The structure behind that power is what comes from the top of the university down. The university may allow faculty "freedom" to design individual lectures for a course; however, the faculty member must still conform to specific methods that are approved by the university like having a syllabus and issuing grades. The faculty

therefore (knowingly or not) is enforcing the power structure of the university, and the values of the university, by following the rules the institution has imposed on them regarding teaching.

In the film *Higher Learning* (1995) the university's administrators are absent from the film. Most of the film focuses its attention on the students and Professor Phipps. However, there is one piece of the university that is carefully represented in the film besides the students and the faculty and that is the university's campus security. The campus security officers in the film are the ones that deal with any student disputes or issues that arise on campus. The campus security officers in the film effectively serve as the voice of the university and make decisions by enforcing rules on behalf of the university. The way in which campus security officers enforce the rules at the university adds to the racial tension on campus. The campus security officers seem to watch the African American students more closely and attempt to control and restrict their freedoms more than they do the white students. One scene in the movie depicts two different parties on campus that are going on simultaneously. The first party is made up of mostly African American students while the other party is made up mostly of white students. After a white student complains about the other party the film depicts campus security breaking up the party with the African American students. The campus security tells the African American students that they need to have more respect for students that are trying to sleep. One of the African American students immediately responds "But you don't hear that down the hall? You ain't sweatin' them because they're playing that hillbilly s***." (Singleton et al., 1995). The Security officer brushes it off and merely responds by saying "No, it's cause I dig rock and roll" (Singleton et al., 1995). In that short scene

the viewer can clearly see that the campus security officers are enforcing tighter controls on the behavior of the African American students by shutting down their party while allowing the white student party to continue. The security officers even make light of the African American student's complaint. The guard shows no sign of being sensitive to the perception that they are unfairly enforcing rules against the African American students while allowing white students more freedom. After the scene in the film when Remy points a gun at Malik after a racially charged confrontation students are assembled outside of the building. Campus security asks the African American students that are assembled on the side of the building to leave and the African American students point out that the campus security does not ask the white students to leave the premises. The African American students actually refuse to leave until the security guards finally decide to clear out all the students.

The film *Higher Learning* (1995) presents the viewer with a complex look at how racial divisions occur on college campuses. In the film external forces such as skinheads work towards inciting racial tension on campus. However, the university is also complicit by condoning racial inequality. The university ignores the growing racial anxiety on campus and allows campus security (acting as their agents) to enforce their power unequally towards African American students. The postmodern understanding of power provided by Foucault (1979) allows one to see how the university is sending the message that African-American students are not equal to white students when it allows campus security to discipline them more frequently than other students. The behavior of campus security cannot be explained away as simply being the result of a few officers acting on their own accord. The security officers are part of a broad power structure of systematic

discrimination. The security officers are using their power to enforce the values of the university. The film *Higher Learning* (1995) effectively showcases the ways in which a university that may not seem at first to be directly involved in the rise of racial tension is complicit in it by enforcing discriminatory power structures.

Faculty in the collegiate films of the 1990s

The concern over race on college campuses is not relegated just to students. The 1990s was a period in which there was quite a bit of interest in the diversity of faculty members at colleges and universities as well. The decade began with a surprising incident in which students at one of the United States most prestigious universities took matters into their own hands in order to promote faculty diversity. In November of 1990, a student run organization at Harvard sued the university claiming that Harvard was engaged in hiring practices that discriminated against minorities (Lee, 2011). The student group, which called itself the Coalition for Civil Rights, also organized a sit-in for 24 hours in front of the office of the Dean of the Harvard Law School in order to bring attention to the lack of underrepresented minorities in the faculty at Harvard Law (Lee, 2011). In 1990, the Harvard Law School faculty was comprised of sixty-six tenure/tenure tracked professors (Lee, 2011). Among those sixty-six faculty members there were five white women and five male African American professors (Lee, 2011). That meant that the vast and overwhelming majority of faculty positions at the Harvard Law School were held by white men. There were no women of color, Hispanics, Asian, or openly gay professors in the ranks of the Harvard Law faculty (Lee, 2011). Unfortunately, the lack of diversity among tenure tracked faculty was not simply an issue at Harvard Law. It was an

issue for most universities during the 1990s. At Yale University there was a grand total of thirty-four African-American tenure/tenure tracked faculty members in 1995 in the entire university (Black Faculty, 2001). That was the exact same number of African-American tenure tracked faculty at Yale in 1973 (Black Faculty, 2001).

In the film *Higher Learning* (1995) the issue of minority faculty is tackled head on. Most of the film is focused on the plight of students but the university's faculty is also important to an understanding of the film. The film pays very close attention to Professor Phipps and his relationship with his students. Professor Phipps is an African-American political science professor that teaches freshman political science. Two of the main characters in the film, Malik and Kristen, are both enrolled in his course. Professor Phipps is represented as being quite formal in his interactions towards his students. He continually refers to Malik as Mr. Williams instead of calling him by his first name. He always wears a sports coat on campus and carries around a briefcase to hold his documents. He is seen as representative of a more traditional view of a college professor that harkens back to a long history of college professors wearing jackets with a patch on their elbows. In movies such as *Tammy Tell Me True* (1961), the professor is always wearing a tweed jacket with a suede patch. That image is actually so commonplace, it is seen almost as a uniform for professors, much like scrubs are the uniform associated with a nurse. In fact, that traditional image of a professor with a jacket with elbow patches continues to this day where examples of it can be seen in more contemporary films such the *The Human Stain* (2003).

Professor Phipps association with the traditional image of a professor is of importance because it goes well beyond just his formal manner and his clothing. The film

portrays him as embodying the traditional values of the dominant social class and the status quo. Those values of the status quo in the film are associated with the hegemonic power of the white heterosexual man. It is those very values that are being questioned by minority students at Columbus University throughout the film. In one poignant scene in the film Malik tells Professor Phipps that he believes he is harder on him than his other students because he is one of the few African-American students in his class. Professor Phipps responds by saying "young man you have to rid yourself of this attitude that the world owes you something. You must strip yourself of that mentality. It breeds laziness. It is laziness that has kept black people down in this country. " (Singleton et al., 1995). In that scene Professor Phipps' response surprises Malik because it comes from an African-American professor. The response diminishes the history of racism in this country and the ways in which it is still difficult for minority members of society to break the glass ceiling in a number of professions. The response implies that although Professor Phipps is an African-American, he seems to have aligned himself with the cultural values of the predominantly white university where he teaches. Professor Phipps response would not align him with progressive social or political movements that question the status quo or promote diversity. When in a later scene Malik and Professor Phipps meet again Malik complains to Professor Phipps about the racial climate at the university. Malik tells Professor Phipps that he feels that as an African-American, he is not made to feel welcome at the university. Professor Phipps responds by posing a question to Malik "someone spit in your face when you first came to campus? Was there a cross burned outside your dormitory?" (Singleton et al., 1995). His response to Malik references the great strides that African-American students have made in being able to attain a college

education. However, by referencing the past he also seems to belittle the real and valid concerns that Malik has. His question implies that since racism is no longer codified by law that his concerns are petty and that he should merely shrug them off. Malik responds by telling Professor Phipps “I know what you're trying to get at. Look, just 'cause it ain't up in my face, that don't mean it's not happening. It's less physical now. It's more mental” (Singleton et al., 1995). Malik lets the professor know that despite the lack of visible and overt signs of racism that he genuinely feels he is not welcomed by the broader campus culture at the university. Malik also tells the professor that he is under stress to ensure that he does well on the track in order to attain a scholarship that will allow him to stay at the university. Professor Phipps then proceeds to respond to Malik that “your problem is financial. Not racial, but economic” (Singleton et al., 1995). That comment from Professor Phipps serves to further invalidate Malik’s feeling of being excluded from the campus community.

The 1990s was period during which there was a great deal of attention paid to the number of minority faculty members in tenure tracked positions at colleges and universities across the country (Lee, 2011). However, films such as *Higher Learning* (1995) point to some of the complexities behind race relations, faculty, and students. If much of the impetus behind hiring more minorities as faculty members is that they can help make the broader campus culture more inclusive than perhaps that is not enough. In *Higher Learning* (1995) having a professor that is African-American does not in any way assist in making the campus more welcoming to minority students. In the film, Professor Phipps actually dismisses the racist overtones that African-American students feel on campus. The events in the film point to the need for colleges to confront issues of race on

their campuses head on in an attempt to enact policies and procedures that truly promote inclusiveness and acceptance of diversity. Films such as *Higher Learning* (1995) showcase how increased hiring of minority faculty (although a laudable goal) may do little to change long standing racial tensions on a college campus.

Gender in the collegiate films of the 1990s

Issues of diversity do not apply solely to the racial makeup of students and faculty. Examining diversity on college campus also includes examining gender and sexual orientation. The film *Higher Learning* (1995) is quite clearly focused on race, but the film also examines issues of gender and sexuality on campus as well. One of the students that the film focuses on is Kristen, a young white woman that undergoes many hardships while she is a student at Columbus University. When Kristen moves in to the dorms on campus she finds that she has been paired up with Monet, an African-American female student that is also a freshman. Once on campus, Kristen has two white female friends she spends time with that take her to frat parties and engage in heavy drinking and partying. The scenes of the frat party are reminiscent of a series of frat party movies such as the 1978 classic *Animal House*. The frat scenes in *Higher Learning* even include a young lady drinking beer out of a funnel while the onlookers chant "Drink! Drink!" (Singleton et al., 1995). After one of those parties as Kristen walks back to her dorm she runs into Taryn, a student that is involved in a club called *Students for a Non-Sexist Society* and invites her to go to a meeting. Taryn warns Kristen to be weary of violence against women on campus and points out to Kristen that the walkway is full of blue lights that are meant to be safety lights to help students find a phone and call security if they

need help. Taryn's warning to Kristen regarding violence against women turns out to be prophetic since following another frat party Kristen is raped by one of the fraternity members at the party.

Kristen's rape is of course traumatic for her and leads her to seek solace from Taryn. Taryn helps her to admit publicly she has been raped and helps her cope with her emotions following the event. However, what seems most significant is not the rape itself, although it is an important comment on the state of colleges in the 1990s that rape seems to occur so frequently. What seems most meaningful is that after the rape Kristen explores her feelings of same-sex attraction to Taryn. When Kristen's roommate Monet sees that Kristen is spending quite a bit of time with Taryn she tells Kristen that Taryn is weird. Kristen merely replies that Taryn is not weird but is merely different. Monet's response is "yeah, and I bet she wants to show you just how different she can be" (Singleton et al., 1995). In that scene Monet uses the word weird as code for lesbian. The scene implies a clear disapproval of gay women by coding them as weird. Monet is concerned that after being raped Kristen is vulnerable, providing an opportunity for Taryn to seduce Kristen into her lesbian lifestyle. Even more indicative of the disapproval of homosexuality in the film is that Kristen only begins to explore her same sex feelings after being raped. Before the rape Kristen is merely a straight girl interested in young men. This dichotomy implies that female same sex attraction only makes sense after a woman has been traumatized by a man; had Kristen not been raped and traumatized one is lead to believe she would never have explored a same sex relationship.

That is not the only scene in *Higher Learning* (1995) that appears to be disapproving of same-sex attraction. When Remy is first approached by a skinhead that

wants to recruit him to join their skinhead gang he invites Remy to join them to have a drink. Remy's initial reaction is to reject the invitation and ask the skinhead if he is gay. The skinhead is clearly upset by the mere suggestion that he may be gay and assures Remy if he says that again he will beat him up. In another scene in *Higher Learning* (1995) shortly before Remy goes on a shooting rampage, the skinhead gang members are seen beating up some young men that were walking together under a bridge for appearing to be gay. Being gay or lesbian clearly on campus is disapproved of by many students and can even be dangerous.

One scholar that can help to provide an understanding of gender identity in the film *Higher Learning* (1995) is the postmodern cultural theorist Judith Butler. In her book *Bodies that Matter: on the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* Judith Butler (1993) delves into questions of gender identity and the discourse that surrounds it. Butler contends that there are numerous reasons why individuals conform to a strict sense of gender identity. Butler (1993) finds that there is a kind of heterosexual hegemony in society that makes it very difficult to not conform to society's gender roles. This has the effect of making those that question gender roles as being troublemakers that want to go against the naturally established order of things. Taryn's student club which is devoted to examining issues of gender make her an outsider. That is a part of the reason why Kristen's roommate categorizes Taryn as weird. Of course, Taryn is also categorized as weird because of her lesbian identity which is perceived of as unnatural. Kristen's flirtation with same-sex attraction can be blamed away on her being raped, but Taryn's lesbian identity is clearly labeled as weird. It is weird because it goes against the accepted standards of gender roles that are commonly accepted. Butler's (1993) book makes a similar argument by

emphasizing that heterosexual gender identity has been normalized to the point where it is merely accepted as a universal truth.

The 1990s was a period during which issues of gender and sexuality were becoming of increasing interest to academics (Rhoads, 1998). The period even saw the rise of theoretical movements such as queer theory being studied by academics at many universities. However, the 1990s was a period during which the visibility of gay students and gay rights on college campuses were still quite contentious. One salient example of how contentious issues of gay and lesbian identity were during this period on college campuses were the events at Penn State during the 1990s. During the 1990s, an organization on campus called the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Student Alliance (LGBSA) held several student rallies in an effort to have Penn State add a reference to sexual orientation to its official wording on policies regarding non-discrimination (Rhoads, 1998). At one point in 1992 numerous students converged on the school's auditorium and had a coming out event where they shared their experiences as being gay, lesbian, and bisexual, despite the very conservative climate of the campus (Rhoads, 1998). However, this event and several others were not always met with positive changes on college campuses. On the contrary, it seems that coming out events such as the one at Penn State led to a campus climate that continued to marginalize gay, lesbian, and bisexual students (Rhoads, 1998). Indeed, the existence of the LGBSA club at Penn State led to student organizations being formed specifically to counter the emerging gay rights movement. At Penn State a counter student organization emerged that called themselves Students Reinforcing Adherence in General Heterosexual Tradition (S.T.R.A.I.G.H.T.). This student club existed only to counter the nascent gay rights movement that was

slowly emerging on the campus (Rhoads, 1998). During the 1990s “coming out” in college still had negative associations assigned to it and it could serve to make a student a social outcast. Gay college students were “weird” as Monet points out in *Higher Learning* (1995). It is quite notable that the scholarly advances in understanding gender that were seen in academia did not lead to many real changes in attitudes or greater acceptance of gay and lesbian students in college during the 1990s.

In this regard Judith Butler’s work may once again prove to be useful. Her work can help to provide an understanding of the dichotomy found in the 1990s regarding the acceptance of gay and lesbian identity by academics despite the lack of acceptance on college campuses. In *Undoing Gender*, Butler (2004) discusses the role of theory in relation to actually leading to societal change. For Butler (2004) theory is not divorced from practice and the progressive social movements that accompany them. In Butler’s (2004) estimation merely having theoretical viewpoints that can imagine alternative ways of viewing the world are enough to allow for change to eventually occur. Butler (2004) asserts that without first having a theory that allows people to envisage things differently social change cannot occur. For Butler (2004) discourse can be so totalizing that it can be difficult to even conceive of things differently. The way that things are done seems so normal that it is as if they evolved to their present state in a natural way. That evolution of course ignores the power struggles that are behind the way things are done and belies and ignores that the status quo gives power to some at the expense of others (Butler, 2004). Butler (2004) argues that a theoretical understanding of something does eventually lead to societal change, but that it takes time. This viewpoint can help to understand how

gay and lesbian students seem to not be accepted in college during the 1990s, despite the growing acceptance and understanding of gay identity within academia.

The 1990s is a period during which there were many changes regarding the ways in which scholars as well as the broader popular culture thought of colleges and college students. College students during this period began to be associated with generation “X” which was related with being slackers (Sacks, 1996). However, the films of the period present a much more complex view of gen “X” youth as more than slackers. Instead of being seen as slackers, films such as *Higher Learning* (1995) present college students that are involved in a difficult search for identity in a changing cultural landscape. The 1990s also saw an increased focus on diversity on college campuses that led many changes and forced colleges to look at themselves and reevaluate their values. Again, films such as *Higher Learning* (1995) served to expose the complexities involved in promoting diversity and how difficult it can be to change the culture on a college campus. In general, the films of the 1990s problematized and questioned much of what scholars and the popular culture thought of colleges during the 1990s. These alternative ways of viewing colleges during the 1990s that are brought to light through the cinema serve to enhance previous scholarly work and provide a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in studying higher education.

Summary

This chapter presented my findings based upon my examination of the various representations of higher education in the films of the 1990s. In this chapter I analyzed the following films *Higher Learning* (1995) and *PCU* (1994). In my analysis of the films

I focused on seven main themes in higher education. The themes I examined were Students, Student Services, Admissions, Race, Finance, Faculty, and Gender. My analysis of the films in this chapter included references to the critical scholarly works of the period in order to help contextualize my findings. This chapter mentioned the ideas of scholars such as Judith Butler (2004) and made reference to postmodern theory to provide additional perspectives to help explicate my findings. The next chapter delves into my findings when examining the representations of higher education in the films of the new millennium.

CHAPTER NINE

HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE CINEMA: THE 21st CENTURY

Students in the collegiate films of the Twenty-first Century

The new millennium has given rise to a generation of college students that are different from the students from the previous decade. Like every generation before them these new students bring with them a set of unique cultural attributes that sets them apart from other generations. There are several traits that scholars find are unique to millennials that help to describe them as a group. Overall, scholars find that millennials "are racially and ethnically diverse, interested in new technologies, prefer group activities, and identify with the values of their parents more than other young people have in the past century"(Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007, p. 2). However, when examining traditional aged college students entering college in 2000 and beyond there is one specific trait that many researchers seem to focus on. The most salient feature that seems to distinguish these students is the way that they have embraced using new technologies to communicate (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007). Whether it is Facebook, Twitter, blogging, instant messaging, or text messaging, these students are so accustomed to digital communications that some scholars have dubbed them the Net Generation (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007).

The depictions of millennials in the collegiate films of the new millennium in many ways concur with the descriptions of millennials provided by social science researchers. In the film *Larry Crowne* (2011), the students routinely use digital mediums such as cell phone texting to communicate. Larry as a student who is older than the

millennials in the film is almost immediately made to adapt to their use of digital communications. Shortly after meeting Talia for the first time she tells Larry that she will text him. When Larry receives his first text from Talia he does not even understand why his phone is buzzing and has a difficult time silencing it causing his Economics professor to come up to him and take away his phone. Later in the film Larry is seen yet again fumbling with his phone in class attempting to respond to a text message from Talia. This leads to his Economics professor becoming angry and telling Larry "They call them smart phones, but only dummies use them in my class" (Brody et al., 2011). It is clear in the film that the millennial students are completely accustomed to sending each other texts from their cell phones as a preferred means of communication. Texting actually becomes one of the skills that Larry must adopt in order to fit in with the younger students.

The film *Larry Crowne* (2011) not only provides examples of how millennials use digital communications but it also provides insights into how faculty perceive these new digital communication tools. Clearly college students are not going to be allowed to text each other instead of paying attention to class discussion. However, the film presents faculty as treating many of the new digital communication mediums as no more than insignificant childish fads. In the film Mercy has several arguments with her husband and they eventually split up freeing her to date Larry. Several of the arguments with her husband revolve around his use of the internet. Mercy's husband is a published author and internet blogger. When Mercy comes home after her first day of class her husband tells her about all the blog posting he did and how it could serve as an outline for his next book. She responds by telling him that all he does all day is watch pornography on the computer. While the film does portray Mercy's husband as surfing an erotica website

while she is at work, the film also presents Mercy as showing contempt for his work as a blogger. Mercy's husband tells her that what she really is upset about is that he has established himself as a writer in new media while she is stuck teaching. She dismisses that claim and merely tells him that he doesn't do any real work. After Mercy splits up with her husband she deridingly tells her friend Frances "I'm married to an ex-teacher turned blogger with two books in print. And oh, yes, he has the libido and internet access of a 13-year-old" (Brody et al., 2011). Mercy clearly disapproves of her husband's blogging as not being real work and dismisses new communications technologies such as blogging as unproductive.

The film *Larry Crowne* (2011) provides us a glimpse into how millennials are open to using new and emerging methods of communications and how faculty at colleges and universities do not seem to see the value of some of these new forms of communications. Quite a bit of research has been written on these new methods of communications and their possibilities for disrupting current mass media. Many important thinkers such as the French philosopher Félix Guattari (1996) have written about the possible changes that these new technologies may bring. Guattari (1996) who is most well-known for his philosophical writings in conjunction with Gilles Deleuze has written on the ways in which new digital communications have the possibility of minimizing the hegemonic power that exists in the hands of mass media producers. Guattari (1996) believes that new communication mediums have the power to decentralize the production of media into a new era he calls "post-media. While Guattari's (1996) vision is still heavily debated, there are signs that the new digital communications techniques that are common among millennials are changing society. One only needs to

see the important role that twitter played in the Arab spring uprisings in 2011 to see how communications technology can effect change in different parts of the world (Bruns, Highfield, & Burgess, 2013). Perhaps, the viewing of films such as *Larry Crowne* (2011) can serve to showcase a possible area of disconnect between faculty and millennial students and stimulate future research into the attitudes of faculty towards the new communications methods that have been adopted by millennials.

Student Services in the collegiate films of the Twenty-first Century

The new millennium has seen Student Services and all the different areas that are encompassed under it evolve into a full-fledged career path for many young professionals. There are numerous departments that fall under this division which is dedicated to providing all the services students need beyond the classroom. The person that usually oversees all of these divisions is the Dean of Student Services. The title of the position is frequently shortened to just Dean of Students, while at some universities it may be called a Provost of Student Services. From the 1950s to the present numerous studies have been done on the importance of providing support services to students to help ensure success (Thelin, 2004). Despite the growing importance of the field the representation of student services in collegiate films has been uneven at best. For the most part, collegiate films do not even bother to represent student services and focus only on students and professors. When collegiate films do bother to represent a Dean it is someone that students have to see when there is a problem. The film *Larry Crowne* (2011) is unique not only because it is the first feature film that explores the community college experience, but it is also the first collegiate film in which a Dean of Student

Services is seen helping students instead of providing punishment or disciplining students. When Larry goes to East Valley Community College for the first time he looks confused as he reads a course catalog book. While Larry stands there leafing through the book he is greeted by a tall man with grey hair. The man introduces himself to Larry as Dave Busik, Dean of Student Services. The Dean asks Larry if he is returning to college. Larry tells him that it is actually his very first time attempting to enroll in college and gives him a bit of background about himself. He explains that when he graduated high school he went into the Navy for 20 years where he was a cook. The Dean then tells Larry that the college has a program in hotel and restaurant food preparation. The idea of taking cooking courses does not interest Larry so he lets Dean Busik know why he is there "oh, no, no, no, I did that long enough. Then I got into a whole different line of work until I was downsized. I'm here to make sure that never happens again" (Brody et al., 2011). With that information the Dean quickly decides what courses Larry should take. He recommends Larry take Speech 217 "The Art of Informal Remarks" (Brody et al., 2011). The Dean tells Larry that the class will change his life and tells him that he will like the teacher. In addition to speech, he recommends that Larry take Economics 1 and Composition 1 telling him that "You learn how to talk, you learn how to do business, and you learn how to write about it" (Brody et al., 2011).

In that short sequence the film presents a Dean of Students that is actively walking around the campus helping students. The Dean sees that Larry needs some help and steps in to assist him. He gets information from Larry as to what his goals are and provides him with help to select the courses he should take. All of this happens informally without Larry having to make an appointment or go through a long waiting

process. The film presents an almost idealized view of a Dean of Students that is truly involved in helping students reach their goals. The depiction of Dean Busik in *Larry Crowne* (2011) is of course going to differ from previous depictions of deans due to changes in higher education. The role of the Dean of Students in higher education has undoubtedly changed over time (Masterson, 2011).

One major change that affected Deans of Students was the end of in loco parentis. In loco parentis is based on the concept that a college or university would act and make decisions in place of a parent (Kiendl, 1963). This doctrine led to colleges having strict policies regarding conduct outside of the classroom and keeping control over students with curfews while living on campus (Kiendl, 1963). This concept still exists in high schools, but is no longer used in higher education settings (Kiendl, 1963). Its use by higher education institutions ended with the decision in *Dixon v. Alabama* in 1961. In that case, Alabama State College expelled students for joining a civil rights protest. The court decided that the college could not expel students without first providing them with due process (McDermott, 1962). The college was relying on the legal concept of in loco parentis to justify their decision to expel them for behavior unrelated to their academics (McDermott, 1962).

The end of in loco parentis meant that Deans of Students were no longer involved in policing the activities of students. This undoubtedly provided college students with more freedom. However, this freedom for students also gave Deans of Students freedom from not having to watch over students and restrict their off-campus activities. This begs the question, what kind of work are modern Deans of Students engaged in? It seems that given the scholarly literature they do not look much like Dean Busik in *Larry Crowne*

(2011). Despite *in loco parentis* having been removed in 1961 Deans of Students continued to operate in much the same way throughout most of the 1960s. In 1961 Ronald Barnes, Dean of Students at Iowa State University was still taking about late night calls to go to the local police station to pick up students who had gotten into trouble (Barnes, 1963). By the 1970s the role of a Dean of Students began to be understood in slightly different terms. During this period the position of Dean of Students was being understood more as a middle management position (Roaden, 1970). The Dean of Student was part of an educational bureaucracy that helped supporting student services by making sure things got done in a timely manner (O'Banion, 1972). Deans of Students were focused on students only as far as making sure that things ran smoothly overall and that student demonstrations could be handled appropriately by listening to students to prevent the possibility of riots (O'Banion, 1972). As the position has continued to evolve the modern Dean of Students seems to be characterized not by being a middle manager, but instead by the expectation of truly providing leadership (Masterson, 2011). The contemporary Dean of Students is concerned with budgets and fundraising and is looked at by the upper administrators as the person in charge of leading the various student service departments (Masterson, 2011). The modern-day Dean of Students also represents the college or university and serves as an ambassador of the university to outside constituents (Masterson, 2011). Besides being involved in making long-term planning decisions regarding funding and the furthering of the colleges mission there are new concerns that did not exist for the student deans of the past. Following the acts of violence at Virginia Tech other US colleges student safety is also a concern for student deans (Silverman, 2008). Many student deans around the country have seen their

campuses install emergency notification systems and now the Deans of Students must make difficult decisions regarding when to alert students and what to say (Hoover & Lipka, 2007). All of these roles that are associated with contemporary Deans of Students seem to make it quite unlikely that a Dean of Student would be quite as accessible as Dean Busik in *Larry Crowne* (2011). In the film Dean Busik not only helps advise students but he also frequently sits in on courses while in session. When *Larry Crowne* (2011) does his very first presentation for his speech class Dean Busik is sitting in the class watching him. Dean Busik sits in on the class several times throughout the course of the term. Dean Busik is also seen taking a morning Tai Chi on campus with several students. The representation of Dean Busik as an approachable Dean that is readily available to provide advice and encourage students is refreshingly different from the kind of Dean that serves primarily a disciplinarian. However, the depiction of Dean Busik may also be a bit over idealistic. Given all of the duties that a Dean of Student juggles it may be difficult to be quite so accessible to students.

Admissions in the collegiate films of the Twenty-first Century

The new millennium has shown that there is still an interest in the college admissions process. However, it seems that the discussions regarding college admissions have changed from precious decades. Much of the debate regarding college admissions in the past has focused on issues related to affirmative action or the use of standardized testing in the college admissions process. The new millennium has seen the focus shift slightly away from a concern with access to higher education. The collegiate films of the new millennium do not seem to be particularly interested in the actual college admissions

process. Only one film, *Admissions* (2013) attempts to deal with the college admissions process. In that film an admissions officer for Princeton is seen advocating for a bright young student from an alternative high school that on paper alone may not seem to be Princeton material. The decision whether or not to admit the student becomes more complicated as the admissions officer has to deal with a rather contrived and unlikely ethical dilemma. It appears that the student she is advocating for may be the long lost son she gave up for adoption when she was a teenager. The film does not provide the viewer any real insights into the admissions process at a highly selective institution such as Princeton University. Instead, the film uses her job as an admissions officer as a kind of backdrop that allows for the plot to unfold.

In the film *Larry Crowne* (2011) there is no acknowledgment of the admissions process at all. Larry just shows up at East Valley Community College and registers for class. East Valley is after all a community college so it would undoubtedly have an open admissions policy. However, even institutions with open door admissions policies have some procedures in place when admitting students. In most cases, community colleges require that new students provide a high school diploma or GED in order to enroll in college credit degree seeking programs. In addition to that most community colleges also test their new students in order to see if they perhaps would benefit from remediation in core subjects such as English and Mathematics. It is also very likely that new students at a community college would be required to attend some kind of orientation in order to introduce the student to the college and its policies.

When Larry shows up for the first time he is not asked to take a placement test before registering. Larry is seen in an office looking through a booklet with a listing of

courses when the Dean introduces himself to him. Right after Larry finishes talking to the Dean Larry's student ID is flashed on the screen letting the viewer know that he has registered for classes and is now officially a college student. The focus is on getting Larry into class. It is even unclear what Major Larry selected. In fact, the film actually never even makes it clear that he is degree-seeking. It seems that this kind of fast track admissions process is common at community colleges. Across the country community colleges unlike four-year institutions are heavily enrollment driven (Roman, 2007). However, at the community college the emphasis on enrollment from the admissions office can be detrimental to efforts to improve student retention (Roman, 2007). The admissions office is the initial contact point with a student and that is an important moment for a student. The moment when a student is applying for admissions is the best time for an institution to provide a student with information about what will be expected of the student as well as to provide information on career choices (Roman, 2007). Open access institutions are often so concerned with getting students into class and increasing enrollment numbers that important discussions regarding student success happen after the student is already in class. In order for community colleges to truly improve retention rates they should perhaps stay away from the *Larry Crowne* (2011) model of instant admissions. Admissions offices at community colleges should perhaps be involved in providing information not only on what is needed to be admitted to college but also provide information on what is needed to be successful in college (Roman, 2007).

Race in the collegiate films of the Twenty-first Century

The racial makeup of students and faculty in collegiate films very often has failed to reflect the racial and ethnic diversity that characterizes the United States. Most collegiate films focus on the plight of white students and white faculty members effectively ignoring African-American, Hispanic, and Asian students. The 2011 film *Larry Crowne* contains a fairly diverse group of students and faculty. Larry, the main student in the film is a white male. However, the rest of his fellow classmates at East Valley Community College represent various minority groups. The closest friend that Larry makes on campus is Talia who is a young biracial coed that introduces Larry to all her friends from the college. Another student that Larry becomes friends with and is in both his Speech and economics courses with him is Lala. Lala is a Hispanic college student that like Larry is a bit older than the traditional college student. The film also showcases diversity on the faculty side of the campus as well. The main professor showcased in the film is a white woman named Mercy who is Larry's speech professor. Mercy's best friend in the film is Frances who also teaches in the English and communications department at East Valley and has her office down the hall from her. Frances is an African-American English professor who is depicted as actively caring for students such as Talia. Larry's economics professor, Dr. Ed Matsutani, is an Asian American faculty member. Despite the fact that two main characters in the film (Larry and Mercy) are white the film does provide the audience with representations of various minority groups as students and faculty.

The depiction of a racially and ethnically varied student body in *Larry Crowne* (2011) is consistent with the much of the scholarly research on higher education. The

film is set at a community college and at community colleges in particular, there has been a significant rise in minority student enrollment (Fry, 2010). In a study done on enrollment patterns during the recession which began in 2008 there was a 6 percent overall rise in freshman enrollment from the previous year (Fry, 2010). When separating the students in that 6 percent increase along racial lines, one finds the increase in enrollment was not equal for all. Hispanic student enrollment increased the most, with an increase of 15 percent in new freshman enrollment in 2008 when compared to 2007 (Fry, 2010). African-American students also enrolled in college in larger numbers showing an 8 percent gain in enrollment during the same period (Fry, 2010). Asian American enrollment increased by 6 percent and white student enrollment increased by 3 percent (Fry, 2010). All of these numbers signal a growing trend in which college campuses are slowly becoming more racially diverse with minority student enrollment increasing at rates faster than that of white students.

Enrollment rates however, are not the only numbers that matter when examining race in higher education. In order to improve the economic status of minorities it is not enough to simply have more minority students enroll in college. Students must complete a college degree in order to truly reap the benefits of a higher education. The graduation rates of minority students however lag behind those of their white peers. In 2007, roughly 58 percent of white college students graduated with a bachelor's degree within six years of having started college (Nealy, 2009). The number of Hispanic students that completed their bachelor's degree within a 6 year period was 43 percent (Nealy, 2009). African-American students had similar graduation rates to Hispanics with 40 percent of African-American students completing a bachelor's degree with a 6 year period (Nealy, 2009).

These numbers point to a challenge for higher education institutions. Overall, it seems the higher education system is doing better at getting students to enroll in college but needs to do more to provide support to minority students to help them attain their college degrees.

In order to examine ways to improve graduation rates, one can once again look at the film *Larry Crowne* (2011) to provide some contemporary examples. The film can help to illuminate the ways in which our higher education institutions need to provide more of a focus on graduation. Half way through the film Larry's friend Talia drops out of college. She decides to drop out of college to open a thrift store. Her English professor Frances talks to Talia about staying in her class but does not convince her. When Talia tells her she is dropping out Frances does not offer any suggestions or alternatives to dropping out. Frances could have offered Talia an extension on an assignment or an incomplete for the course. The professor had options available to give Talia a bit more time to finish her assignments while she gets her new business running. The professor could have also referred Talia to someone on campus to counsel her before dropping out. Someone like Dean Busik could have advised Talia to return next term as a part time student. Perhaps Talia could stay in college taking only one class in the evenings or online in order to stay in school while still attending to her work.

Dean Busik is effective in assisting new students but is not seen helping current students persist. When *Larry Crowne* (2011) first arrives on campus and meets the Dean he never discusses graduation with him. They never discuss what kind of degree Larry should get or how long it will take to finish a degree. The Dean only tells Larry to register for three courses. It is actually unclear if Larry is even seeking a degree while in

college or if he is simply taking courses. In fact, it seems that whether or not students actually graduate from college is never even brought up in the film. Indeed, unlike other collegiate films *Larry Crowne* (2011) does not end with a graduation scene. Instead, the film merely ends with Larry and Mercy riding off into the sunset together on a scooter.

While some college coursework is helpful, completing an actual college degree is what makes a true difference in overall future earnings (Dohm & Wyatt, 2002). That is why our higher education system should focus more on improving graduation rates, especially given the lower graduation rates of minority students. Unfortunately, it seems higher education institutions still need to provide a more concerted effort on improving graduation rates. Even in collegiate films like *Larry Crowne* (2011), it seems evident that colleges are not investing enough resources on improving graduation rates particularly for minorities at community colleges.

Finance in the collegiate films of the Twenty-first Century

A poll of college students conducted in 2011 found that a majority of students believe that it is more important for them to go to college than it was for their parents' generation (Lipka, 2012). However, a belief in the importance of attending college provides an incomplete picture of higher education during the 21 century. While students agreed on the importance of attending college they also agreed that college is becoming increasingly unaffordable (Lipka, 2012).

The strong held belief in the importance of getting a college education has been paired with questions regarding the actual value of a college education. Indeed, the topic of higher education that seems to have garnered the most interest by policy makers and

the general public in the beginning of this century is the cost of higher education. During the height of the financial collapse there were a group of demonstrators collectively known as the Occupy movement that held protests across the country regarding the economic downturn and the bail outs of large corporations (Lipka, 2012). Many of the student demonstrators that were a part of that movement were protesting the large amounts of student loan debt that college students now routinely take on during their college years (Lipka, 2012). The amount of student loan debt that students are taking on in college has begun to alarm many economists and policy makers throughout the country ("Nope, just debt; student loans in America", 2011). The amount of money taken out in student loans does seem to have increased dramatically. In 2010, the total amount of student loan debt in the US surpassed the \$800 billion mark exceeding total credit card debt during the period (Avery & Turner, 2012). The total amount of money that is owed by students overall is not the only number of importance when examining student loans. The number of students that cannot pay back their loans and end up in default is what has really brought to light the question of whether or not student loan debt should be so high. Students graduating college during the financial downturn found themselves often taking low wage jobs that did not pay enough to repay their student loans ("Nope, just debt; student loans in America", 2011). The data is even more worrisome for students that do not graduate college. One report from the College Board found that 69 percent of students that dropped out before graduating college had accumulated some sort of student loan debt associated with their college studies ("Nope, just debt; student loans in America", 2011). In 2009, even the federal government took note of the problem and

stepped in implementing income based repayment plans in order to assist students struggling to repay their loans ("Nope, just debt; student loans in America", 2011).

Given that policy makers and legislators have focused on student loans, it seems surprising that the collegiate films of the period have been unwilling to represent the issue of student loans. In the film *Van Wilder* (2002) the cost of a college education is a large part of the plot that propels the narrative of the film. In the film Van has been enrolled in college for seven years in an undergraduate program and has not graduated. When Van's father realizes how long he has been in college without graduating he goes to the college to visit Van and tells him he will no longer pay for Van's tuition. He tells his son "I'm sorry son. Sometimes in life you have to realize a poor investment and simply cut your losses. Write that down" (Abrams et al., 2002). Van is devastated by the news but decides he wants to stay in school. He immediately goes to see a college administrator hoping to get an extension to pay for tuition. Van is then placed on a payment plan, but the terms of the plan prove to be quite onerous. Van is required to make four monthly payments of \$5,000 each during the term to stay in school. That places his tuition at around \$20,000 per term. Even for a selective private institution, the tuition costs are quite high. Van then resorts to a series of creative ways to try to pay his tuition. Van begins charging money as a party planner and establishes a tutoring service staffed by attractive coeds that go topless in order to motivate students to get the right answers. In a comedy such as *Van Wilder* most everything is placed up to ridicule. What is taken seriously however, is the high tuition that Van must pay and the tight deadlines he must adhere to when paying for his courses. Curiously, Ms. Haver the college official that Van sees about his tuition never offers Van student loans as an option. The only

option he is offered is a payment plan. The film presents the fictional Coolidge College as largely uninterested in the fact that Van has been there for seven years and not graduated. The college seems content to simply cash his father's checks for tuition and allow Van to register for courses even though he does not seem to be making any progress towards a defined degree. It is only once Van's father stops wanting to pay tuition that anyone actually pays attention to how long Van has been attending Coolidge without graduating. It is Van's father that has to point out that attending college without graduating is a bad investment.

In the film *Larry Crowne* (2011), the global financial crisis is an important part of the plot. Larry decides to attend East Valley Community College as a result of being downsized from the big box retailer where he worked. The effects of the economic crisis are thoroughly represented throughout the film. In one scene Larry is seen filling up the gas tank on his SUV and the price goes up to \$75. This is a direct reference to the soaring gasoline prices that coincided with the financial crisis. As a response to the high gas prices, Larry trades in his flat-screen television for a small old scooter from his neighbor Lamar. Larry is then seen throughout the film riding the scooter to school and with his college friends. Larry also has trouble paying his mortgage without a full time job and goes to the bank to try to refinance but is turned down. In his economics course at East Valley he learns strategies to help him better control his finances and decides to perform a strategic foreclosure as suggested by his professor Dr. Matsutani. In spite of all of these references to the economic downturn there is almost no indication of its effects on the college. There is no reference in the film to issues with student loan debt. In fact, there is no reference to tuition costs in the film at all. The film never delves into how Larry is

paying for his college courses. One can surmise that since he was laid off that financial aid is covering his tuition but that is never explicitly discussed in the film. The film does not discuss how any of the students at East Valley community college are covering their tuition. No one at the college from the Dean to the professors ever questions how students pay for their tuition.

It seems that despite the all of the attention that has been given to student loan debt the collegiate films of the new millennium decided to ignore the issue altogether. Student loans are never really discussed in any of the collegiate films of the period. In *Van Wilder* (2002) Coolidge College does not care how tuition is paid (or who pays it) as long as it is paid off. In *Larry Crowne* (2011), the film depicts the effects of the financial crisis on Larry, but curiously does not show how it affected students and tuition costs at the community college that Larry attends. In a period dominated with concern over student loans the films of the period provide depictions of colleges that are not concerned with student loans or how their students pay for tuition.

Faculty in the collegiate films of the Twenty-first Century

Higher Education institutions have undergone substantial changes in the new millennium that have altered the college student experience. However, students are not the only ones that have had to contend with the broad changes that have occurred in higher education. College faculty have had to weather quite a bit of change as well. In many cases the role of faculty has evolved quite rapidly and has required that many faculty rethink their role in higher education. It was not that long ago that the role of faculty was fairly well defined. It relied on fairly tried and true features of higher

education that were taken for granted. Faculty members in their quest to promote learning and advance knowledge basically relied on “the book, the classroom, and the face-to-face course” (Gappa, 2010, p. 210) in order to do their work. Those are all features of higher education that are no longer as important as they once were. The modern faculty member may be teaching in an online format that may not have any face-to-face interaction between the faculty member and the student. Faculty may no longer need to rely primarily on textbooks when they teach their courses. Many colleges and universities utilize online technologies such as blackboard even in their traditional courses which allow faculty to place supplementary readings online for students to read without depending on photocopies or library course reserves. The massive growth that the Higher Education sector has undergone has also lead to changes in employment patterns for faculty. Colleges and universities have had to hire more and more faculty as colleges grow, but the growth in tenure-track positions has actually decreased. Over time universities have drifted away from hiring tenure-tracked permanent positions to hiring more and more faculty members that are non-tenured; “Today the majority of faculty members in American colleges and universities occupy non-tenure-bearing positions, both contract-renewable and fixed-term” (Gappa, 2010, p. 210).

The collegiate films of the new millennium provide examples of faculty struggling to adapt to many of the new changes occurring in higher education. In the film *Larry Crowne* (2011) Mercy is a faculty member in the English and Communications department at East Valley Community College and she begins every new class with the same ritual. She stands in the back of the classroom and counts. She counts the number of students in class in the hopes of finding that there are less than ten students in the

classroom. If there are less than ten students then the class will be cancelled because it would cost more to pay her than to cancel the class. The emphasis the film places on actual classroom teaching seems consistent with the role of faculty at community colleges. Faculty members at community colleges spend much more time teaching than do their counterparts at four-year universities. At community colleges 81 percent of faculty members view classroom teaching to be their primary function at the college (Callan, 2001, p. 98). This is in sharp contrast to faculty at four-year institutions where faculty also see the role of research as an important part of their function at the college. Mercy, like the faculty at most community colleges views teaching as her priority and does seem to want to be an effective teacher. However, in the film Mercy feels disconnected from her students. She asks her friend Frances (another professor at East Valley) "I wonder if I make a dollop of difference to anyone sitting in my classroom?" (Brody et al., 2011) to which Frances quickly responds "we used to, until Facebook and twitter killed whatever attention span they had left" (Brody et al., 2011). They both feel disconnected from their students and blame much of it on their student's use of new communications technology. As noted earlier the film presents Mercy shunning modern communications methods. This is clearly evident as she chooses to write the topics she gives her students by hand on note cards instead of typing them. This leads to confusion and prompts Larry to work on a presentation on a different topic than the notecard because he could not read her handwriting. However, the fact that the faculty members in *Larry Crowne* (2011) have chosen to not adopt modern technological tools in the classroom may not be the only factor involved in their sense of dissatisfaction at the community college.

One factor that could influence their dissatisfaction may be that community college faculty sometimes lack of a clear sense of being part of an established professional group (Bayer & Braxton, 1998). College professors at four-year research institutions have a well-established professional identity. Due to the position of community colleges in the higher education system faculty at community colleges are at a crossroads in between two different established and readily understood professions. Community colleges and their faculty straddle the space between high school and four-year universities (Seidman, 1985). Faculty at community colleges certainly share characteristics with their counterparts at four-year research universities. However, by teaching more courses and not being required to produce scholarly research they are a distinct professional group. They are primarily teachers, but they are not really akin to high school teachers either. What does seem to be clear is that within the higher education hierarchy community college faculty are situated at the bottom end of the tertiary education system (Seidman, 1985). Many community college faculty praise and glorify the value of the community college and its mission despite being at the lower end of the higher education hierarchy (Seidman, 1985). Connecting with the community college's overall mission may be useful for community college faculty to have a greater sense of professionalization (Bayer & Braxton, 1998). Perhaps the community college faculty in *Larry Crowne* (2011) would be less dissatisfied if they internalized the open-door admissions policies and community centered mission of the community college.

Mercy certainly does not exhibit much of a connection to the overall mission of the community college. Returning from the first day of the semester she scoffs and

complains that she was given a Renaissance Literature class with students that think of the Renaissance as a fair they go to in July. A professor that understands the open admissions policy of a community college may view a class full of students that know very little about the Renaissance as an opportunity to teach them about the period and its literature. Mercy's expectation that the students in her introductory Renaissance literature class should have previous knowledge of the Renaissance belies an elitist attitude towards her students. She mocks her students for not knowing about the Renaissance instead of embracing the idea that at a community college students with different educational backgrounds have the opportunity to take her class to learn about Renaissance Literature.

When her friend asks Mercy why she is teaching a class at eight o'clock in the morning Mercy quickly replies that it is because she earned "a master's in comparative political discourse in the plays of Shakespeare and Shaw." (Brody et al., 2011). Her response provides an answer to the broader question as to why she is teaching at the community college. She does not talk about her passion for teaching or her belief in the overarching mission of the community college. Instead, she implies that by having a Master's degree in comparative literature she is ill equipped to do anything else, but teach at a community college. She did not aspire to be a faculty member at a community college. She merely does so out of a belief that she cannot do anything better. Her husband knows that she is unhappy teaching at the bottom run of the higher education system. During an argument he tells her that she is just upset she that is still teaching at "Vassar of the Valley"(Brody et al., 2011). By jokingly conflating East Valley Community College with Vassar (a well-regarded selective college) he reminds her that she is not teaching at Vassar but is instead teaching at a lowly community college.

It seems however, that Mercy is not alone in feeling disconnected from her position at the bottom rung of the higher education system. The collegiate novel has already become a well-established fictional genre (Showalter, 2005). For the most part the genre has mostly focused on full time professors at research universities (Showalter, 2005). The new millennium however, has seen the rise of a new sub-group of collegiate novels. These new novels showcase the plight of academics that do not make it to full time tenure tracked positions at universities (Williams, 2012b). Some of them like Paul in the 1997 novella *Queen of the Jungle* never get the highly coveted full time tenure track position at a university (Williams, 2012b). Instead, Paul is a temporary lecturer for a less prestigious institution. In the sequel to the novella Paul loses that and ends up in a temporary office job for \$8 an hour (Williams, 2012b). The new millennium has brought about collegiate novels where the characters do not have the security of a full time tenured position. The characters are often working at less prestigious universities and community colleges. Many times the characters are part-time adjuncts and sometimes fall out of academia altogether. These novels and films such *Larry Crowne* (2011) provides glimpses of faculty members in the new millennium that teach at institutions that are deemed as less prestigious within the higher education system. Examining these representations may help to provide insight into the hierarchy that exists among faculty members and the way that position and prestige can affect faculty satisfaction in a stratified higher education system.

Gender in the collegiate films of the Twenty-first Century

In the film *Larry Crowne* (2011) the viewer is presented with Talia as a prime example of a female millennial college student. Talia is very outgoing and immediately befriends Larry and introduces him to her boyfriend and their friends. She is presented as a free spirit and often goes out for rides on her scooter on a whim with no clear destination in mind. Besides being very free spirited Talia is presented as having many interests that are traditionally feminine. She loves to shop and has a storage unit full of clothes she has bought at thrift stores and yard sales. Her interest in fashion moves on to Larry as she gives him a fashion makeover. She forbids him from tucking in his shirt and throws out all of his polo shirts and has him wear tighter jeans. She also has her friend give Larry a more modern haircut as well.

When Talia first sees Larry's house she decides to give his home a complete makeover and moves his furniture around and completely redecorates it. She gives him a Spartan interior design and uses the principles of Feng Shui to guide her in redecorating his home. Not only does Talia show interest in traditionally feminine fields such as home decorating and fashion, she also makes sure that everyone acknowledges her femininity. When Talia and Larry spot Mercy waiting for a bus after just fighting with her husband Larry offers Mercy a ride on the back of his scooter. Mercy in seeing Larry and Talia together assumes they may be having a romantic relationship. When Larry offers Mercy a ride she refuses at first and says "Bust up your dance in the dell with Bambi? No, thanks." (Brody et al., 2011). Talia's reaction is curious in that she does not immediately tell Mercy that she is not involved with Larry. Talia's reaction to Mercy's snide remark is "Hey! Bambi was a boy!" (Brody et al., 2011). Talia objected more to the snide comment

because it associated her with a boy and glossed over the fact that the commentary was really about Larry being an older man out with a young baby "bambi".

One way to perhaps understand the way that Talia associates herself with traditionally feminine attributes is by viewing it through the work of the French feminist philosopher Julia Kristeva. Kristeva (1986) is a feminist psychoanalyst and has written extensively on issues of feminism and her works may help to illuminate the portrayal of Talia in *Larry Crowne* (2011). In an essay in the *Kristeva Reader* called "Women's Time" Kristeva (1986) discusses the various waves of feminism. As a proponent of Freudian psychoanalytic theory Kristeva (1986) is interested in the various ways that women express themselves while stressing the differences between men and women that are inherent to conducting psychoanalysis. Kristeva (1986) sees feminism as occurring in two distinct waves. For Kristeva (1986) in the first wave feminists were seeking to have the same rights as men and to be equals with men. These feminists in the first group wanted women to have their rightful place in what Kristeva calls "linear time" (Kristeva, 1986, p. 193). As Kristeva (1986) sees it linear time is connected to specific struggles such as equal pay for equal work and being included in history. In the second wave which Kristeva (1986) believes began after 1968 women have shifted some of their concerns. Kristeva (1986) finds that feminists in this second group may find it reductionist to focus mainly on women being equal to men. These feminists are interested in acknowledging the specificity of women's experiences and language and want to find a voice for that which was left ignored in the past (Kristeva, 1986). Kristeva (1986) then theorizes that yet another third wave of feminism is emerging that will have to confront the issues of the previous two waves. Kristeva (1986) imagines that this next wave will blend together

the various approaches to feminism and find a way to acknowledge the specificity of women and their desire to bear children with a desire to be equal to men (1986).

Kristeva's (1986) understanding of feminism can help to illuminate the representation of Talia in *Larry Crowne* (2011). While Talia strongly embraces the feminine part of her identity she is also presented as an independent free thinker. She freely rides around the valley in her scooter pursuing her own interests. Talia sees herself as having the same freedoms and opportunities as a man. When she decides to drop out of East Valley Community College, her professor Frances tells Mercy "Come and meet this girl. She brings passion to Feminism and Modern Lit" (Brody et al., 2011). This lets the viewer know that Talia is interested in feminism and is a smart and engaged student in her literature class. It is also important to note that while Talia drops out of college she does so to open her own business. Talia becomes a female entrepreneur and starts her own small business. Even while embracing traditionally feminine attributes, Talia makes her own path forward by becoming a businesswoman. She earns the respect of her professor for bringing passion to feminism and by fearlessly deciding to drop out of college to start a business. She brings together the specificity of her womanhood with a desire to exert her own will and be her own boss. Talia brings a respect and understanding for feminism with an acknowledgment of her specificity as a woman while not allowing that specificity to limit her choices and her ability to make decisions. The film *Larry Crowne* (2011) therefore presents the viewer with a female millennial college student that asserts her femininity while being open to pursuing her interests as freely as any male student.

Conclusion

This chapter provided my analysis of the cinematic representations of higher education in the new millennium. Overall, the purpose of chapters four through nine of this study was the same. Each chapter presented my analysis of the various representations of higher education in the movies from the 1950s to the present. The findings were broken up by decades per chapter and narrative descriptions were provided of the ways in which the various elements of the higher education system were represented. The specific elements of higher education that were examined in this study were Students, Student Services, Admissions, Race, Finance, Faculty, and Gender. The findings were contextualized by examining pertinent scholarly research alongside the cinematic representations. Various theoretical perspectives were also explored in order to help shed light on the ideological constructs that may have helped shape the representations in the films. The next chapter will delve into the research questions that guided this study and provide a review of the findings from this chapter. The next chapter will also discuss the practical implications of this study on higher education as well as provide recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TEN DISCUSSION

Responses to the Research Questions

This study examined various aspects of higher education as represented in popular cinema from the 1950s to the present. In order to guide the examination of this topic three research questions were developed. The research questions were then addressed in detail in chapter four through nine of this study. This chapter provides a summary of the responses to the research questions that guided this study.

The following are the research questions that were answered in this study:

- 1) How is Higher Education as a whole represented in popular cinema (including all of its parts such as students, faculty, and administrators)?

- 2) Have the representations of Higher Education in film changed over time?

- 3) What common themes emerge in these representations and how are those themes explored in the critical literature (if they are addressed at all)? Do the various representations reaffirm and/or subvert the dominant themes found in the research literature?

Research Question One

How is Higher Education as a whole represented in popular cinema (including all of its parts such as students, faculty, and administrators)?

The aim of this study was to explore the ways in which higher education is represented in popular cinema. Upon reviewing the findings of this study it becomes clear that as a whole higher education is not represented as a unified monolithic system. There is wide variation among the representations of higher education among the films that were analyzed. Despite the individual differences that were found there are some aspects of higher education that were constant throughout all of the films analyzed. The vast majority of the films examined in this study focused on the traditional four-year residential university as the model for a higher education institution. This study focused on films from the 1950s to the present and through that entire span of time there is only one film that does not revolve around a four-year residential university. The film *Larry Crowne* (2011) is focused on a community college setting and is the only film that is not set at a four-year university. However, even *Larry Crowne* (2011) supports the notion of a four-year university as the model for our higher education system. In the film *Larry Crowne* (2011) the similarities between the community college and the traditional university are emphasized while minimizing their differences. The students in the film are all enrolled in courses such as Composition 1, Economics 1, and Speech. These are all fairly ubiquitous courses that are a part of the freshman curriculum at almost every four-year university across the country. The film follows freshman students at East Valley Community College as they take first-year courses. The classroom scenes in the film

could be scenes from any film about a four-year university. The film emphasizes the ways in which the courses are the same as what freshman students would take at a four-year university. The film makes no mention of the ways in which community college students often begin their studies taking developmental courses before taking college courses. None of the students, administrators, or faculty, mention courses of a vocational nature that are focused on job training or any specialized courses. The film ultimately reinforces the supremacy of four-year universities and the standard curriculum they offer by not even acknowledging that community colleges have students taking a wide variety of courses that are not modeled after the traditional Bachelor's degree program at a four-year school.

The cinematic representations of students in this study varied greatly. The students all engaged in very different paths through their journey in higher education and all of them faced very different challenges in college. In the film *For Men Only* (1952) college students are marked by their willingness to conform to society and uphold established traditions. On the other hand in films such as 1960's *College Confidential* and *Where the Boys Are* (1960) students are presented as carefree and uninterested in upholding traditional customs and morays especially in regards to dating. In films such as *The Paper Chase* (1973) students see college as nothing more than something that is needed in order to land a high paying job. That kind of representation stands in sharp contrast to films like *The Harrad Experiment* (1973) and *Higher Learning* (1995) where students are in college trying to find their own identity.

The only aspect of students that it can be said that is universal to all the films is that all of the collegiate films in this study at some point focus on the romantic lives of the students. There is not a single film in this study in which the romantic life of a student is not addressed. Every student in every one of the films in this study is dating someone or trying to date someone. At first one may attempt to attribute the interest in the sex lives of college students to the mere fact that young college students are at a period in their lives when dating is undoubtedly a part of life. However, the interest in the sex lives of students extends to all types of students including the non-traditional age students. In the films *Back to School* (1986) and *Larry Crowne* (2011) the films focus on students that are older than the traditional college age student and yet their sex lives are also an important part of the films. It seems that the one thing aspect of student life that the films all seem to agree on is that a part of student life for all students is devoted to finding a mate regardless of the type of student.

The representations of faculty that were examined also varied widely. The films provide the viewer with faculty members that are very different from each other and have very different attitudes towards their students and their work. Some of the professors such as Dr. Diane Turner in *Back to School* (1986) and Dr. Stephen Brice in *For Men Only* (1952) are presented as caring professionals that are seen actively trying to help their students. In other films the viewer is presented with examples such as Professor Kingsfield in *The Paper Chase* (1973) who hazes his students and expects some of them to fail and Dr. Phillip Barbay in *Back to School* (1986) who openly displays contempt for one of his students. Some of the faculty members in the collegiate films are interested in

students more so as objects of study than as real people. In *College Confidential* (1960) professor Steve McInter is really only interested in his students in terms of a sociology study he is conducting. Similarly, in *The Harrad Experiment* (1973) Professor Philip Tenhausen takes an interest in his students because they are part of his experiment but he seems uninterested any of them individually as students.

The only thing that faculty in the collegiate films in this study have in common is that all of them seem to remain employed as academics. Despite the many trials and tribulations that several of the faculty face in their careers none of them are ever seen leaving academia. Dr. Stephen Brice in *For Men Only* (1952) is fired but is then quickly re-hired. Professor McInter in *College Confidential* (1960) and Dr. Noah Praetorius in *People will talk* (1951) both undergo trials in which they may lose their jobs but both are ultimately vindicated and are allowed to keep their positions teaching at the university. Some of the films allude to faculty members having had other careers before becoming professors but none of the films actually present faculty members having to forge new careers outside of academia. The only quality that seems to bind the various faculty members in the films is that they are all life-long professors.

The representations of administrators in the collegiate films in this study are also quite varied in terms of the role that administrators play and their overall dispositions. In films such as *For Men Only* (1952) the viewer is presented with a college president that is completely unconcerned with individual students and is instead only concerned with the overall reputation of the college and nothing else. Similarly Dean Wormer in *Animal House* (1978) places his reputation (and the college's) above all other concerns. Dean

Wormer provides kick-backs to the local mayor in order to ensure that the college's homecoming festival goes well and holds disciplinary meetings where he has already predetermined the outcome. In sharp contrast to Dean Wormer who yields his power with impunity and little regard for students there are other representations of administrators as caring professionals that are devoted to helping students. In *Larry Crowne* (2011) Dean Busik provides suggestions regarding what courses to take and displays a real interest in the students at the college. When he is not sitting in on courses watching his students learn he can be seen walking around the campus approaching students offering to help them get registered. Overall, the representations lack any consistency leaving one with an uneven view of college administrators that is mismatched and lacks any kind of overriding attribute that can be used to unite the disparate representations in the films.

Research Question Two

Have the representations of Higher Education in film changed over time?

This study found that the representations of Higher Education in cinema have changed dramatically over time. The various representations that were explored in chapter four through nine showcase the ways in which the representations of higher education are not stable and evolved through the decades. This study began with the collegiate films in the 1950s and found that the films from that period provide the viewer with college students that are trying to conform to established social standards. The college students represented in 1950s cinema are rather conservative and are interested in making money and becoming a part of the status quo. The students in the collegiate films

of the 1950s do not question the established norms and are characterized by their attempts to conform to society.

When the study explored cinema in the 1960s the representation of college students had already begun to evolve. The collegiate films of the 1960s provide the audience with students that are less conservative than the students in the 1950s. College students in the films of the 1960s actively question many of the traditional values of the period especially regarding sexuality. Unlike students from the 1950s, they are not characterized by a quest for money and a desire to join the status quo. The films of the 1960s provide the audience with college students that are much less focused on career paths and money and are instead focused on a desire to question the prevailing views regarding dating and pre-marital sex.

This study found that the representations of college students did not remain static and continued to change throughout the decades examined the study. When one views the collegiate films of the 1970s one is once again presented with a different perspective on college students. The college students represented in the cinema of the 1970s are primarily characterized by being job and career oriented. The films present college students that want to attend professional schools to study law or medicine. These students seem to be unconcerned with questioning prevailing societal attitudes. They are not actively involved in accepting, or rejecting, societal norms. These students instead focus on thinking about their future career and job prospects.

The representation of college students continues to evolve and when the study focuses on the cinema of the 1980s college students are once again presented in a

different light. The collegiate films of the 1980s unlike examples from the previous decades are disconnected from collegiate life. College students in collegiate films of the 1980s are also much more connected to their parents than in the representations from previous decades. The 1980s is also the first time that collegiate films focus on students that are not the traditional college age.

The changing representations of college students continue to accelerate with a marked difference in the way college students are represented in the cinema of the 1990s. College students in the films of the 1990s enter college expecting to receive high grades. This marks a notable difference from the college students of previous decades where good grades were only earned by studying. The students of the 1990s also seem to be quite different in that they turn their attention inward. These students are characterized by their personal search for identity. They attempt to find themselves and create an identity related to their racial, ethnic, or gender status. This marks a very poignant difference from the college students found in the films from the previous decade.

The final set of films examined in this study led up the present day and once again college student representations have changed from the previous decade. College students in the new millennium are characterized by their use of digital communication mediums and unlike the students from the 1990s films they are not characterized by a search for identity. The students in the films of the new millennium are of different ages and are from different racial and ethnic backgrounds but are not found struggling to find their identity. The students in these films do not see college as a time for self-discovery. Instead, these students see college as a place where one goes to gain skills that may be

useful in their future careers. This is however different from previous decades where students are focused on professional programs like law school. The students in these films are less focused on having a concrete career goal as was seen in the collegiate films of the 1970s. However, these students do see their college studies as linked to future job prospects.

This study found that the cinematic representations of college students clearly changed from one decade to the next beginning with the 1950s all the way to the present. However, the cinematic representations of college students are not the only aspect of higher education that changed. The representations of faculty also showed underwent meaningful changes over time. In the films of the 1950s faculty have issues with the rigid hierarchy that governs higher education institutions. The faculty members of the 1950s are not unified and have trouble getting along with each other.

This study found that the faculty members represented in the cinema of the 1960s also noted discontent within their fields but their reasons for dissatisfaction were different from what was found in the cinema of the 1950s. College professors in the films of the 1960s are seen actually engaged in research unlike the professors from the 1950s. In the cinematic representations of the 1960s engaging in research studies is the factor that provides a source of conflict for faculty.

In the films of the 1970s the representations of faculty are once again poignantly different from the representations from the previous decade. In the 1970s cinematic representations shifted away from issues of faculty discontent and research. The films from the 1970s showcased faculty and their relationships with their students. This period

is marked by films where faculty often treat their students quite harshly. Unlike films from the previous decades, faculty in the 1970s actively complain about their students. One of the representations even includes a faculty member engaging in a sexual relationship with a student further emphasizing the theme of inappropriate faculty attitudes towards students.

This study found that in the 1980s the representations of faculty continued to evolve from the previous decade. The films of the 1980s provide the viewer with a wide variety of depictions of faculty members. Unlike in previous decades the faculty members all seemingly get along with each other. They are also unlike the professors of previous generations in that they are not fighting against the bureaucratic nature of the university and its hierarchy. The depictions of the faculty however are quite varied. The depictions range from a faculty member that is willing to help tutor a student to a professor that is intent on failing a student to a professor that is mentally unstable and has a flashback to Vietnam while in the classroom.

In the 1990s the depictions of faculty members once again evolves from the previous decade. The films of the 1990s depict diversity among faculty members and feature African-American professors. This is unlike the films of the previous decades where representations of faculty were almost exclusively white. During the 1990s films explored changes in the professoriate by examining issues of diversity the within the ranks of collegiate faculty.

When examining the films of the new millennium this study found that the cinematic representations of faculty had once again changed from the previous decades.

In the films of the new millennium one finds representations of collegiate faculty at community colleges which is unlike the representations from previous decades which were always showcased professors at four-year research universities. The cinematic depictions of faculty in the new millennium feature professors that are unhappy not with the bureaucracy of higher education institutions but instead lament the lower status of professors that are not teaching at prestigious four-year teaching universities.

This study found that the representations of college administrators although slightly more stable than that of students and faculty but that the representations of college administrators also evolved and changed over time. The college administrators depicted in the cinema of the 1950s were interested in protecting the status quo and the reputation of the university above all else. Students and faculty members were largely seen as expendable as long as the reputation of the university remained untarnished.

The films of the 1960s found that college administrators were still more concerned with protecting the reputation of the institution than the interests of students and faculty. However, the college administrators depicted in the films of the 1960s were different in that they were much more aloof than the administrators from the previous decade. The collegiate administrators represented in the cinema of the 1960s do not get involved in disputes among students or faculty. They only appear to become involved in college affairs when a person of power or importance prods them into action. In some instances even though the college's reputation could be brought into question the college administrators are nowhere to be found. The films depict administrators that are quite

removed from the daily functioning of the university in contrast to the depictions from the previous decade.

During the 1970s college administrators are still more interested in the reputation of the university than students. However, the college administrators depicted during the 1970s were not just concerned with the reputation of the university. They were also just as concerned with their own personal reputation and status. In the cinematic representations of the 1970s the college administrators depicted are actually less concerned with protecting the interests of the institution than their own personal reputations. Protecting the reputation of the university was an act of self-interest since it was linked to their own personal reputations.

The 1980s found that the depictions of college administrators changed once again. In the 1980s there were hardly any representations of college administrators in the cinema at all. This is quite unlike in previous decades where deans and college presidents were important to the plots of the films. The collegiate films of the 1980s essentially ignored the role that upper administrators play in higher education and only focus on students and faculty as essential elements of higher education.

This study found that the cinematic depictions of college administrators during the 1990s continued with the trend from the 1980s. The collegiate films of the 1990s also made basically no mention of college administrators and focused on students and faculty while basically ignoring the role of college administrators in higher education.

The films of the new millennium shifted dramatically away from the previous decade in that once again college administrators were seen playing an integral role in collegiate cinema. During the new millennium deans were once again spotlighted in film and their depictions had once again changed. This study found that the depictions had moved far from the self-concerned deans of the 1970s to depictions of college administrators that worked together with faculty and showed concern for students. This is quite a shift from the 1950s where administrators were only concerned about a college's reputation or from the previous decades in which college administrators were absent from films altogether. This study found that the depictions of college administrators remained more stable over all from one decade to the next when compared to the depictions of students or faculty. However, there was still substantial change in the representations of college administrators evidenced over time in the collegiate films of the 1950s to the present.

Research Question Three

What common themes emerge in these representations and how are those themes explored in the critical literature (if they are addressed at all)? Do the various representations reaffirm and/or subvert the dominant themes found in the research literature?

In order to respond to this research question, it is important to look at what themes are predominant in the films analyzed in this study. There are various themes of importance that emerged in the discussions in chapters four through nine. There were many themes of importance that emerged from the analysis of the films that provided an

important counter-point to the dominant themes that emerged from the critical literature of the period. This chapter will provide a selected overview of themes that emerged from the films and the ways in which they varied and/or affirmed the scholarly literature of the period. The selected themes are presented by decade.

1950s. Much of the critical literature regarding college students during the 1950s characterizes them as conformists that rarely voiced any opinions that would question the status quo (Young & Young, 2004). When examining the collegiate films of the 1950s at first a similar theme emerges with college students attempting to conform to society's standards. However, a close examination of the films subverts the viewpoint that college students during the period merely accepted the views of the status quo. The films reveal a darker side of the 1950s where students often did not express opinions critical of the status quo because there were strict penalties for those that refused to conform. In *For Men Only* (1952) a student ultimately pays with his life for speaking out against hazing by taking on fraternities and the college's administration. The collegiate films of the 1950s provide an additional context to the scholarly studies on college students from the 1950s. An analysis of the films subverts the dominant theme that college students were merely conformists by suggesting that society was so rigid that there was no safe space for students to voice opinions of dissent without suffering strict negative consequences.

When looking at the scholarly literature regarding the 1960s one finds that much of the research focuses on the advances that were made in regards to women's rights. The 1960s saw the rise of the second wave feminism movement and heated public debates regarding the role of women after the publication in 1963 of *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan (Bailey & Farber, 2001). As the higher education historian Helen

Lefkowitz Horowitz reminds us (as cited in Walsh, 2012) it was not until 1963 that Harvard degrees were for the first time ever awarded to female students from Radcliff. It was During the 1960s that Harvard's Lamont Library was finally freely open to women (Bailey & Farber, 2001). Harvard's Library had still off limits to women throughout the 1950s so they would not distract the male students (Bailey & Farber, 2001). Higher education and the society as a whole was changing and becoming more accepting of female students in academia.

1960s. However, the films of the period do not seem to reflect those changes. The collegiate films of the 1960s portrayed female college students mostly as boy crazy and not particularly interested in scholarly pursuits. In *College Confidential* (1960) the film portrays female college students that are definitely more interested in dating than in academics. The film includes a young man singing a song about how girls go to college to find a man to marry not to get a degree. In *Where the Boys Are* (1960) female students are at least portrayed as smart and trying to get an education. However, the film emphasizes their quest for the right boy in spring break in Ft. Lauderdale and is uninterested in their academic goals. Despite all of the advances and societal the changes that are noted in the scholarly literature during the 1960s the common theme that emerges from the films is that female college students during the period are still very from equal to their male counterparts. The films provide the viewer with the sense that despite societal changes female college students during the 1960s had not really changed much and were still much more concerned with marriage and a family than academics or a career. The emphasis on change during the 1960s that is found in the scholarly literature is linked to the advancement of women overall. However, it seems that those changes did

not lead to significant changes in the perception of female college students during the period.

1970s. The scholarly literature on higher education during the 1970s points to a period of change during which a number of issues regarding higher education that had been slowly emerging finally came to the forefront. One issue that became of importance during the 1970s was in regards to admissions and the role of the university with the larger community that surrounds it. Quite a bit of research has been done regarding changes in admissions policies during the 1970s such as the decision by City College to become the first large four-year university to institute an open door admissions policy (Marshak & Wurtemberg, 1981). The policy which was enacted as a way to improve access to the university by allowing more minority students from the surrounding community to attend was met by fierce debate on both sides of the issue. This change was dramatic because it was at a four-year institution and not a community college which were the only institutions at the time with open-admissions policies. The resulting change at New York's City College did lead to an increase in minority enrollments. Historical statistics point out that in the 1969 less than a fifth of undergraduates from CUNY City College were minorities and those numbers rose steadily with African-American and Hispanic students eventually becoming the majority (Crain, 2003). The policy was however quite controversial with even the United States Vice President Spiro Agnew weighing in on the issue in 1971 citing opposition to the policy claiming that the policy would devalue the diplomas from City College and other CUNY universities (Crain, 2003).

Given that issues of admissions and equity made it to a national stage in America during the 1970s it is important to note that the collegiate films of the period do not reflect the interest in this issue at all despite the growing controversy. None of the films directly address issues of equity regarding college admissions to four-year universities. The films actually run counter to a theme from the scholarly literature. The scholarly literature suggests that universities and the nation were actively interested in issues of improving access to a university education. The only collegiate film that makes mention of access to a university education is *Breaking Away* (1979). That film follows a series of recent high school graduates in the college town of Bloomington Indiana living in the shadows of Indiana University. The film presents a university that is completely uninterested in the surrounding town's people. The university shows no interest in improving access to the university to students from the surrounding area. In fact, the films present the townspeople as feeling that they are not welcome at the university. Indeed, they are looked down upon by much of the student body at the university. The interest in improving access to a university and the ensuing debate is not reflected in the collegiate films of the period. The films therefore seem to subvert the dominant theme in scholarly literature of the 1970s which point to a national interest in questions of access and admissions to a university education. The films of the period point to a lack of interest in the issue of admissions and despite important experiments such as the one at City College. The films suggest that at most universities there was no real movement towards improving access to the university or any real interest for universities to extend admissions to students in the communities that surround them.

1980s. During the 1980s much of the scholarly literature regarding students focused on the ways in which students during the period were expressing a kind of disconnect from their college's activities. College students during the 1980s were presented as being less interested in following their college's athletics teams and the respective events that colleges create for their students on campus (Moffat, 1989). Scholars also found that students during the 1980s seemed to only value college only because it is believed to be important to increase their future earning potential. College students during the 1980s which Horowitz (1988) refers to as the New Outsiders showed little academic curiosity and only seemed to care about grades and finishing college to make money. There was also quite a bit of critical inquiry during the 1980s into the issue of grade inflation with numerous studies examining the ways in which grade inflation seemed was becoming prevalent on college campuses during this period.

The collegiate films of the 1980s however provide an interesting counterpoint to the themes that were identified by educational scholars during this period. The films during this period showcase themes that are only recently even acknowledged by the education scholars. The film *Back to School* (1986) provides the audience with a clear example of helicopter parenting of college students which is a term that did not even exist during that period. *Back to School* (1986) also provides an in-depth portrait of the exploits a non-traditional age college student which despite their rising numbers during the 1980s is a group that was essentially ignored by the critical literature examining this period. The representations of college students in the film also present a different view of college students from Horowitz's (1988) influential view of college students during the 1980s. The film presents Jason and his friends attending college not just to forge a career,

but also to learn and gain knowledge. When Jason's father becomes a student at the university he also contradicts Horowitz's category of the New Outsiders. He forges a strong connection with the university and thoroughly enjoys the collegiate experience. He is motivated by his desire to experience college student life and is not motivated by monetary gain. The representations of college students in the films of the 1980s go against the prevailing themes found in the scholarly literature of the period. Not only do they subvert the dominant themes in the critical literature, they also provide examples of future trends before they have been identified by scholars effectively predicting future trends in educational research.

1990s. Most of the critical literature devoted to studying college students during the 1990s focuses on describing them as "slackers" (Sacks, 1996). This generation of students, collectively referred to as Generation "X", are characterized by being scholastically unmotivated and often criticized for not wanting to put much effort into their studies (Marshall, 1997). Despite finding that Generation "X" students do not want to work hard for their grades they also characterized by their expectation that they receive high marks (Sacks, 1996). This led some to criticize the entire higher education system for pandering to a generation of students that were not putting in enough effort towards their studies. The scholarly literature on Generation "X" students often alludes to postmodernist theories which were gaining popularity in academia at the time in order to attempt to help understand the supposed the lack of motivation of these students.

Despite the critical literature's focus on Generation "X" students as slackers the collegiate films of the period provide a somewhat different view of these students. Films such as *Higher Learning* (1995) essentially debunk the overly simplistic description of

Gen “X” as slackers that is found in much of the scholarly research. There are themes from the critical literature that are reaffirmed by the films of the period. The representations of college students in the films do include scenes where the students seemingly expect high marks from their professors and seem surprised by how much hard work it will take for them to achieve good grades in college. However, the films do not by any means focus on the students as slackers. The theme that emerges from the films that is much more important in defining college students is their quest for identity. The collegiate films of the 1990s provide audiences with students that are heavily engaged in a quest for identity as they navigate the complex issues of identity politics and self-definition. In the film PCU (1994), the students are not characterized as slackers but are instead characterized by their identities as vegetarians, feminists, conservatives, liberals or a host of other categories of self definition. In the film Higher Learning (1995) racial identity is crucial to the plot of the film and is the most salient feature of the film. The film does not in any way characterize the students as slackers and instead provides representations of students that are struggling with issues of identity and racial categorization. This makes the "X" from Generation "X" an appropriate symbol since it refers to finding the unknown which in the films is the individual student's quest for identity amongst a complex backdrop of political debates regarding racial and gender categories.

2000s. One important theme that has evolved from much of the scholarly literature devoted to examining the state of higher education in the twenty-first century has been the increasing reliance of institutions on adjunct instructors. There has been much interest in the gradual loss of tenured permanent faculty positions towards hiring

faculty in non-tenure tracked positions (Gappa, 2010). This has led to a number of scholarly works devoted to redefining and defending the academic freedom that is associated with tenured faculty and lamenting the state of higher education as the protections afforded to tenured faculty are eroded as they are available to an increasingly smaller number of faculty members (Gappa, 2010).

The collegiate films of the period however point to faculty members confronted by a set of challenges beyond that of a loss of tenure tracked positions. In the film *Larry Crowne* (2011) for example, the viewer finds faculty members that are having a difficult time navigating the pace of changes in technology and are hesitant to legitimize using much of the technology that students have embraced. The issue of faculty embracing new technology is not an issue that has received much attention from scholars. Most of the research in this area has focused on the ways in which faculty are using and developing innovative pedagogical techniques using new technology but do not focus on faculty that are resisting accepting new technology.

Despite the research that has done in higher education as institutions slowly drift away from hiring tenured faculty this is an issue that has not as of yet entered the consciousness of the collegiate films of the twenty-first century. The faculty members represented in the films of the period do not cite that as a salient issue. Faculty members in the collegiate films of the twenty-first century are instead represented as dissatisfied by the rigidly hierarchical top-down structure of higher education institutions. In our higher education system the selective research institutions are clearly at the top with institutions such as community colleges at the bottom rung of the system. Community Colleges which are at the bottom of the educational hierarchy have the least prestige and their

faculty members are therefore also afforded the least prestige and acknowledgement. Despite the increasing importance of community colleges in educating more than half of incoming freshman students in our higher education system the institutions and their faculty command the least amount of respect and accolades leading to representations of faculty members at these institutions as dissatisfied with being a part of such a highly stratified higher education system.

Directions for Future Research

This dissertation raises several issues that future researchers in higher education may wish to consider. Some recommendations for future research topics are discussed below.

Scholars in a number of disciplines have already written extensively on how mass media culture affects the way in which society views various institutions, yet this line of inquiry is not common in educational research. Cultural theorists such as Stuart Hall (1977) have articulated the premise that our understanding of the society we live in is mediated by cinematic representations. Our social knowledge is derived mainly from media representations, and it is mass media that produces the images and ideas which help to provide meaning to social institutions (Davis, 2004). As is evidenced in this dissertation, this does not mean that all films provide a simple and coherent or unified representation of higher education. There are indeed a multitude of representations and perspectives regarding higher education in film. Hall notes that given a plurality of representations one of the roles of mass media is to mediate those representations and create something that can be grasped as a *whole* (Hall, 1977). This point is fundamental in understanding the

influence that media representations can have on popular opinion. Knowledge of the way higher education is represented in popular culture is therefore essential to researchers that wish to make sense of the ways in which students and the dominant culture in general understand higher education.

This dissertation's literature review shows us that very few scholars have examined representations of higher education in film. Within the small amount of research that has been done on cinematic representations of college education only one other dissertation even attempted to utilize cultural studies methods in conducting higher education research. There are many scholars in the field of higher education research that are well aware of research methodologies in various disciplines and areas. It is therefore doubtful that higher education researchers are not cognizant of cultural studies as a valid methodological approach to research. I believe it is more likely the case that many higher education researchers have not delved into using cultural studies and similar methodologies because they have not yet seen clear examples of cultural studies in use in educational research. This study may therefore serve as an example for future researchers on how to engage in cultural studies in higher education research.

This dissertation creates a basis for further meaningful research using cultural studies in various areas of higher education. For example, much of the research done on first-time in college students (FTIC) has very often focused on quantitative studies that examine specific variables to see how they affect student performance. There has been almost no research done on the way in which mass media messages can influence students as they decide to enter college. One of the findings of this study highlights the ways in which films do not make college seem accessible for first-generation prospective

college students. Popular cinema represents colleges as full of organizations with peculiar Greek letters and mysterious rituals and terms that can seem quite foreign to prospective students that have no one to ask about college. A first generation college student may find all of the representations of Greek life and the process of joining student organizations as intimidating for the uninitiated. Popular cinema's focus on Greek life as a seminal part of college makes it seem as if the overwhelming majority of students in college are members of a fraternity or sorority. Based on this, it would seem that future research could examine the ways in which media messages can negatively influence potential FTIC students by making college seem like an unwelcoming place that is not open to those that do not already know all of the intricacies of college life.

Another important finding of this dissertation is the way in which films perpetuate the myth that college is primarily a place for sex and casual dating. This is clearly evidenced by the numerous references to the sex lives of students in the films analyzed in this study. Indeed, an interest in the sex lives of students is the one common factor that is prevalent among the representations of students in cinema regardless of the decade during which the film was released. The repeated representations of the sex lives of students are important not just as an interesting thematic finding. The emphasis on sex in collegiate cinema perpetuates an almost tacit acceptance of date rape and sexual assault in contemporary culture. Many collegiate films provide examples of the *boys will be boys* mentality where it is acceptable for young men to chase women and try almost any method available to coerce young women to have sex with them. The goal for young men is to have as many sexual conquests as possible, while the young women are seen primarily as sexual objects for the men. Even in films such as *Higher Learning* (1995)

where an incident is represented as date rape, the perpetrator is not punished and the film remains ambiguous towards condemning the acceptance of violence against women. In the film *Higher Learning* (1995), topics such as the safety of female students and date rape are relegated to discussion only by the radical lesbian feminists on campus and never become a topic of discussion for the majority of students.

A related finding from this dissertation that may that may also lead to further avenues of future research is the way in which popular films perpetuate substance abuse, particularly drinking. There are numerous cinematic instances throughout the decades of students engaging in heavy drinking. As colleges and universities design programs to help curtail issues such as binge drinking on campus college leaders may want to look at the ways in which mass media condones and promotes drinking among college students.

The idea perpetuated by mass media that college is supposed to be about drinking, partying, and having sex begs the question of what that means for college students that are not having these experiences. Do college students that are not drinking at fraternity parties feel like they are missing out on something? Do students that are not engaged in collegiate activities feel that they are getting a college education that is *less-than*, even if they are receiving an excellent academic education? The idea perpetuated by popular culture that a college education should be should include nights out drinking and partying may leave some students feeling that they are missing out and that could cloud their perception of their college education.

Another theme of importance that was examined in this study was the ways in which women were represented throughout the decades and how those representations changed over time. In 1960 only 39 percent of undergraduate students were female

(Goldin, Katz, & Kuziemko, 2006) but those numbers have changed quite dramatically in a fairly short period of time. The number of female college students has systematically increased with female college student enrollment catching up with male students in the 1980s and consistently surpassing male enrollment since the 2000s (Goldin, Katz, & Kuziemko, 2006). In studying the representations of female college students in the cinema, this study raises several new questions for future researchers to expand upon. There have been many studies conducted into the lack of women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields which are still largely dominated by men, but there has been almost no research linking that topic to representations of women in popular cinema. Perhaps the representations of women in the cinema can also help to illuminate the factors that enter into the decision making process for female college students when picking a major. Similarly, can the representations of women in cinema provide insights into the decision making process for female students as they pick the kind of institution to attend (four-year, community college, selective, co-ed versus all female, private, or public)? Future Studies regarding the representations of women in cinema may also provide general insights into how colleges, and society as a whole, are adapting to the increasing numbers of female students on college campuses throughout the country.

Another related question posed by this study is in regards to college students as a whole (male and female). As is noted in this dissertation, the vast majority of films focused on four-year research universities even though the majority of students do not attend these institutions. What does that mean for the students not attending these research institutions? Is the overall dream for all college students to attend a selective

research university? Are all the students attending community colleges only there because they were not able to attend another institution? Aren't there students at the community college for whom the community college was a better choice than a four-year institution? Can there be students at community colleges that perhaps could have attended a more prestigious four-year university, but because the representations of those institutions are mostly of white suburban middle to upper middle class students perhaps felt they would not be welcome there? All of these questions provide avenues of possible research in terms of access to a higher education and the way it may intersect with popular cinematic representations of colleges.

Another related area of future research relates to questions regarding minority college enrollment and popular cinematic representations. While much research has been done regarding increasing minority student college enrollment, none of the studies have looked to the cinema to possibly help illuminate popular perceptions of minority students in college. It is known that minority students are more apt to enroll in a community college so perhaps an in depth examination of the representations of college student enrollment in the cinema can be used to help understand patterns of minority student enrollment (perhaps cite something here). The specific representations of minorities in popular cinema may be further studied to provide certain insights into issues of persistence and college graduation by providing new perspectives regarding the expectations of minority college students in society.

Summary

Chapter Nine concluded this study by providing a recapitulation of the responses to the research questions. The purpose of this study was to examine various representations of higher education in cinema from the 1950s to the present. This study looked at the ways in which those representations differed from the critical literature on higher education. The findings of this study were contextualized by examining pertinent scholarly research and the study also examined the ways in which the representations changed over time. This chapter also provided recommendations for future researchers in higher education to explore.

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