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**CONSIDERING CURRICULUM IN POST-9/11 CULTURAL CONTEXTS:
THE *STORY OF MOVIES* AND THE POLITICIZATION OF THE
AMERICAN CITIZEN**

A Dissertation in
Curriculum and Instruction and Women's Studies

by
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on the 2006 *Story of Movies* interdisciplinary, film curriculum for the movie *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939) and the contours of American identity as represented therein. The *Story of Movies* materials were commissioned and created by The Film Foundation in partnership with IBM and TCM- Turner Classic Movies. Using experimental methodological frames, bricolage and intersectionality, the research aims to understand multiple ways of reading the texts contained in the data set: the motion picture *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), the *Story of Movies* teacher's guide, and the students activities that correspond to the film. Furthermore, the curriculum's productions of race and gender are explored through visual and linguistic tropes. Focusing on historical and cultural imperatives outlined in the curriculum, the research questions prioritize race, namely Afro-descended identity/ies, and gender roles- specifically feminine performance, in conjunction with post-9/11 citizenship identity to carefully consider curriculum ideology, and what constitutes the ideal American citizen.

Ultimately, I argue that the *Story of Movies* retooling of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* focuses on nation-building and national pride as rooted in a white (male) historical narrative of the country's social development via World War II, and through the type of democracy promoted within the United States government, namely the U.S. Senate. Examining these institutional cornerstones, I centralize race and gender in order to present possible counter-narratives in order to challenge this under-complicated perspective of who and what a citizen is. Additionally, I work to address the bias found within the curriculum not only by highlighting shortcomings through unequal representation and misappropriation, but also by critiquing and revising contemporary school curricula to not only include, but to emphasize social justice.

The *Story of Movies* curriculum package is not only teeming with examples of race-related deficiencies, but also it fails to problematize (and thereby reinforces) unequal gender roles. While in some ways the film *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (as an individual, cultural artifact) can be justified by the socio-historical context in which it was produced, the curriculum itself, in its deliberate packaging of the film and its corresponding teacher and student materials, can claim no such justification. By failing to provide students with the critical tools to discern these problematic representations within the films that are part of this curriculum, in addition to other films that the students are likely to see or encounter, the *Story of Movies* is— at the very least— complicit in perpetuating the myth of multicultural democracy.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Kristina K. Roldan, January 1974 - November 2007; to Melora Inez Hutcheson and Rex Ezra Troutman: Immortal Beloved Eternal; and to my mother, Ginny, to whom I owe more than could ever be named or repaid.

Chapter 1: Introduction

“The meaning of freedom has been constructed not only in congressional debates and political treatises, but on plantations and picket lines; in parlors and even bedrooms. ...an appreciation of the history of freedom—as a contested idea and a lived experience—can help us understand some of the changes American society has undergone since September 11th, 2001.”

(-- Eric Foner, 2003)

“One can hope for the emergence of mature peoples who do not need a *someone* to represent or even state the principles of their identity. One can wish that the very idea of nation, saturated through the mingling of economies and cultures, might open up on other unions where the bond between human beings would be located, thus forcing political discourse to move away from national constraints.”

(--Julia Kristeva, 1993)

Introduction and Purpose

As illustrated by the quotes by Foner and Kristeva, the current state of American citizenry has and continues to be heavily mediated by the requirements which (on both conscious and unconscious levels) mandate internalization of ‘the nation’, particularly as it relates to post-9/11 culture in the U.S., as integral to lived identity. In relation to this

unspoken mandate, I have decided to interrogate how one particular curriculum takes up such notions by offering filmic representations, supported by curriculum materials, of what it ‘looks like’ to be a U.S. citizen, historically and contemporarily. I am particularly interested in the ways in which race and gender shape, constitute, and co-mingle in such identity constructions.

The *Story of Movies (SoM)* curriculum is designed and distributed by the Film Foundation, in conjunction with Turner Classic Movies (TCM, www.tcm.com) and IBM, and is free to middle and high school English/Language Arts (or related area) teachers nationwide. Debuting in 2005, the curriculum combines contemporary curricular English/Language Arts standards with media methods and media literacy approaches geared toward film analysis. The curriculum takes as its subject matter classic Hollywood films—packaged and repurposed to attract young/new viewers and of course, teachers.

While I must concede to thinking that the whole idea is actually pretty cool (I love old movies, and I loved to teach students about film analysis and other forms of media) I must admit to finding it odd that classic Hollywood cinema, given the present historical-cultural moment, was taken as the focus for a public-school oriented curriculum package. Upon seeing the infomercial, investigating the website, and reading through other promotional materials, I sensed that multiple, intriguing platforms were at work.

According to the online Mission Statement for the *Story of Movies* (www.storyofmovies.org), the Film Foundation created this curriculum with the goals of “teaching young students how to understand and interpret the language of film and visual images” and “exposing new generations to classic cinema” (para. 4). Each of the three teaching units includes DVDs, a teacher’s guide, and a student activities booklet. What

the Film Foundation fails to mention here is that “classic cinema” is really being defined as Hollywood narrative cinema, which is far from being politically neutral (Aumont, Bergala, & Vernet, 1992.) The films for study are Robert Mulligan’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962), Frank Capra’s *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), and Robert Wise’s *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951). These films explore moral dilemmas, ethical obligations, the U.S. legal system, and matters of race and gender in somewhat politically charged socio-historical contexts.

Classic Hollywood Cinema and American Emphasis

All of the films in this curriculum are recognizable as canonical paradigms of classic American cinema, at least according to the Film Foundation and Turner Classic Movies. Each film was recognized (at the time of its original theatrical release) with award nominations and critical acclaim; in addition, these films were among the first to be restored (historically preserved) with grant funds by the AFI (American Film Institute, www.afi.com). It follows that they textually embody certain ideals and fears reflective of the time period(s) during which they were made.

This curriculum repackages these films for use within a contemporary context. Students (middle and early high school age) are the target audience; these contemporary students are negotiating their interpretations of the media, the world, and themselves in and through a post-9/11 context. Staples (2009) defines literacy/ies in this context as consisting of practices that interact with and respond to present cultural narratives. She argues that literacies in the post-9/11 era are characterized by integration and responsiveness to (contemporary) cultural narratives, particularly as they present constructs of personhood, which bear on formations of identities. This presents complex

and sometimes problematic implications for the nationalized, racialized, and gendered identity/ies of American youth.

In my dissertation, I will expand on the post-9/11 context in relation to the cultural climate and environment, which in my estimation, gives rise to the literacy/ies practices that Staples describes. To be specific, my interest is not so much underpinned by abstract conceptions of new literacies, but a focus on cultural narratives as represented by the *Story of Movies* curriculum in relation to contemporary contexts (and at times public discourses) mediating the *SoM* package: one film, respective student materials, and the teacher's guide. By turning to a variety of scholarly theorizations from across disciplines: women's studies, history, cultural studies, and political science, I trouble and complicate the various ways in which gender and race are 'historically' represented and enacted through the film *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939) and its corresponding curriculum materials. Then, I re-read these constructions through, and in relation to, contemporary political understandings of identity in the post-9/11 cultural context. I chose *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* because of its overt themes of citizenship and American nationhood and government—themes that are of central importance in youth identity work (see Fine and Sirin, 2007; Maira, 2009) given a post-9/11 frame. Also, an examination of the students activities packet for this film revealed a substantial amount of focus on the Second World War and U.S. military, which I found intriguing given the current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

To summarize Foner (2003), in the post-9/11 context, preceding historical events are re-contextualized and reinterpreted in light of 9/11. Foner goes on to identify several key elements that have direct relation to the aftermath and continuing cultural-political

effects of 9/11: “the invocation of ‘freedom’ as an all-purpose explanation for the attacks and for the ensuing” (and at this point unrelenting) “war on terror, widespread acquiescence in significant infringements on civil liberties, and a sudden awareness of considerable distrust abroad of American actions and motives” (p. 31). It seems relevant to note that Foner grounds his post-9/11 markers in terms of the legal, the political, and the global. This orientation does not put his theorizing at odds with Staples (2009), whose arguments are more along the lines of technology, identity, and youth culture within educational and new literacies frameworks, but rather provides another component to the overall landscape of a post-9/11 environment. According to Faludi (2007), America had a “nervous breakdown” after 9/11, which makes it “essential not to confuse the defense of a myth” [presumably freedom, safety, equality, and superiority] “with the defense of a country” (p. 18).

All of these theorizations become important in relation to how we (educators, researchers, etc.) conduct work that attempts to account for specific elements of contemporary culture. In other words, how do we even begin to discuss educational implications, curriculum development, cultural climates, and diversity issues in schools without at least a preliminary understanding of how our current context, as redefined by and through the aftermath and residual effects of 9/11, accounts for so many of the ways in which we ‘see’ and ‘perform’ our lived identities?

In my own work, post-9/11 culture becomes a space to occupy and from which to view race, namely Afro-descended identity/ies and feminine performance/female gender roles, in relation to representation; I also attempt to account for the discourses generated in this environment (about freedom, civil liberties, technology, nation, etc.) as producing

possible schemas which the student-viewer may bring to bear on her/his interpretations of and engagement with curriculum materials in the *Story of Movies* package. I'm interested in seeing what reading the films through this lens conjures, allows, and rejects. I posit here that American identity/ies becomes central to the ways in which the curriculum negotiates particular gender and race narratives. In other words, a specific form of (intentionally) monolithic American identity is at the center of the *Story of Movies*' logic, thus dictating the flow of content in terms of what is prioritized, what is sidelined, and what counts as valuable knowledge. I am specifically examining the *SoM* curriculum within this particular context in order to negotiate as a contemporary tool through which teaching and learning is poised to happen, in the view of two major American institutions and corporations: The Film Foundation and Turner Classic Movies (partnering with IBM.)

Background: The Research Project

When I began to envision this project three years ago, I conceptualized a research project that would conduct a multi-level analysis of the curriculum, the actual teaching of the curriculum (from pedagogical perspectives), and an assessment of student/learner (audience) engagement and participation with the films and related materials being offered. This project grew in my mind and became a daunting task. I soon came to the realization that I could not do every possible or available analysis, and that as the researcher I would have to select the curriculum components most salient to me.

While my initial interest pertained to the 'why' in terms of the film selections, as in 'why were these films chosen' given the scope, range, and availability of critically acclaimed films that qualify as 'American Classics' or as 'Hollywood Classic Cinema,'

my focus on the film and materials in their *SoM* incarnation became primary. Therefore, as my research progressed, it became less important to dispute/debate/disprove the ways in which the curriculum does or does not carry out its said mission or curricular agenda. What developed instead was the impetus to conduct an intersectional feminist approach to deconstructing the content of the curriculum, and to familiarize and engage with its inner-workings; I wasn't necessarily interested in the creators' claims about what the curriculum does, but rather, I grew more interested in what the curriculum does/implies/constructs that would fall outside of the categories for consumption (to impart media literacy, and to acquaint young students with classic film) identified by the curriculum producers.

To that end, the following questions provided a starting point for my analysis:

- *How does Story of Movies situate the films in order to represent society in the past?*
- *What or whose history and identity/ies are displayed? Questioned?*
- *Where (if at all) is it made evident the possible implications of contemporary media contexts for viewing these films and interpreting their corresponding curriculum materials in relation to American social identity issues?*

With these initial questions in mind, I can say that on one level, this project is an inquiry into concepts of American national identity, patriotic citizenship, and democracy constructions as directed toward secondary students through the curriculum. At this level, my purpose is to situate the *Story of Movies* curriculum package within a larger tradition of curriculum analyses; yet at another level, my research works to expand the terrain of conceptualizations of Afro-descended identity/ies and female gender roles, specifically in relation to a post-9/11 cultural context that recuperates a retrospective nostalgia while

simultaneously advancing a progress narrative specifically for the aforementioned marginalized groups.

At a preliminary point in my analysis, it appeared to me that the curriculum revolves around reinstating and appropriating archaic notions of national identity/patriotism, race, gender, film, and post-9/11 culture by constructing representations that are enforced by classroom activities with little attention to contemporary marginalization and interpretations produced by and through current popular media and discourses of popular beliefs. Additionally, it was clear that the lack of attention to both historical and contemporary oppression and oppressed peoples (within a U.S. context) extended beyond Afro-descendants and women, in effect reproducing (as a cumulative side effect, possibly) the male/female binary and the black/white binary that feminist researchers like myself have worked so hard to deconstruct and expand. Said differently, Native Americans, Asian-Americans, Hispanic and Latino Americans are lumped together as “people of color” when referenced within the curriculum materials; they are absent and/or invisible in the film itself.

To take this observation even further, within the scope of intersectionality and diverse identities, the curriculum only addresses social class status in relation to notions of upward mobility and progress; global identities are flattened and made general by curriculum terminologies such as “European” and “foreign countries” which assume an all-encompassing national identity for citizens of those countries. This treatment of all diverse peoples as unified by nation as the primary category also holds true for the curriculum’s perspective on American citizenry. Religious and sexual diversity are also not dealt with, as heterosexuality is the dominant paradigm depicted in the film. To put it

more succinctly, as a result of the socio-historical context of the film, ethnic minorities are disproportionately left out, in addition to variations of class associations or gender representations.

A central goal of my research is to use feminist and critical race frameworks toward deep understanding of race and gender constructions in curriculum used within a post 9/11 context. In addition, it is my hope that this work will apply new theoretical lenses to understanding curriculum in this context, while continuing the conversation on curriculum and schooling in its present state, working toward changes that necessarily require us to think about the ways in which knowledge, curriculum, popular media, and politics converge in school-based settings. Furthermore, I want to demonstrate how innovative methodological techniques and frameworks (intersectionality and bricolage¹) query these political-educational convergences toward an analysis of their ability/ies to influence processes of critical thought. Toward this end, I refined the preliminary research questions, upon recognition of broad thematic categories around race/gender/citizenship identities, as constructed through visual and linguistic representation by the *Story of Movies' Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* curriculum.

Feminist researchers (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002/2005) identify the emergence of structural inequality and understand that such structural inequality assumed as 'normal' or 'natural' obscures the language and directions of social change. In the *Story of Movies* curriculum, I use intersectionality to break down apolitical rhetoric and representation to explore the ensuing intricacies and complications that such

¹ For full descriptions of how I use intersectionality and bricolage, please refer to Chapter 2: *Methods and Methodology*, pages 17- 32.

appropriation creates. I believe that these ensuing complications and distortions minimize, or altogether ignore, the journey toward social justice for marginalized and oppressed groups through explicit and implicit mandates on race, sex/gender, and compulsory nationalism.

Although my initial plan was to study all three films, to ‘read’ each film and its corresponding materials in order to ascertain the formations and interactions of race, gender, identity and culture, it became clear that such an undertaking would not be possible, based on the sheer volume of curriculum content. It became apparent to me that such an extensive undertaking was not imperative, due to the fact that the makers of the *Story of Movies* conceptualized each individual film and its corresponding materials as all-inclusive. While this by no means indicates that the packages are interchangeable per se, it does negate the need for study across all three set of film texts and their individualized, corresponding curriculum materials, which I will show to be similar in formation anyway.

Therefore, I selected the middle film in the series, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, for exclusive analysis. After preliminary screenings of the other two films, I excluded *To Kill a Mockingbird* because the overt racial dynamics were integral to the plot and therefore outcomes and stereotypes were more readily apparent and predictable in terms of social conditions for representation, outcomes, and inclusion in the materials. *The Day the Earth Stood Still* was excluded because it is better suited to comparative analysis with the updated version, a 2006 remake set within and marked by differences in direct relation to a post-9/11 context. Also, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (both versions) deals with alien-as-other in a metaphoric way that detracts from formulations of race in

the social context of multiracial Americans and ethnic minorities. In other words, I opted to select *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* because it is a film in which gender (in terms of female roles) and race (Afro-descendant identity/ies) were present in relation to the concept of nation in direct proportion to government ideology, politics, and a (white) male citizenship context for leadership.

The Story of Movies: Structure and Contents

Since the scope of the materials was entirely too broad for full inclusion, I decided that my research focus would be text-based, leaving teacher role and student/audience queries for a later time or follow-up project. In other words, no teachers and no students are included via field observation, survey, focus group or other participant-based research modes. All data is derived from the curriculum package itself: the film, the Student Activities Packet, and the Teacher's Guide.

Each curriculum package in the series is set up around the same organizing principles and a general layout is replicated for the individual films (Chapters are the same, with slight variations in lessons with regard to specifics of the film content—for example Lesson 3, in Chapter 4.) Here is the “Lesson Grid at a Glance” for *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*:

Chapter 1. What Is a Movie?

Lesson 1. Technology and Story

Lesson 2. A Film's Narrative Structure

Lesson 3. Our Film Heritage

Chapter 2. The Filmmaking Process

Lesson 1. The Director's Vision

Lesson 2. Getting Ready — Pre-Production

Lesson 3. On the Set — Production

Lesson 4. In the Studio — Post-Production

Chapter 3. Film Language and Elements of Style

Lesson 1. How to Read a Frame

Lesson 2. How to Read a Shot

Lesson 3. Emphasis on Editing

Lesson 4. Putting It All Together — Analyzing a Scene

Chapter 4. Historical and Cultural Contexts

Lesson 1. How Films Mirror Society

Lesson 2. How Films Influence Society

Lesson 3. World War II and Frank Capra's Documentary Film

TEACHING RESOURCES

Teacher's Guide

Appendix A. Chapter Tests and Answer Keys

Appendix B. Performance-Based Assessment Activities

Appendix C. National Film Study Standards

Glossary of Key Terms

For the purposes of my analysis, in addition to the film itself, I decided to focus exclusively on the teaching resources and student materials developed specifically for “Chapter 4: Historical and Cultural Contexts.” Because the research questions pertain to identity/ies and representations found within the intersecting discourses of race, gender, and the nation, I find that the materials included in Chapter 4 both explicitly and implicitly configure these categories. While representation more broadly is a focal point for the entire curriculum package, the connections and interrelations between history, culture, and representation that form the basis for my research are less of a focal point in Chapters 1-3 of the *Story of Movies* curriculum, whose materials deal squarely with media literacy as it pertains to technological aspects of film and production, highlighting processes related to editing, lighting, camera angles, etc. While I do in some places throughout the dissertation refer to “shots” or “scenes” and use some film-related terminology, my intention was to only note or reference such things when applicable, as opposed to solely relying on visual tropes, symbols, and cues in order to make determinations about representation. And again, these visual and filmic effects do not really provide much in terms of possible causation, which is at the heart of my analysis.

Interestingly, the selection of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* in the *Story of Movies* package was reaffirmed by the work of Eric Smoodin (1996), whose audience reception piece on the film revealed the extraordinary nature of the film’s national presence at the time of its release. Additionally, the film was featured in *Photoplay Studies* (1940), a magazine published by Educational and Recreational Guides, Inc. and designed for use in junior high and high schools. *Story of Movies* is not, therefore, the first curriculum to choose *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* to represent to teachers “one of

the greatest lessons in the ‘American Way of Thinking’ a pupil will ever get anywhere” (p. 13). Smoodin goes on to argue that in 1939 and 1940, the reception of the film in educational, governmental, foreign, and local contexts was complicated.² For now, it is only significant to note the following: 1) the film has been packaged for student use prior to the incarnation that forms the basis for this inquiry, with 70 years in between the curricular appropriations; and 2) the film has (according to Smoodin) come to be regarded as an “assertion of universally recognized and understood democratic values” (1996, p. 4). I shall revisit these points in Chapter 6.

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington: An Overview of the Film

The Turner Classic Movies (TCM) website (www.tcm.com) provides the following synopsis for Frank Capra’s 1939 film, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*:

The untimely death of Senator Foley presents problems for political boss Jim Taylor, who needed the senator's help to perpetrate a land swindle at Willet Creek. Taylor orders Governor Hubert Hopper, whom he controls, to appoint a yes man, but citizen committees want someone else. Hopper is also besieged by his sons, who ask him to appoint Jefferson Smith, the patriotic leader of the Boy Rangers, played by James “Jimmy” Stewart. Confused, Hopper appoints Jeff, then convinces Taylor that naïve Jeff cannot learn enough about politics in time to affect the crooked bill. Jeff's appointment as junior senator is also supported by the senior senator, Joseph Paine, portrayed by Claude Rains, who is both Taylor's stooge and Jeff's idol. Jeff and Paine go to Washington, where Jeff, overwhelmed

² For more on audience reception and historical documentations thereof, see Smoodin’s full article, “‘Compulsory’ Viewing for Every Citizen: *Mr. Smith* and the Rhetoric of Reception.” *Cinema Journal* 35(2); Winter, 1996.

by his first sight of the Capitol dome, leaves the group and boards a tour bus. Five hours later, he reaches his office, where his cynical secretary, Clarissa Saunders (Jean Arthur) is waiting for him with her chum, newspaperman Diz Moore. They think Jeff's patriotic spirit is hokum, and Saunders engineers a disastrous press conference for Jeff. The next morning, Paine takes Jeff to be sworn in at the Senate, where one senator objects, alleging that the newspaper stories prove Jeff is unfit. Paine defends Jeff, and after he is sworn in, enraged Jeff goes on a rampage, slugging the reporters, who label him an "honorary stooge." The truth of it stings Jeff, and after seeking advice from Paine, who tells him to sponsor a bill proposing a national Boy Rangers camp, Jeff and Saunders stay up all night working on the bill, which Jeff presents in the Senate the next morning. Despite Jeff's nervousness, the senators like his ideas, except for Paine, who is horrified to discover that Jeff wants to use Taylor's Willet Creek site. Paine knows that Jeff must not be in the Senate the next day, when the Willet Creek bill is being discussed, and so he resolves to distract Jeff with his beautiful daughter Susan. Jeff is thrilled by Susan's attentions, but the next night, Saunders, drunk with Diz, becomes distraught over the way Jeff is being misled. She asks Diz to marry her, and they return to her office to collect her things. Jeff is there when they arrive, however, and she tells him about Paine, Taylor and the graft. As they leave, Diz realizes that Saunders is in no shape to get married, and he takes her home. Stunned by Saunders' revelations, Jeff rushes to Paine's house to confront him, but Paine tries to smooth-talk him. Later, when Taylor himself arrives, he tells Jeff that he runs Paine, and that if Jeff is smart, he will cooperate. The next day, Jeff

attempts to speak against the crooked bill, but, not understanding rules of protocol, yields the floor to Paine, who denounces Jeff on charges of using the boys camp for personal gain. Some time later, at Jeff's hearing before the Committee on Privileges and Elections, Hopper, Paine and others present phony evidence that Jeff owns the land upon which he wants to build the camp. Jeff is so dumbfounded by Paine's lies that he cannot testify on his own behalf and decides to leave Washington. Later that night, Jeff goes to the Lincoln Memorial, where Saunders finds him and convinces him to attempt a filibuster. The next morning, after a night of coaching, Jeff reveals the truth about Taylor and Paine to the Senate, even as Paine continues trying to condemn him. Jeff intends to talk until his news reaches his home state, and the people rise up against the corruption, but Taylor organizes a massive newspaper campaign against Jeff. Many hours later, Saunders cheers up Jeff with a note telling him she loves him, and then calls his mother, telling her to enlist the Boy Rangers to spread the truth. The boys publish their tiny newspaper, but Taylor's gang steals the papers and injures some of the boys. Back at the Senate, Paine brings in 50,000 telegrams drummed up by Taylor, all of them urging Jeff to quit. Though discouraged, Jeff resolves to keep fighting, but after he gives one last speech to Paine, he collapses from exhaustion after the almost twenty-four hour filibuster. Paine finally breaks down, and after attempting suicide outside the senate chamber, confesses that everything Jeff has said is true. Everyone in the room cheers and Saunders jumps for joy.

Preliminary Comments

My early viewing and subsequent feminist reading of the film suggested to me that *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* leans on the formations of white patriarchal relations starting in the opening scenes by demonstrating a legacy of male-dominated relations: a male senator dies, immediately old (white) men begin to hold conversations and meetings about how to deal with this. They go about making decisions for everyone else (women, children, and the population at large) with only their own best interests and personal gains/profit in mind. Ultimately, Jim Taylor, a powerful mogul who owns the press (a Rupert Murdoch-like figure) is making important ‘behind-the-scenes’ decisions because he owns key people in the Senate. Among the men in his pocket is Senator Paine. Paine supports the Governor’s decision to appoint Mr. (“Jeff”erson) Smith specifically due to his lack of political experience; as the clever secretary Clarissa Saunders points out to reporter Diz Moore, “if you scratch the surface, you’ll find that they [Taylor and Paine] need a dope around here for a few months” (Scene 6: “Saunders”). Smith is, initially, oblivious to this fact. He is referred to throughout the film as “a” or “the boy” by every single major character—Paine, Taylor, and Saunders. Obviously, the term “boy” applied to a man has negative connotations in the context of government leadership, which it should be noted indicates another central tension in the film: boyhood versus manhood, an important distinction that is reliant upon and simultaneously dismissive of women and girls.³

³ Issues around masculine/feminine gender performance and women’s roles are addressed in Chapter 3.

The political injustice(s) created in the film are the result of several key people's direct behaviors and the apathetic complicity of others. Ironically, race and gender (on multiple levels) are simply left out of the equation. Heavy-handed and overt, director Frank Capra insists on making the point about corruption and avarice within both the U.S. Senate and the popular press/print media, implying that these are excellent systems at the core, and that the only reason they are flawed has to do with abuse of power coupled with dishonest intentions, which are reflected in characters like Senator Paine, Jim Taylor, and Diz Moore; the film offers no critique of systemic or institutional injustice resulting from racist agendas (including ethnocentrism) classism, and gender biases. This lack of critique, inquiry, and sustained dialogue around these issues and constructs informs the basis for the research questions.

Research Questions

Based on my initial reading of the film, I formulated three key research questions:

1. How are national ideals, identities, and citizenship being constructed in this curriculum?
2. How do these particular constructions interface with race, class, and gender systems (within the films and curriculum) to promote the 'ideal' American citizen?
3. How is America's past and present being constructed through the use of these films? How are discourses within the current post-9/11 context conversant with curriculum products?

As the research process began to take shape through selection, coding, analysis, etc., the aforementioned questions shifted a bit. Ultimately, Question 3 became a structural question governing the overall research project. Question 2 broke down into

sub-questions: one specifically dealing with female gender roles (Chapter 3) and the other focusing solely on race, Afro-descended identity/ies (Chapter 5) though both categories are recombined strategically throughout the dissertation. Question 1 became the basis for Chapter 5—dealing with citizenship formation through war and questions/understandings of the U.S. as a nation. To be clear, the questions did not essentially change, though in places they morphed slightly or overlapped as constituted by the research methodology and focus on intersectionality. What this shape-shifting of questions as guided strategically by relevance allowed for was the emergence of cultural conversations within my work regarding institutional and discursive structural change or lack thereof— and to expose how theoretical dialogues can unearth or illuminate the reification of particular binaries and other constructs.

With this in mind, I will now explain the topical flow of the dissertation from chapter to chapter. In Chapter Two, I explain the research methods and methodology to make clear how it is that I aim to respond to the research questions and how I go about making sense of those responses. Chapter Three provides insight into gender along the lines of female/feminine performance. I focus on the film's female characters, the lack of black women represented in the film and materials, and on how the language and tone of the materials measure up when compared to sex-fair/gender equitable paradigms for curriculum standards. Chapter Four builds from concepts of race via Afro-descendant identity/ies introduced in relation to women in Chapter Three. The management of African-American identity/ies through White-identification, and how that plays out within the film and curriculum materials is probed, with attention to the educational context. Where non-white (minority) identity/ies take on dimensions of the

psychological, the social, and the historical, I attempt to expose a fallacious logic of color-blind institutional practices.

In Chapter Five, race and gender (or feminine roles and Afro-descendant personhood) are merged and brought into relationship as co-constitutive in the larger project of the patriotic U.S. citizen. Citizen status becomes bound to the American versions of ‘democracy’ and ‘freedom,’ which in turn become contingent upon particular Afro-descendant and particular female identities (performing in retrofit iterations) to produce a homogenous entity that has moved beyond the language of multicultural diversity, positing ‘difference’ as a feature to be ceded to a focus on similarity in the name of homeland security. Here, I also revisit the ways in which the curriculum’s terminology “people of color” functions as multicultural rhetoric that flattens individual and ethnic group differences in ways that deny or overlook current citizen demographics in the U.S. Chapter Six continues in this vein, and develops toward the project’s conclusion by re-evaluating the findings and implications through reflection, recommendation, and visions of pedagogical interventions that make race, gender, and the complex array of all student identity/ies *central* to the evolving project of curriculum.

Chapter 2: Methods and Methodology

While the same research methods are used across the film and materials, the interpretive lenses and theoretical frameworks I employ to analyze data vary from chapter to chapter. Overall, my methodology, which governs, to an extent, the methods selected and the frameworks generated in the interest of best responding to the research questions and making sense of those responses, is a new formulation driven by two pre-existing concepts for research: bricolage and intersectionality. This chapter provides in-depth descriptions and explanations of bricolage and intersectionality, and of how each of these terms informs my work as a qualitative researcher. Bricolage can be understood as the orienting concept that governs my work. It provides a framework within which I situate my understanding of how qualitative research can work, as a collection of processes through which one can understand the relationships between and among methods, methodology, and interpretive, analytic lenses for the purposes of generating new knowledge useful to researchers in education. For my research, bricolage involves the piecing together of theories, keeping intersectional considerations at the fore. Hence bricolage is the methodological antecedent to the ways in which I chose methods and interpretive lenses that allow me to ‘do’ intersectional work; bricolage (which continues to evolve as a qualitative research methodology in Education) has helped in the grand scheme of my organization and of analytic and interpretive frames.

Overview of Bricolage: Origins and Evolution

The term bricolage originates from Claude Levi-Strauss, specifically, from his 1962/1966 book, *The Savage Mind*. Levi Strauss used the word *bricolage* to describe any spontaneous action, further extending this to include the characteristic patterns of mythological thought. Levi-Strauss reasoned that since mythological thought is all generated by human imagination and is based on personal experience, it arose from pre-existing things in the imaginer's mind. According to Gee (1986) who situates Levi-Strauss within a literacy/ies discourse debate:

Levi-Strauss...demonstrated that there was nothing primitive about thought in so-called primitive cultures. Nonetheless, he reintroduced a dichotomy between primitive and modern cultures in terms of two distinct ways of knowing, two distinct modes of scientific thought. In an influential insight, Levi-Strauss characterized the systems of stories that make up mythical thought as a kind of intellectual “bricolage.” The bricoleur is adept at performing a large number of tasks. Unlike the modern engineer, he does not design tools for the specific task at hand; rather, his universe of instruments is closed, and the rules of the game are always to make do with “whatever is at hand.” What is at hand is always a contingent result of all the occasions there have been to renew or enrich the stock or to maintain it with the remains of previous constructions or destructions (p. 17). Mythical thought is “imprisoned in the events and experiences which it never tires of ordering and reordering in its search to find meaning.” (p. 22)

In reference to Gee and as researcher-bricoleur, I acknowledge but reject the hierarchy that places the engineer's capabilities above the skill set possessed by the bricoleur. My position arises from the Derridian notion (1966) that "every discourse is (inherently) bricolage." In other words, discourses are the result of piecing together and rearranging variables, reading those variables against and in relation to each other, and taking note of signifiers and multiple meanings. To that end, qualitative research is an especially fertile territory in which to adapt, apply, and extend understandings of bricolage. If one adopts the Derridian standpoint, the dichotomy advanced by Levi-Strauss breaks down, placing the engineer and the bricoleur on a level playing field.

Bricolage is being used in the field of educational research in a number of ways. Steinberg (2009) states that "...positioned as they are at the intersection of a plethora of disciplines...educational researchers are logical candidates to lead the charge for new forms of multiperspectival research." Extending Denzin and Lincoln (1994), Kincheloe (2001; 2005) uses the term bricolage to denote the use of multiperspectival research methods. In Kincheloe's conception of the research bricolage, diverse theoretical traditions are employed in a broader critical theoretical/critical pedagogical context to lay the foundation for a transformative mode of multimethodological inquiry. Using these multiple frameworks and methodologies, researchers are empowered to produce more rigorous and praxiological insights into socio-political and educational phenomena. Furthermore, Kincheloe claims these philosophical notions provide the research bricoleur with a sophisticated understanding of the complexity of knowledge production and the interrelated complexity of both researcher positionality and phenomena in the world. Such complexity demands a more rigorous mode of research that is capable of dealing

with the complications of socio-educational experience. My use of bricolage in this dissertation, to organize ways of producing knowledge sets around strategic aspects of the *Story of Movies: Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, builds on Kincheloe's acknowledgment of researcher positionality and phenomena in the world, to the extent that I use bricolage as my orienting guide to facilitate the management of doing intersectional work.

Assuming a 'level playing field,' between the engineer and the bricoleur researcher, Turkle and Papert (1992) assert that "bricolage is negotiational" and that "bricoleurs construct theories by arranging and rearranging, by negotiating and renegotiating with a set of well-known materials" (p. 7) They go on to assert that bricoleurs:

- prefer negotiation and rearrangement of their materials
- use a mastery of associations and interactions
- use a navigation of midcourse corrections
- set out to realize goals in the spirit of a collaborative venture
- start out with one idea, associate to another, and find a connection with a third-etc. (p. 9)

In keeping with the rigor that bricolage demands (Denzin and Lincoln 1994), theoretical frameworks and concepts have been differentially combined and applied in this dissertation. The areas of race and gender, as centrally maintained through intersectionality, are key to the formation of my theoretical lenses and conceptual applications, the changing of lenses made viable by a bricolage approach. Of course, I am modifying bricolage because instead of using it in the deployment of multiple methods, I am using it in the deployment, application, and combination of multiple lenses for analysis in order for the work to reflect intersectionality. Though bricolage can employ

something akin to mixed-methods, its features of flexibility, decolonization, and creative combination of methods differentiate it from a typical mixed-methods approach. The mixed-methods researcher charts and plans which methods (where, when, why, and how) will be applied far in advance of the actual encounter with her/his object/s of study (Turkle & Papert 1992; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2009). While in the case of this study, my methods for gathering data did not change throughout the project, my ways of looking at data sets in relation to one another and the lenses chosen for interpretation did.

For many scholars using bricolage, it is a deliberate choice to decolonize traditional “ways of seeing/knowing” through the process of conducting research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Kaomea, 2000; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2009). Assimilative research has categorized and rejected indigenous knowledges, experiences, and ways of understanding (Anzaldua, 1987). Again, referring to Kincheloe’s insistence that the bricoleur hold in flux the relationship between her/himself and the reading of the world, I engaged throughout this project with my perspective as a feminist scholar of color, as holding critically important potential for oppositional resistance to monolithic and ‘pure’ research methods or paradigms that move from verisimilitude toward conscious tinkering to produce uncertainty and multi-variant interpretations. I am not claiming to have found a definitive ‘truth’ of *Story of Movies*’ intentionality in representing race. What I do offer are possible readings of aspects or sub-categories of race and gender, derived from multiple, systematic readings of the texts.

While I have already described one of the ways in which bricolage differs from traditional mixed-methods approaches, it is important to note that the most significant

split between the two research forms stems from the intent of bricolage to unseat the use of one particular method as producing a true meaning, its rejection of empiricism, and in its explicit decolonizing for or toward new paradigms of social justice. One such example of using bricolage in a project of decolonization and as a composite theoretical lens exists in the work of Native Hawaiian scholar, Julie Kaomea (2000; 2004) who identifies herself as “bricoleur researcher.” Similar to Kaomea whose aim it is in the work I reference to read a deliberately racialized curriculum against other native (visual) materials, I aim to decipher the meanings (privileged and otherwise—see Stuart Hall, 1991; Nodelman, 2002; 2008) of particular underrepresented groups produced by and through the *Story of Movies* curriculum. My use of bricolage is in keeping with Kaomea’s (2000). She writes:

Writing as a Native Hawaiian in the middle of the Pacific, far removed from the academic centers of the Metropolis, I do not attach myself to any one theoretical perspective, but “make do” as something of an *interpretive bricoleur*. Matching theories to practical problems, I rely on a series of methodological tactics rather than rely on a single consistent strategy. (p. 321)

Like me, Kaomea does not necessarily changes methods throughout her research project, but rather she pieces together multiple theoretical perspectives in order to generate new knowledge production. More specifically, Kaomea goes on to describe her work to analyze contemporary curricular discourses of what it means to be Hawaiian, by re-contextualizing text-book images and school-based activities to their ‘primitive’ forms to show the ways in which particular histories and representations are simultaneously re-inscribed and made ‘new’ under the mantra of cultural awareness. Like Kaomea, I

deliberately repurpose the cultural artifact known as the *Story of Movies* to shift focus away from what the curriculum producers claim it does or is meant to do, toward an end that I consider more worthwhile: the mapping and charting of race-gender-national identity/ies (ideology transmission) within the confines of U.S.-based Black identity and feminine roles, whose representation in the films and materials raises a series of questions and outcomes about the type of desired citizen that the curriculum (perhaps unintentionally) promotes.

While Kaomea's approach to methods is informed by the explicit combination of discourse genealogy (Foucault, 1970, 1972, 1979, 1980) and new historicism as an intersectional bricoleur, my methods of reading the texts come from feminist critique, curriculum studies guidelines for sex-fair curricula, and a similar new historical approach that allows present contexts (in the case of this dissertation that is the 'post-9/11' context, in part described by Eric Foner, 2003) to be brought to bear on the juxtaposition of texts. I have juxtaposed the materials in such away that has allowed me to read iterations of black identity, to deconstruct feminine gender roles and their performance, then combine and use these readings to query larger implications of race and gender as germane to the production and secure status of a desired U.S. citizen in the post-9/11 United States, as implied by the *Story of Movies*. To further complicate and situate my analysis, I read from multiple sources, as mentioned in the introductory chapter: the teacher's guide, the student activities, and the original filmic text on which these are based, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. Through my various readings, I have worked diligently to be cognizant of the fact that the curriculum itself has drawn materials from multiple sources (documents, letters, other Capra films, information and iconography of World War II, and so on)

juxtaposing these texts in a strategic array.

In summary, I find bricolage to function as more than a ‘mixed methods approach,’ because as a research method it has the *potential* to function as a decolonizing strategy (as demonstrated by Kaomea’s work) through intentional disruption of the other methods it subsumes and strategically deploys. While it can be argued that bricolage allows the use of multiple methods, it seems that it can also be considered to encourage the researcher to adopt multiperspectival (theoretical) modes, as is true in the case of this dissertation. Considering the vast body of theoretical frameworks (tools) at my disposal, which in many cases are overlapping and/or intertwined, it proved futile to try and force my project into the scope of only one. As a bricoleur, all remain within the scope of access, as they are co-constitutive and mutually conversant within the realm of textual heritage to begin with. My use of bricolage is most closely related to Kaomea’s for its focus on a particular racial group and because it seeks to illuminate unintended consequences of curriculum choices.

However, I depart from Kaomea in that I use bricolage to organize a form of intersectionality that I believe my work advances. The intersectionality of which I speak harkens back to some of the initial territory it was intended to address: the issue of Afro-descendant identities and women, in a U.S. context. To elaborate, I have used multiple levels of reading (a combination of close reading, reader response, and feminist critique) to focus narrowly on race and gender, with the prioritization of U.S.-based black identity/ies and female roles because those are most salient in the texts.

My methods deliberately repurpose the role of theory in constructing the researcher and moving the data in directions that might otherwise not emerge in conjunction with

one (or any set of) singular method(s) used in isolation. While here I must pause to account for my use of similar approaches to categorize data initially, I must also point out that the methods were not used in isolation. I also do not claim to utilize bricolage as the only way of conducting intersectional research or as a methodological panacea that allows for every- and anything to occur within the research space. Rather, keep in mind the phrase *conscious tinkering*. Given this characteristic as a creative mode within bricolage, I have consciously tinkered with race and gender to specifically tease out issues related to particular iterations of Afro-descendant U.S. identity/ies and female roles/feminine performance in relation to visual and linguistic images made available by the original texts: the film and the corresponding curriculum materials. I understand that by doing such, I have chosen to omit (though not altogether exclude) an emphasis on other ethnic minority and marginalized groups.

In part, the omission reflects the socio-historical context and timeframe of the film. Along these lines, the film and the time periods (1930's and 1940's) privileged by the content of the curriculum materials does allow for the revisiting (and re-envisioning) of aspects of African-American identity/ies and women's roles, given the ubiquitous presence of the Jim Crow and Pre-Civil Rights Eras (1876-1965) and the significance of the progress of women during this same temporality. Through bricolage as an organizing methodology, much like a blueprint, works to structure my brand of intersectionality; that is the doing of intersectional work (beyond deployment of the term) to purposefully view particular marginalized groups in relation to one another, then to extend these data sets and the research outcomes therein by recombining them under the rubric of post-9/11 U.S. citizenship.

Overview of Intersectionality: Inception, Debates, and Contemporary Complications

In naming myself, the researcher, as “intersectional bricoleur” I now examine the title—how it positions me, my research, and why. This term is meant to imply that as a researcher, I have proceeded in piecing together data from the *Story of Movies* curriculum and the film, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, with a narrow focus on Afro-descended identity/ies and female gender roles and feminine performance, to illuminate what possible understandings of the race/gender subgroups are made available or relevant when examined through strategic, appropriate theoretical domains for analytic interpretations. While I have reviewed the literature illuminating the iterations of bricolage, as well as accounted for my use of the practice to govern my overall perspectival approach to selecting methods (i.e. positionality), I now turn my attention to intersectionality—a fraught, and sometimes capacious term whose history and application I will explain here.

With bricolage permitting me to conceptually poise a composite theoretical lens for analysis, intersectionality informs the construction of this composite interpretive lens. Thus I inquire into the *Story of Movies* curriculum with intersectionality as a guiding premise and a tool—like a magnifying glass of sorts that allows me to focus on race/gender/citizenship configurations rather than measuring for example, standards, assessment types/instruments, etc. Specifically, I am compelled by the original context in which intersectionality was coined and advanced: to center the marginalization and multiple oppressions faced by black women (hooks, 1984). While I do not wish to re-

historicize intersectional practices by flattening race and gender so that these terms become synonymous with “black” and “women,” these are the groups whose identities I use to serve as models to investigate the extent to which curriculum tends toward an overall post-race rhetoric whose implications can be understood to present a composite desired (White/male) citizen. I recognize that Whiteness and masculinity are dominant throughout the curriculum and the film (even to the extent in which they co-construct and reflect non-dominant groups and identities) because my intention is to prioritize marginalized groups, and so I keep these areas in the background of my research study. When such conceptions are present, it is always and only in the service of explicating and advancing analyses of African-Americans and women.

Here, I must carefully assert that it is not my intention to look broadly across the curriculum at racialization and gender of *all* marginal groups, though I use my findings on Afro-descendant U.S. identity/ies and femininity (and women’s roles) to extrapolate and hypothesize considerations and advocacy for non-white, ethnic, and racial minority citizens at large in Chapters 5 and 6. This advocacy, I believe, is in keeping with Kimberle Crenshaw’s (1989) assertion that in order to achieve antiracist and antidiscrimination frameworks for policy and for social (and economic) justice, that the intersection of race and sex must be demarginalized.⁴ I contend that such frameworks in relation to intersections of race and gender are also integral to the ongoing evolution of the project known as curriculum.

In espousing intersectionality, and claiming this work to be intersectional, I also

⁴ Crenshaw coins the term “intersectionality” in her 1989 article which explores legal examples of identity politics that continue to overlook/undermine black women.

acknowledge Patricia Hill Collins (2006) who states:

intersectional paradigms view race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and age, among other things, as mutually constructing systems of power. Whereas all of these systems are always present, grappling with their theoretical contours is far more difficult than merely mentioning them. (p.7)

For me, Collins is correct in pointing out the difficulty inherent within the task of not only locating these various constructs and their corresponding power relations, but also in the necessity of recognizing their mutually constituting “theoretical contours.” For me it made sense to treat the pieces (gender/race) separately, but as referential of one another, and to subject both gender and race (in concert) to further inquiry under the broad (but as research revealed, narrowly defined) banner of citizenship, which subsumes them both: individually and collectively. Again, having deliberately limited (not flattened) race and gender into Afro-descended U.S. identity/ies and feminine roles, I am conscious of the impact of reinscribing black/white and male/female binaries. But since so much of the film and materials work to mobilize race and gender in this way, it only makes sense that these areas would constitute interrogation and study, as they are produced and appear as present absences, whereas diverse ethnic, sexual, class-based, and ability-level groups would need to be dealt with individually under a different set of research questions and theoretical expletives, due to their own specific (and totalizing) absence within the textual products.

Finally, my use of intersectionality is conversant with my use of bricolage in two important ways: 1) it aides in the project of helping to make explicit my position as researcher by exposing my own biases and subjectivities, and 2) it also serves to underpin

my selection of scholars upon whose work I situate my own. As a mulatto, female scholar, a hybrid methodology inspires my ways of conducting research and helps me to locate the tradition in which to situate my scholarship. Bricolage pre-determines my ability to change and shift things around (as necessary) within the research project—achieving flexibility as it morphs along the way; intersectionality foregrounds aspects of race and gender, while highlighting which theories to plug in, remove, and center within the analysis. Simply, bricolage is the why and intersectionality is the how. Additionally, intersectionality affords me a way of looking at both feminine roles and Black U.S. identity/ies as displayed within the film and curriculum, as social constructs, rhetorical devices, and as political categories historically deployed to particular ends. For my purposes, I use intersectionality flexibly. As Collins (2006) also points out:

Since the 1980's, the American nation-state has increasingly defined ideas about what it means to be American through ideas of Whiteness, Christianity, wealth, masculinity, and heterosexuality. As a result, social inequality of race, class, gender, ethnicity, and religion, among others, appear to be natural and normal and certainly not socially constructed by public policies and everyday customs. (p. 7)

Here Collins' expands the definition of intersectionality by going beyond race/gender/class orders and extending theoretical dimensions into an assessment of the concrete materiality upon which American identity depends. In order to sufficiently “grapple” with these systems of power—namely race and gender—I have chosen to focus on them individually first, then recombined to further examine them in the post-9/11 citizenship context, which I argue is predicated upon the trend that Collins locates in the 1980's which only intensified in the wake of 9/11, though now the current political

tide (at least in overt ways) may be shifting, as less experienced groups and minority citizens are becoming increasingly active in the U.S. political arena. Nonetheless, dominant groups and beliefs persist in opposition to the emergence (and prominence) of these ‘new’ groups. The dominant groups’ primary tactical approach (in attempts to thwart the efforts of the current groups gaining in popularity and vying for political power) relies heavily upon the discourses of “Whiteness, Christianity, wealth, masculinity, and heterosexuality” identified by Collins.

White masculine paradigms are not only found throughout the curriculum, but are more accurately the basis for it. As my research indicates, it is the abundant fodder from which the *SoM* content flows. Insisting upon analysis that magnifies and queries possible outcomes of such political discourses and their representations, turning attention toward deconstructing such concepts intent on refocusing Afro-descendant, U.S. identity (race) and women/feminine roles (gender) and, where applicable, both (i.e. Afro-descended women), is at the heart of my research project.

Intersectionality II: Personal Location and Subjective Bias

As the researcher, I conduct and perform data analysis from within a black feminist tradition of intersectionality, which Valerie Smith (1998) says “can function to illuminate not only connections between gender, race, and sexuality, but also between fact and fiction, text and ‘real life,’ classroom and outside world, and private and public spaces.” (p.136). Smith’s definition seems like a tall order: a model that encompasses each aforementioned sphere by flattening difference in favor of broad, inclusive reconfigurations. In fact, my interpretation of Smith reflects one of the popular critiques

that is often leveraged against or posed in relation to intersectionality in general.⁵ Other critiques of intersectionality revolve around tendencies to describe rather than analyze. However, keeping in mind both of these critiques, which I believe to be valid in some cases, I have attempted not to flatten ‘race’ and ‘gender’ by conflating them to mean ‘black’ and ‘woman,’ but I have instead specified them as such. I also deliberately chose to avoid flattening ethnic differences, plural marginalized identities, and racial hybridity (which poses a different sort of philosophical dilemma within the black/white binary and for intersectionality) by rejecting (*not* replicating in my own language) the curriculum’s use of the politically correct terminology “people of color.” The data are read through theoretical lenses in order to avoid the semblance of mere description, which can always be read as merely subjective.

This is not to say that I deny the role of subjectivity within my work. In fact, one of the reasons I adopt intersectionality is to prioritize my identity toward establishing a political legacy that which prioritizes *my* looking (as a woman of color and first-generation college student) that connects me to my academic ancestors, black feminists, whose shoulders my work stands on and has been made possible by, and insert my work within scholarly enterprises from which people like me have been (and in some cases continue to be) subsequently excluded and/or marginalized. I find this act to be similar to Crenshaw’s 1989 declaration, “I will center Black women in this analysis in order to contrast multidimensionality of Black women’s experiences with the single-axis analysis that distorts these experiences” (p.139). Like Crenshaw, I too center representations of

⁵ See Berger & Guidroz, 2009; Pipemeier, 2009, p.127-8. These texts provide multiple insightful critiques on intersectionality, both in theory and practice/application.

Black identity/ies and women's gender roles/femininity as they hold compelling basis for inquiry because of the ways in which they are ironically portrayed, denied, and revised within *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and the subsequent *SoM* curriculum materials; their conundrum is the basis of a central tension throughout the materials, as Chapters 3 and 4 will reveal. I claim my position as valid while simultaneously questioning if perhaps this personal-political location makes me more sensitive to my own erasure, as it were, within the *Story of Movies* curriculum. This question haunts the research project, and I return to a brief exploration of this in my conclusion chapter.

Methods & Data Analysis

Initially I was interested in using each of the three films (though in the end, as noted in the introduction, I only worked with one) to explore how categorical representations of race, gender, and nation/citizenship contribute to or co-construct identity/ies in the U.S. with attention to cultural appropriation in the post-9/11 context. This motive is yet another reason I chose to engage a research design articulating multiple theoretical frameworks that while interconnected, can be separately applied yet conclusively recombinant, in order to sufficiently illuminate points of intersection among and within the applicable discursive structures. To reiterate, qualitative methodology that engages case study technique paired with a variety of lenses and theoretical frames for analysis as the scaffolding (support network) allow me to engage the intricacies of the *Story of Movies* curriculum in the pursuit of answers to my research questions.

Using bricolage as a conceptual framework, I conduct intersectional analysis, in the sense that I hone in on particular marginalized groups—extracting them from the larger categories of race and gender. I will now go on to explicate and outline the

techniques used to organize data and the discreet process of selecting lenses for analyzing the data, with the specificity required to locate African-American U.S. identity/ies and feminine roles (female performance). Using the research questions to guide my inquiry through multiple levels of viewing and reading the texts closely (Gallop, 2000) data was coded in a broad descriptive sense, according to race, gender, and nation (national identity/ies within the U.S. context). To code for each variable—race, gender, and nation/citizenship (as determined by the research questions) —I scoured the following materials:

- the film- *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*
- *Story of Movies* Student Activity Packet
- *Story of Movies* Teacher's Guide

I systematically looked at each artifact to find references—visual, linguistic, direct, and implied to the aforementioned variables.

The concept of race in the materials was complicated to apprehend, because of the totalizing terminological uses of terms like “people of color” and “minorities.” In the visual aspect of my research, I conducted for visual signifiers of ‘race,’ and only Black Americans were (albeit in token manner) featured. Their rendered visibility formed the basis for my formulation of ‘race’ in the context of my study to pertain only to African-Americans. I also systematically located references to gender and nation in similar ways. In many places they overlapped in complex ways; such complexities are evident in parts of Chapters 3, 4, and 5. For example, I compared and contrasted the visual signifiers of non-white identity/ies and female identity/ies with language such as “citizens” or “Americans” because often throughout the *Story of Movies* curriculum, language seems

to mask generalizations about to whom that language refers or describes. In such instances, women and minorities are inserted covertly, since (often) subsumed under terms like ‘Americans,’ the inferred reference is to white males.

The data was initially coded for frequency to note how many scenes in the film revolved around discussion and/or visual cues of Smith’s camp for boys, the Boy Rangers organization and so forth; such instances were critical to note because of gender division. Further along the lines of gender, the scenes featuring the female characters—Ma Smith, Clarissa Saunders, and Susan Paine were also quantified. The same steps were done in search of non-white characters (Chapter 4 examines visibility of African-Americans in only two scenes, as other groups, such as Hispanic and Asian, are non-visible). Omission, Exclusion, and Unreality (*see Chapter 3*) criteria and guideposts stemming from sex-fair curriculum paradigms for research, were also used to count and code representation within the Teacher’s Guide and Student Activities. Each data chapter (3, 4, and 5) to some extent reference these quantities—how many scenes, how many activities, and so forth with respect to matters of race, gender, and citizenship. However, I mainly relied upon reading particular instances and the nature of these instances within the data analysis portion of my research, which constitutes the basis for each chapter.

With regard to analysis, I chose a combination of feminist theoretical frameworks, critical race paradigms, and curriculum studies lenses that all work toward deconstructing representations, absences, and the specificities and sometimes overlapping nature of both. Intersectionality was critical to the work of selecting analytic frames. For instance, Chapter Three considers sex-fair curricula in combination with feminist explorations of female performativity (Walkerline, 1989) and Black feminist work (Fordham, 1993;

Ransby, 2006) to situate reading outcomes of the film's major female characters (in the film and in the materials) and post-9/11 iterations of women's work.

In discussing African-Americans in the film and materials content, I relied upon a critique of multicultural education from a critical race perspective (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995). I go on to interpret findings using Black feminist work from bell hooks' (2001) philosophical conceptualizations of the black/white binary as posited by both W.E.B. Du Bois (1903, 1982) and Charles Mills (1999) and anti-racist, white privilege critique from feminist educational scholar, Peggy McIntosh (1989.) In addition to data analysis, Chapter 4 engages in a wider project of debunking historical claims made by and contradicted through the *Story of Movies*' curriculum materials. As race and gender often complicate and co-construct one another, women's roles and masculine identity, as extensions of Chapter 3, emerge a bit here as well.

Chapter 5 takes a more new historical approach, reading the curriculum's treatment of World War II against current conceptions of the post-9/11 cultural context. The World War II content/materials is quantified and certain activities have been deconstructed to exemplify prevalent themes and dominant ideas about democracy and U.S. identity/ies.

Screening Gender, Viewing Race, Mapping Citizenship

The first two readings/viewings included engagements that provided a foundational understanding of characters and plot. Third and fourth readings were conducted to notice interactions between characters and the ways language and sequenced, orchestrated interactions between key figures worked to construct race, gender, and nation. Fifth and sixth readings were purposed to closely notice and record

signs and symbols that created the contexts that couched characters and supported the plot of the films. Seventh and eighth readings worked toward understanding the film's visual systems in terms of setting and location—namely the iconography of Washington D.C. and the Senate as mechanisms deployed in the construction of concepts of 'nation.'

A ninth reading focused on recognizing and charting convergences of race and gender—visibly identifiable only in representations of women and African-Americans.

Reading/viewing number 10 focused on tracing scenes that would constitute a convergence of race and gender within the film's context of nation and citizenship. Two more viewings helped to clarify data collected, correct my written notes, notice any other important features, generally and specifically, and to begin to hone in on particular scenes that warranted further analysis.

I reviewed these notes and determined categories based on broad themes found throughout the text. Categories were refined based on major plot points. Then I reintegrated the data set (as narrowed by themes, then plot contrivances) with my original research questions. I then developed detailed descriptions and explications of scenes accordingly. Next I subjected the data to a feminist film critique and deconstruction with attention to how systems of power work across the text to produce particular iterations of femininity, masculinity, race, gender, and class. It is noteworthy that ultimately boyhood, masculinity/ies, and related areas were eliminated from the data set (though they registered to some small extent within Chapters 3-5) because while that category yielded a substantial set of data, it was at odds with my desire to focus on marginalized groups. Therefore, I made the conscious decision only to include a small portion of this work and only with regard to framings of African-American identity/ies and feminine/women's

roles as constructed by the film. Also, the complexities of class (in addition to a politics of local, rural, and urban identity effects) were charted at basic levels in my preliminary analysis, but left out of the overall research project- except for instances in which they contribute in highly relevant ways to matters of race and gender.

My next measure involved organizing the curriculum materials to look for language, content, and imagery that harkened back to the research questions. I started with the Teacher's Guide, reading through it in its entirety, and performing several readings of the text governing *Story of Movies* "Chapter 4: Cultural and Historical Contexts." I annotated the text for particular words and phrases whose utterances explicitly denote issues related to race and gender. Then I went back and re-read for places where race and gender were alluded to, but not directly mentioned. I further refined my descriptions by attempting to account for tone in the language, and by looking at the broader scenarios in which the language was conveyed. For example, in some places the language acts as a script for the teacher to say to students—in those instances, the knowledge produced by the curriculum materials becomes authorized and official by mandate of the teacher. In other places the Teacher's Guide is merely describing or elaborating on specific details that are part of the activities provided, as opposed to introducing 'new' content or information.

Student Activities were first coded for 'type' (visual aid, assessment, writing activity, etc.). I did another level of coding to determine which activities were based exclusively upon the film, which were based on the socio-cultural context during which the film was made, and which were based on other filmic materials (for example other works/films, by Frank Capra—most notably encapsulated in the curriculum's use of his

Why We Fight documentary series.) Sub-categories relating to Capra's biography and World War II emerged early in the coding process. I counted the instances of World War II activities, their prevalence signifying some level of importance. I counted again for references to the present day and iterations of 'now' and 'today' in terms of contemporary social concerns. I performed another reading to isolate what they (the curriculum materials) *ask* students to do with that information.

I went on to look for connections among and between each of the three data sets: *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*: the film, the Teacher's Guide, and the Student Activities, with attention to race, gender, and citizenship. I chose to inquire further into the materials that demonstrated the highest amount of overlap, while strategically selecting materials to exemplify each of these phenomena (race/gender/citizenship constructs) in isolation as well. Once these data were matched, traced, re-read, compared and contrasted, I chose which scenes from the film and which specific activities from the student materials would be included for further study and incorporated within each of the data chapters. I selected activities that referenced, explicitly, race, gender, American government, and the Second World War (WWII.) I omitted activities that were plot and character heavy in terms of production modes and film production related content. In terms of the film, scenes focusing the relationship between Smith and Saunders, Smith and Susan Paine, and scenes heavily reliant on patriotic imagery and Washington D.C. visual iconography are featured⁶. The scene involving the black porters at the train station is also included. I include titles for the curriculum materials being referenced and analyzed throughout, and

⁶ See Appendix A (page 177) for a complete listing of scenes from *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* that I reference/include in this dissertation.

scenes from *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* are throughout and labeled when/where applicable. I viewed individual scenes and scene sequences dozens of times, tracing key visual signifiers (American landmarks, monuments, statues, etc.) and markers of race and gender (measured in appearance, absence, dialogue, and curriculum language). I took more detailed notes to help in the analysis of key scenes that point toward the development of and/or contain rhetoric referring to the establishment or promotion of race, gender, and American citizenship.

My strategy for sorting, selecting, and coding data (Palmquist, Carley & Dale, 1997) did count occurrences, but only in an overall, composite manner. In other words, my quantifications (for example how many scenes featured women, and how many activities focused on World War II) are mentioned as descriptive indicators, but my analysis more heavily relies upon connecting thematic concepts. Carley (1992) states that meaning is a product of the relationships among concepts in a text.⁷ Therefore, in this case, my methods for analysis are thematic and relational. Once combined, notes, codes, connections, and interpretive strategies are made apparent due to the emergence of specific discourses that produce identity tropes along the lines of race, gender, and citizenship toward a politics of representation that are both relevant and revelatory given the contemporary student (audience) as located within a post-9/11 cultural context.

The next step in completing the research study involved situating the data within the post-9/11 context⁸ as a means of cataloguing the relationship between curriculum and broader political ideologies toward the manufacturing and reproduction of a particular

⁷ For more on content analysis, see Weber, 1990; Craig, 1992; Solomon, 1993.

⁸ “Post-9/11” as a cultural construct is explicated at length in dissertation Chpt. 5.

type of U.S. citizenship in relation to contemporary modes of thought and perception. In this step, I had to carefully continue to account for intersectionality, with attention to African-American identity/ies and feminine roles. Sometimes it became easy to lapse into the use of my limited scope of race and gender to extrapolate about the citizenship status of all U.S. minorities, so I had to reflect often in order to resist flattening differences. I was certain not to overlook the fact that African-Americans and women serve as case-studies for larger implications of race and gender, while at the same time containing their own set of specificities that may or may not pertain to other marginalized groups. My multiperspectival framework allowed for the recognition of *how* within a post-9/11 environment knowledge production is “entangled with constructs like race, gender, culture....”⁹ within the context of the *Story of Movies* curriculum package.

Limitations

As mentioned previously, I intended to include each film package created by the *Story of Movies* curriculum in my research project. This proved an all but impossible task, because of the amount of curriculum. In my preliminary exploration the *Story of Movies Curriculum*, I analyzed (in detail) from feminist perspectives specifically focusing on systematic representations of gender and race with critical attention to ideological development of national pride. Specifically, the project focuses upon these aspects utilizing the middle film (second in a series of three films) of the *Story of Movies* curriculum: *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. Since representations of race and gender always enter into the question of culture and discursive productions of identity and the identity politics that follow, the original context in which the film debuted is also

⁹ See J. Staples forthcoming (2011) for more on “post-9/11 literacies.”

considered alongside the contemporary social context. By using this film as a case-study for the curriculum as a whole, one can begin to think about the cultural and ideological apparatuses whose functions delineate an increasingly complex and unstable fault between the past (when the film was originally made) and the present, a ‘post-9/11’ landscape in which citizen identity/ies paradoxically grow ominous yet narrow at the same time.¹⁰

As I revealed earlier in the first chapter, I initially conceptualized the project as having three distinct components: curriculum, students, and teachers. It made sense to me that I would combine methods in order to address each one separately in order to weave them back together in the end. Preliminary thought led me to believe that I would use interviews, audience observation, a focus group, and possible written responses in order to ascertain both teacher and student perceptions, identifications, or possible subversive readings, and amenability to the curriculum, namely the films.

However, I quickly began to realize that this would be a gargantuan undertaking for a *single* research project, and that it would be more beneficial for the integrity of my research to treat the project as ongoing, with each of the three distinct components becoming an individual project. In other words, the curriculum analysis constitutes a research project, as do the areas of teacher engagement with the curriculum and student learning based on the curriculum. In a number of complex ways, these three projects (the curriculum itself as an artifact, teacher perspectives, student use/outcomes) will converge. But before convergence, they must be understood individually and more narrowly. My methodology and methods approach the telling and reading of the curriculum as a

¹⁰ See Butler and Spivak (2006) *Who Sings the Nation-State?*

cultural artifact and as a neo-historical text, as this constitutes one of several possible research projects based on this material as previously noted.

In addition to limitations that stem from not incorporating students and teachers, as I am acutely aware of my own subject biases, I run the risk of becoming over-deterministic in my reading of the materials. This possibility makes it all the more critical, in my opinion, that I turn to various lenses and theories to substantiate my interpretive claims. Ultimately structured by intersectionality, Chapters 3, 4, and 5 espouse the following theoretical lenses and interpretive frameworks in order to explicate data and prove, disprove, and complicate responses to the research questions and the hypotheses I developed regarding such outcomes: Feminist film analysis, Critical Race, Black Feminist Standpoint/Cultural Theory, Philosophy, Gender Theory/Feminine Performativity, History/New Historicism, Cultural Theory, Curriculum and Ideology/Curriculum Theory, Educational Studies, Personal Narrative, Artistic Interventions, Aesthetics, Textual Analysis/Content Analysis/Discourse Analysis, Race and Gender Inventories.

Within each individual chapter (with the exception of the conclusion), I have included a “Methods/Methodology Section” as a means of familiarizing the reader with exactly which lenses and frameworks s/he can expect to encounter, as unique to that chapter’s topic, data set, and corresponding line of inquiry.

On a final note, it may seem as though my new imagining of intersectionality through bricolage, producing multiplex of theoretical lenses and interpretive frameworks, is a risky enterprise, since to-date there is little precedent for my methodology and methods of interpretation. While I am aware of the limitations that this lack of

precedence causes, I would argue against this as a sole determinant for the value of the research I have conducted. In other words, the field, in terms of my use of bricolage, is new and evolving. By no means do I claim that it has the ability to ‘fix’ the many messy areas inherent to the qualitative research process.

At the same time, I advocate against its dismissal or foreclosure because I am in favor of asserting new, creative possibilities in the research process—not as a ‘cure’ but as another set of possible, alternative interventions. For precisely this reason, I placed limitations on my own uses and iterations of bricolage and intersectionality. For example, I followed the same method of reading key concepts, thematic content, visual and linguistic tropes across the data set, in order to render consistent, intelligible race/gender paradigms as they work across the film and materials. Changing of methods, I felt, would have over-complicated the project in unnecessary and confusing ways that would have been a disservice to the value and contribution of this research: a curriculum study that traces and deconstructs the inner-workings the curricular manifestations of race and gender in the *Story of Movies* installment of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. My set of methodological choices and my methods of reading and viewing reveal the production of a particular citizen identity through race and gender, and in ways that continue to manifest as the result of historic justifications and progress narratives, both of which work to obscure their limited and inaccurate deployment in the texts.

Chapter 3: “It’s a funny thing about men you know. They all start life being boys”: The *Story of Movies* and Female Gender Roles in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*

“I wasn’t given a mind just so I could tell a boy ranger what time it is.”

(-- Clarissa Saunders)

Introduction

In this chapter, I piece together potential gender implications by interpreting and deconstructing representations of women and their roles promoted by and through the film *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (*MSGtW*). In this installment of the *Story of Movies* interdisciplinary film curriculum, the consequences of nationalistic and historical rhetoric about women’s roles signal particular cues about performing a female identity. More specifically, by analyzing the film, the student activities and assessments, and the teacher’s guide provided as part of the *Story of Movies* package, I show how the relationship between gender and representation are central to an understanding of how the curriculum works to promote particular versions of American citizenship identity that rely heavily on conventional gender codes and roles. In this chapter, the term gender refers to classifications that categorize and differentiate women from men in the *SoM* curriculum in relation to the film *MSGtW*. My conception of gender derives from and focuses on representations of leading female and male characters and the corresponding feminine/masculine gender roles ascribed to each of these categories. I pair the film’s gender characterizations—performed via fictional and (literally) scripted constructs with

understandings of gender scripts, performance of the feminine¹¹ and schooling, since the research project is concerned with how visual depictions of particular identities (blacks, women, U.S. citizens) are deployed in culturally specific ways as indicative of women's and men's historical contributions to U.S. society.

In other words, this chapter seeks to describe and hypothesize what readings of curricular representations of women (femininity) and to a lesser extent men (masculine identity/ies) are made viable and plausible using gender codes (roles and social constructs that rely on femaleness and maleness as essentialist categories possessing inherent characteristics) in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. In addition, I contemplate how such systems of meaning—systems organized around gender—work to reproduce or create conditions whereby students can (or are encouraged to, afforded opportunities to) perform their own gender identity work in relation to current cultural norms, as evident within the text. The absence of sustained, critical attention to gender, in terms of both female roles and women's work, provides the basis for this chapter's inquiry.

Performing Female: Theories of Gender and Feminine Identity

Gender and femininity are contested terms that have and continue to be mobilized in a number of asynchronous ways heavily interdependent upon the contexts in which they are formed and to what end. For instance, gender as an umbrella term houses concepts including (but not limited to) codes pertaining to masculinity/femininity, social gender roles, constructs of boyhood and girlhood, the male/female binary, and a variety

¹¹ For more on the performance of the feminine/gender as performance see: Walkerdine (1989, 1991, 1997); Butler (1990, 1999); Gonick (2001).

of other iterations that connote sexual signification. According to Judith Butler (1990) gender is performative in that:

acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body...such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. (*Gender Trouble*, p. 173)

Butler goes on to cite “ritual” as the daily routine of attiring oneself to appear male, female, androgynous, etc. Similarly, Walkerdine (1989) notes that femininity (the female subset of gender) is performed as a result of the complex interplay between social and psychic phenomena that require girls/women to ascribe to a mind/body split (i.e. Cartesian) whereby because of their physical reproductive capacity, they accept the role of ‘emotional’ and as a result ‘nurturing.’

Additionally, women have been historically constructed as objects of science—men being the scientists (read: active, rational, intelligent) whose pursuit of the ‘truth’ of the nature of existence reveals woman to be ‘other’ than himself or mutually opposed. Walkerdine (1989) also asserts that women’s embrace of pre-designated characteristics (like being emotional) is lived through masquerade (a performance to conceal...perhaps deceive?) which serves to effectively reduce sameness where difference is both required and desired as the necessary counterpoint that produces and stabilizes male identity. In other words, women uphold and perform gender ‘difference’ because it is necessary to mediate the interdependence of masculinity upon femininity and vice-versa. Such constructions are historically formed by and through patriarchal fantasies; the fantasies

hold material and political consequences for women in general, but most critically (in Walkerdine's work) for female students within classroom contexts where presuppositions of gendered virtues translate into performance indicators in subject areas (namely mathematics) and behavioral outcomes.

Combined, Butler (1990; 1999) and Walkerdine's (1989; 1991) hypotheses form layers of gender as external, "inscribed on the surface of the body," and as internal, "the psychic struggle," whose complex combination within patriarchal social structures and institutions (like schools) form the basis for particular subjectivities and identity locations that are multiple, partial, shifting, contradictory¹²...in other words, nefariously fraught. I would argue that female students viewing films in the classroom context are engaged in a number of performances (as is the case for any/all audience members regardless of sex/gender) and that those performances interface with female performance as enacted in the film in particular ways, beyond mere practices of supposed identification. In the *Story of Movies'* iteration of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, white femininity comes to represent all females, as there are no women of color represented visually. No black women are featured in the accompanying curriculum materials either.

Because neither the film nor the curriculum materials depict African-American women, I turn to intersectional thinking on race/gender identities to expose and deconstruct what Fordham (1993) acknowledges as the existence of a diverse womanhood among African-American women alongside a two-tier patriarchy to think through the ways in which the suppression of black women/ black femininity is framed and made highly visible by a focus on inauthentic, but highly present white feminine

¹² For more on partial, multiple locations see Donna Haraway, 1989.

dichotomies and white patriarchal hegemony. Here, I pause to mention that other women of color (indigenous, Latina, Asian) are absent from the text as well, though my focus is on African-American women based upon the partial inclusion of African-American men in the text, given the film's socio-historical specificity which is mostly contingent upon a black/white binary. Beyond noting the existence of such powerful, discursive constructs, I offer potential ways to agitate¹³, interrogate, and confront what I term the 'abandonment' of black female identity/ies. The confrontation includes the reclamation of a black female experience as one of resilience¹⁴—one that resists discursive condemnation by asserting itself as a site of recovery, agency, and creativity (Ransby, 2006). Building on gender disparity, this final section of the paper segues into the next chapter, which deals with race, specifically Afro-descended identity/ies, in explicit terms.

Methods and Interpretive Frames

Using a lens that is part feminist gender theory and partially based on research from gender and education, issues around female identity, particularly against the backdrop of white patriarchal hegemony, are traced. Education-based research on gender and schooling as well as gender and curriculum provides a way to classify and organize

¹³ In her article "Encouraging Agitation: Teaching Pre-Service Teachers to Confront Words That Wound" (2009) Staples uses personal narrative and classroom research to describe the importance of dealing with sexist, racist language that seeks to damage and further extend sanctions on already (historically) marginalized or oppressed peoples.

¹⁴ See Ransby's (2006) article "Hurricane Katrina and the Deadly Discourse Against Black Women" in which she not only rejects but disproves claims against black women's causality in the downfall of black communities and the black family structure; further Ransby exposes how this willful (not factual) condemnation of black women produces them as unworthy of resources, and shows how such a sentiment of abandonment is functionally exacerbated by crisis situations and natural disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina.

data beyond the initial recognition and identification of particular images made possible by and through a feminist film critique¹⁵, which was the starting point for the project. Feminist film critique is loosely defined in my work as a descriptive measure used to focus, explicitly, on how women's roles are enacted and portrayed via film production techniques, including but not limited to lighting, costume, acting, dialogue, composition, and camera angles. While such an analysis reveals the apparatuses that render women intelligible (and in some cases obscure) to audiences, such a perspective is also limited.

Strategically, I used this method to formulate general understandings of the main female characters and to designate them as a major/minor. Three female characters emerged under this distinction: "Ma Smith" (mother of the protagonist; minor character), Clarissa Saunders, known as "Saunders" throughout most of the film (the female lead; major character), and Susan Paine (daughter of Senator Paine; minor character). While I will briefly touch on Ma Smith's role, the remainder of the chapter devotes itself to inquiring into the functions of Clarissa Saunders and Susan Paine as historically entrenched cultural conveyances of femininity directed, consequentially, toward students. The curriculum materials will be referenced in support of and used to exemplify analysis outcomes.

To guide and advance my inquiry, I turn to paradigms of sex-fair and sex-affirmative curricula (Scott and Schau, 1985; Sadker & Sadker 1982, 1992, 1994; Shaffer and Shevitz, 2001.) Such paradigms provide the parameters by which strategic critique of gender in curriculum (and its potential impact on students) can be traced and understood. This is important because while I am focusing on the film *MSGtW*, the film's strategic

¹⁵ For more on feminist film theory see Thornham, (1999; 2007) and Mellencamp (1996).

recuperation as a cultural artifact within a contemporary curriculum, produces an interrelation akin to what Barthes (1977) termed a “third meaning.” Simply put, the ‘third-meaning’ here refers to the positioning of the film as a legitimate cultural artifact and text, and in conjunction with the products or representations and curriculum materials (often ideological in nature) that it transmits.

Focusing on gender in the film as a discursive feature that in many ways overlaps with issues of gender already present in schooling, I organize my analysis around concepts of gender equity and gender bias as defined within the educational literature. According to Sadker and Sadker (1982), six general forms of gender bias in instructional materials have been identified:

- Exclusion/invisibility
- Stereotyping
- Imbalance/Selectivity
- Unreality
- Fragmentation/Isolation
- Linguistic Bias

For the purposes of this chapter, I use this list of indicators as a starting point for organizing and initially interpreting the materials. I find the first five categories helpful in assessing gender depictions and their possible meanings via the characterizations of Clarissa Saunders and Susan Paine within the film, and as a means of understanding the dismissive tone used in the materials to shy away from *possible*, nuanced discussions of gender—then and now—in favor of a false rhetoric of women having made sufficient progress in the expansion of life choices and options. I would argue that the sixth item—linguistic bias is more difficult to isolate, as it seems to cut across each of the categories.

I focus on “Exclusion/Invisibility” and “Unreality,” as these items also emerge within the curriculum when shifting emphasis to matters of race (namely Afro-descended American identity/ies), which is the focal point of the next chapter, though an intersectional lens makes them present here as well. For discussions of gender in the instructional materials relating to and within the film *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, these two areas combined present a lens for understanding how such representations function to operationalize what Walkerdine (1989; 1991) and others (Butler, 1990; Gonick, 2001) refer to as complex manifestations of feminine performance of difference.

“Exclusion/Invisibility” speaks to the notion that some specific group is underrepresented or altogether absent in curriculum/instructional materials, while “Unreality” has to do with the concept that history and life experience are portrayed inaccurately, often to avoid controversial topics (Shaffer and Shevitz, 2001.) This chapter accounts for such instances pertaining to gender within the materials/film, and goes on to theorize new understandings of why the shaping of particular identities (by and through curricula) is vital to an understanding of the formation/production of students as post-9/11 citizens. Post-9/11 youth are urged to embrace diversity, while identifying with post-race and post-feminist ideals that posit race and gender as important to acknowledge, but ultimately to avoid, as the social inequalities and unpleasant histories with which they are associated are typically seen as “controversial topics.” This conceptual framework is combined with cultural, feminist theory in order to illuminate the ways in which gender (roles, identities, and performances) can be read across the film and curriculum materials toward narrowly defined, particular constructions of Americanness.

Femininity as a Load-Bearing Wall

As articulated in the previous section, undertaking the work of looking at women's roles across the film and the curriculum materials necessitated the use of several interrelated theoretical frameworks and disciplinary domains. Overall, bricolage is the primary conceptual framework authorizing the governing structure for the selection, development, and combination of such theoretical lenses as informed by intersectional approach. Close reading (Gallop, 1999) and categorization provided a means for identifying instances of "exclusion/invisibility" and "unreality." These instances, elaborated in the following sections, were used to guide further inquiry into concepts relating to gender (highlighting women's roles and feminine performance) and its possible formative use in establishing particular connections to nation-based citizen identity/ies.

Using relevant student activities and scenes from the film, I am able to offer examples of how girls/women are rendered in ways that continue to be fixed or stabilized in favor of practices that in ironic yet historical fashion, routinely dismiss them while simultaneously demanding and relying upon their participatory subjugation¹⁶ as required to provide support mechanisms for masculine roles and identities. I not only reference, but offer possible explanations of how women/women's roles and feminine performance are deployed via cultural, feminist theoretical work informed by Valerie Walkerdine (1989), Signithia Fordham (1993), and others, hence registering a form (albeit limited in scope) of intersectionality.

¹⁶ For more on women's supporting roles in nation-building and female identity/ies, categories, and culture see Chris Weedon (1999); Denise Riley (2003); Carol Patemen (1988).

With “exclusion/invisibility” and “unreality” as a starting point, the pairing of coded data from both the film and the accompanying materials revealed that gender codes function throughout to ignore girls—mostly by emphasizing boys and men, and to effectively justify this ignorance (a term that addresses all three descriptors: exclusion, invisibility, and unreality, which form a marginalizing and oppressive regime against women) by naming it ‘historical accuracy’ (a predicted outcome or strategy under the rubric of unreality, as noted previously on p. 8.) Similar mechanisms resurface in discussions of race, and the deployment of Afro-descendants (see Chapter 4). Subsequently, the exclusion of girls on the whole works only to highlight the maintenance of their marginal, traditional presence when they *do* appear—Clarissa Saunders and Susan Paine are explored later in the chapter to this end. I show how both then (when the film was made—1939) and now (when the *SoM* curriculum was created) women’s roles are availed to construct the vast majority of women as essentially nurturing and supportive caregivers of men.

I will show that alongside the conventional representations of girls/women, is the privileging of the brand of American boyhood that flourishes not only by virtue of internalized (female) acceptance of women’s marginalization, but also through subscribing to the politics of U.S. democracy made possible by female labor and subordination. Such a view of women’s worth/women’s labor can possibly be viewed as the consequential effects of the ‘cause,’ which is, according to Walkerdine (1989):

The historical antecedent of the position that females do not possess a capacity for reason...that the rational self was [ibid] a profoundly masculine one from which the woman was excluded, her powers being not only inferior but also subservient.

The “thinking” subject was male; the female provided both the biological prop to procreation and to servicing the possibility of “man.” (p. 269)

In other words, the curriculum not only disadvantages girls, but boys too—in setting impossible standards for carrying the burden of the greatness of the nation on their shoulders as a legacy of masculinity (spawned by patriarchal agendas) to which they must aspire to uphold. The notion of leadership, depicted mostly as a male enterprise throughout the film and materials, is not negative per se, but the construction of leadership as the monolithic legacy of patriarchy is. Placing males at the helm in terms of government and American virtues/ideals is central to an understanding of gender in *Story of Movies*. And such “ideas about reason and reasoning,” which I argue here give rise to the enterprise of leadership—the ‘who’ and the ‘why’ of it—“cannot be understood historically outside of considerations about gender.”¹⁷

One such ideal is the concept of American-identified democracy. To expand upon the ways in which democracy is envisaged in both the film and materials, one must note and explore the linkages that exist between World War II (which I will show as emphasized by the curriculum) and the post-9/11 context in which the student-audience members inevitably encounter the curriculum products, resulting in a paradigm for the “patriotic citizen” who is inevitably male, though he requires female support.¹⁸

Walkerdine (1989) expounds upon this concept at length in relation to the role and performance of the female teacher, noting that “it is still up to women to prove

¹⁷ See Walkerdine (1989) p. 269.

¹⁸ Chapter 5 of this dissertation provides a sustained inquiry into American citizenship and patriotic identity in relation to a black/white binary and femininity and women’s roles.

themselves equal to men” and that women’s “‘capacity for hard work’ makes them excellent material for the support of a ‘brilliant academic male’” (p. 270).

While broadly, discourses of “exclusion/invisibility” are present, it is less than helpful (or hopeful) to note that women are merely underrepresented. It became incumbent upon me to turn attention toward the possible meaning/s and effects of the absences and of the limiting portrayals. Therefore, I scrutinized the women who do appear and who are represented, namely Clarissa Saunders and Susan Paine, for what and how their presence performs— on behalf of gender and femininity—across and within the materials. For example, in some cases more women have been found to appear in curriculum materials or are more heavily featured, but the quality of content is lacking in how they are depicted in terms of character, presence, action, and behavior; hence stereotypical images (of boys and girls or males/females) are still reinforced (Chapman, 1997). To analyze the larger implications for gender in relation to social relations and citizenship (identity) formation, cultural and feminist theories, as delineated throughout this chapter, are useful.

The absence of women in the original source materials/texts/artifacts and the absence of women from the curriculum materials could signify a value judgment on how gender aligns with privileged (or more valued) configurations of American citizen identity. It seems one thing to acknowledge that women were perceived differently at the time that the film was made and therefore are represented in particular ways; however, to create materials in present time, by this very same antiquated logic, is something altogether different. Having laid some foundational groundwork for the type of Americanness that the curriculum promotes, it now becomes important to turn our

attention toward *how* gender roles and codes govern or are deployed within the construction of this category.

Gender Codes and Roles: Boys to Men at Women's Expense

The curriculum materials pay very little attention to the women's roles in the film, including only a handful of activities, directives, and prompts all aimed at "historical accuracy" of women's roles as represented by and in the film. However, the film *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* relies on the use of female characters foremost, to sustain the plot. The film features several women in minor roles—"Ma Smith," Jefferson Smith's mother, and the Governor's wife—who are seen briefly and only a few times throughout the entire movie. The female lead in the film, Clarissa Saunders (played by Jean Arthur) is featured heavily throughout, as confirmed by her top billing in the film's closing credits. The foil to "Saunders" is Susan Paine, the daughter of the corrupt Senator Paine.

A sub-plot of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* centers on Jefferson Smith's platonic connections to Clarissa Saunders and romantic connections to Susan Paine, though ultimately, Saunders fall in 'romantic' love with Smith. The reciprocity of her affections by Smith, however, remains open to interpretation. One may conclude based on social class and the markers of cultural capital and self-identification with which class is associated, that Clarissa Saunders, who represents a particular urban, career-woman mode of femininity was not, in the traditional sense, feminine and wholesome enough for Jefferson Smith. Ultimately, Clarissa Saunders is aligned with an upward mobility narrative (Lawler, 1999) in which she is attempting to leave behind her past by "getting out and getting away" (p.19) to be an independent working woman in Washington, D.C. Consequently the virtues of her newfound status (career-woman) come at the expense of

leaving behind a certain traditional form of femininity and being read as masculine, which in turn renders her an inappropriate romantic match for the rural, homespun Jeff.

Because early in the film Smith is established as being ‘green’ (naïve) or boyish, in terms of his life experience (the determining factor for his selection and appointment to the Senate, whose key leaders seek exploit his innocence for personal gain), a central theme in both plot and character development is Smith’s youthful idealism versus the political reality of experienced manhood. His movement from lofty dreamer to Senator is, of course, facilitated by and through women: his mother is at his side, *supporting* him, when he is welcomed into the Senate (scene 4, “Star-spangled banquet”) and she is overseeing and managing the publication of the *Boy Stuff* magazine in his absence (scene 26, “Tell Jeff to stop”), during Taylor’s major press smear campaign against him. In what Walkerdine (1989) terms, “woman’s fitness for the facilitation of knowing and the reproduction of the knower...” (p. 270), Saunders serves as his guide, teacher (literally, yet informally), and coach: helping him navigate the Senate rules, policies, and procedures leading to his pivotal filibuster (scene 24) on the Senate floor, the film’s closing wherein he passionately clears and restores his good name. Susan Paine, a distraction for Smith in ‘Samson and Delilah’-esque motif, provides Smith with lessons in the art of female persuasion, simultaneously exposing his boyishness and initiating him into manhood. This scenario between Susan and Jeff relies heavily on readings of the cultural signification of class status rendered tangible through the women’s performances via their actions, behaviors (Lawler, 1999; Walkerdine, 2003), and character constructions. Susan represents Washington D.C.’s elite upperclass, while Jeff is a ‘country boy’ of sorts, and unfamiliar with Susan’s brand of sophisticated femininity and

female sexuality. Just as Clarissa Saunders is romantically incompatible with Jeff, so too is Susan Paine. Susan's feminine wiles render him incompetent, and while Saunders restores his competency, she takes on more the role of a big sister rather than a love interest.

In three different occasions, Smith is depicted as a bumbling idiot as a result of interactions with Susan. Through body language and expression, it is made clear that Smith is enchanted with Susan from the time they first meet at the train station (scene 5), literally moments after Smith's arrival for the first time in Washington. When asked by local press reporters about what he thinks of Susan, Smith replies that she is "a great girl" and "the prettiest girl he's ever seen" (scene 8, "press conference"). In the scenes (subsequent to their initial meeting) Smith is charmed and made useless or inadequate by Susan, furthering his depiction as awkward and boyish, not only in the political arena but in the interpersonal, male/female relationship realm as well.

During a meeting with Senator Paine, Susan enters the room and almost instantly Smith begins to stumble over his words and knocks over a lamp. At the end of scene 14 ("New bills and resolutions"), Susan Paine calls Smith at the office and he can barely speak, manages to tangle himself up in the telephone cord, and continuously drops his hat. Observing the effect she (Susan) has on Smith, we see Senator Paine exploit his daughter (her sexuality, in particular) to advance the graft scheme he has going with Joe Taylor, with which Smith has unwittingly interfered. Paine strategically has his daughter invite Smith on a date in order to guarantee Smith's absence at a special session of the Senate, during which time a vote will be taken regarding the acquisition of land (Willet

Creek) under the auspices of creating a dam to bring jobs and additional resources to citizens—the same land that Smith has earmarked for his boy’s camp.

Notably, the conflict of interest over the land’s possession and use (Smith’s proposal versus Paine’s proposal) is a minor issue. The primary concern over Smith’s presence and vote revolves around his previously stated objection and refusal to go along with the underlying motives (graft- personal gain) of the Willet Creek Dam proponents, specifically, Paine and Joe Taylor, as well as the few other corrupt Senators and businessmen involved. Susan, working on her father’s behalf, deceives Smith into believing that she genuinely wants to spend time with him, and she deploys her sexual power (feminine wiles) to invite him out. He is eager to accept her invitation.

Throughout the film, Susan is a pasteboard character (Peterson and Eeds, 1990/2007), without personality of her own. For Smith, she is an unknowable object of adoration, while for her father, she simply represents feminine guile. In other words, Susan functions as a plot device/contrivance more so than as a character. Used as an object lesson about a certain kind of dangerous woman, a coquette-ish, socialite vamp, her father’s act of using her to bait Smith is rendered unproblematic. Susan is shown to rather enjoy her power over Smith, whom she mocks as “Honest Abe” when her father (in reference to Smith) comments, “it seems you’ve made another conquest.” Here it seems useful to pay attention to the language used by Senator Paine: “another conquest.” This one-line utterance provides viewers with two notions about Susan: 1) that she entices *many* men, and 2) that her power resides within her *ability* to entice/captivate men or suitors. While I won’t belabor the point that sexual/seductive power over men is not necessarily a “good” or a “bad” thing, I would point out that in the context of the film, it

is highly normalized and depicted as a valuable but untrustworthy quality—a “quality” that is consequential and profitable to corrupt men and dangerous to honest men.

Of course stakeholders (other than gender and men’s/women’s roles) are at play in these power-relations. Some theorizations of the materiality of social class can be helpful in understanding character tropes in this film and in other works by Capra. According to Lawler (1999) “class is embedded in people’s history and cannot be so easily escaped” (p. 3). Narrative depictions and character juxtaposition in *MSGtW* attest to this. Susan Paine and Clarissa Saunders are both metropolitan women, but it is clear through language and clothing that Susan is privileged. She is shown not to have any occupation, but to be a woman of leisure instead. Whereas Saunders, on the other hand, is a working woman, surrounded by men with whom she shares collegial relations that mark her as “one of the guys.” Here class-based femininities establish Susan as sexually desirable and Clarissa as masculine or tough, and ultimately able to hold her own in the circle of men. Smith is marked by a rural, middle-class sensibility that allows him to be seen as too ‘virtuous’ for both Susan and Clarissa.

Nonetheless, both Clarissa Saunders and Susan Paine are presented as ‘possible’ matches for Smith. As mentioned previously, Senator Paine uses Susan to distract Smith. While the movie depicts Susan as unharmed by her father’s use, and as a willing party to the fleecing of Smith, I contend that her representation is at best questionable because it is one of only two sustained depictions of women throughout the entire film—the other being the diametrically opposed, working-class Clarissa Saunders who, figuratively

speaking, passes as male¹⁹ in order to assimilate within the male-dominated politics and press in Washington...at least in the first part of the movie.

Just One of the Guys?: Clarissa (Saunders) Explains it All

Turning attention to Clarissa Saunders requires us to keep in mind that she is the lead female character in the film. Saunders' role is intimately tied to that of Susan Paine's through a version of the "madonna/whore" binary: the asexual maternal, nurturing woman (Clarissa) versus the primal, sexual woman (Susan). Clarissa Saunders is visually as attractive as Susan Paine, but class difference (as highlighted by her career, and through dialogue costuming) produces her as less desirable and less glamorous. While "Saunders" is developed in a more round and dynamic way than is Susan, ultimately, both of these women play alternating roles as both tools and exchangeable commodities for men and as competitors/rivals.

Unlike Susan Paine, Saunders is referred to by her last name only—typically a gesture associated with hailing or referring to men. Jaded and working-class Clarissa Saunders is a secretary and assistant to Senator Paine. She is also intimately familiar with inner-workings of Washington D.C.'s political machine and the Washington D.C. Press Corps, as demonstrated through dialogue with Senator Paine and Diz Moore, a press reporter. Saunders describes her need to work and to earn a living. We find out via a conversation between Saunders and Smith (scene 13) that she left home at a young age

¹⁹ See Fordham's 1993 article, "Those Loud Black Girls" regarding symbolic, quality-based, gender passing. Fordham develops the concept of women 'passing as men' in the academy. She asserts that women select and perform personality and behavioral traits associated with dominant masculinity/ies in order to survive within the patriarchal structures of institutions such as the academy. This "gender passing" is not merely an unspoken demand, but a requirement. This paradigm is useful for understanding the positioning of Saunders early in the film.

and has been on her own supporting herself for a number of years. Saunders is shown in scenes 11 and 14 having drinks with Diz Moore and other members of the press. In these scenes she is the only woman within a group of men, hence she becomes one of the guys, an indicator of gender passing.

The film establishes Saunders' independence through scene six ("Saunders"), and scene 11 ("Washington Press Corp") in which she refuses half-hearted marriage proposals from Diz. Again (scene 9, "Saunders and Paine") we see her independence in her initial reluctance to help (i.e., nurture) Smith, though Paine directs her to do so. Paine's attempt to use Saunders mirrors his use of his own daughter (Susan) in that Smith must be monitored and kept occupied as a means of distracting him from the corrupt political moves being made by Paine with the help of mogul Joe Taylor. Unlike Susan, Saunders does not gleefully obey Paine's decree. Instead, she acts on her own behalf, alluding to the fact that she knows what is afoot, and that Smith has been brought in as "a dope" (scene 6, "Saunders") in order for Paine and others to profit by way of political chicanery. Paine congratulates her on her assertion, and guarantees that if she plays her part regarding Smith, (scene 9, "Paine and Saunders") she too will benefit from the Willet Creek Dam scheme. In this exchange, Saunders 'passes' for male again, only agreeing to comply with the scheme on her own terms, for her own personal and financial gain.

In juxtaposing characters for scene-based power relations, analysis centers the idea that while Saunders agrees to keep an eye on Smith, her street-wise nature clashes with his "Daniel Boone" patriotic idealism. Herein again, the class differentials are made visible via regional effects: Smith possesses a rural (i.e. "Daniel Boone") idealism based on his lack of experience in the city—typically associated with a busier pace of life, street

savvy, and intelligence; Saunders has been living in the city for quite some time; she marks her own transition from innocence in direct proportion to class, location, and upward mobility, stating that when she came to the city her “eyes were big blue question marks but now they’re big green dollar marks.” The contrast between rural attitudes and urban sensibilities is apparent here, and these class (status) interplays can be connected back to other (famous) Capra characters, since class figures heavily as a significant trope in most of his films. Unable to fathom Smith’s innocent boyishness, Saunders mocks him; in one scene when Smith goes missing in the nation’s capitol, she tells an assistant to “try catching him with a butterfly net” (scene 7, “Daniel Boone arrives”).

While her initial impression of the naïve Smith is one of frustration and annoyance, she eventually succumbs to his ‘innocent’ charm. She goes from considering him a phony, to a simpleton, to a true patriot, to a son, to a potential romantic interest. Saunders comes to represent what Walkerdine (1989) calls “splitting.” This means that on one hand, Saunders ‘gender passes’ as one of the guys—cynical, corrupt, and independent; on the other hand, she finds herself acquiescing to what the film (and often society, more broadly) would have us believe is her ‘true self,’ one that is feminine, exercising her internal (natural) desire to connect emotionally to a man romantically, and to begin to voluntarily labor on his behalf. Ironically the splitting followed by the shifting of the Clarissa Saunders character is brought about during the time that she and Smith are working on his proposal for a boy’s citizenship camp. During this scene (scene 13, “National Boy’s Camp”) it randomly occurs to Smith to ask Saunders what her first name is. When he repeats it back to her aloud, “Clarissa,” it marks a turning point in the film: she goes from male, “Saunders” to becoming female, “Clarissa.”

Further evidence of the essentializing unreality of women's portrayal in the film is the notion that the time Clarissa Saunders spends intellectually laboring to help Smith complete his proposal and educating him on political processes (i.e. how a bill becomes a law, etc.) are the source of her growing affection for him. In other words, Saunders' work (intellectual labor, in this case) on behalf of Smith speaks to her capability with regard to knowledge production, a male characteristic, and also positions her as one of the guys. Because she is after all a woman and not one of the guys, this work must inevitably lead her back to her own forgotten femininity; thus she becomes emotional and vulnerable, committed to supporting Smith.

Aside from the inherent unreality of this characterization in itself, these shifts in the cinematic development of Clarissa Saunders can be read in two important ways: 1) they work to visually articulate the "impossibly contradictory positions" (Walkerdine, 1989, p. 278) socially accorded women and girls, and 2) they demonstrate the "fantasy of femininity" upon which the material consequences of gender difference are produced. That is to say that women's roles under the rubric of femininity are enacted thusly in order to uphold the fragile construct of masculinity (Kimmel, 2001; MacAnGhaill, 1998; Jensen, 2006). The movement of Clarissa Saunders from 'guy' to 'woman' happens in tandem with and in support of Jefferson Smith's mobility from boy to man, from "green" to competent. Though Ma Smith and Susan Paine are integral to Smith's journey toward manhood, his final developmental stage (maturation) is made possible only under the careful guidance of Clarissa, who buys into Smith's foolish idealism by helping him to draft and propose his own bill for a national boy's camp. Furthermore, she restores his

faith in liberty, during scene 21 (“The Lincoln Memorial”) when she finds him—morally defeated—sitting on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in tears.

In fact, not only does Saunders help Smith write his bill proposal, she actually takes him step-by step through the process of how a bill gets passed. In Screening Sheet 2-3 and Reading Activity 2-5 of the *SoM* curriculum materials, the scene in which she does this (in the film and in the script) is highlighted. This activity shows Saunders to be competent, light-years more informed on the political process than Smith, and highly intelligent—she uses words such as “vivisection” and “stymied.” However, the materials ask students to focus on the process (how a bill gets passed) and not on the gendered dimension of power relations as part of the interplay between Saunders and Smith.

When the curriculum does attempt to account for aspects of Saunders’ depiction in the film, it comes by way of ‘gender’ stereotyping. One example of this can be seen in Screening Sheet 3-1: *Communicating Without Words* which features a close-up shot (taken from scene 27, “23 hours, 16 minutes”) of Clarissa Saunders’ face looking down at Smith on the Senate floor; her expression is one of tearful desperation. While there is nothing inherently wrong with showing a soft/emotional side to the quick-witted, Washington-savvy Saunders, given the lack of other activities focusing on female representation within the film, this activity works to undermine/undercut the strength, smarts, and competence displayed by the self-supporting, marriage-resistant, Saunders throughout the majority of the film. The curriculum materials do assert that:

the character of Clarissa Saunders is both independent and intelligent...the driving force who teaches Smith everything he needs to know....And that sends a powerful message, at least to some women in the audience. Films allow audiences

not only to recognize life the way it is but also to imagine the way life could be.

(Teacher's Guide, L. 2, p.118)

This statement is a bit misleading. It does well to point out the potential for female empowerment through audience identification with Saunders; however, it dismisses the other ways in which the film portrays women's roles—thereby effectively reducing Saunders (in the end) to mother/lover of Smith. In some way it attempts to imply that women of that time could look to Saunders as role model of sorts (for her independence and intelligence) while at the same time failing to address the unfairness of Smith profiting from and receiving credit for Saunders' knowledge, creativity, and network of press connections. Furthermore, in another activity (Activity 4.1), the materials highlight Saunders' fashion and earning potential as secretary to Senator Paine. I argue that ultimately such details within the curriculum materials, when combined with Saunders' emotional behavior toward Smith in the latter part of the film, diminish Saunders' capacity to act as model for female empowerment, additionally foreclosing opportunities for feminist readings of gender (and its constructs—masculinity/femininity, male/female, men's roles/women's roles, etc.) in the film as a whole.

Overall, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* is not a beacon of hope for female empowerment. It situates women/female roles as secondary and always subordinate to men's. While the film's original context is important to note in critiquing it, it becomes even clearer that careful consideration of these roles in the *SoM* curriculum materials is incumbent upon the curriculum's producers. This is a responsibility that they have, either through ignorance or deliberate intent, failed to address.

Desperately Seeking Sistas: Gender, Race and Post-9/11

Building on previous arguments in this chapter, I now turn my attention to addressing the contemporary context in which the curriculum is studied. In thinking through current conceptions of feminine roles, I focus on reading the post-9/11 cultural positioning of women juxtaposed with what I term the abandonment of black (Afro-descendant) women within the film and curriculum materials. This intersectional reading provides insight into the growing complexity of feminine performance in an effort to answer, theoretically, Walkerdine's call (1989) for pedagogic strategies that enter into "dangerous and threatening territory" in order to account for "fiction, fantasy, and contradiction" (p.277) and their complicated coexistence within the *Story of Movies* curriculum. While I have elsewhere in this chapter deconstructed the female characters in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* in terms of the world of the film, and, broadly as products in the classroom, I now re-contextualize their operative nature through a feminist cultural lens.

According to feminist researcher and popular journalist Susan Faludi (2007) post-9/11 cultural responses suggested in myriad ways that women should return to the home, making motherhood their number one priority. Here we are able to note that feminine performance has particular contours and variations that adjust in response to crisis, a point I shall return to shortly in relation to black female identity performance. Faludi goes on to attribute the retroactive shift for women out of the workforce and back into the home as symbolic of the general, national sentiment that women are again needed to sideline their own progress on behalf of the greater good: producing and rearing citizens, while men participate in war to protect the nation that women are so diligently tending.

At the same time that women are being asked to retreat to the private sphere, they are also being asked to account for the (supposed) damage feminism has caused to the fabric of our society and to assume a stance of defenselessness in order to help restore what Anahita and Mix (2006) call retrograde frontier masculinity. This particular brand of masculinity has to do with women allowing men to be powerful and active in using violent means to control and restore ‘wild’ environments. Instead of pursuing peaceful and sovereign modes of thought and (re)action, women are to ‘man up’ alongside their men by vocalizing their support of the ensuing war, as a matter of national security.

It seems plausible to assume that Faludi’s (2007) findings are directed toward white women. In the immediate wake of 9/11, the media began to signal that a return to traditional conceptualizations of womanhood (raising children, being in the home, politically silent in deference to men) was ‘newly’ required. This was a reversal of trends in the 80’s and 90’s, a period that saw an increase in ‘neo-liberal, power feminist’ types climbing the corporate ladder. Such mandates also fly in the face of a black feminist standpoint of “talking back” to power and authority that we continually institute our marginalization (see hooks, 1984; Fordham, 1993; Collins, 1998). Did the events of September 11th interlock with post-feminist backlash in ways that provided opportunities for women to be reigned in, regulated, and recast in supporting roles? If gender roles are held in play by a relation of the masculine to the feminine and vice-versa, then the answer is ‘yes.’ Retrofit frontier masculinity requires the silent caregiving woman, and both roles are contingent upon each other and are deeply impacted by national events, intersected by ongoing debates about race and the politics of crises (i.e. war, natural disaster, etc.).

If we couch *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and the *SoM* curriculum materials in this post-9/11 paradigm, not only do we see the complex reiteration of gender roles in the film (women as support systems and enablers for men) made newly relevant by national crisis and global issues, but in both cases—the film’s original (historical) context and the curriculum’s present tense—but we also see black women’s roles and identities as forever bound to legacies of abandonment. I use the term “abandonment” to move beyond erasure, exclusion/invisibility, and unreality. While such descriptors are all viable (as made evident in various parts of this chapter) I purposefully apply the term “abandonment” now, to invoke a profound sense of presence. One not only possesses awareness of this (black feminine) presence, but that this presence is left and never returned to or reclaimed. Its blunt existence haunts the abandoner, whose fear compels him/her to perpetually re/enact the abandonment (Cheng, 2001.)

Because black female identity is abandoned within the *Story of Movies’ Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* curriculum, the only way to recover it is by situating white feminine performance as a foil to black feminine performance.²⁰ Since the black community functions by more differentiated family models than do many dominant models of the white family in American culture, it becomes problematic to subsume race under the rubric of gender when discussing black women, but the *SoM* curriculum materials do just that. In fact, women and minorities, then and now, are lumped together in one graphic organizer, effectively collapsing race and gender into one category.

My feminist intersectional analysis of Graphic Organizer 4:1 helps to reveal how particular perspectives of race and gender are briefly noted and easily dismissed. This

²⁰ See Fordham, 1993.

activity features two female graphics (clip-art silhouettes, actually) labeling the more conservative/conventional graphic as representative of the film's 1939 audience; the other model (indicative of "now") has a short, trendy haircut, her hand on her hip, and wears pants. Already the binary is established as if these two women can/do not co-exist in either the space of the past or the present. This seems a senseless oversimplification of women to begin with.

The questions students are asked to engage with on the sheet are oversimplified as well. The same question (with subtle variation) is asked several times; essentially: "why are women and minorities excluded from government-related positions?" I would contend that this question has little value in accordance with taxonomical measurement. In other words, students most likely understand that the film was made before the Civil Rights Movement and that the film somewhat 'accurately reflects' the lack of formal participation by girls, women, and minorities in the U.S. governmental sector. What is troubling about this acknowledgment is the lack of strategic, follow-up questions, which might provide a platform for meaningful discussion around the Civil Rights and Women's Rights movements. In addition, the role of women and minorities in the government today is not prompted for discussion. Could this lack on the part of the curriculum again be due to its engagement with "unreality" as a strategic means of "avoiding controversial topics"? Here lies yet another missed opportunity to discuss important black, female leaders such as Fannie Lou Hamer and Shirley Chisholm.

Ultimately, black women in the *SoM* curriculum for *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* are excluded/invisible to a greater extent than white women, so much so that the question of 'unreality' regarding their depiction/s cannot even be examined. On the

one hand the stereotypical imagery meant as the black female referent (the mammy figure, the house servant, the hypersexual performer, the tragic mulatto, the welfare queen, etc.) are not displayed. At the same time, positive or empowering images, such as Ransby (2006) details in her article on black female survivors of Hurricane Katrina who define black feminine identity as “strong, creative and resilient” are also disallowed.

One Last Look: Working for the Man or Not at All...

In turning to curriculum materials for further information on the deployment of female gender roles, I noted seven student activities that focus on World War II, including combat, propaganda, the Axis nations and the Allies, and maps. Each of these activities (some of which are explored at length in Chapter 5) focus on male participation in government and military positions. Not one activity or visual refers to women (white or black). One cannot help but notice the conspicuous absence of WWII icon, Rosie the Riveter. This moniker of women and the labor movement and women in the workforce is simply omitted. Perhaps an image of Rosie is too counterintuitive to the promotion of the opt-out mom? However, both working and opting out are increasingly sidelined in the current economic crisis facing the U.S. The economic meltdown of the U.S. economy, according to the March 21, 2010 broadcast of Dateline NBC, is disproportionately affecting women, who are being forced out and kept out of employment. Ninety percent of new jobs created are going to men.

One of the reasons for women’s reduced opportunities for employment has specifically to do with what Walkerdine (1989) refers to as the material consequences of the truth-effects that the fantasy of femininity (and gender roles, by and large) has over the lives of girls and women. In other words, according to the Dateline reporter Diane

Sawyer, the explanation for denying women employment often harkened back to ‘the male as family breadwinner’ archetype. The anchorwoman then revealed family data indicating that over 40% of households in the U.S. are female-headed, a reality that undermines the fantasy of the male breadwinner, but that is nonetheless insufficiently powerful to overturn it.

Ultimately, female presence in the U.S. workforce over time has been and continues to be plagued by gender issues: sexual harassment, gender passing, the glass ceiling, lower pay for equal work, etc. In spite of affirmative action-based gains, tasks and jobs associated with women’s work still remain largely ideologically bound to the private sphere. Many studies have suggested²¹ that it is women who embody the nation- in terms of symbolic representation and transmission of cultural traditions, mainly in the home through routine domestic labor such as caring for children or preparing meals, but also in terms of ornament, for example by the ways women are represented in artistic renderings and fashion. Faludi (2007) notes and explores many incidents directly following the attacks on September 11th in which President Bush and other military and government and the U.S. itself were characterized through the use of female pronouns, which helped to construct popular discourses of the need for male protection.

²¹ Uma Narayan’s *Dislocating Cultures* (1994) pays attention to women as (trans)national culture/commodity through food and attire; Martha Nussbaum’s 1999 book, *Sex & Social Justice* documents women’s behavior practices (globally) using a human rights framework; Chris Weedon’s *Feminism, Theory and the Politics of Difference* (1999) examines the connections women have to their nation from historical, religious, and social perspectives; and Chandra Mohanty’s 2003 text, *Feminism Without Borders* closely deconstructs and re-examines relationships between “Third-World women” and their cultural identities and white women’s (i.e. “First-world”) feminism.

This relation of women as bearers of the nation works to bolster Walkerdine's (1989) engagement with the production of (male-dominated) scientific constructed against and through the characterization of 'the true nature of woman,' as nurturer. Women are understood as "reproductive" and men as "productive." Both perspectives locate women's power in acts that constitute mainly domestic and often unseen/invisible labor or work in support of men, so is it any wonder that when we speak about the location of the true female self, especially when we try to recover blackness in relation to this true female self, that "there is no there there"²² (Lorde, 1983)? And, if we cannot settle on forms of authenticity within our own psychic understandings and social encounters, then is it so far-fetched that visual representations (media-based, artistic, etc) would, in their imitation of life, only recreate the same such fiction—the "fantasy of femininity"? While I do not fault *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*'s inability to reconcile the aforementioned problems of gender and female roles/feminine performance, I do take issue with the *SoM* creators' denial of masculine/feminine identity work, which could have been taken up in various ways within the curriculum materials.

"Boy Stuff": Willet Creek Camp as Another Location of Gender Inequality

The shots depicting Jeff (Jefferson) Smith's Boy Rangers in his hometown (scene 25, "Democracy in Action") defending him via their/his private (small) press are also telling, in terms of gender. While there is token racial inclusion in this montage, no girls are shown. The obvious reason behind this stems from the fact that Smith leads an all-boy group. Visually, the only female pictured interacting with the boys is Ma Smith (Jeff's mother) who is shown in maternal fashion, caring for and supervising the boys as they

²² Audre Lorde coined this phrase in her 1983 work *Sister Outsider*.

work tirelessly to print and distribute their publication of *Boy Stuff* in record time. Ma Smith is no way directly involved with the printing of *Boy Stuff*; she simply nurtures the boys while they do the work.

This particular segment also supports a reading of rugged or frontier masculinity (Anahita & Mix, 2006; Miller, 2004) and rogue or renegade boyhood encouraged in the spirit of taking matters into your own hands (breaking established rules) for a cause. In this case the boys do publish the ‘true’ version of the filibuster as it unfolds in Washington, hoping to counter the Taylor-controlled press versions. This raises an interesting question about gender and the press: why not include curriculum materials that touch on this long-standing issue? There is one sort of “throw-away” mention of “the lone female reporter” who questions Smith, “no doubt, her news assignment being the ladies’ social pages” (Teacher’s Guide p.107). Comparatively, there are 4 activities that deal specifically with the press; none of them discuss women’s roles in news media and/or press within the context of the film, the original time period during which the film was released, or within a contemporary framework. While I can’t argue that this issue should hold primacy within the materials, it does stand to reason that since press, media roles, and social functions are examined, gender and race are at least worth a mention in this discussion.

We can, however, find mention of race within the language of Smith’s proposed bill (presumably co-authored by Clarissa Saunders) for the establishment of a boy’s citizenship camp to be held in the nation’s capital in scene 13, “National Boy’s Camp.” The unification of citizen subjects is the main goal of the camp, whose creation will make it possible for “boys of all colors, creeds, neighborhoods, religions” to come together to

learn what “a man must do for his country.” According to this film, women are only involved in reproducing supportive environments, while men actually do the work of actively producing the nation. Smith’s proposal for a ‘boy’s citizenship camp’ only works to further distance women from participating as leaders of the nation. The implication here would seem that an invitation to “all boys” supersedes issues of race/racial identity. However, the next chapter will look more deeply into constructions of race, focusing on Afro-descendant identity/ies conveyed throughout the film and materials, proving that ultimately Smith’s call is more of a rhetorical strategy than a reality.

Issues of gender inequality (and racial inequality, as the next chapter will show) are glossed over by the *SoM* producers. Willet Creek Camp for Boys serves as the ideological repository for a privileging of boyhood that works to reinforce male privilege. Consider this short speech Smith gives to Saunders when enlisting her help in the writing of the Camp proposal:

You see, **boys** forget what their country means by just reading *The Land of the Free* in history books. When they get to be **men** they forget even more. Liberty's too precious a thing to be buried in books, Miss Saunders. **Men** should hold it up in front of them every single day of their lives and say: I'm free to think and to speak. **Boys** ought to grow up remembering that. (Scene 13, emphasis mine)

I have used bold lettering to indicate the gendered language (i.e. references to men/boys) that punctuates the lack of attention to women/girls and their (invisible, perhaps unimagined?) entitlement to the conjuring of such “liberty.” There are two other points worth noting: 1) the male privilege that assumes a natural relationship between principles of liberty and freedom and maleness, and 2) the active and therefore masculine

(Walkerdine, 1989; Martin, 1991) language of liberty—not a “thing to be buried in books,” but something, a manly virtue, that should be actively engaged with in the wilderness, which Smith proposes as the location for his Boys Camp.

The language used by Smith is just one of many examples of the ways in which gender inequity is simply overlooked and therefore ‘normalized’ within the film; the curriculum affirms and supports this normalization. The implication of (white) men being ‘in charge’ of the country, is still operative now, grounded in the events of 9/11 and the subsequent military action taken in response to those events. These linkages—patriarchal, hegemonic masculinity, war culture: then and now—are not explored within the curriculum either.

Conclusion

Ultimately what is at stake regarding cultural representations of gender in this film and its instructional materials, are the affordances made possible by offering alternative views and perspectives on the cultural legacies whose circuitry is deeply embedded in the institutions that govern our lived experiences and identification processes. The importance of American ideology—which is heavily reliant on particular discourses of gender, race, and nation—then and now, is what sustains the popularity and recycling (mostly by AFI and the Film Foundation) of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*.

It also involves the re-silencing and branding of women who dare to speak words of dissent, especially in public spaces. One such example is chronicled in the 2007 documentary, *Dixie Chicks: Shut Up and Sing!* This film documents the comment by the popular trio’s lead singer, in the wake of September 11th. While on-stage, performing abroad, Natalie Maines made the comment that she was “ashamed” to be from the state of

Texas because George W. Bush (the nation's president who had just was authorized war with Iraq) was from there. Her statement was greeted with resounding applause.

However upon the groups return to the U.S., they were lambasted for speaking against the U.S. in a foreign country during a time of war. How dare they not support the war effort? How could they question the leadership of this great nation?

The Dixie Chicks received death threats, radio stations stopped playing their music, former fans burned their albums, tapes, and CDs, they were called "Dixie Sluts," and their album sales declined. This cultural artifact is important to note as a counter-narrative to the story of women's rights and progress as indicated by the *Story of Movies* curriculum. If the utterance of famous and well-regarded white women can incite such a vitriolic response, what does this imply for the speech for the black female? Is it equally treasonous...even more so? In this instance we are able to see how the relationship between personal freedom and individual expression are mediated by political forces and powerful discourses of nation that opportunistically assert themselves across race and gender lines, but that also make possible the overwriting of civil liberties with legislation like the Patriot Act.²³

While both men and women are barred from speaking against the nation (the nation's leadership to be exact) during a time of war or conflict, women become the target of harsher consequences for such action, in large part because as I have shown in this chapter, women are particularly tasked with staying within certain boundaries, playing a supporting role rather than speaking out on policy. According to the film and curriculum, women and girls barely merit a mention in their own right, always and only

²³ PATRIOT ACT <http://w2.eff.org/patriot/20020925_patriot_act.php>

being seen in relation to maleness. The inequality stems from what Walkerdine (1989) and others (see Weedon, 1999; Riley, 2003) traces back to the philosophical and psychological theoretical foundations the discursively construct women as objects of study, concluding that women “do not have rational powers of the mind.” This fiction-based stigma remains a significant feature of our society today and examples of this stigma abound in every social institution, including the labor force where even now, women are still making 77 cents to the man’s dollar (Burke, 2000; 2005) and in the case of black women, even less.

The recognition of this continued female, gender oppression only leaves me with more questions in the face of the current political and economic crisis in the U.S. Does the current political climate for women in the U.S. workforce (and other areas of public life and social existence) perpetuate what Faludi (2007) credits 9/11 with having done to women, simultaneously heterosexualizing all women and casting them as helpless, in need of protection, and requiring men who must struggle to provide in the wake of what has been characterized as women’s selfish, emasculating feminism? Such parallels and issues related to women and work should be explored as a viable alternative and experiential way to look at the history that the *SoM* package is so determined to construct as non-controversial and objective, which confirms the notion of “unreality” as a form of bias that is present in these instructional materials.

Furthermore, this particular set of materials is nearly totally devoid of all types of women and U.S. minorities. If the curriculum were to turn its critique inward, that is to say, attempt to account for its own biases, perhaps sex-fair or sex-affirmative outcomes could result, enabling students to establish, perhaps, a more balanced worldview in terms

of gender justice. But in its current incarnation, the *Story of Movies* curriculum misses an opportunity to serve a greater purpose toward social justice and civic participation. It goes as far as denying its own potential toward conflict-resolution education by failing to suggest ways for all (particularly female) students to find themselves within the processes that govern social relations across post-9/11 spaces—including the classroom. By offering students the past in a vacuum—with no relevant connection to the changes that brought us here, coupled with tired and anti-progressive representations of female gender roles through unrelenting binaries, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and the activities included for the film's study, become the sexist regurgitations that we've relied on so long to tell us what it looks like to be a woman or to be a man. In his calculation of gender and the feminine/masculine binary, the African-American poet and writer James Baldwin (1985) stated:

The American ideal of sexuality appears to be rooted in the American ideal of masculinity. This ideal has created cowboys and Indians, good guys and bad guys, punks and studs, tough guys and softies, butch and faggot, black and white. It is an ideal so paralytically infantile that it is virtually forbidden---as an unpatriotic act---that the American boy evolve into the complexity of manhood.

(p. 678)

While I have no concrete solutions to offer, by coupling Baldwin's assertion with Shaffer and Shevitz's (2001) work on sex-fair curricula, and reflecting on what this combination offers, I close with my own belief as a black, feminist, contemporary educator: the recognition of the real diversity of contemporary classrooms and the overt, politicized content that 'passes' for curriculum that continues to be used in schools are at odds with

lives of the majority of students, and for that matter teachers too. Complacency about gender roles, female identity/ies, and masculine/feminine dichotomies must be troubled, deconstructed, and, ultimately, replaced with pedagogies of hope and materials that respect the past but reflect the present.

Chapter 4: The *Story of Movies & Race* or Schooling and Social Justice

“The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line.”

(--W.E.B. Du Bois, 1903)

“I remember there in school one day I learned I was inferior...water in my cereal.”

(--Erykah Badu, 2002)

Introduction:

While in the previous chapter I introduce preliminary concepts on ‘race’ in relation to gender in the film *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and its corresponding (curriculum) materials, in this chapter I will examine race directly. The two quotes I use to foreground this chapter by notable black philosopher W.E.B. Du Bois and by contemporary R&B singer and poet, Erykah Badu, illustrate the complicated legacy of Black and Afro-descendant experience through structural or structurally sanctioned racism: a legacy that continues to work through institutions—like schools—to maintain the subordination of black/brown people, and to use the myth of their inferiority to discount or suppress the reality of their lived experiences within these very same institutions. As Patricia Hill Collins (1998) squarely notes, “racial ideologies that portray people of color as intellectually underdeveloped, uncivilized children require parallel ideas that construct Whites as intellectually mature, civilized adults” (p. 64). In this

chapter I look to the ways the *Story of Movies* legitimates and visually and rhetorically performs such practices.

Already having provided a focus on gender roles with attention to femininity, in order to continue to address Research Question 2 (*How do these particular constructions interface with **race**, class, and gender systems within the films and curriculum to promote the 'ideal' American citizen?*), race becomes the focal point for this chapter. Specifically I take up 'race' with particular attention to Afro-descendants (as they are represented) in the *Story Of Movies* curriculum. I use the term "Afro-descendants" to be inclusive of multiple black identities and to account for the contemporary complications of the sociocultural, political, and economic borders that constitute black American, diasporic, and mixed-race identity formations. Tantamount to the configurations of Afro-descendants as constructed by, in, and through the *Story of Movies* curriculum, is an understanding of 'race' as a means of exploring the multiple ways in which it is mobilized in opportunistic and oversimplified ways across these texts, including in terms of whiteness in accordance with a black/white binary, though admittedly, I recognize this binary to be problematic and incomplete to sufficiently address the messiness and the social implications of the historical specificity of the broad spectrum of mixed race ethnic and cultural identifications worn and felt by a diverse U.S. population.

In light of such obstacles, it is my aim to use my readings of the film, the corresponding curriculum materials, and specific scenes to explore the positioning of race in several important ways: as an erasure justified by historical accuracy and an invitation to interrogate assumptions of history, as a visual trope whose marginalization may be read in contrast to white, masculine patriarchal enterprises, and as an important set of

social conversations and educational outcomes as yet to be had. While all non-white groups are marginally represented in the *Story of Movies* curriculum, I attend to Afro-descended identity/ies here, as I found their paradoxical inclusion/exclusion and morphing nature (in relation to their move from unequal to cooptation and assimilation under the umbrella of multicultural awareness leading to post-race or colorblindness) the most salient. As I will outline and apply in what follows, critical race, feminist cultural, and curriculum educational theories and research studies inform and advance this work. However, at times my discussion will shift or expand to include (or refer to) race in a broad, more general sense, as I believe that there are relevant extrapolations that one can make in pointing out connections and/or similarities between racial or ethnically non-white, U.S. citizens.

In a (Race) Relationship...and It's Complicated

In addition to the importance of theorizing race and representation, generally speaking, this work must be situated in a broad educational context. Like Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) in their seminal article “Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education,” this chapter seeks to “theorize race and use it as an analytic tool for understanding school inequity” (p.18) However, while Ladson-Billings and Tate take a macro approach to defining “school inequities” with broad implications geared toward educational reform and the shortcomings of the current multicultural education paradigm, I attempt to “move beyond the boundaries of the educational research literature” (p.18) by focusing on micro issues surrounding the construction/s of race within this specific curriculum, and more narrowly, within the film *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. Due to an erasure of black identity/ies—tokenism notwithstanding— this film (and many others) follows a set

trajectory that forecloses the paradigmatic and critical shifts that would restore dignity to marginalized populations. And while seemingly less relevant to the project of understanding ‘the Other’ (in racialized terms) in comparison to the overt characterization of ‘the Other’ in the curriculum’s first and last films (*To Kill a Mockingbird*, 1962 and *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, 1951) I go on to show how *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939) nonetheless retells the problematic story of a hierarchical society predicated upon white (male) leadership that requires only minor reform to insure its dynastic capabilities.

In this chapter, I argue that race is an important concept to analyze in the *Story of Movies*—more so in the films that indirectly refer to race rather than those that treat it directly through plot (i.e. *To Kill a Mockingbird*) because of the abstract ways in which race is central even when it is assumed as tangential to or in the (main) narrative. In order to describe the ‘racialized other’ as it operates across *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, in terms of Afro-descendant identity/ies, I reference the foundational work *The Souls Black Folk* by W.E.B. Du Bois (1903/1982) coupled with more contemporary critical race frames acknowledging *The Racial Contract* by Charles Mills’ (1999) work on the black/white binary and new theorizations of multiple black identities in relation to W/whiteness²⁴. These lenses are further complicated by feminist cultural critiques of race-relations (within a black/white binary) from bell hooks (1994) and Peggy McIntosh (1996). Attention to educational implications remains the focal point throughout this chapter, as positioned by what these lenses conjure in the *Story of Movies’ Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* curriculum.

²⁴ In *The Racial Contract*, Mills (1999) distinguishes Capitol W whiteness as the institutional (and historic) force that sanctions erasure of blacks from lower-case w whiteness, which refuses to recognize, question, or focus upon the absence, as members of this category do not believe it to directly effect them—mostly because they are the beneficiaries of its manifest privileges.

I apply Du Bois and Mills critically, showing that race should not be reduced to a single, white male narrative, thus creating the constructs that dictate women's roles and the status of racial minorities as derivative. In other words, while the work of Du Bois and Mills obviously has ramifications for women, for my purposes here the applicability of an apparatus (formed by uniting theories and paradigms as set forth by Du Bois and Mills) that only does race and gender work from a comparative standpoint, falls short in providing analysis of the intersecting nature of race and gender-based oppression.

Therefore I attempt to reconcile the race/gender split by combining their theorizations of race (with attention to Afro-descended identity/ies) with black feminist and anti-racist feminist paradigms, particularly those set forth in relation to cinematic representation by bell hooks (1996), and work on the impacts of white privilege explored by Peggy McIntosh (1989). Combined, a more intersectional mechanism for looking at and across the materials and the issues raised by analysis is formed. Restated, double consciousness/two-ness (Du Bois, 1903, 1982) and the black/white binary (Mills, 1999) are read critically with bell hooks' (cultural critic and feminist theorist) and Peggy McIntosh's writings on women.

Du Bois' double consciousness (1903, 1982) produces the understanding of the psychosocial implications of the desire to reconcile African-American manhood into a singular or non-hyphenated 'whole' identity. Of course, the non-interchangeability of Africa and America consistently prevents this reconciliation, as does the "utterly impenetrable" notion of negroes being treated like men (Baldwin, 1950, p. 67). Mills' work in *The Racial Contract* (1999) theorizes the structural and institutional obstacles that prevent the socio-emotional coherence of Afro-descendant identity/ies, as generated by the work of Du Bois. Mills points out that Whiteness (the set of power relations that cause institutional and structural inequalities to persist) is not the same as whiteness (the racial category by which individual persons can be described and with which U.S.

citizens with European ancestry tend to identify). Also, the work of Mills is useful here in that it describes the historical problems of erasure of non-whites in addition to attempting to theorize hybrid (mixed race) identity configurations. Mills' conception of Whiteness versus whiteness is an important distinction if we are to move the conversation on race relations in the U.S. into a contemporary frame.

Here, McIntosh's work on white privilege (1989) becomes critically relevant in dialogue with Mills, because she names the forms of institutional racism (locating them in schools, hair salons, and other taken for granted white, social spaces) and she goes on to call for agency and accountability amongst whites (and feminists) in changing issues of structural racism, beyond mere disapproval or individual acts of justice. As stated by Mills (1999) "those who pretend not to see them [racial issues/phenomena] who claim not to recognize the pictures...are only continuing the epistemology of ignorance required by the original racial contract" (p. 133).

Henceforth, this chapter concerns itself with reading the imbrications of Whiteness in conjunction with Afro-descendant representations and absence within the film and materials. Additionally, gender (masculine/feminine relations) in relation to race (as forming meaningful intersections) is considered in parts of my analysis. My readings, as they pertain to ways of seeing race in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, are then recontextualized in a wider conversation of 'race' within education, taking into account the role(s) played by the systematic historical erasure of blacks and women, which persists in philosophy and education today. According to Mills (1999) the erasure and subsequent, deliberate appropriation (apprehension) of black identity/ies is the very basis for contemporary socio-political paradigms that govern modern American institutions and the hermeneutical thought and reasoning produced therein.

To further understand race and institutions, "doing it for daddy" (hooks, 1996), a race influenced, power-relations discourse works to create a lens by which *Mr. Smith*

Goes to Washington can be critically interpreted. This lens, applicable for analyzing the deployment of race and gender roles, is used in this chapter to provide a conceptual sketch of white, male power-relations as the dominant basis for and against which racial difference can most effectively be read. Furthermore, in this vein I argue that this established white, patriarchal norm sets boundaries for ‘acceptable identities,’ which constitute power differentials that make the type of participatory democracy that they seek to represent virtually impossible in ‘real life.’

The Black/White Binary Meets Masculinity and Feminist Thought

As mentioned in the previous section, bell hooks’ (1996) cultural work is brought to bear on readings of race in order to use contemporary black feminist theory to connect race relations and gender issues. In *Real to Reel*, bell hooks advances a contemporary theory on race, sex, and films in the 90’s. In several of her essays, hooks positions herself in relation to a particularly interesting hegemonic discourse that she calls “doing it for daddy.” “Doing it for daddy” can be defined as the ways in which social behavior is predicated upon (and often motivated by) a desire for the power of white male love and/or acknowledgment, and the privileged status that it socio-culturally signifies. This discourse is both recognizable yet elusive, revealing that while “daddy” is often depicted literally, it functions more toward symbolizing a concept of status and power-relations which govern politics. hooks also notes that this pattern of behavior has specific implications with regard to women and black men because of its direct relationship to the openings and closures of available spaces with which one can choose to identify or live. This discourse, hooks argues, asserts itself in the daily lives of men and women across race, gender, and class lines.

Border crossing and the pervasive rhetoric of “doing it for daddy” manages to continuously circulate, re-inscribing male dominance almost everywhere it exists. According to hooks, younger men and black men who seek upward mobility and/or acceptance and affirmation of their own male status (from governing powers—usually defined by white male standards, perspectives, and leadership) are not exempt from being bi-directionally affected by doing it for daddy. Their level(s) of participation positions them to both enforce and receive the discourse, forever trapped in its various hetero and homo social layers: factors compounded by other politico-identity issues.

hooks’ argument is grounded conceptually using preliminary race theory developed philosophically by aspects of Du Bois (1903; 1982) and Mills’ (1999) work on race relations. For Du Bois, racism generates harmful social and psychological constructs that require the black (African-American) man to submit to a universalized white norm and to live a double identity of sorts in order to engage with his ancestry (African) while surviving his daily existence (non-white American.) Both Du Bois and Mills posit that a racist culture leads to psychological damage in the black man. While this perspective has been critiqued and expanded upon extensively within the fields of post-colonial and feminist theory (see Spivak, 1999; Bhabha, 1994, 2004; Fanon, 1952), Du Bois’ initial findings are indispensable to the project of historicizing race/racism as a construct of philosophical and theoretical inquiry.

I aim to recognize within the film and curriculum materials, a racial logic that formulates the black/white binary: the logic that by absorbing dominant cultural practice and language, the outsider (non-white and/or non-masculine) identity would be both castigated by and mutually constitutive of the dominant group. While both insider and outsider racial identity/ies are reliant on one another, the dominant identity devalues and

marginalizes the other, denying the relationship.²⁵ This distancing effect (brought about by racism) is a major element of hooks' "doing it for daddy" because of the impaired and dysfunctional proximity at which it governs and reiterates power differentials between women and men and white men and black men, revealing the co-constitutive nature of the intersecting oppressions (and other social variations) of race and gender.

While both Du Bois' and Mills' examinations of race are grounded in binary opposition between black and white, importantly, Mills' acknowledges that Whiteness really stands in as a metaphor for dominance or for the dominant class of people in a given temporal, topographic context. In other words, he identifies the black versus white binary as a construct that is symptomatic of the larger implications (psychic and material) of social difference. Importantly, he deals with race both theoretically and in a politically material way that extends Du Bois, whose emphasis was spiritual and psychological identity formation in Afro-descendant identity/ies. Ultimately, limitations of such theories and accounts force us to acknowledge that the foundations of race according to color, or in terms of black/white, is a simplification that does not account for class difference and diasporic experiences of the divisions of man. Here, I invoke, via hooks and McIntosh, the element of culture to account for further difference, and complications of contemporary vectors of race/gender/class intersections. Regardless, racialized difference, as politically operational with its (conceptual) transmission as cultural, produces undeniable material effects in people's lived identity/ies and social experiences.

Though Du Bois (1903; 1982) tends to critically oversimplify women's relationships to, in, through, and across race, given his focus on black (Afro-descendant)

²⁵ This is central to Cheng's (2001) argument in *The Melancholy of Race*, though others make similar claims.

manhood²⁶, his extensive querying into the condition of men and race allows us to look at how hooks' theorizing about "doing it for daddy" translates across race, class, and gender lines. This phenomenon is observable even in films that do not focus on subordinating female characters or deploying overt racism. This is the case with *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, which does neither, opting instead for dismissal/erasure of race and normalization of gender roles and characteristics.

Additionally, hooks' discourse teases out gender/ed implications, thus injecting racialized representation(s) using feminist theory. By bringing hooks into dialogue with Mills and Du Bois, women (and black women) can be seen as subject to the same treatment that "doing it for daddy" holds for their male counterparts—instead of seeing women as somehow exempt by and through strategic deployment of their own sexuality or due to mental/psychological inferiority as may be otherwise implied. In contemporary black feminist terms, hooks "talks back" to Du Bois by presenting contrary thoughts to address gender (women's roles/participation), while assuming a culturally relevant standpoint that compliments his early work on racism by extending psychological and spiritual tropes to address material effects on raced-gendered power relations. The next section advances the framework detailed herein to demonstrate that the work of Du Bois and hooks used in tandem with theorizations on the meaning of W/hiteness (Mills 1999; McIntosh, 1989) co-constitutes a new theoretical terrain against which ideology/ies of post-9/11, with particular regard to race and racism, will be traced in Chapter 5.

²⁶ For more complex analyses of black feminist grappling with gender and historical context in Du Bois work on women, see James (1997), Guy-Sheftall (1990), and Carby (1998). Each woman has critically situated Du Bois with attention to his shortcomings in relation to Africana female identity/ies, while taking care not to dismiss or oversimplify his larger work on behalf of African-American identities and the politics of race. Their studies are generous toward Du Bois by focusing the implications of his political work on race and identity as central, and addressing his limitations on black women and gender as minimal, comparatively.

Whitewashing, Erasing, Politicizing: A Racial Inventory of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*

In the *Story of Movies* curriculum, whiteness and American citizenship are made/become synonymous due in part to filmic representations and equally (and perhaps more insidiously) through a pseudo-apolitical stance as advanced by the materials and activities the curriculum contains. The conflation of American citizenship with whiteness is particularly observable in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* in terms of the curriculum materials which both directly and indirectly “do it for daddy” against the backdrop of pre-World War II (WWII) social conditions and public anxiety driven by the United States’ ambivalence toward entering the conflict, as demonstrated by/emphasized within the curriculum activities numbering eight in total. In terms of the film itself, through character relations, plot-driven male dominance, and white men as the paradigm for appropriate citizen identity, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* succeeds in affirming the institutional politics in which the hope of the nation (state) is ideologically grounded. In other words, though the film is revered as an American Classic, the method of performing a ‘racial inventory’ reveals the contours of racism in law making and government, class status, and interpersonal relationships.

The curriculum materials tend to avoid any sustained, focused inquiry into race in favor of several mentions in the *Teacher’s Guide* of how much ‘progress’ has been made in terms of minority civic participation. It is noteworthy that any/all direct mentions of gender and race are made in tandem, grouped under the term ‘minority’ and therefore must be recognized within the curriculum as “interchangeable” and/or collapsible, not to mention subsidiary. This can be seen most explicitly in Graphic Organizer 4.1 “That

Was Then; This is Now”²⁷ in which gender and race are coupled to ask students questions about the lack of women and “people of color” represented in the film. Suffice it to say, that this activity sets the stage for further inquiry into the dearth of substantive articulations of race within the film and materials.

In accordance with intersectionality, this chapter is guided by the aforementioned theoretical framework, which materializes through the combining of critical race, post-colonial, and feminist theories. Similar to the reading of gender under guidelines conveyed by sex-curricula paradigms, as outlined in the previous chapter, here I conduct a racial inventory of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*—the film and materials—focusing on interrogations of the black/white binary as it is held in tension with colorblind and post-race ideals via rhetoric and representation within the *Story of Movies* curriculum. Since ‘Whiteness’ (consistent with Mills, 1999) as a social construct can be identified throughout the film and curriculum materials as the source (foundation) by which subsequent erasures and representations of race take shape, the notion of unconscious oppression must also be dealt with. Here, I have in mind the ways in which European and white narratives often dictate and produce value judgments about who speaks, about what, and what counts as knowledge.²⁸

To account for this phenomenon, I use Peggy McIntosh’s (1989) seminal essay, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.” Here, McIntosh catalogues her observations about race in structural inequality. McIntosh observes that as a white woman, she can be assured that her “children will be given curricular materials that

²⁷ Graphic Organizer 4.1 is included in the appendix; see “Appendix B” p. 196.

²⁸ For feminist anti-colonial scholarship on knowledge production, research and authenticity see Mohanty’s (1984) article “Under Western Eyes.”

testify to the existence of their race.” She also notes, “When I am told about our national heritage or about ‘civilization,’ I am shown that people of my color made it what it is” (pp. 389-390).

The rest of this chapter— through using various critical and post-colonial theories of race— attempts to make visible the mechanisms that produce what McIntosh calls “unconscious oppression” as it relates to the *Story of Movies* curriculum, specifically within *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. The ‘racial inventory’ compiles/identifies and interprets information according to the following principles:

- Visual constructions of whiteness and blackness (in the film)
- Language positioning of whiteness and blackness (curriculum materials; teacher’s guide)
- Reading absence as meaningful exclusion
- Finding justificatory rationales that seek to a- or de-politicize race

Starting from the definition of ‘race’ as a cultural and historical marker of difference, the following materials are analyzed in terms of race, its curricular formations and ideological implications, in relation to *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. The following five curriculum artifacts have been selected as representative of the opportunistic ways in which ‘racialization’ is used to support and negotiate contemporary ‘American’ identity/ies articulated via the past or in accordance with specific histories/historical events. Read in broad, thematic terms with an emphasis on content, I describe the activities here to demonstrate the basis upon which my analysis is built. Broadly understood, they form the basis for my inquiry/ies.

Schooling, (Post?) Race & Patriarchy

“He won the lottery by being born—because a big hand slapped a White Male American...do no wrong, so clean-cut, dirty his hands it comes right off.”
(--Eddie Vedder, 1993)

I open this section quoting lyrics from Pearl Jam’s song “W.M.A.,” an abbreviation for “white, male American.” This song appeared on their highly political 1993 album *Versus* which took up controversial issues around gun control, mental health, political dissent, identity politics, corporate exploitation, and racial injustice. White male privilege, so integral to *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*’s dismissal of women and black people, is of the same caliber and consequence as the type summarized in Vedder’s contemporary lyrics.

In “W.M.A.” the racist aspect of police brutality is criticized. Furthermore, the band takes religious conservatives to task in the song when Vedder sarcastically sings, “Jesus greets me...he looks just like me.” This is a reference to dominant Catholic/Christian depictions of Jesus as a white man. Ultimately, the song focuses on all of the affordances and privileges that come along with being a white man in America. The refrain includes Vedder screaming over and over, “the police stopped my brother again!” which signals not his white guilt, but his human outrage over the racist aspects of police brutality that are all too familiar in the criminalization of blacks in the U.S. Vedder aligns himself with black men in crying out for social justice. The nature of white male identity described here neatly parallels some of the inner workings of the same set of characteristics in the film and curriculum.

While aesthetically compelling and historically significant, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939) is the reification of homo-social bonding, and father-son understandings on macro and micro levels, endowing men—white men—with the power to rule the country by virtue of a male-leadership oriented legacy handed down by the founding fathers. Two patriotic montage sequences attest to this by focusing on the words of founding fathers, and by placing Jefferson Smith in proximity to their words (hence their ideals) and depicting him as alternately awe-struck and inspired by the Lincoln Memorial. Five artifacts within the curriculum materials attest to the centrality of this concept, focusing on Smith’s relationship to Senator Paine, and referring to the back-story of Paine and Smith’s father, along with other relationships between powerful (government and press) men.

An example of an activity that *does* attempt to grapple with race and gender issues Graphic Organizer 4-1, “That Was Then; This Is Now” a visual aid whose language and imagery implies that historical accuracy is at the root of the film’s exclusion of women and minorities through the staging of representation as exemplar of features (hair, clothing, posture) of the 1930’s (when the film was originally released) and comparing/contrasting that image with a modern or “now” set of features (clothing, hairstyle, posture). In addition to the stark contrast of appearances and the binary language of “then” and “now,” the wording of the questions in this activity performs (at the linguistic-level) a total erasure of black women by separating the category of “women” from the category “people of color,” which forces us to read women as white women and people of color as (black) men or non-descript, non-white ‘others.’ To illustrate, students are asked the following:

- *Why are all of the senators in the film portrayed by white male actors?*
- *Why were women and people of color not included in the cast for the Senate?*
- *Why are there no female pages in the movie?*

Such questions are structured in ways that can only be answered by way of citing ‘historical accuracy.’ A discussion of historical accuracy is taken up in a later section of this chapter. This is the *only* student activity (for *MSGtW*) that deals explicitly with race and gender. As evidenced in the aforementioned analysis, it oversimplifies and conflates the two.

In the Teacher Overview for Lessons 1 and 2 (“How Films Mirror Society” and “How Films Influence Society”) while setting forth key terms, learning outcomes, and ‘answers’ for the student materials, the curriculum also acknowledges race and gender bias within the film, but is quick to access the ‘historical accuracy’ argument as a viable explanation for these inequalities. Here the curriculum is explicit about the historical accuracy claim, while in student activities the claim is more so implied. Here the language of the curriculum also flattens diversity, ethnicity, and gender, as the activities give way to the shaping of national identity as structured by and through World War II; in fact, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* takes a back seat to World War II in these materials. The materials recount WWII as a white male narrative of national identity.

Such activities (their content and language—directed at both students and teachers) serve as evidence of what McIntosh (1989) describes as white people as the cornerstone of civilization. Each character in the film acquiesces to this notion, just as audiences are simultaneously complicit (perhaps on a subconscious level) in carrying out this internalized patriarchal agenda. Furthermore, these depictions attest to Mills’

arguments (1999) about the two-fold workings of whiteness ('W'hiteness and 'w'hiteness) to structure individual and institutional political agendas.

Even though some members of the audience may be puzzled or concerned about the lack of racial diversity in the film or by the transformation of Clarissa Saunders from savvy woman to love-struck girl, the storyline works to focus audience attention on the efforts of Smith to clear his good name and restore dignity to the democratic process and patriotic values upon which the film (and our society) is built. Smith is positioned as humble 'great white hope' who will restore dignity to American government and usher in the new culture of patriotic boyhood. Both ventures are deeply rooted in exclusionary practices, despite his verbal proclamation that the camp will be for "boys of all creeds," because only one black child is actually featured on-screen in the film and in token manner.

Applying a bi-fold critical race perspective informed by Du Bois (1903/1982) "two-ness" (or double consciousness) and Mills' (1999) critique of White structural inequality (enforced through institutional norms) and white (political) identity/ies, together with hooks' (1996) archetypal motif of "doing it for daddy," reveals the heavily racialized structures that allow one to maneuver and identify as 'citizen.' In the aforementioned examples Graphic Organizers 4.1 and 4.3, women and minorities are positioned as peripheral to the historical development of politics and governance in the U.S.-context. Moreover, in this regard, both history and culture come to signify "daddy" as they appear to reside beyond the scope of race and gender relations as autonomous male entities.

In Graphic Organizer 4-3: “When History and Culture Meet” three boxes are featured: one deemed a “historical event,” one labeled as a “cultural event,” and one that combines the two. This assumption of the two terrains (history and culture) as mutually exclusive undercuts their co-constitutive enterprise making it even more difficult to refute claims of historical accuracy, as to why women and minorities are continuously marginalized. Don’t history and culture ‘always’ meet? It is never a matter of a tentative ‘when’? I feel the need to emphasize this activity because it represents the overarching structure of the curriculum: to maintain as ‘separate,’ social enterprises that are always mutual, in relation to, and/or overlapping.

The “doing it for daddy” discourse penetrates far beyond female competition and the so-called black male need for white male love, in that it values a traditional and generally accepted paradigm of nationhood that explicitly resists subaltern identities and behaviors. One example is the scene in which a defeated Smith is found by Saunders sitting on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, looking to Lincoln, a primary symbolic national “Daddy,” for guidance and restoration. Here, from a critical perspective, history is re-inscribed as a white male narrative, especially in relation to race since the Lincoln Memorial is inevitably tied to significations of the Civil War and slavery. In the context of the scene, the presence of the iconic statue alludes to race, but again, as a present absence, favoring instead the connection between Lincoln’s status and Smith’s.

In yet another scene, Senator Paine and Smith reminisce about Smith’s father, who worked with Sen. Paine, and what a “good and virtuous” man he was. Smith feels compelled to live by his father’s virtue, preserving a legacy of patriotic citizenship within the parameters of an unquestioning belief in the greatness and freedom of the U.S.

governmental system and the form of democracy as construed thereby/therein. Smith's father, like the founding fathers of the United States, is invoked as the absent, yet omnipresent source of reason, wisdom, and fortitude. If we trace the references to dads and fathers in the film, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, women and young people, including young adults, require permission, love, and guidance from invariably white fathers.

While “doing it for daddy” has literal translations in the film, perhaps more important are the structural inequality issues that continue to be underrepresented in films, in favor of character portrayals that ‘blame’ (or at least implicate) the individual in contemporary U.S. society as racist/misogynist/homophobic and endlessly susceptible to stereotyped interactions with others (see for example the 2004 film, *Crash*)²⁹. Rather than understanding racism as individual, in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, Capra unconsciously enacted the role that institutionalized racism plays in constructing masculinity and national identity.

Aside from its reliance on the primacy of white male narrative as the standard by which all else is defined, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* directly represents blacks as inferior both through overall the omission of black (and all non-white) participants, and through the one scene (scene 5, “At the station”) that prominently includes African-Americans. In this scene, Jefferson Smith is—to comic effect—duped by negroes at the

²⁹ The film *Crash* (2004) directed by Paul Haggis, represents a number of racial stereotypes and their consequences in a contemporary U.S. context; however, the film also positions the viewer as complicit victim and perpetrator, reducing racism to an oversimplified narrative of personal prejudices that undercuts the important material differences and outcomes at stake dependent upon class, power dynamics, and structural racism. The film (inadvertently perhaps) equalizes all forms of racism. For further critique of *Crash*, see Orbe and Kinefuchi, 2008.

train station as blacks are depicted in a minstrel-esque manner synonymous with vaudevillian comic relief. Race is clearly foregrounded in this scene, both in their presence in a historically recognizable “Black” profession and in their use in the film. That is, African-American characters were not included to demonstrate their own sophistication, but rather to bring into relief just how naïve Smith was, that he could be duped even by lowly porters.

This troubling image need not be removed or ignored, but in much the same way that Spike Lee’s 2000 film *Bamboozled* complicates, critically deconstructs, and reconstructs racist depictions to present a nuanced portrait of representations of race in media then and now, the curriculum (via materials) and/or the teacher, have a responsibility to confront the racism of the images within that scene. The curriculum experts/creators and or the teacher are tasked with moving beyond the explanation that such depictions are “historically accurate” (an answer that shuts down dialogue) as the Teacher’s Guide suggests. The “why” and the fact that it is one of multiple positionalities occupied by blacks/people of color during that given historical moment (the late 1930’s) are what need to be addressed possibly connected to a broader discussion of representation in contemporary films/media wherein similar depictions, though less viable now, still exist. It provides an opportunity for discussion of possible reasons for the continued inequities of representation.

While the identity politics associated with race and gender and the damaging psychological effects of both, as actively (socially) constructed by and through American culture and supported by seemingly invisible ideology/ies, are neither overtly promoted nor thinly disguised in this film, the materials accompanying the film should seek to

examine race and gender in more robust and complex ways, as a way to promote a form of democracy and the reclaiming of space on behalf of the students who will encounter, possibly negatively, the representations displayed. By troubling the source material (the film), the curriculum materials would open opportunities for valuable dialogue about race and ethnicity in their current incarnations.

Historical In/Accuracy: a Euphemism for Ignorance

“...only scant reference is made to African heroes. A people without a positive history is like a vehicle without an engine.” (--Steve Biko, 1970)

I begin this section with a quote from South African anti-apartheid activist, Steve Biko. While I acknowledge that the context for this quote is apartheid South Africa, I include it here because it resonates within contemporary U.S. education as well. When Afro-descendants (and other non-white and indigenous groups) are erased, overlooked, or misrepresented³⁰ the outcomes tend to reinforce dominant values and ideals. Such values and ideals generate continued white privilege and perpetuate a mythical past wherein all significant social contributions are credited to whites. This is both untrue and psychologically damaging for members of marginalized groups.

In the Teacher’s Materials for “Historical and Cultural Contexts” the curriculum producers state:

A film, like all works of art, reflects the values and culture of the society that produces it. *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* was made during a period of history

³⁰ Kaomea (2001) provides a compelling example of how well intended ‘inclusion’ within a Hawaiian curriculum, ultimately amounted to re-colonization of indigenous identity/ies.

that generally excluded women and people of color from holding political office. Society's attitudes in 1939 were such that the realm of politics belonged to men, primarily white men. As many of your students will point out, African American actors in this film play the roles of servants—porters at the train station, a waiter, at the National Press Club. Those shots depict historically accurate practices.

(p. 107)

Historical accuracy here acts as an oversimplification—or what Mills might call a (White) contrivance concealing the ways in which race is (and has been) constructed toward a particular social agenda that privileges Whiteness as the norm. Further, this explanation serves to conflate history and culture, as if the terms are interchangeable, as opposed to mutually constituting enterprises, which they are; they do not happen independent of one another. Moreover, scholar Amy Hasinoff (2011) in response to the question of racialized representations in contemporary media, points out that a defense based on historical accuracy avoids an inquiry into whose stories get told and why. In reality, it would be just as valid to include a section geared specifically toward the black servicemen in WWII. I would maintain that such an activity would still align with the curriculum's WWII focal point within the materials, while opening spaces for inclusion and discussions of race.

Both the omission of race and the historical accuracy argument are made further incongruous when taking into consideration the availability of *The Negro Soldier* (1943), a Capra documentary chronicling black servicemen as part of the *Why We Fight* series he was commissioned to direct, produced by the U.S. War Dept. In short, the film is a WWII recruitment piece targeting black Americans. In the opening scene, a black

reverend commends individual serviceman (and one servicewoman) seated in the congregation. He goes on to discuss the current situation (the Second World War) and the Axis Powers as a threat to (U.S.) democracy. While the Bible lies open on the pulpit, the reverend produces a copy of *Mein Kampf* and reads a key portion of text in which Hitler admonishes the U.S. for granting rights and opportunities to Afro-descendants, likening a black lawyer or professional to a trained monkey.

From here the “documentary,” which was really propaganda for the U.S. military effort in WWII, goes on to recount Black American involvement in previous wars, including the American Revolution. This segment features Crispus Attucks as a valued participant in the Boston Massacre, a key event leading up to the American Revolution. It is notable that the narrative then goes to World War I, leaving out slavery and Black service in Civil War, almost entirely. It is ironic, then, that the film culminates in a brief voice-over narration of an excerpt from the Emancipation Proclamation while the Lincoln Monument is shown onscreen.

The *Negro Soldier* showcases Black progress in all walks of American life, including a montage featuring historically black colleges and universities: Howard, Tuskegee, Fisk, Prairie View, and Hamilton. Furthermore, black professionals are depicted, as are black athletes competing in the Olympics. Overall, the film depicts an idealistic (and skewed) progressive American culture of an integrated society, a major shortcoming of the film. Another cause for concern may be its over-reliance on connecting service, in the church/religious sense, with service to the nation through military enlistment.

The final significant concern with the film is that it is, after all, a propaganda piece, advocating enlistment and promoting the military as a conduit for greater respect, prestige, and citizen status for Afro-descendants. Despite these issues, this film could make a dramatic piece as part of the historical accuracy discussion in the *SoM* curriculum. It is part of the *Why We Fight* series, from which other supporting curriculum materials in this section, including documentary films, have been selected. In its inclusion of at least *some* positive images of black history and black community, *The Negro Soldier* complicates or throws into question the absence of Afro-descendants as participants in the shaping of this nation as it is represented in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*.

The absence of significant Afro-descendant characters and erasure of race, along a White continuum, as a salient issue in the film is certainly not new, though it does persist. In making connections between *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and representation in present day media contexts, it could be said that not much has changed. That is, as remarkably different as things may seem on the surface, ultimately we are likely to encounter prominent stereotypes in conjunction with dominant, recognizable tropes. Hypothetically, students may even suggest or point out that in many instances similar depictions (of Afro-descendants, Hispanics, and other non-white groups) exist today, in which case the “historical accuracy” argument would no longer apply. This indicates the critical need for the centrality of the interrogation of race in all aspects of schooling. Of course, such an interrogation assumes a position that is contradictory to the “colorblind” and “post-race” discourses (see Bonilla-Silva, 2010) currently governing U.S. race-relations.

Beyond mere opposition, such a stance also requires a re-conceptualization of ‘race’ as a category. Meanwhile, a noteworthy distinction about the current status of race discourse and social formation based on the gains/progress of affirmative action is Crenshaw’s (1989) notion that antidiscrimination discourse is ambiguous and can accommodate both conservative and liberal views of race and equality. Such discourse is used within the curriculum as part of its move toward a progress narrative for “people of color” and women. The discourse works in tandem with syllogism that makes progress synonymous with equity, the continuance of this form of progress culminating in a post-race or colorblind social vector. This reality is reflected within the modest gains of affirmative action³¹ combined with neoliberal constructions of meritocracy, the continued political rhetoric of democracy (most recently mobilized by the Tea Party). These factors, combined, go to the root of why very little has changed in schools and in other social institutions—namely government, at least in terms of racial composition.

To critically understand ‘race’ and representation in historical terms or from a more current perspective, the curriculum materials would have to confront the issue by providing activities/lessons and teacher strategies for engagement. The curriculum does make a nod to the possibility that historical accuracy alone cannot account for the social implications of the film. Within the teacher materials (2006) it is stated directly that “how films reflect society, however, requires more than fact checking” (p. 107). Still, no further initiative is provided for creating a learning experience that moves students beyond the limitations of ‘fact checking.’ The materials provided for student

³¹ For analysis on the history of affirmative action, contemporary debates, the color-blind philosophy, or post-race perspectives and their impact on affirmative action see Herring, Keith, and Horton, (2004); Curry and West, (1996); and Crosby, (2004.)

consumption and the shape of those materials makes evident that such modes of critical evaluation, while suggested, are not actually facilitated by the curriculum components. The curriculum does, however, devote a unit to teaching students how to recognize propaganda, but even this is done through examples that bolster a sense of (white) American centrality and dominance because the unit relies, exclusively, on materials that reference and take as a focal point World War II: hence, Nazism and propaganda become synonymous.³²

Querying the *Story of Movies* creators as to why they chose *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* for inclusion in this package is a moot point: it is clear that Capra, the script writers, and production studio executives failed to reason through issues of race and gender. To refute the claim of ‘historical accuracy’ in the film’s lack of diversity in terms of representing the inhabitants of Washington D.C. cannot be ignored. In fact, only one scene even depicts non-white people or any type of multiculturalism (a term fraught with its own nefarious oversimplifying or flattening capacity—see Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995) among the inhabitants of Washington D.C. Yet the D.C. area, where the film is set, has enjoyed a large Afro-descendant community (bolstered by Howard University, a historically black institution founded in 1867) that continues to thrive even today. In fact, the inclusion of the one black child in the scout scene (set outside of Washington) stands out that much more as a marking of the absence of black (namely Afro-descendant) faces elsewhere in the film.

³² In Chapter 5 of this dissertation I provide detailed inquiry into themes of nation (in the U.S. context) in conjunction with race/gender analyses of post-9/11 ideological impacts on citizenship.

Because of the film's shortcomings in terms of representing race, the accompanying materials require further (increased) accountability. If we espouse the belief that "curriculum represents a form of intellectual property," (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995, p. 54) a close reading of educational materials, such as those contained within the *Story of Movies* package, is both warranted and necessary. After all, one can assume that the poorest, most under-funded and, in many cases, urban schools are the most likely to take advantage of free curriculum materials like the *Story of Movies*. Furthermore, a high percentage of the students in such educational settings are ethnically non-white.

An over-reliance on "historical accuracy" as the answer to questions surrounding tokenized representations of race and lack of adequate minority inclusion is a silencing practice. It closes dialogue, as the discussion is just beginning. As evidenced by the film, the role that institutionalized racism plays in constructing masculinity and national identity cannot go unnoticed. Herein, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* forecloses the possible roles women and non-whites play in nation building and in shaping commodities of the nation: children, law, and existence in general. Of course this is particularly ironic, given slavery, which relied on the African-American labor to build entire industries that were the precursor to current conceptions of corporate America. Not only that, but given the status of Afro-descendants in the sports and music industry, indeed we see nation building and the shaping of commodities formed by and through black labor. And on the other end of the spectrum, the current status of Afro-descendants serving in the military and serving time in prisons³³ makes apparent the need to discuss and theorize the many

³³ For more on Afro-descendants and incarceration see Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, 2010.

trajectories, narratives, and political and economic placement of non-whites in American society. School is a good place to start, not end (or obscure) such a conversation.

This conversation, in schools, and in the broader ‘public curriculum’ of American society, should seek to theorize and prioritize Afrocentric agendas in relation to official (i.e. textbook) ‘history.’ This needs to go beyond Black History month or the other various cordoning off (separate, unequal) projects African American History, and so forth. In spite of the socio-political move toward ‘colorblindness,’ the continuous examination of Afro-descended peoples’ collective memory must continue to be probed. In an academic blog post (2011) regarding Afrocentric agendas, public pedagogy, and black cultural representation, Dr. Adam Banks states, “This [U.S.] media landscape still does not offer Black people or other people of color space to develop our conversations in serious ways that bring the full range of who we are individually and collectively to the conversation” (para. 9). I would add that included in the conversation to which Banks alludes, are some difficult questions on what it means to be Afro-descended, global, and local, erased from history, marginalized/oppressed, then re-erased by multiculturalism or under the rubric of colorblind rhetoric.³⁴ What does it even mean to be Black or multi-racial/multi-ethnic?³⁵ We need to encourage this critical questioning about race in schools, through curriculum; the full range of who we are individually and collectively

³⁴ Stuart Hall (1996, 1997, 2000) theorizes contemporary concerns of racial/ethnic/hybrid identity/ies; Lisa Tessman (1999) theorizes mixed-race identities using feminist perspectives; and Patricia Hill Collins (2005; 2006) recasts critical dialogue on race and African American identity in conjunction with new nationalist agendas and cultural shifts.

³⁵ An article, “Who’s Black? Who’s White? Who Knows?” by Jeffrey Kluger in *Time* magazine online (Dec. 10, 2010) explored the contours of U.S. bi-racial identity/ies with attention to Halle Berry, President Barack Obama, and others.

must come to the table—black intellectuals and public scholars alone cannot do this urgent work.

Conclusion: Imagine That...A Curriculum Intervention because Race Still Matters

In the spirit of thinkers and scholars who take up the imaginary as a line of scholarly inquiry and viability, I offer the following hypothetical intervention on behalf of race. This intervention draws on existing *SoM* curriculum materials brought together with Capra's (conspicuously absent) *The Negro Soldier* (see pp. 104-106 of this chapter) for an 'imagined' activity mobilizing a shift (in blackness/racial consciousness) from margin to center.

Writing Activity 1-7: "Reflect & Connect": this activity asks students to connect the film and themselves (their world) by using sentence completion prompts. For example, one of the prompts reads as follows: "*An issue in the film that still has importance for me today is...*" This activity assumes a viewer who relates to and is changed/transformed by engagement with the film. It does, however, allow for students to self-select a film of his/her own choosing for questions not directly related to *MSGtW*. But, if *The Negro Soldier* were the film in question, a number of possibilities emerge from asking students to respond to this film. Perhaps a number of issues and ideas related to race, militarization, the 'war on terror,' the war on drugs, the black church, hip-hop culture, educational opportunity, and family histories would emerge. Maybe a space would open up wherein students could begin to engage directly with the complex but important questions(s) of race, racialization, and race relations in their lives, and in the U.S.-context. These 'hypothetical' dialogues might deride the line of nonracial approach (Biko, 1970) so privileged in public discourses about schooling and (human) rights.

Since “no education is politically neutral,” (hooks, 2004) it follows that in the case of the *Story of Movies*, this same logic can be argued about the films selected for study. And beyond the critique of racial ramifications and the insufficiency of multicultural educational reform to address educational disparities offered by Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), this chapter foregrounds the need for opportunities to illustrate the importance of assessing educational inequity/ies in terms of curriculum programming and the prioritization of certain topics (inclusion, diversity, social justice) within curricula.

In closing, I offer a comparison with another artistic work produced during the same time period as the film: “I too Sing America” by famous Harlem Renaissance poet Langston Hughes, which decries the gap between principles of American ideology and the governing apparatuses politically enforced through racism:

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.

They send me to eat in the kitchen

When company comes,

But I laugh,

And eat well,

And grow strong.

Tomorrow,

I'll be at the table

When company comes.

Nobody'll dare

Say to me,

"Eat in the kitchen,"

Then.

Besides,

They'll see how beautiful I am

And be ashamed--

I, too, am America.

This poem is part of a larger, more significant tradition of literary resistance that resonates with themes, challenges, and self-affirmation that are taken up in various post-colonial and African-American literary texts. This piece can be situated among the most famous examples that “talk back” (see hooks 1990; Hill Collins, 2000; 2005) to dominant (white) representations. In “I, Too, Sing America,” Hughes is not altogether fundamentally opposed to ideals of American citizenship and the importance of nation to identity; however, he mobilizes a shift that allows both recognition and personal freedom by acknowledging his own difference and the stake holding racial practices that forcibly exclude his voice. Contrasting himself with (white poet) Walt Whitman (this poem is his response to Whitman’s “I Hear America Singing”) Hughes exposes the ideological mechanisms that underpin popular notions of the nation a fundamental crack; the same

crack is traceable to/ can be observed in the ideological paradigm set forth in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. One might speculate that more sophisticated students are likely to resist it with Hughes-like vigor at best or with apathetic withdrawal at worst, and of course anywhere along the vast continuum of possible reactions between these binaries.

The vast continuum of possible student reactions in relation to race must also be accounted for within the experiential context. As Joseph Tobin (2000) suggests, the racial dynamics in the community in which a child lives—which are highly localized and constantly in flux—affects how that child interprets racist ideological messages. Tobin also reminds us of Buckingham’s (1993) assertion that “while children’s likes and dislikes of screen characters cross racial lines...liking a character is not the same thing as identifying with him” (p.58). I posit that most audiences develop a fond feeling for the protagonist Jefferson Smith, but that black identification, at a level beyond like, is not supported by images and representations within the film or curriculum.

As Black activist Steve Biko (1970) so astutely pointed out in the context of apartheid South Africa, “...the liberals are playing their old game. They are claiming a ‘monopoly on intelligence and moral judgment’ and setting the pattern and pace of the black man’s aspirations. They verbalize all the complaints of the blacks beautifully while skillfully extracting what suits them from the exclusive pool of white privileges” (p.21). Again, I insert Biko’s perspective on racism from a South African apartheid context to make the point that a certain ubiquitous whiteness, in the form of neoliberal affirmative action rhetoric, is both historical and global, not to mention pervasive.

What Biko refers to as the “skillful extraction...from the exclusive pool of white privileges” as bequeathed to Blacks (Afro-descended peoples and others) by or from

whites, is also conveyed in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. After all, the film does just that: claims to demand democracy for and on behalf of “boys of all colors and creeds” though it does so by accessing the white, patriarchal lineage that is handed down to Jefferson Smith and all of his Senate colleagues, where there are no significant Afro-descended (or other non-white citizens) or women, anywhere to be found. As this curriculum and other cultural artifacts and products demonstrate, white privilege and its affordances have and continue to permeate history, culture, and social institutions. School being among these “social institutions,” it becomes incumbent upon educators and students to demand the variety of races, genders, and ethnicities befitting the diverse world in which we live.

Through my inquiry into race in terms of Afro-descended, U.S. identity/ies here, I have exposed the problematic script governing the interrelations and power dynamics of black/white social constructs, as seen in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* via the *Story of Movies* curriculum. Paying careful attention to visual and linguistic tropes, the complicated and nuanced treatment (and denial) of a multiplicity of black identities is brought to the fore. In addition, the contours of race as probed here have been shown as historically inaccurate, and further mystified by (white, masculine) gender formulations. Furthermore, when connected back to larger issues of institutional inequalities—namely in relation to schools, prisons, affirmative action/policy debates, and media/artistic forms—practices of U.S. racialization are shown to perform in contradictory fashion, existing across these spaces in irreconcilable ways.

In an age where race is being talked about more than ever (due in part to the 2008 presidential election of Barack Obama) do analyses of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (in

the academic, public, and *Story of Movies*-specific spheres) still balk at (and ultimately decline) the opportunity to question specific human behaviors and institutional frameworks that use and rely upon structural racialized violence as a governing mechanism or tool of domination masquerading as order? Such a stance (i.e. one that is uncritical) mobilizes the assumption that the same accountability, power, and reckoning apply equally to each member of a society, without taking into account power relations and oppression. This is further complicated by social standing and positions by what Collins (2000) refers to as “the matrix of domination” (p.21, 246-250) which would stand to reason that the disenfranchised in the context of this study—economically disadvantaged or students with low socioeconomic status, many of them non-white—should not be subject to the apolitical and depoliticizing practices of race as construed by the *Story of Movies* curriculum. And while debates continue on the complex socio-cultural status of race, race relations and racial identity/ies in American, this curriculum purports to answer the question: who’s black, who’s white, who knows? Ignoring the impossibility, the audacity, and the inevitable array of further questions that any attempt to definitively answer such a question implies.

Chapter 5: “Citizenship, WWII and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*: Constructing (U.S.) National Identity in Post-9/11”

“The category of the stateless is reproduced not simply by the nation-state but by a certain operation of power that seeks to forcibly align nation with state, one that takes the hyphen, as it were, as chain.” (--Judith Butler, 2006)

Introduction

According to historian Eric Foner, (2003) “like all momentous events, September 11th is a remarkable teaching opportunity—but only if we use it to open rather than to close debate. Critical intellectual analysis is our responsibility—to ourselves and to our students” (p. 30). He also elaborates on the critical intellectual analysis he calls for stating:

...it is our [educators’] task to insist that the study of history should transcend boundaries rather than reinforcing or reproducing them. In the wake of September 11, it is all the more imperative that the history we teach must be a candid appraisal of our own society's strengths and weaknesses, not simply an exercise in self-celebration.... (p.30)

This chapter devotes itself to Foner’s challenge to educators and students, taking up his imperative as justification for analyzing the role of citizenship as constructed within *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* as it appears in the *Story of Movies* curriculum. Because research on the film (see Smoodin, 1996) locates it as providing a spectacle of

“history” and “patriotism,” I assert the importance of evaluating these concepts as they now interface with post-9/11 society. Additionally, Smoodin points out that the film (as a form of cultural production) became “the place to depict the nation’s history, to explain its government, and to promote unproblematic loyalty to its institutions” (p. 9). I not only agree with Smoodin, but I contend moreover that the *Story of Movies* curriculum is reliant upon the recuperation of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* because of its textual systems that function thus, in an attempt to re-create, in these years immediately following September 11, “an official culture that could be shared by all Americans despite deep ethnic, regional, racial, religious, and class differences” (p. 9). The same imperative to “legitimate a national culture of patriotism” that, according to Foner (2003) is “newly relevant” now— that of the nation as homogenizing force with mediating ‘difference’ as insignificant—also guided the post-Civil War and post-WWII eras, according to Smoodin.

In keeping with patriotic ideals of the past—particularly as connected to national government and leadership, each of the films featured in the *Story of Movies* curriculum series showcase white, male leadership in small communities and in government offices. Women and “people of color” are marginalized within the original contexts of the films, a fact that the curriculum materials attempt to expeditiously justify as unproblematic with minimal controversy, as shown in the previous chapters. The *SoM* materials provided for *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (particularly the Teacher’s Guide) are fraught with excuses as to why gender and race are configured as such.

With attention to women’s roles and Afro-descended persons, I argue these depictions as the most salient “other” identities in the film and materials. Moreover, I use

them to exemplify larger concerns with regard to racial diversity and ethnicity that are bound up within the curriculum's reification of a black/white binary, its monochromatic terminology "people of color," and its politically correct movement toward a neoliberal post-race or colorblind stance. As explored in the two previous chapters, I argue that conceptually race and gender in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* become instrumental in two ways. First, each in its own right must be examined for the ways in which its multiple/plural constructions are produced and enforced in the film and corresponding materials, and secondly that these categories must be understood together in terms of the ways in which their absence, dismissal, and reversal are integrated into the version of citizenship that the curriculum and film perform, and thereby promoted as the desired form to students. In this chapter, I attempt to synthesize notions of femininity and Afro-descended personhood in this curriculum (as presented in Chapters 3 and 4) to extrapolate and comment more broadly on other systems relevant to the production of American, post-9/11 citizenship.

Post-9/11 scholarship figures heavily here, as does the curriculum's use of war and national conflict (namely the Second World War/WWII) in conjunction with Frank Capra's biography as a site for locating the white, American immigrant. I also cite the film's themes, plots, and imagery in an attempt to further identify features that are symbolically indicative of nationhood and patriotic citizenship. In other words, this chapter devotes itself to the culmination of findings on race and gender (as seen through examining marginalized groups—women and Afro-descendants) as brought into proximity with curriculum materials that centralize the becoming of nation/national citizen through socio-political processes. This mode of synthesis and analysis provides

possible understandings of how the film *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and contemporary materials interface with elements of post-9/11 culture to produce a desired version of nation and citizen.

Intersectional analysis, including an ideological critique, feminist deconstruction, and applied post-9/11 theoretical reading through the gaze of new historicism, reveal three primary ways in which citizenship works within the curriculum: through engagement with the Second World War, by using aesthetics of visual culture/American patriotic iconography to strategically highlight the nation, and by paradigmatically aligning director Frank Capra's autobiography with characteristics of patriotic service and belonging. It is noteworthy here that women's roles and the roles of non-white persons (Asian, Latina, African, Muslim, Chicana, and otherwise) are subordinated within and subordinate to each of these areas, as the continued focus of the curriculum places emphasis on dominant paradigms of white masculinity as the normative signifier of national identity and citizenship.

Methods/Interpretive Framework

This chapter takes as its starting point Research Questions 1 and 3 (*How are national ideals, identities, and citizenship being constructed in this curriculum? And: How is America's past and present being constructed through the use of this film; how are discourses within the current/post-9/11 context conversant with curriculum products?*) In order to address these areas, visual iconography and geography of place (location) were important to my analysis. The film creates a national aesthetic by highlighting (multiple times) American ideology as visible in the nation's capitol, Washington D.C. In addition, it is important to note the imagery and language used in

the curriculum materials in conjunction with the film, which taken together enable the maintenance of a narrow portrait of American citizenship—past and present. This type of citizenship, particularly when taking into consideration the post-9/11 environment as marked by increased attention to and surveillance of racial and ethnic identity/ies (particularly those of Muslim and Middle Eastern descent) has been used to create and sustain racist policies, boundaries in relation to immigration law, and restrictions on civil liberties and other social sanctions.

To account for the original, social context of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* as an American cultural artifact and in its subsequent *SoM* incarnation, I inject cultural historian Judith Smith (2004) in order to provide a more nuanced account of identity politics as represented by and through American Cinema in the WWII and immediate post-WWII time frames. Smith's work extends important dialogues on race and gender in the films of this period. According to Smith, popular cinema in American culture during the war years (1940-45) was dominated by what she terms 'looking back stories.' Such stories feature a nostalgic embrace of ethnic, working-class families making the transition to the middle-class mainstream, striving for the (white) American Dream.

When tracing American film representations from those 'war years' to these 'war years' (2001-present) in terms of thematic tropes, I turn from Smith's appraisal to the work of Quay and Damico (2010) on film in relation to 9/11 and post-9/11 popular media. Conversely, following September 11th 2001, Quay and Damico document that Superhero and Action-Hero films exploded in popularity and were the top grossing features at the box office. A proliferation of films directly dealing with war and middle-eastern conflict also emerge. Furthermore, they assert that "the popularity of these kinds

of films can be understood from a number of perspectives relevant to post-9/11 life: an assertion of traditional masculinity³⁶; the idea that Americans wanted to be “saved” by superior, yet flawed heroes, etc....” (p. 181). In this vein, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* is fittingly recuperated by the *Story of Movies*, as it advances its main character, Jefferson Smith, as a hero of the people: a flawed, but idealistic man who believes in his country. This national (so-called) desire for salvation through characters like Smith (and even contemporary, larger than life heroes) interlocks with war and national conflicts that threaten to jeopardize or unseat the dominant order. The curriculum materials include several activities that contextualize *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* in accordance with its proximity to the escalating global events that would eventually culminate in American entry into WWII. Here, one begins to see parallels between *MSGtW* in its original context and in its contemporary one: as an American artifact whose value changes through the prism of war(s).

For the remainder of this chapter, using intersectional analysis, I focus on evaluating the materials that feature World War II, provided as a unit on propaganda within the curriculum for political representations of nationhood and citizenship. Following this evaluation, I link recurrent concepts to themes from the film, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, itself, as well as to issues of race and gender—mostly centered around feminine roles and Afro-descended identities—expounded upon in the previous two chapters. These findings are then read against current conceptions of post-9/11 American culture, as defined by and through a number of theoretical lenses and academic

³⁶ For more on a return to traditional masculinity/ies in the U.S. in the wake of 9/11, see Faludi’s *The Terror Dream*, 2007.

domains, including but not limited to philosophy, cultural studies, feminist studies, and history, which I detail in the next section.

As a result there are two primary domains/categories into which data from this chapter fit: Aesthetics/ideology and World War II/propaganda. Through intersectional, theoretical positioning I attend to race, gender, and post-9/11 culture as working in concert, and sometimes in overlapping fashion, to create uncomplicated, linear modes of citizenship and participatory democracy. As Patricia Hill Collins (1998) points out:

...the United States as a large national family with racial families hierarchically arranged within it. Representing the epitome of racial purity that is also associated with U.S. national interests, Whites constitute the most valuable citizens. In this racialized nation-state, Native Americans, African-Americans, Mexican-Americans, and Puerto Ricans become second-class citizens.... (p. 70)

The curriculum's oversimplified nation and citizenship discourses imply a just society, thereby totally obscuring the challenges and barriers inherent within existing structures, failing to address their continued legacy of exclusion, as Collins notes here. Additionally, the shortcomings inherent in these nation-citizen discourses become even more pronounced in their formations of race, given an increasingly globalizing set of socio-identity relations.

A third distinct area emerges within the data set that includes the student materials that specifically position Frank Capra as a model (European and white) immigrant-citizen. Autobiographical materials frame Capra in a story of American meritocracy³⁷ as

³⁷ See McNamee and Miller (2004) for an examination of meritocracy as a myth, in light of the politics of race, class, gender that dictate trajectories of upward mobility.

the hard-working immigrant who, through service to his country and hard work, was able to transcend his lower/working class status and achieve the American dream of success as defined by and through achieving status, fame, and fortune. The American Dream remains central to citizen goals and corporate agendas in the post-9/11 environment. Like Capra before them, a plethora of racially, ethnically diverse young people immigrate to America in search of this dream. Ideologically, the dream is connected to the notion of ‘freedom’ in the most conservative sense; not freedom constituted as (or through) an exercise or performance of progressive, inclusive visions of American identity/ies seeking the redefinition of ‘citizen’ beyond the hyphen or beyond the ‘nation.’

Framework for understanding what constitutes “post 9/11 culture”

As a feminist intersectional researcher, I find it important to continuously reflect upon the ways in which identity/ies (particularly those that are marginalized) are constructed within schooling relationships. In other words, teachers, the materials they use, and the students they teach are all variables that must be understood in terms of how they interrelate in processes of meaning-making and knowledge acquisition. Citizenship within the parameters of national identity/ies and social relations is one of many factors that influence students’ relationships to classroom texts. So what happens when the content of particular texts position and/or exclude particular identities, not just in terms of representation, but along the lines of race and gender mandates in accordance with foregrounding a particular version of history in tandem with contemporary (i.e. post-9/11) social paradigms?

In attempting to answer this question, it becomes important to understand how the *Story of Movies* and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* frames students as spectator-citizens

of sorts. In the previous chapters, I explored dynamics of race and gender, mainly through the scope of Afro-descendants and femininity/women's roles, with some attention to whiteness and masculinity. This chapter now takes race and gender, more broadly, into consideration when attempting to analyze the patriotic sentiments and national, democratic ideological structure of the film and materials. While one could focus solely on the implications of 'history' as it exists within the film and materials, because *SoM* frames the materials as cultural *and* historical, I would be remiss to ignore the implications of contemporary cultural contexts in which students receive this curriculum. I hypothesize that who they are now, or perceive themselves to be, is informed by national imperatives to promote a very narrow version of diversity and to restore Americans to a conservative sense of citizenship, justified by and through 9/11 and the policies (social and governmental) that ensued in its wake.

War and the Legacy of National Belonging

The aftermath of 9/11 (henceforth referred to as 'post-9/11') was really a continuation of or return to a perceived need for increased loyalty and belonging under the auspices of national identity. Various scholars indicate that such 'national imperatives' to unify diverse populations under a rubric of shared cultural history and identity have been popular since the end of the Civil War period and peaked in the 1930's, as traced by increases in patriotic events and public icons.³⁸ The ethnic composition of the U.S. has shifted dramatically in the last twenty years, making it more

³⁸ For more on conflating history, culture, and representation toward nationalist agendas, see Wightman, Fox, and Lears' *The Power of Culture: Critical Essays in American History* (1993); and Bodnar's *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (1992).

complex to corral the various ethnic/racial groups into a solitary, easily defined ‘American citizen.’³⁹ This dilemma has no probable resolution, and therefore must be understood along a historic trajectory that accounts for identity-based social relations from WWII to the present. We could go back further, but for the purposes of addressing the *SoM* curriculum and the contemporary classroom setting, I have confined my foray to 1939-2010. This allows a scope broad enough to account for the time that *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* debuted, World War II and the post-war era, and the contemporary context during which the curriculum was developed and in which students are receiving it.

The term ‘post 9/11’ means various things. Mostly it conjures thoughts/memories directly connected to the actual event of September 11th, 2001; it also invokes imagery of New York City immediately following the attacks, but I turn my attention to the ways in which scholars have been using ‘post-9/11’ to theorize understandings of history and culture and national identity, as these areas are the focal point of my work. When combined, the various perspectives offered through scholarship across a variety of fields offer us a kaleidoscopic lens, if you will, that can be shifted slightly to form an array of possible views. I take each of the following perspectives into consideration, in my intersectional approach to analyzing the data for configurations of ‘citizenship’ in the *SoM* materials.

A general descriptive of immediate changes that took place after 9/11 comes from Quay and Damico (2010) who point out that, after 9/11, Americans found themselves in a

³⁹ See Katz and Stern’s *One Nation Divisible: What America Was and What It Is Becoming* (2006).

transitional period with regard to their traditional beliefs and behaviors. They go on to assert that general trends pervading the country during this time focused an increased emphasis on family, friends, religion, and philanthropy. As for negative effects in the aftermath of 9/11, hate crimes increased, people became fearful of traveling, and ordinary events seemed dangerous to attend. Purchase and advertisement of “patriotic products” increased (2010, pp. 17-20).⁴⁰

The local context provided by Quay and Damico can be understood more broadly by thinking through large-scale questions of post-9/11 in relation to race, ethnicity, and global relations. A good starting point for situating other aspects of cultural identity in relation to post-9/11 (U.S.) nationality comes from Samuel Huntington (1996), as quoted in Jennifer Jackson Preece (2005):

In the post-Cold War world, the most important distinctions amongst peoples are not ideological, political or economic. They are cultural. Peoples and nations are attempting to answer the most basic question humans can face: who are we? And they are answering that question in the traditional way humans have answered it, by reference to the things that mean most to them. People define themselves in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs and institutions. (2005, p. 1)

This characterization of people and their affinity group tendencies is accurate in terms of the local. Of course, one could argue particularly from a critical race, postcolonial, or feminist standpoint that ideological, political, and economic distinctions

⁴⁰ Maira, 2009 and Faludi, 2007 make similar assertions- the former with attention to ethnicity and the latter with emphasis on gender.

are the very ‘institutions’ through which ancestry, religion, language, history, customs and values come to have meaning and social implications. These mutually constitutive and not separate enterprises are among the plethora of factors that form categories whose flexibility contracts during and after national/global conflicts and crises. Similar to the aftermath of WWII, the post-9/11 cultural environment contends with the aforementioned areas of life identified as belonging generally to the ‘post-Cold War world.’

Important and central to all cultural foundations of citizenship is conflict and/or war. I will show that *SoM* materials attest to this. In the context of schooling and society in the U.S., specifically in terms of the materials being examined in this chapter, war is central in the production of citizenship because of its participatory requirements: one must choose a side. But Preece (2005) goes on to rhetorically ask: “Is there any evidence to suggest that a multicultural paradigm of security is gaining adherents in the wake of September 11?” Furthermore she notes “identity, culture and security questions of identity and culture are among the most contested issues in political life because they speak to an inherent tension in human affairs between competing desires for freedom and belonging” (p. 2).

In his academic/scholarly blog postings, Grant McCracken (2002) also takes up issues of freedom and belonging. McCracken points out that:

9/11 created a great lining up of the heavens—a return to all the old verities and traditions as we closed the wagons against the intruder, and now, little by little, we are returning to the full diversity of American life. There will always be an irreducible remainder here, a changed sense of Americanness, but slowly and surely it is a return to business as usual, and this is individualism in the

marketplace (so that great outpouring of collectivity now goes away) and in the cultural world in a way this is a part of the war effort: after all, it is in some sense a struggle between open and closed societies. (para 3)

McCracken's assertion has complex implications for national identities. He doesn't elaborate on his notions of closed versus open societies in relation to the war efforts impacts on individual and collective structures as specifically related to post-9/11, but he does well to indicate the way in which 'Americanness' both contracted and expanded as a response to 9/11. However, a "return to the full diversity of American life" remains to be seen. By carefully interpreting curriculum cues, the question of what even constitutes "the full diversity of American life" is at stake in relation to institutional (cultural and public policy) structures whose power extends to influence the ways in which individuals enact their identity/ies as citizens.

An articulation of the post-9/11 American citizen, in terms of national identity and status, is taken up by feminist philosopher Judith Butler and post-colonial scholar Gayatri Spivak. According to Butler and Spivak (2006), in the wake of the events of September 11th, 2001 (and even possibly preceding it due to various military forays into the Middle East starting in the 1990's (i.e. Operation Desert Storm, Operation Desert Shield, and so forth), U.S. citizens find ourselves both "juridically bound" and simultaneously unhinged by the notion of the nation-state. The nation-state as a nuanced formation in an ever-globalizing world context is important to grasp in terms of social identity/ies and citizenship status. As noted in their text *Who Sings the Nation-State?*:

...the state binds in the name of the nation, conjuring a certain notion of the nation forcibly, if not powerfully, then it also unbinds, releases, expels, banishes.

...it expels precisely through an exercise of power that depends upon barriers and prisons and, so, in the mode of a certain containment. (p. 4)

As boundaries shift and become more fluid, we find ourselves in a state of constant flux as citizens. This flux includes attempts to fit our ethnicity/ies and cultural plural identities (those items we privilege in defining ourselves, according to Jackson-Preece, 2005; 2006) into traditional forms of nationhood and patriotic requirements contained therein.⁴¹ In other words, what it means to be and perform 'citizenship' identity is contradictory given the intricate and often conflicting imperatives of U.S. imperialism on one hand, and global interdependence of nations. Historian Eric Foner (2003) offers a critique of the re-emergence of U.S. imperialism in the wake of 9/11 stating:

The idea that the West has exclusive access to reason, liberty, and tolerance, ignores both the relative recency of the triumph of such values within the West and the debates over creationism, abortion rights, and other issues that suggest that commitment to such values is hardly unanimous. The difference between positing civilizations with unchanging essences and analyzing change within and interaction between various societies is the difference between thinking mythically and thinking historically. If September 11 makes us think historically-not mythically-about our nation and its role in the world, then perhaps some good will have come out of that tragic event. (p. 30)

⁴¹ For more on the complexities of hyphenated selves in relation to multiracial and multiethnic identities, with an emphasis on Muslim and Middle-Eastern, American youth in the post-9/11 U.S., see Maira, 2009 and Fine and Sirin, 2007.

Rather than addressing every possible contentious perspective or idea within the nation/citizen/globalization debate, a more principal concern for this portion of my research is to build a foundational paradigm of post-9/11 characteristics that will work to advance analysis of the curriculum. Such a paradigm includes elements of material and figurative citizenship, which several key frameworks (from different disciplines, as noted above) work together to produce. Leaning on these key concepts, attributes, and criteria I assess configurations of who the ideal U.S. citizen ‘is’ in a post-9/11 society and how those configurations interface with and are promoted or rejected by and through the *Story of Movies* curriculum for *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*.

National Identity and the Historical Politics of Representation

Within each configuration of nation/citizen a culture of war and/or war itself is established as central to the development of citizenship and national identity. The primacy of war in civilian-nation relations that culminate in citizen identity is evident within *Story of Movies MSGtW* curriculum materials, particularly because the unit on propaganda featured within this section is structured exclusively around WWII. It does not, however, provide any U.S.-based social context for understanding the war’s impact on gender and race relations, prioritizing instead an oversimplified narrative of rival governmental ideologies, democracy versus totalitarianism, and a need to defeat the enemy defined as the Axis Powers in an archetypal “good versus evil” mythology. Additionally, the curriculum never makes any direct connections between World War II and any of the subsequent wars in which the U.S. has participated, including the Vietnam

War, the multiple conflicts/occupations constituting the War on Terror, and the military occupations, operations, and deployments it has spawned and justified.

For the purposes of defining citizenship in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and the corresponding curriculum materials, I take together cultural customs as posited by Preece (2005; 2006) and Foner's (2003) 'new historicism' or the notion that history develops based on contemporary happenings through which reflection on past relations and present discourses/conditions can be traced. I resituate these philosophical understandings within tensions between personal identity/ies and national requirements of freedom and belonging and open versus closed societies, to understand how the curriculum packages American citizenship at present. Leaving my previous findings on Afro-descendant identity and feminine roles in the background for now, I go on to hypothesize, *SoM*'s construction of American identity as a singular monolithic object that is obtainable through specific participatory modes symbolized in a reverie over our nation's capitol, the site from which U.S. democracy emanates, while weaving gender and race issues and post-9/11 parallels throughout.

The capitol, Washington D.C., is recognizable as a site of monuments that commemorate war and government, the nexus of our patriotic core. Furthermore this ideal signifier is coupled with another important feature of American discourse: meritocracy as a powerful mythological construct that supports capitalist epistemology and has come to be regarded as central to achieving the American Dream of success and wealth (McNamee and Miller, 2004). *Story of Movies* advances the myth of meritocracy by showcasing director, Frank Capra's personal narrative—namely his transition from

immigrant to culturally assimilated citizen, then coupling his narrative with a strategic insistence on American superiority as evidenced by the nation's role in World War II.

Aesthetics of Nation and the Citizen-Student

Visual cues are central to an understanding of how *MSGtW* uses the cultural iconography of the nation's capitol (Washington D.C.) to connect and impart patriotic sentiment and government (politics) to students. Because so many decisions have been made with consideration to 'pre' and 'post-9/11' with attention to the relationship(s) between masculinity/gender, race, and national pride (Yuval-Davis, 1997; Osterund & Sinha, 1998; Faludi 2007; Maira, 2009; Dowler, 2002), the performance of the "proper citizen" is newly relevant (Foner, 2003) and requires the establishment of a direct connection between young adults and the (version of) American 'history' that precedes them. In other words, films like *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* become the visual reality of a mythological past, steeped in American-defined democratic virtues that claim to promote a just society, governed by fair laws, that provides equal opportunity for all. Already having shown both the film and the curriculum's limitations in terms of dealing with (even now) race and gender equity issues, this claim is problematic.

One example of how the mythological past functions visually can be seen in Screening Sheet 2-7: "A Patriotic Montage." This student activity accompanies a film montage of Jefferson Smith's tour of Washington, D.C. on the day he arrives in the capital. Students are asked to identify and "list specific patriotic images" in one column, and to identify the music accompanying each image in the other column. It then hand-holds students through three questions that heavy-handedly draw their attention to the montage's possible intended, emotional response on viewers. The music includes:

“Yankee Doodle Dandee,” “My Country ‘Tis of Thee,” “The Star-Spangled Banner,” “When Johnny Comes Marching Home,” “Taps,” and “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.” All of the songs contain direct references and allusions to patriotic, national heritage featuring themes of grandeur, bravery/heroism, democracy and freedom, and the perils and victories of war. The curriculum is ambiguous as to intentionality here, but given its overall lack of critical attention to issues that may be deemed ‘controversial,’ it seems as though this activity serves as an inculcation of the trappings of American freedom and national identity. Furthermore, because viewers see the images through the eyes of Jefferson Smith, a white-male identified position is assumed and is privileged.

I would be remiss if I didn’t take this opportunity to reconnect the *SoM* appropriation of *MSGtW* with the use of this film in the 1940 curriculum guide *Photoplay Studies*. In similar fashion to the aforementioned *Story of Movies* framing, the *Photoplay Studies* guide functioned to attempt to direct audience reception. Smoodin’s (1996) assessment of the 1940 guide indicates that “by stressing issues of cinematic form...the guide sought to assure a reading...on the part of students that made a critique of political systems far less plausible....” (p. 7). A critique of political systems in the film then was as unlikely as a critique of race and gender in the film is now, if students and teachers attend to cues given by both sets of curricula. Instead, aesthetic enjoyment and visual identification via recognition of national spaces and artifacts are stressed in conjunction with Euro-American understandings of what these symbols mean.

Unsurprisingly, and as Chapter 4 spends time explicating, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* features a predominantly male cast, with white hegemonic masculinity at the fore. Jefferson Smith as played by Jimmy Stewart is the consummate, average, white man

who redeems the nation from the kind of corruption that potentially leads to fascism. The film reminds viewers of what (white) men need to do for their country. The film's prominent featuring of men (the members of Congress and the Press) and boys (specifically Boy Rangers, who are depicted as reader's of *Boy Stuff* and as Congressional pages in Washington, presumably the next generation of leaders) make it an easy target for gender analysis. However, beyond gender issues, it becomes important to recognize the connection between maleness and leadership as essential characteristics of ideal citizenship. After all, white men hold the majority of governmental leadership positions.⁴² White men typically outrank women in terms of military status, in spite of the fact that since Vietnam, African-Americans have served disproportionately in our armed services (Muhammad, 2011).

This promotion of white-male leadership in the film and curriculum materials neatly parallels the prominence of older, white, experienced men who serve in the majority of government (and other national) leadership positions in the post-9/11 U.S. (Faludi, 2007; Damico and Quay, 2010; Dowler, 2002). In terms of the U.S. Senate (since this is the specific capacity in which Smith serves in the film, and much of the film's plot relies upon the U.S. Senate) there are currently 17 female senators—all of whom are white. Historically, we have had only one black female Senator. Within the Teacher's Guide (in reference to Graphic Organizer 4.1: "That was Then, This is Now") the curriculum language states:

⁴² According to the "ethnic" section of www.senate.gov, only six African-Americans have served in the Senate—only one of whom was female. To date, there have been five Asian-American senators, seven Hispanic-American senators, and three Native-American senators, none of whom are female.

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington was made during a period of history that generally excluded women and people of color from holding political office. Society's attitudes in 1939 were such that the realm of politics belonged to men, primarily white men. Those shots depict historically accurate practices. (Chpt.4, L.1)

Based on the curriculum language, the attitude that “the realm of politics belonged to men, primarily white men” is squarely rooted in the past—1939 to be exact. But as mentioned previously, current U.S. government statistics reflect that such an attitude still exists, which the curriculum completely ignores—possibly because an acknowledgment of this sort may interfere with, disrupt, or impede their desire to portray racism, sexism, and inequality as bygone social issues. The post-race frame and colorblind multicultural imperatives herein require a progress narrative of minority inclusion. Thus, we can never ask *why* the U.S. Senate is still predominantly a white male enterprise in the new millennium, and what that may mean for policies and laws enacted to govern a diverse population. During this same period, in alternative venues and public outlets outside of the American government, society's attitudes about the realm of politics were being argued, debated, and critiqued in artistic and activist social movements, namely The Harlem Renaissance (1920's-30's), though the curriculum materials never engage with this.

Also, while the curriculum includes consideration of some historical materials representing events and trends before, during, and after the Second World War, the curriculum producers made no effort to include information on male and female Afro-descendants' participation in U.S. military efforts and in the U.S. government directly following the film's release. This dearth of diverse representation may not be shocking

and pointing it out may not be a groundbreaking observation, but what is crucial to note here is the way in which it implies leadership as white and male-dominated within the public realm, re-relegating women and U.S. ethnic minorities to the status of second-class citizens. This is in keeping with social practices that enable the U.S. to convey hierarchal levels of citizenship in accordance with race, ethnicity, and immigration status (Hill Collins, 1998). This trend (exclusion/erasure of non-whites) in the curriculum seems anti-progressive in light of the increasing classroom diversity of post-9/11 U.S. students (for more on diversity and post-9/11 youth culture, see Maira, 2009 and Fine and Sirin, 2007).

Furthermore, conspicuously absent is any dialogue on race/ethnicity more widely represented and portrayed in art, literature, theatre, and film in the years around the Second World War, as a means of interrogating social conditions and citizenship identity in the U.S. In her book, *Visions of Belonging: Family Stories, Popular Culture, and Postwar Democracy, 1940-1960* (2004), Judith Smith identifies a fascinating moment of opportunity during WWII/in between WWII and McCarthyism and the Cold War Era, when left-leaning writers were able to challenge contemporary views of ethnicity and race and expand their representation in cultural artifacts. Smith also notes that the New Deal and popular anti-fascism made ethnic inclusion more acceptable during this time. The absence of this information within the curriculum materials is problematic.

In the same way that the curriculum suggests that history and culture can be understood separately, so do the *Story of Movies* curriculum producers limit the meaning of propaganda to definitions convenient to their narrative. The *SoM* Teacher's Guide curriculum producers concede, "a carefully crafted film controls what the audience sees and how...influencing what they think and feel. A film can be used to destructive ends,

just as a weapon can be” (2006, p. 128). However, this statement is connected directly to the World War II propaganda unit, eliding the fact that *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and the accompanying curriculum can be read as ideological propaganda, both through what is made visible and what is left out.

Many of the activities in the curriculum are focused around American politics, U.S. government, and visual imagery of the nation’s capitol. The film *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* features seven total montage sequences of governmental buildings and patriotic monuments in Washington D.C. This is an inordinate number of scenes. Considering that the main action of the movie *only* takes place in Washington, the purpose of so many montages cannot be to orient us to place. Obviously then, these scenes serve a different purpose: to indoctrinate what I characterize as a different type of ‘literacy.’ Because this film was made in the 1930’s, it could not have anticipated September 11th and its impact on American society and culture. However, September 11th has been made into a main event in the global and cultural, political psyche. Hence it becomes possible to argue that the creators of the curriculum made deliberate decisions to include this film in what we may now term a ‘post-911’ cultural context.

The curriculum makes room for multiple discussions of war and for the autobiography of Frank Capra, while dismissing or glossing over direct, sustained discussions of race and gender. In no way does the curriculum attempt to link or account for multi-ethnic identified students—or teachers for that matter. Maira (2009) refers to this trope as “assimilative citizenship implying that we are all Americans” (p. 75) or citizens, first and foremost, as our primary category of identification. Though Hill Collins’ (1998) work reminds us that:

...the United States [can be seen] as a large national family with racial families hierarchically arranged within it. Representing the epitome of racial purity that is also associated with U.S. national interests...Native Americans, African-Americans, Mexican-Americans, and Puerto Ricans become second-class citizens, whereas people of color from the Caribbean, Asia, Latin America, and Africa encounter more difficulty becoming naturalized citizens than immigrants from European nations.” Although, “via the principle that all citizens stand equal before the law...the United States aims to craft one nation out of many and to transcend the limitations of ethnic nationalism. (p. 76)

Generally, both women argue that non-white minorities in the U.S. are unified by the nation-state through citizenship to the maximum extent possible in the fight against the enemy, but unification here acts more as an illusion of equality, rather than a cogent form of solidarity. Interestingly, these theorizations on war and identity/ies are in relation to the present wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, but they could easily be read onto or mapped against the ways in which World War II is operationalized in the *SoM* curriculum.

Consider again that Capra created the short pseudo-documentary, *The Negro Soldier* (1943) devoted to recruiting African-Americans for military service, with the promise of greater access to the benefits of American citizenship. In other words, minorities are encouraged to ignore their own marginalization in the local context in order to support a national context that relies on what Butler and Spivak (2007) term “geostrategic imperatives of empire and imperial practices that belie the U.S. rhetoric of freedom and democracy” (p. 41). Butler and Spivak take this concept even further by asking us to consider the meaning of immigrants singing the U.S. National anthem in

Spanish. The complications of multiracial and multiethnic identifications and citizenship status are removed by the *SoM* curriculum, in favor of an attempt at achieving an apolitical stance that in turn does little more than re-inscribe white masculinity as the dominant mode of citizenry, which corresponds with a post-race philosophy that is merely the repackaging of white ideals.

Since the film itself is not diverse in terms of racial representation, the flattening of difference amongst U.S. citizens as strategically deployed by *SoM* throughout the unit on WWII and propaganda is even more problematic. An intersectional focus reveals that the curriculum's language of diversity always appears as the homogenizing phrases, "people of color" and/or "women and minorities." These neo-liberal parlances appear infrequently throughout the Teacher's Guide and student activities. Such general monikers never consider (with due diligence) the relationships between American students of German, Italian, and Japanese descent in relation to the World War II materials presented; nor do they engage the context of U.S. Muslim and Middle-Eastern minority students in the post-9/11, U.S. environment. This, coupled with the film's overall disregard of race/ethnicity (as shown interrogated with attention to Afro-descendants in Chapter 4) form a curriculum discourse that is akin to the pervasive rhetoric of "color-blindness" that is rampant in our society today.

The only important or critical difference necessitating recognition is the difference between 'us' and 'them': the United States versus the Axis Powers. Though the U.S. did not act in isolation against Germany, Italy, and Japan, the materials portray U.S.-leadership as the most significant portion of the Allied Forces. In fact, the curriculum includes *no* activities on the Allied Forces—only several mentions of the

alliance between England, France, and the United States—which works to elevate a heightened sense of American patriotism and pride.

A specific example of U.S. dominance in the Second World War that directly connects *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* with the war effort is included in Reading Activity 4-5: “Cheers Overseas.” In this activity students are given an excerpt from a news article detailing a French audience’s response to *MSGtW* in 1942, during the Nazi occupation of France. The information provided includes the fact that this was the last American film shown in France, just prior to the Nazi ban on English-language films. Again, America, this time by virtue of its cinema, is positioned as the arbiter of democracy from which freedom (culturally, historically, and politically) apparently emanates. Furthermore, the activity distinctly combines American history and American mythology (Foner, 2007) such that students are not asked to critically differentiate between the two.

In addition, the activity asks that students respond to the prompt “Explain in your own words the meaning of the last sentence of this article” (p. 124). The last sentence of the article is as follows, and is made in reference to the French audience’s “cheers and acclamation” that punctuated Mr. Smith’s “famous speech ...on man’s rights and dignity”: “It was as though the joys, suffering, love, and hatred the hopes and wishes of an entire people who value freedom above everything, found expression for the last time...” (p. 124).

The Teacher’s Guide answer key for this activity states, “Answers will vary but should focus on the main idea that the film seemed to capture the hopes and dreams of all France, a country that had lost its liberty” (2006, p. 124). This activity and the anticipated

student responses position America as superior in global relations, the idea that we liberated France, as opposed to the U.S. being allied with the French Resistance, looms large within this activity. The next section takes a closer look at the structuring of ‘them’ (the Evil Axis) through Capra’s series *Why We Fight*. This is an area in which the curriculum walks a slippery slope between defining and categorizing texts as ‘documentary’ and ‘propaganda’ to interesting effect.

Comparatively, Smoodin (1996) pinpoints similar rhetoric (as illustrated in the newspaper quote) in many periodicals circulating at the time of the film’s release. In fact value-laden statements and speech regarding the film’s iterations and representations of American freedom and democracy as patriotic citizen ideals are so common that they actually comprise what Smoodin terms “a standard response to *Mr. Smith*” (p. 7). Also, the *Photoplay Guide*—the *SoM*’s curriculum forerunner—signals teachers to “persuade students not to view the film politically,” going so far as to “instruct each student to disregard any possible link between *Mr. Smith* and contemporary politics” (pp. 14-15). In Smoodin’s estimation, it was possible for the *Photoplay Guide* curriculum to function so blatantly because during this time perspectives in Education (philosophical, curricular, foundational) “generally supported the notion of education-as-indoctrination into American values” (p. 14).

Side by side, the 1940 curriculum and the 2006 curriculum both aspire to position students as less than critical in relation to the film as a cultural text. To this end Smoodin notes, “The [*Photoplay Studies*] guide to *Mr. Smith* gave students a seemingly thorough instruction in citizenship...and in the history that all citizens need to know” (p. 15). The concept of instruction in citizenship is central to immigrant-Americans in that, “those

who wish to become adopted citizens must undergo a socialization process whereby they study important elements of U.S. culture” (Hill Collins, 1998, p. 72). But what are these so-called “important elements of U.S. culture”? Taken in terms of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* in the *SoM* curriculum, the history that *all citizens* need to know does not include the fact that only one non-white woman has ever been a U.S. Senator (out of a meager total of 39 women senators) or that only 20 minority men (Afro-descended, Asian, Hispanic, and Native-American) in total, have been United States Senators from 1870 to the present.⁴³

WWII, Propaganda, the Curriculum, and Post-9/11 Considerations

Read together and against each other, the activities in this section connect to and in some cases overlap with the aesthetics and ideologies explicated prior. It is important to see how each area constructs citizenship through war defined as a necessary patriotic act in the interest of preserving the American ideals of liberty, freedom, and democracy: without any self-reflexivity into the various contextual (social, historical, cultural) meaning of these terms, especially in relation to global relations. Images promoting American ideology in the film and materials (along with Frank Capra’s biography) place white men at the fore, making important decisions on behalf of the nation, which one could argue positions them as tightly controlling or reinforcing their own dominant characteristics and legacies of citizenship. The enterprise of freedom as something fought and won as requisite in establishing nationhood becomes critical in the materials featuring WWII.

⁴³ Refer to www.senate.gov/ for the “briefing on minority senators.”

In Screening Sheet 4-4: “The Axis Powers in 1939,” students view footage from Capra’s *Why We Fight* documentary series. [Note: it also coincides with the narrator’s script in Reading Activity 4-7.] Students are directed to “Remember! The target audience for this film was American servicemen about to go to war against the Axis Powers. The images, however, are from propaganda films and newsreels of Japan, Germany, and Italy.” This activity (as indicated in the previous section) constructs America as superior to and isolated from, though acting in concert with the other Allied forces. The Teacher’s Guide mentions that teachers should tell students that while Capra’s film *Prelude to War* won the first-ever Academy Award for Best Documentary, “studies suggest it did educate soldiers...but it did not necessarily inspire them to fight,” which meaningfully interrogates how successful the film was in reaching its goal to “boost military morale and influence public opinion” (p. 135). This information, while holding the potential to engage students in purposeful discussion of war, violence, peace, and social justice in a post-9/11 context instead functions as an ‘aside’ of sorts, peripheral information meant to provide additional context only.

Screening Sheet 4-5: “Propaganda in Wartime” features segments comprised of shots taken from Nazi propaganda films made in the 1930s. Students answer questions and fill in information based on sounds, images, and subtitles. Symbolism and imagery (the dragon, swastika, and ax) figure prominently. While this sequence is recognizable as a parallel to footage of the American capitol highlighted in Student activity 2.7 “A Patriotic Montage,” students are not prompted to make this connection. Another opportunity for studying the complexity of visual imagery, propaganda, and ideology

with attention to race, ethnicity, and nationhood is missed here. This absence is detrimental given students' heavily mediated, post-9/11 social environment.

Ultimately, the curriculum refers to Capra's work as documentary, while labeling the newsreels and footage from Japan, Italy and Germany, which he uses to construct a large portion of that work as "propaganda." The term 'propaganda' here is telling in that it delegitimizes the other countries' ability to represent their versions of the 'truth' while implying that their re-contextualization conforming to a logic of Capra's artistic vision can achieve the reality that the term 'documentary' seems to capture. Why is the teacher not at liberty to label and convey the films as either propaganda or documentary or to present students with explanations of both, followed by the option to choose?

The materials do state that all films have the potential to be seen as tools of ideology and propaganda, but it stops short of criticality and highlighting via activities and information the necessary complications that would allow for students to see and interrogate these relationships. As a result, we see America as the pinnacle of Western thought and democratic principles. The curriculum depicts white men as ideal citizens marching to war against the enemy of freedom, Nazi Germany, Italy, and Japan, with no mention of women, minorities, the Holocaust, or the recent post-9/11 wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Frank Capra: The Model Immigrant and the American Dream

The final element in the *Story of Movies* version of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* is Frank Capra's biography. As mentioned previously, the *Story of Movies* curriculum for *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* utilizes Frank Capra's narrative as a mode for imparting

citizenship standards.⁴⁴ Capra's is a rags-to-riches story that traces his humble beginnings as an immigrant to his assimilation into dominant white, male culture, and his rise through years of hard work in the film industry, to the status of legendary Hollywood director. Included in this narrative is his service in the U.S. armed forces as a Major for the Army. In this narrative, Capra is the foil to his own main character, Jefferson Smith; he is overcome with pride and belief in the great nation of America, in awe of its founding fathers, and seeking to serve as a model citizen protecting the virtues of freedom. In much the same way, through the teacher's guide and student materials, students are presented representations that would have them seek to identify with Smith and Capra under the logic of what Lauren Berlant (1993) deems "construction of a patriotic youth culture" and teachers are called upon to emphasize and reinforce this positioning while they too are being discursively produced as citizens by the curriculum.

In Reading Activity 1-4: "The Panic," an excerpt from Capra's biography, *The Name Above of the Title*, takes students into the mind of the director through a narrative of Capra's visit to Washington in 1938. It provides initial exposure regarding the pending American involvement in the Second World War. This activity introduces the concept of national solidarity in a time of war and establishes the "greatness" of America. Here, Capra is linked to the character of Jefferson Smith in terms of the awe he felt upon arriving in the nation's capitol. The text in the Student Activity Packet (2006) intimates that upon Capra's arrival in Washington D.C. he attended a press conference at the White House. "The president (Franklin Delano Roosevelt) sat...smiling confidently. Here was

⁴⁴ In his article "Compulsory Viewing for Every Citizen: *Mr. Smith* and the rhetoric of reception" (1996) Smoodin indicates that Frank Capra is positioned within the study/appreciation guide as an early auteur and featured heavily throughout.

the leader of the greatest democratic country in the world.” Capra says to himself: “Panic hit me. During a crisis, shouldn’t all Americans stand behind their leaders? *What am I doing? This is no time to make a movie criticizing the United States Senate!*” (p. 4). This activity establishes the connection between *MSGtW* and the U.S.’s pending entry into World War II, though this linkage is not further explored. Also, here the text tends towards promoting Maira’s (2009) ‘assimilative citizenship’ concept, that the nation/citizen identity has priority over all other personal, ethnic, gender, or sexual identities in times of conflict/crisis/war. What’s more, Capra establishes himself as humble before “the leader of the greatest democratic country in the world” (p. 4) here, by questioning his own personal liberties, in this case, freedom of expression. Capra resolves his personal crisis about the plot and content of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* with a visit to the Lincoln Memorial, much like the one Jefferson Smith makes in the film when he is feeling wary and defeated.

In Screening Sheet 2.1: “Meet Frank Capra,” students complete a Q&A sheet that goes along with an autobiographical documentary film-clip that briefly details the time period from Capra’s immigration to the U.S. through his early career as a filmmaker. It tells a story of meritocracy by describing and using the subsequent questions to focus on getting students to recount, “the jobs Capra did to earn his way through college” and the “other jobs in the film industry he had when he was first starting out.” Meritocracy as a concept integral to the American Dream resurfaces in question 8, when students are asked to interpret the statement that “Frank Capra believed in the promise of America.”

The activity sheet also champions Capra as a director who “sings the songs of the poor and the afflicted...fighting for their causes on the screens of the world” (*MSGtW*

Student Activity Packet, pp. 52-53). In other words, Capra's immigrant status is highlighted to support the narrative of America as a land in which freedom and opportunity are available to all as well as a point from which freedom spreads into the world (as evidenced in the "Cheers Overseas" activity in the previous section). While I do not doubt that Capra, the son of Italian immigrants, found tremendous opportunity in the U.S. and indeed championed a "common man versus Big Power" perspective, what is entirely absent are conflation of "common man" with "Euro-American" and "man" and the social, political and economic conditions in the U.S. that afforded Capra and *not others* these opportunities. Since race in the U.S. "is constructed via assumed blood ties, race influences the differential distribution of citizenship rights and responsibilities" (Hill Collins, 1998, p. 7). But because the curriculum attempts to assume an apolitical stance on issues of race, instead Capra's apocryphal biography becomes a model of citizenship, amplified through the content of his films and his war documentary series *Why We Fight*.

Reading Activity 4-6: "Major Capra Makes a Documentary" explains how Capra joined the military and was commissioned as a filmmaker for the wartime recruitment effort; students read the text and answer content-based questions. Again (like in most of the activities in the propaganda lesson) the nation's superiority is structured by and through the mandate of war. Capra's work for the military culminated in the "documentary" series *Why We Fight*, whose clips and segments are seen throughout the curriculum materials for the *MSGtW* unit and featured/explicated within this chapter.

The materials provided seem to recuperate Capra as an American hero/Hollywood legend sorts- detailing in *multiple* activities how Capra enlisted in the military, made 'documentaries' for the military, and acted as the 'model immigrant' by achieving the

‘American Dream’ and assimilating into dominant American culture and politics of the time. Interview excerpts, multiple films by Capra, and two excerpts from his autobiography are included for study in Unit 4 of the materials. The varied portrayals of Capra culminate with him being positioned for students as a patriot and hero.

The curriculum passes on is the chance to explore in more nuanced detail the experiences of diverse immigrants during the early part of the 20th century, as well as comparisons between Capra’s immigrant experience and contemporary immigration laws and citizen experiences. One might point to this exclusion of a sustained dialogue on immigration as an attempt to skirt issues of race and identity. The mobilization of Capra’s narrative as one of race, ethnicity, and immigration would have been a good segue into race relations and ethnic identity in a post-9/11 U.S. context, had the curriculum producers seen fit to include it as such. Instead, the curriculum explicitly states: “like thousands of patriotic Americans, Frank Capra volunteered for military service” (Reading Activity 4.6, 2006).

Conclusion:

“We believe ...that the picture develops a theme of true Americanism, showing under our democratic procedures that the least experienced of peoples’ representatives could arise in the highest of legislative halls, expose political chicanery, and through existing Senate rules with sympathetic aid of presiding Senate officers make justice triumph over one crooked senator.”

(Harry Cohn/Frank Capra, 1939)

I begin this section with a quote from Reading Activity 4-4: “Letters of Protest.” Here, the students are asked to read and answer questions about three correspondences. These correspondences are among Ambassador Joseph Kennedy, Will Hays (Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association), Harry Cohn (the film’s producer-Columbia Pictures), and Frank Capra (director of *MSGtW*). The curriculum materials note that their correspondences were copied to President Roosevelt. Cohn and Capra wrote this letter to Kennedy in response to his letter alleging that the film misrepresents American government, and that this negative portrait will effect foreign relations by influencing people to believe that the U.S. Congress is full of corruption. To Cohn and Capra, the testimony to American greatness lies not in the perfection of its leaders, but in the built-in capacity of the system to be self-correcting. While the premise that goodness overcomes corruption is highly dubious to begin with, what I must also note once again is the assertion that American government and the form of participatory democracy it promotes are systematically sound. The letters are part of an important ideological argument in which participation is featured in the film and indeed enacted in the letter exchange as to province of Euro-American men. Nowhere in the artifacts selected or in the activities provided, are such beliefs challenged or even questioned.

In the current context, researchers and cultural correspondents alike have noted that the attacks of 9/11 raised the social ‘fear-factor’ (through the threat of ‘terror’) to a new level of public awareness and daily social consciousness, there has been a backward turn (Faludi, 2007; Farrah, 2004) toward trusting ‘older, more experienced’ [read: white, male, conservative, i.e., Bush, Cheney, Petraeus] leaders to restore and preserve the safety and greatness of the U.S. within the post-9/11 cultural landscape. In light of this, it

becomes increasingly important for relevant curricula to take up the complicated ways in which gender, race/ethnicity, and class manifest within national, institutional imperatives of the nation—how government, schooling, military, etc. set the agenda for proper or desired citizen status.

While it could be argued that *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* features critique of the Senate/U.S. government, creating a “controversy” which the *SoM* curriculum materials evidence and mobilize in four different activities, Jefferson Smith’s argument is really with his peers—other white men. It is a semantic argument over definitions and practices associated with concepts like liberty, democracy, freedom, and human rights. In the scenes depicting his filibuster before the Senate, Smith unproblematically alludes to the founding fathers and repeatedly reads from and cites the U.S. Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. This focus on a previous ‘golden age’ of American freedom and rule perpetuates the illusion such that it comes to be regarded as true.

Indeed, Jefferson Smith’s patriotic rhetoric in the final filibuster scene supports the visual and auditory messages that combine to provide interlocking ‘citizenship cues’ as described Screening Sheet 2.7. Though Smith clears his name in the Senate and inspires others to revisit the principles of democracy and human rights, no significant impacts or long-term change can be assumed. How can one advance a curriculum on democratic virtues and civic participation that excludes women and non-whites and, moreover, shuns opportunities to engage and connect dialogues on social justice with historical reflection? Eric Foner (2003) reminds us that:

Equality before the law regardless of race is a very new principle in American life. Only in the last few years did racial and ethnic profiling by public authorities come to be seen as illegitimate—a position now apparently reversed in the aftermath of September 11. One “surprise” of the last several months has been how willing the majority of Americans are to accept restraints on time-honored liberties, especially when they seem to apply primarily to a single ethnically identified segment of our population. Like other results of September 11, this surprise needs to be understood in its historical context.” (p. 34)

Pointedly touching on the intricate connections between liberty/freedom and race, this perspective on social justice, current events, and history clearly reflects the absence of such a model for looking in the *Story of Movies*’ (*Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*) curriculum materials. *SoM* prioritizes reifications of war, nation as empire within the U.S. context, and white hegemonic masculinity as the combined ingredients for ideal citizenship. The curriculum tries to apoliticize this stance under the guise of ‘history’ which careful analysis debunks as mythology. Even Smoodin notes that the (1940) *Photoplay Guide* curriculum for *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, “insisted that ‘Washington’ and ‘American history’ and ‘aesthetic accomplishment’ were in fact complementary categories that created a logical, non-threatening, smoothly working system of power between people and institutions” (p. 15).

While the *SoM* curriculum does acknowledge the potential to read *MSGtW* against Capra’s WWII documentary series, as “fascinating counterparts,” it falls short of its aspiration to make such analysis/theorizing a reality for students. By ignoring civil liberties implications, complicity with traditionally established, re-emergent national

discourses on what it means to be an American citizen is encouraged. Luckily (though you'd be hard-pressed to see it in the *SoM* curriculum) what constitutes American identity—especially given the post-9/11 multiethnic context—has been and remains contested territory.

Chapter 6: Seeking Social Justice and Coming to Conclusions

“Mourn the dead, but fight like hell for the living.”

(--Mother Jones, 1908)

Introduction

I begin this chapter by reflecting on a personal incident that occurred in my schooling history. I choose to begin my concluding chapter with this personal narrative because it is the singular event in all of my elementary school years that haunts me still. I believe that by sharing it, documenting it here, it will shed light upon my purpose for undertaking the type of intellectual, scholarly thought as demonstrated across my research, including this dissertation. My desire to deconstruct this particular curriculum package must acknowledge this schooling event and its reverberation as its catalyst:

1986-87: a public school classroom of twenty-plus kids in Lodi, New Jersey, Washington Elementary School to be precise. I was a 3rd grader in Mrs. Kubler's class. I loved, absolutely loved, Kathy Kubler, a 30-something white woman with light brown hair and hazel eyes. She was a phenomenal educator. During a social studies lesson, we were taking turns reading aloud from our textbook, when I read the phrase (something along these lines) “...at this point in history, African Americans were only two-thirds of a human being.” At this point, I recall having felt something utterly sorrowful and confusing open up inside of me. I stopped reading. She asked me to please continue to read to the end of the paragraph, then choose the next reader. I sat there, not quite sure

what to do, but I felt tears coming. So I cleared my throat and asked what that meant: “were only two-thirds of a human being...why not a whole person?” In an unfortunate choice of words, brought about most likely (from her perspective) by an unforeseen ‘teachable moment,’ Mrs. Kubler said, “They only counted as two-thirds of a person because only white people were ‘whole people’.” I was shocked and hurt. The tears moved from my eyes to my cheeks. Mrs. Kubler suggested I use the restroom, and handed me the hall pass. Exiting the classroom, I heard her select a new reader, and the lesson continued.

* * * * *

I was the only black child, the only black, female child in the class and in that moment, the impossible pain of my history emerged on the pages of that textbook. Its specter reached its hand across time and space, and, metaphorically, grabbed me by my throat. I share this story to illustrate the need for culturally responsive educational practice, not just for individual teachers, but at the very core of all educational practice and foundations. Mrs. Kubler reacted poorly in the moment. I was a kid who knew something wasn’t right, but with very little power or vocabulary available to me to articulate what I wanted and needed from the educational experience.

In the scenario I briefly revisit here, the starting point for the classroom incident that ensued was a textbook whose language and imagery uncritically and to the best of my recollection and given my visceral response, insensitively reported the dominant version of pre-Civil War American history: no critique; no apologies. The teacher and I (and presumably some of my classmates) were injured and disrupted that day because of

the power of language and discourses abounding from that source material, our textbook. I don't 'blame' the book, nor do I blame Mrs. Kubler for failing me in that unanticipated moment. I certainly do not blame myself.

In 1969, Carole Hanisch coined the phrase "the personal is political," which has become a familiar feminist mantra. Adopting this mantra, I take as my starting point the intersection of me, a black, female, third-grader, the schooling/classroom environment as controlled by my third-grade teacher, Mrs. Kubler, and the information conveyed by the social studies textbook. I offer you my reflexive conclusion on the *Story of Movies* curriculum package for *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. While some of my queries remain, what I do know, unequivocally, is that the creators of the *Story of Movies* curriculum (in similar fashion to the writers/editors constructing my third-grade, social studies textbook) made choices that prioritize a version of history that privileges the dominant group, while attempting to appear apolitical. Even more troubling than such recognitions about school curricula, is the notion that while truth claims can be queried in terms of content presented and format that ultimately represents the world that the curriculum makers wish was true. I doubt that the curriculum makers would experience or represent themselves as people who champion the continuance of white and patriarchal dominance in the public sphere. Nevertheless their difficulties in addressing these issues directly at the very least indicate the wish and indeed the assertion that the problems the curriculum will create for students, and particularly for students whose histories are excluded from it, were not problems at all. This is a form of willful ignorance, which, as Sedgwick (1991) argues (about silences and the refusal to acknowledge homosexuality), is to actively ignore, to actively circulate the political assertion of what must not be said.

The effects of such active ignorance of the discursive structuring of what counts in the past and present of American citizenship demands an accounting.

The *Story of Movies* curriculum is in current use in schools in Bergen County, New Jersey, which houses my childhood elementary school. Thus it can be stated that, be it Bergen County, New Jersey in 1986 or Bergen County, New Jersey in 2006, or in any U.S. classroom, the politics of curriculum must be challenged, critiqued, and potentially revised. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to summarizing and combining the findings on race, gender, and post-9/11 citizenship in the service of seeking active solutions and frameworks for addressing them in ways that move the curriculum process toward social justice and equity.

The *Story of Movies* and Revisiting Issues of Race and Gender: Erasure as Red Herring?

In the chapters on race and gender, I show that representations of blacks and women in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* are flawed, minimal, and lacking. This deduction, while problematic, signifies very little because representation alone is insufficient to address issues around equity or to create sustained dialogues about power relations. According to Allison Piepmeier (2009):

a number of scholars have noted, ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘diversity’ are now popular, pervasive ideas, that have in the post-civil rights, post-black power era, been drained of radical power, becoming individualized, apolitical tropes linked to brand identities and market demographics. (p.126 2009).

So after focusing, in a broad sense, on what the representations, absence, prominence, and accuracy may mean, I turn my attention toward understanding the

curriculum's strategic deployment/constructions of the concepts of race and gender (blacks and women) as necessary in support of their particular version of U.S. citizenship. The citizenship ideal that *SoM* promotes via classic Hollywood cinema (in this case *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, but really in all three film installments) is very much in keeping with the re-emergence of conservative/traditional ways in which Americans are being asked to consider and perform our identities in the immediate wake of 9/11 (see Farah 2002, 2005; Faludi, 2007.) Along such lines, a close composite reading of the findings across Chapters 3-5 of my analysis of the *Story of Movies (MSGtW)* curriculum reveals:

- The preservation of the image of an apparently coherent (unified) 'citizenship' trumps race and gender-based inequality/ies, which are no longer (really they never have been) appropriate topics for discussion and open dialogue in classrooms.
- Race- in its multiple non-white iterations, including but not limited to: Asian, Hispanic, Indigenous, Muslim/Middle-Eastern, and Afro-descended, and gender issues, specifically female black American identity/ies and female identity/ies, are always contingent upon (and subordinate to) white patriarchal interests; further they are subject to approval and, when necessary, alteration by the dominant group.
- Absence of representation of women and blacks and thereby their social contributions is not erasure, but historical accuracy—and, paradoxically, this invisibility is simultaneously used as a platform to discuss the progress made on behalf of these groups, in attempts to project a post-race civil society whose shared, primary concern is the upholding of democratic virtues.

As I have indicated in the previous chapters, taken together these three main axioms constitute an American identity paradigm for contemporary students who will be the audience and consumers of this curriculum. The mere mention of particular groups' absence as historically accurate and consistent with cultural attitudes and beliefs misses

the mark in attempting to provide justification for the visual dearth of women and minorities in all facets of this curriculum package. To critically understand race and representation in historical terms or from a more current perspective, the curriculum materials would have to confront the issue by providing activities, lessons, and teacher strategies for engagement.

Story of Movies: Too Much Past Inside the Present?

An unexpected finding was the extent to which World War II is featured in the Unit on *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. Coupled with the film's major themes, the prominence of World War II documentaries/propaganda included led me to speculate that possibly another emergent theme in the curriculum, one also related to the question of American citizenship, requires that students recognize that war is the necessary condition by which democracy is made possible/viable. To connect WWII imperatives to the present, I revisit historian Eric Foner (2003) who states "since September 11, the word 'empire' has come back into unembarrassed use in American political discourse" (p. 30). This quote is especially relevant because it provides contemporary context for an important feature in the *SoM* curriculum, its presentation of America's role in World War II and the Allied Forces. Each WWII activity in *SoM* positions the U.S. as liberating France and singlehandedly eradicating each of the Axis Nations. While parallels between WWII and the more recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are vaguely implied, they could be inferred by the seven activities that rely on WWII imagery and discussion of war and conflict for the completion of curricular items. This, however, only further illuminates the curriculum's conspicuous agenda to represent itself as apolitical when clearly, "no education is politically neutral" (hooks, 1997).

The curriculum language explicitly refers to Capra's war/military propaganda series *Why We Fight*, as "documentary," while consistently calling similar material produced by Axis countries, including some of the very same footage manipulated and re-worked in Capra's films, "propaganda." To borrow Frankfurt School terminology and value-based distinctions without necessarily espousing them, the word *documentary* is "high-art" and has positive connotations in the sense that it is associated with the idea of verite or 'truth.' *Propaganda* on the other hand has "low-art" value in that its purpose is not to document (or enlighten) but to ideologically indoctrinate consumers. So the *SoM* language privileges Capra, and by extension the U.S. and U.S. military as portrayed in his films as being more credible source material than the same genre (sometimes identical) of films produced within and on behalf of the Axis countries.

This conceptual framing of World War II history works to support American government ideals promoted in (and clearly depicted within the film and the curriculum materials as worth fighting for at all costs) *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. World War II in the curriculum provides a way in which to see the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as normal, historically based inevitabilities in the scheme of America's role in being a great pillar of democracy.⁴⁵ Our form of democracy is always besieged by foreign threat and war is the necessary outcome of that threat. Indeed Smoodin's (1996) analysis of government documents pertaining to the overseas exhibition of *Mr. Smith Goes to*

⁴⁵ Both Judith Butler (2009) and Donna Haraway (2007) critique philosophical issues around war, ethnicity, who is "killable" and the politics of location within the global sphere in the service of the nation.

Washington reveals that bureaucrats feared that a potentially hostile foreign audience might see the film as a distortion of American life.

In visual terms, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* is one of two *Story of Movies* films (*The Day the Earth Stood Still*, 1951, is the other) to feature the nation's capitol as the primary setting where the narrative unfolds. Washington D.C. doubles as a site of masculinity and 'true patriotism.' What better way to revisit the mythology that is so integral to past and present projects of the nation state, particularly given the need for a symbol of post-9/11 recovery to balance the harrowing sight of Ground Zero? Washington D.C.'s buildings and statues are heavily symbolic and one cannot choose to ignore them when watching the film.

While one could or may object to *SoM*'s WWII emphasis on the grounds of displays of war-related violence, one must also consider that such concerns seem arcane by today's standards, given the contemporary context of available visual media in terms of combat related footage, film, and video games. Furthermore, as feminist media scholar Robert Jensen (2007) reminds us, the United States historically has no serious objection to cruelty and degradation (i.e., the death penalty, use of weapons of war, etc.). Focusing his cultural critique at understanding the evolution of violence against women in pornography, he asserts that mainstream pornography has become intensely cruel and brutal in response to, or in tandem with, a U.S. culture of violence whose "mainstream values are: the logic of domination and subordination that is central to patriarchy, hyper-patriotic nationalism, white supremacy, and a predatory corporate capitalism" (p. 17).

In relation to the U.S. culture of violence and the re-packaging of World War II, it becomes less a question of what is *not* shown or visually represented within the film, than

of the ways in which curriculum discussion prompts supporting activities, assessments, and the language therein disallows meaningful, political dialogue and alternative perspectives. So where the curriculum excuses and justifies its own iterations of race and gender, when it comes to the culture of war/violence, it abstains from considering non-violence and anti-war paradigms that may stem from peace studies approaches.

Additionally, the curriculum does not offer a critique of global violence; nor does it suggest sustained inquiry into the relationship between issues of race and gender, domestic violence, and incarceration in local contexts. Here I will reiterate that the curriculum leaves women of all races/backgrounds, and black men out of the discussion of WWII, paralleling *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* in constructing American democratic enterprises as white male domains. Ultimately, in keeping with Foner's aforementioned analysis, what I term 'empire mentality,' an outlook upon which a nonchalant acceptance of war depends and thrives, is central to the positioning of the U.S. in the curriculum materials on WWII.

What is Curriculum? Educational Research and Its Discontents

"We cannot assume that there is any longer a consensus about what is valuable and useful and what ought to be taught, despite all the official definitions of necessary outcomes and desired goals." (—M. Greene, 1995.)

Curriculum makers, like standardized tests makers, pick and choose, represent and construct, select, emphasize, and disregard 'what is important' for students to learn and to know. Yet as articulated in Northeastern Illinois University's College of Education mission statement and conceptual framework:

Because Education always occurs within a social context, we understand that classrooms become the places that instill in children and adolescents ways of becoming part of the social order. We must become critical examiners of what is taught and how it is taught both implicitly and explicitly in schools and communities. All students must be engaged to understand the complexity. (p. 26)

In the end, such findings within the data, as I have outlined here, affirm and expand the work being done to examine curriculum ideology. The information gleaned from deconstructing the *Story of Movies* curriculum package for *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* is useful in thinking through the importance of identity and the high stakes politics of race and gender identity/ies in contemporary American citizenship socializations and schooling; of equal importance are this project's limitations.

In terms of the data set itself, I believe another set of limitations arise from my choice to isolate identity constructs that are in many cases overlapping as independent variables of sorts. In other words, by selecting race as the basis for analysis in one chapter, gender as the sole variant in another, and in the final chapter American citizenship, the project demonstrates the ongoing need to develop more precise research instruments for disentangling and recombining the variables to reduce instances of 'seepage.' In other words, the intersectionality, even when governed by a variation of bricolage, was not always fully capable of resolving the complex negotiations between the contours of race and gender. Bricolage is not a panacea for the many paradoxes, limitations, and complications of research methodology. Intersectionality can encompass a wide variety of identity locations and oppressions, but it can also flatten and conflate,

and make interchangeable or synonymous terms and conditions that are very much distinct from one another.

For example, I found it difficult to discuss all non-white groups within the curriculum, without succumbing to or reproducing the same flattening, oversimplifying effects and tendencies that words and phrases like “minorities” and “people of color” imply. Such language ‘includes’ everyone, but it does so at the expense (too great an expense, in my opinion) of losing particular group specificities and characteristics that are needed to illuminate particular forms of marginalization and oppression. And while it could be said that non-white groups share certain disadvantages in common, ultimately the tendency to unify them (in effect, re-erasing them) under the umbrella of ‘multiculturalism’ is too great a risk. To do so would mean to replicate the curriculum’s post-race/colorblind rhetoric; to not include them makes me complicit with the *Story of Movies* curriculum that I have worked hard to critique on their behalf.

This dilemma remains unresolved. Ultimately, I made the choice to commit to Afro-descended identities for my main analysis of race in chapter 4, though elsewhere in the dissertation, I have attempted to bring a variety of ‘non-white’ identity/ies into the conversation. I justify my focus on Afro-descended identities due to the original text (the film, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and its social context) and representation in the materials: ‘Afro-descended Americans’ (and women) were the most salient ‘other’ that emerged. I also believe that I have avoided the flattening of race by paying careful attention to whiteness, though I am aware that in so doing I reinstate (to some extent) the black/white binary. However, contemporary research being done on Muslim youth in

post-9/11⁴⁶ uses Du Bois and other critical race theories and theorists typically associated with African-American identity/ies because, generally speaking, those frames are valid in most instances when discussing (broad) social implications for non-white peoples, not just African-Americans and/or Afro-descendants. I have also attempted to situate my findings on Afro-descendants to serve as *one example* from among all of the groups (indigenous, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, bi-racial, etc.) marginalized by/within the curriculum.

In the same way, my evaluations of social class are confined to brief and infrequent mentions throughout. All of the social locations and identities that are deeply rooted in race and gender, are subject to further positioning along the lines of social class; however, class in my study remains in the background in order to emphasize and prioritize gender and race—gender not as a blanket term or as a stand-in for women, but rather as a meaningful indicator of femininity/ies *in relation to* masculinity/ies, as a set of power relations, meaningfully enacted across the curriculum texts.

Limitations withstanding, these shortcomings/omissions only provide areas for consideration in future research. They indicate and reaffirm some of the blurriness that plagues the ongoing and amorphous project known as educational research. Each in their own right, bricolage and intersectionality can be expanded, combined, and refined. A project to consider specific curricula can be undertaken with teacher and/or student voices at the fore. The utility of projects like this one, in my opinion, is their ability to

⁴⁶ See Fine and Sirin (2007) for black/white, critical race frames used to expand post-9/11 critiques of other ethnic groups and ‘hyphenated selves.’

expose the opportunistic nature of particular ideological formations and discourses that continue to impede social justice in both subtle and pervasive ways in curriculum.

Pedagogies of Hope and Curriculum of Courage: Replacing Social Reproduction with Social Transformation

The *Story of Movies* would have us and our students believe that America is a post-race society founded on strong, white, male leadership and values. In that America, minorities and women were once second-class citizens, but no more. Any needs these groups may claim today are in fact a normal American need, not a result of historic, present, and systemic inequalities and therefore not priorities. Further, the U.S. *must* engage in war(s) as a means of securing democracy. The culture of war is a necessary byproduct of freedom. ‘Freedom’ and ‘democracy’ are two concepts that go unquestioned and untroubled within *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and the *SoM* curriculum materials that accompany it.

In conclusion, it is representations of race, gender, and the patriotic citizen that become focal points for inclusion in this package. More importantly these stereotypical portrayals of racialized, gendered ‘others’ and nation cannot be ignored when they are directed toward young people subjugated within the classroom, who also happen to be ‘post-9/11’ subjects. Considering the student diversity in most contemporary schools, it is important to recognize the subtle and dismissive ways that the ideology of the film gains entrance through a back door of sorts, concerning the politics of nation. My analysis reveals that students are instructed (in both explicit and implicit) ways to signal themselves as properly gendered, and (d)e/raced citizens of the ‘new’ capitalist ideological state of ‘post 9/11’ social relations.

Presumably some students will challenge the materials, interpret them differently than they were intended, or engage in resistant readings. It stands to reason though that such student-led or student-generated approaches will happen as a result of out-school-literacies and/or popular discourses; or perhaps under the direction of a progressive or socially-conscious teacher, but not because *MSGtW* or the *SoM* curriculum materials that accompany this film promote such interpretations.

These findings lead me to recommend that as educators in an American society impacted by the event known as 9/11, it becomes critical to confront such logic in at least two important ways:

- incorporate feminist strategies (pedagogy, theory) and critical race and post-colonial strategies to help students deconstruct with attention to alternative narratives along the lines of identity-politics
- examine closely then select the texts, tools, and materials that we teach with and be certain that those materials foster student agency, motivation, and engagement

Both of these ‘ways of seeing’ center students, but are predicated upon teacher development. My research focused on providing a paradigm whereby educators can challenge and upbraid curriculum materials including the texts, assessments, and activities that serve as the base of operations for teachers and students, since these materials constitute the tangible building blocks for learning and knowledge acquisition. I do, however, realize that the materials account for only part of the classroom experience, as students and teachers form the other integral part of what goes on in that space. The teacher is, after all, the one left to “deal with” matters of race and gender—however they may arise within the context of the classroom, learning environment. The reality of the

teacher's position is dubious because it places a lot of pressure on her/him depending on experience level, personal interest, and other training-related matters. Since we cannot be certain of equity standards in teacher credential procedures (Klein and Ortman, 1994) there is no way to ensure that gender (and race) issues are adequately acknowledged and addressed. Here, I must assert that even the 'best' teachers (like Mrs. Kubler) can fail to recognize and adequately respond to the urgent identity-based needs of students. Feel-good multicultural education in its current incarnation is not enough to confront and/or resist the challenging and complex formulations of race/gender/citizenship as conveyed within the *Story of Movies* curriculum.

To this end, the case may be made that critical pedagogy is introduced and that multicultural coursework is included within teacher education programs and (some) professional development for in-service educators charged with selecting and implementing curriculum. However, it would be faulty to assume that all teachers are exposed to the same amount or types of training in this regard, as college/university teacher education programs vary in accordance with determined state educational standards, institutional priorities, and individual instructor preferences. I contend that feminist and intersectional approaches are necessary in moving beyond multicultural coursework and brief exposure to alternative pedagogical practices.

In particular, I promote feminist pedagogy and student centeredness as opposed to Critical Pedagogy. Because of its tendency toward oppositional stances that critique without flexibility, critical pedagogy approaches have been critiqued as an approach that is more suited to educators' wishes than students' interests (Luke and Gore, 1992). In other words, critical pedagogy often denies students' agency, pleasure, and desire in their

uses of contemporary cultural meanings and signifiers. By contrast, feminist pedagogy acknowledges without penalizing a range of student experiences in relation to results and outcomes of critique and deconstruction. In differentiating it from critical pedagogy, it is also noteworthy to point out that feminist pedagogy contains a self-reflexive component, recognizing that it cannot always guarantee or account for particular outcomes. It assumes its own efficacy as critical pedagogues sometimes seem to do. In fact, feminism is often used to further critique the shortcomings of critical pedagogy as the prominent model for social justice and empowerment education (Ellsworth, 1989; Williamson and Turnbull, 1998).

A Final Note on Prioritizing Intersections of Race and Gender in Education...

“If you go to power without a base, your demand becomes a request.”
(--Andrea Smith, 2009)

This quote illustrates issues of collective struggle and social justice in terms of facing and challenging structural and institutional violence and oppression. With racism and sexism being inextricably linked to both, it is my contention that educators must be more diligent in the curriculum choices we make and the curriculum work we promote and perform. As indicated by Katz and Stern (2006) in *One Nation Divisible: What America Was and What It Is Becoming*, despite globalization’s ability to afford us new opportunities, identity-based inequalities do not cease, but rather perpetuate. But much curriculum continuously advances a retroactive legacy of white, male leadership and American superiority. So with this in mind, I’m left with a question: Does the *Story of Movies*—given its apolitical stance—assume a color-blind multicultural society, leaving nearly every child behind? If inclusion is established through racial/cultural

homogenization, accomplished by a post-racial analytic construction of difference, then possibly, the answer is 'yes.'

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Appendix A

Scenes included for analysis:

Scene 4: Star-spangled banquet

Scene 5: At the Station

Scene 6: Saunders

Scene 7: Daniel Boone arrives

Scene 8: Press conference

Scene 9: Paine and Saunders

Scene 11: Washington Press Corp

Scene 13: National Boy's Camp

Scene 21: The Lincoln Memorial

Scene 24: Filibuster!

Scene 25: Democracy in Action

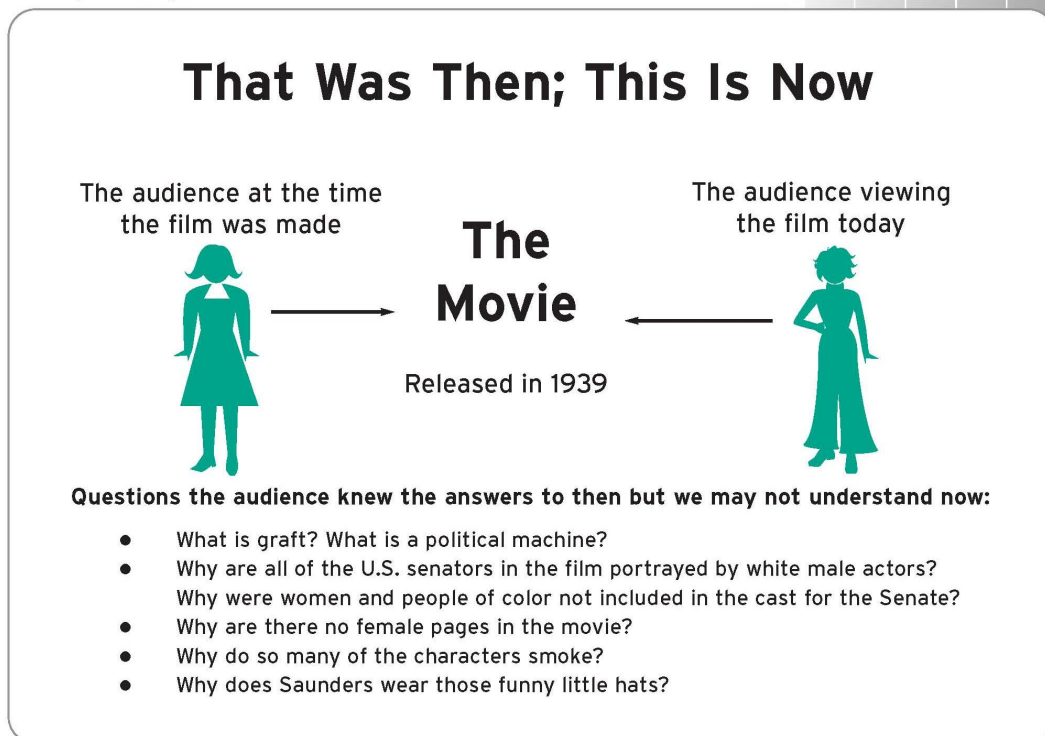
Scene 26: "Tell Jeff to Stop."

Scene 27: 23 hours, 16 minutes

Appendix B

Curriculum Sample: Graphic Organizer 4.1

Graphic Organizer 4-1



VITA

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