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A poststructural investigation of music teachers and music education in film

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A POSTSTRUCTURAL INVESTIGATION OF MUSIC TEACHERS
AND MUSIC EDUCATION IN FILM

by

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A POSTSTRUCTURAL INVESTIGATION OF MUSIC TEACHERS AND MUSIC EDUCATION IN FILM

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ABSTRACT

As popular texts that circulate widely, films contribute to the way groups, individuals or ideas are understood in society. In this study I sought to explore the portrayals of music teaching in Hollywood movies, and examine the ways films might contribute to the occupational identity of music teachers. This investigation focused on four films that feature music teachers as major characters and that demonstrate a prevalent position in public consciousness as indicated by commercial success: Mr. Holland’s Opus (1995), Music of the Heart (1999), Drumline (2000) and School of Rock (2002).

I employed two poststructural approaches to analysis which view meaning as plural, negotiated and produced primarily by the reader’s encounter with the text. One reading uses Derrida’s project of deconstruction to focus on aporias, or paradoxes, and assumptions upon which texts make claims of truth. Aporias of responsibility,
hospitality and *the gift* serve as lenses through which I investigate issues of professionalism, access and the image of the hero-teacher within music education. A second reading uses an intertextual approach to film analysis, acknowledging that texts derive meaning in part from their association and communication with other texts. Using related films, texts from popular culture and movie reviews, I investigate how these films construct images about gender, race and the value of music in schools.

Exploring possible dominant, negotiated and contrary readings of these film texts, I look at a variety of possible interpretations and suggest ways that the films might be used by teachers and pre-service teachers to better understand expectations that people carry with them into the music education environment. As films may be used as sources for common-sense understandings in society, I explore how these films may act as structures to the agency of music teachers and how the negotiation of these portrayals might impact the music education environment.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The portrayals of music teachers in Hollywood movies and the meanings developed from these images are the major issues of this inquiry. In keeping with poststructuralist theory, which holds that meaning is made at the site of the reader, this investigation is not an attempt to uncover messages contained in the films, but an examination of dominant and negotiated readings that may circulate in society. Analysis of dominant readings of these films questions the assumptions by which such interpretations are made and examines the ways that the narratives may contradict their own logic. Because films might be interpreted in negotiated or contrary ways, however, I rely on inconsistencies and paradoxes on which these narratives are based to highlight alternative interpretations. The goal of this research, then, is to develop a better understanding of how films may act as social structures to the agency of music teachers and to investigate the ways in which societal perceptions of music education may contribute to the environment in which teachers work.
Statement of the Problem

Due to the popularity of movies in American society, films that portray music teachers in prominent roles have the ability to influence the public's understanding of music education (Brand and Hunt 1997). Because of the use of both image and speech, films carry the ability to shape opinions, perceptions and expectations of music teachers (Koza 2003). Although viewers ultimately construct meaning and weigh filmic portrayal against their own experiences, films may also serve to reinforce views about various groups of people, as noted by Ayers (1994) and Farber and Holm (1994) in their studies of teachers in film. Because of the potential contribution to music education discourse, the films in this study may also impact music teacher identity.

Researchers have explored this area at length, focusing on issues such as music teachers' self-images (Roberts 1991, 1993, 2004), the multifaceted nature of music teacher identity (Bernard 2005) and on the nature of pre-service music teacher occupational identity (Isbell 2009).

Several scholars suggest that popular films have contributed to prevalent societal attitudes toward education (Ayers 1994; Hershey-Freeman 2008; Koza 2003; Tan 2000). As Wells and Serman (1998) point out, filmic portrayals of education contain images that "young
and old carry with them when they go to school each day, decide whether to pursue a career in education, choose a school for their children, or vote on the next school board issue” (182). Because Hollywood films have such wide dissemination and popularity, the ways in which these films portray music teachers and music education may contribute to societal knowledge about the field. Additionally, Farber and Holm (1994) suggest that films serve as a record of society’s beliefs, since it is assumed that filmmakers attempt to connect to a large portion of society through widespread narratives, shared experiences and frames of reference. Given this dual role as a repository for societal beliefs and as an influence on perception, films would seem to be critical to the investigation of how society understands groups of people (Fiske 1989b).

Despite the fact that several Hollywood films have showcased music teaching and music education over the last two decades, the ways in which these films portray the field remains an area lacking in scholarly inquiry. Cox notes the potential for further contributions to this field in The New Handbook of Research in Music Teaching and Learning when he states that “an exploration of twentieth-century images of music teachers . . . as featured in the movies is a fertile area for investigation” (Cox 2002, 702). Therefore, this study
explores how filmic portrayals make meaning about music education and construct images of music teachers in society.

Rationale

Several films in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have not only featured a music educator, but have centered specifically on the subject of music education. *Mr. Holland's Opus* (1995) and *Music of the Heart* (1999) were both endorsed by the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) and used to advocate for school music programs (Koza 2003). Additionally, *Drumline* (2002) promoted and popularized the unique style and competitive atmosphere of bands associated with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). Within this sampling of movies exists a wide variety of portrayals, settings and characters, all of which may contribute to societal understandings of music teachers and music education.

*Educators in Cinema*

A number of films about education were produced in the twentieth century and scholarship about these films has focused on hero images (Ayers 1994; Faber and Holm 1994), sexual implications (Bauer 1998), portrayals of diversity in media (Cortes 2000), depiction of administrators (Eddleman 2008; Hershey-Freeman 2008), images of democracy (Grobman 2002) and educators in urban settings (Simenz 2007). Many scholars suggest that films often present powerful images of education and potentially contribute to a viewer's
understanding of the educational community (Bauer 1998; Eddleman 2008; Johnson 2008; Schwartz 1960; Tan 2000). However, it is noted that images in films about education often ignore the natural diversity and dynamic qualities of educational settings (Ayers 1994), due in part to Hollywood's use of stock characters and clichés in telling stories on screen. However, these clichéd story lines may also resonate with the public's shared experience in educational settings, which could subsequently impact societal understandings of schooling.

While Wadsworth (1998) notes that the public appears not to shape its opinions of schools solely on media coverage, other scholars have suggested societal discourses about education may be influenced by portrayals of educators in film. Schwartz's (1960) study of on-screen educators in the 1950s indicates that films dealing with education had a higher occurrence of themes of alcoholism, mental illness, marital conflict and romantic relationships than non-education films. Additionally, Bauer's (1998) investigation of filmic educators uses a feminist critique to explore images of sexual and inappropriate student-teacher relationships. As to the value of film-identity studies, Bauer contends that "understanding how society views teachers through the prism of the cultural imagination can productively challenge the profession to create its own pedagogical images" (312).
Though Schwartz (1960) and Bauer (1998) focus on controversial depictions of educators in film, other scholars note many filmic portrayals of heroic characters in “feel good” narratives that depict teachers as saviors who can remedy even the most desperate of situations. Farber and Holm (1994) comment on charismatic educators appear in many films of the 1980s, which depict educator-heroes who build trust and respect with students, parents and administrators resulting in some type of ultimate victory. Though the image of the educator-hero was particularly popular in the 1980s, Tan (2000) notes that it has been a pervasive theme throughout film history.

Also of interest to the current investigation is how educator-hero themes may be interpreted as conflicting messages by the viewer. Farber and Holm (1994) interpret some filmic educator-heroes as renegades who reject the system and traditional teaching methods, while others were seen as teachers who help the good students at the expense of the bad ones (Ayers 1994). Several scholars have pointed to the reliance of many film narratives on images of suburban white teachers placed into urban environments as the saviors of visible minorities (Ayers 1994; Simenz 2007; Johnson 2008). This scenario creates a conflict in the teacher’s hero status by undermining their
good intentions, and instead highlighting the racism present in the power structure between whites and visible minorities. In turn, this contradiction may generate conflicting meanings for the viewer in the interpretation of the teacher image. Paradoxes that seem to abound within this heroic narrative are of special interest in the present study due to the repetition of these themes in films about music education.

Eddleman’s (2008) investigation of school administrators in movies and TV shows from 1995–2000 claims that portrayals of leadership styles and gender in the media lead to contradictions between media portrayals and dynamic real-life situations. Using a feminist critique of bureaucracy, she asserts that a principal’s working environment may be influenced in part by the societal image of administrators as portrayed in film and television. She notes the dual role of film as both a record of societal beliefs and as a message that can influence the public’s viewpoint:

As images of school leaders are perpetuated in mass media, these images shape and are shaped by individual beliefs . . . and haunt the work of the ‘real’ people in schools. At the same time, popular media can capture the essence of widely held experience, beliefs, and assumptions (45).

A common premise among the existing literature in filmic portrayals of educators, as Eddleman indicates above, is that films act dualistically as a reflection of widely held assumptions but also as a
source of influential narratives about these groups. This potential influence, along with the prevalence of music teachers portrayed in Hollywood films and in the media serve as a basis for this study about music teachers.

Music Teachers in Media

Although there have been frequent portrayals of music teachers in Hollywood films and media in the late twentieth century, this area of investigation has received little attention from scholars. The most recent inquiry by Koza (2003) calls attention to the presence of gender inequity in her exploration of the effects of the Disney Corporation’s partnership with NAfME on recent films about music teachers, noting that the majority of music teachers in the United States are women and the majority of administrators are male, yet these gender roles are reversed in Mr. Holland’s Opus. Relying on a poststructural framework that uses concepts from reception theory, Koza notes how the character of Mr. Holland is glaringly gendered through the use of heroic images. Koza points out the prevalence of other themes in the narrative such as the low status of teaching and marginalization of the arts, and notes the narrative’s failure to address the reasons why these problems exist and lack of recommendations to overcome them. Also examining the film Music of the Heart, Koza notes a reinforcement
of racial bias in the image of the white music teacher as the hero and solver of problems for her urban students. Conflicts between the white teacher and predominantly African American and Latino colleagues, students, administrators and parents, Koza suggests, reinforce racial tension and places the music teacher in a position of privilege over her students and those in the community.

As Mr. Holland's Opus and Music of the Heart both portray characters that choose music education as a last resort (over being a performing musician), these narratives may also perpetuate a lowered status of the educator in comparison to the performer (Koza 2003). Through a situated reading that takes into account some of the likely interpretations by various communities of readers, Koza points out many inconsistencies that underlie these two films and demonstrates the multiple levels of interpretation that are at work within the narratives.

An earlier quantitative study by Brand and Hunt (1997) investigated the portrayals of music educators by examining fifteen films spanning the years 1941–1993 using content analysis to categorize common themes. The researchers identified broad categories such as “music teaching as something anyone can do”; “music teachers forming close bonds of friendship with students”;
“music as something that requires little effort for good results”; and “music teachers as generators of greater good.” These areas represent contributions to discourses on music teachers that potentially affect the way society views music education and how music teachers and pre-service teachers view themselves in roles as mentors, teachers and colleagues.

The present study finds a precedent in the numerous scholarly investigations on images of educators in cinema. While relatively little research exists on the depiction of music teachers in film, several scholars have investigated the filmic portrayals of educational specialists such as principals. Given the wealth of filmic images of music teachers that circulate in society, it seems necessary to investigate how these images might impact music teachers and societal perceptions of the field of music education. This investigation, then, may contribute to a number of fields, including music educator image, occupational identity, and societal perceptions of education and music education.

**Occupational Identity**

Occupational identity may be defined as a societal understanding of the tasks associated with a particular occupation and the value of this occupation to society (Skorikov and Vondracek 2011). Identity
takes on different meaning between fields of psychology, where it indicates an individual’s unique image of the self, and sociology, where it is defined in relation to a person’s social identity and status within a group. The formation of social identity is made up of the individual’s experience as affected by her surroundings and belonging to social groups. Occupational identity as a sociological construct acknowledges the influence of context and culture on the perceptions of those in a particular field, as societal knowledge may shape understandings about particular groups of workers (Rudman and Dennhardt 2008). Consequently, as understandings about groups of workers and their contributions are developed in society, it may affect the way these groups view their own social status, and impact their environment as they encounter these societal understandings in their daily lives.

**Agency and Structure**

A primary question in regard to occupational identity is how societal perceptions influence groups of workers as it affects their ability to act independently of societal forces. The capability to act freely and make decisions unencumbered by societal expectations refers to a subject’s agency, and limitations imposed by those societal forces that would limit the freedom of the individual may be defined as structures. Agency and structure may be conceptualized as competing
forces in the formation of identity. Societal structures may impose expectations, define boundaries and apply limitations to groups or individuals; however groups or individuals may also resist structure by exerting free will and push back against those limitations (Giddens 1984).

Applied to the current study, films may act as social structures for music teachers by contributing to the way society understands the practices of music teaching and the value it places on music education. The agencies of music teachers, then, may be affected by those who carry these images with them to the teacher’s environment. The choice for music teachers would seem to be whether to work within the confines of these structures, or to interact with it by asserting their agency and working to alter how their work is understood. The knowledge of these structures may serve as a way to empower teachers to challenge societal structures and gain more control over their own environment.

**Music Teacher Identity**

As Humphreys (2011) suggests, occupational identity is shaped by the ways music teachers view themselves in relation to society and how music teachers interact within society. The formation of one’s identity through the lens of a chosen occupation is important, as
Skorikov and Vondracek (2011) note, because the positive perception of oneself as a worker "appears to be an important contributor to occupational success, social adaptation, and psychological well-being" (693).

From a psychological perspective of identity, or, the way individuals perceive their self-image, survey research from the mid-twentieth century indicated that music educators held a generally positive image of themselves (White 1967). More recently, however, scholars suggest that music teachers face a conflict in regard to the multiple lives many music educators lead as teachers and performers, a problem that may stem from lack of preparation in pre-service teaching to handle the dual role as practitioner and educator (Bernard 2005). Similarly, Bergee (1992) suggests that music teachers often place a lower value on the profession of education than that of the artist/performer, which resonates with societal views of teachers being less skilled than practitioners in the same field outside of education.

While these investigations have focused on the way teachers view themselves, the current investigation approaches identity from a sociological perspective that focuses on the understanding of groups or individuals in society. Scholars adopting this approach suggest that the music teaching profession may be marginalized in society
(Benedict 2007; Bowman 2007; Schonauer 2002) through the status of music in the curriculum, and the perception of music education as extracurricular, or superfluous (Roberts 1993, 2004). In addition, Isbell's (2008) study suggests that the occupational identity of music teachers is formed through the constructs of musician identity, self-perceived teacher identity, and teacher identity as inferred by others, as well as being shaped by the experiences and socialization of music teachers.

Given that occupational identity is influenced by societal perceptions of workers, the films under investigation may have an influence on the status of music teachers as the interpretations of the narratives inform such perceptions. If music educators gain a greater sense of how interpretations of media portrayals may influence their environment, they may become better equipped to negotiate the structures that affect their working environments.

Films and Portrayals of Occupations

Farber and Holmes (1994) imply that popular movies are influential to the identity of teachers, in part, because they shape public opinion about groups and individuals through words and images presented on the screen. Movies, then, may serve as popular texts "of everyday life that can serve as reliable objects of social knowledge"
(Giroux 1991, 112). Given the increased presence of music education in films over the last two decades and the varied portrayals in movies about teachers in general (Tan 2000) there may be much to gain in the study of the filmic portrayal of music teachers.

The investigation of music teacher portrayals in film can find a precedent in film identity studies in other fields. Much scholarship has used films to study aspects of identity in portrayals of race (Dunn 2008; Guerrero 1993; Johnson 2008; Rocchio 2000), ethnic groups (Berg 2002; Shaheen 2003; Rollins and O’Connor 1998) and religion (Erens 1984; Friedman 1982). The study of filmic influence on identity as understood through one’s occupation has been investigated in relation to journalists (Ehrlich 2004; Good 1989), nurses (Kalisch and Kalisch 1982), lawyers (Bergman and Asimow 1996; Black 1999; Levi 2005; Lucia 2005), laborers (Bodnar 2003; Zaniello 1996), law enforcement officers (Murphy 1965), medical professions (Kalisch and Kalisch, 1982) and professional athletes (Baker 2003).

Studying the connection between identity formation and film, Baker (2003) used a poststructural lens to examine the construction of social identities of athletes. Baker argues that film in contemporary society represents a creation that facilitates the dissemination of social identities and calls attention to the common themes of athlete-as-hero
and the objectification of the athlete's body as examples of how film has both commented on and affected society's view of sports figures. In a study of how nurses were portrayed in twentieth century film, Kalisch and Kalisch state, "Hollywood films have helped shape the attitudes" of the public when it comes to the perception of that occupation (1982, 605). Specifically, they speculate that the decrease of positive images of nurses in films, which peaked in the 1940s and has steadily fallen, has affected the "attitudes of patients and policy makers" toward those in the profession (1982, 605).

**Derridean and Poststructural Terms**

In this study, films are treated as texts despite the absence of traditional reading and writing in their reception. Using Derrida's view of text as any repeatable form of communication or expression, my approach to reading films acknowledges the presence of multiple textual systems interpreted by the reader. Accordingly, the following poststructural terms associated with textual interpretation provide a framework for the reading of film texts. Although explained in more detail in Chapter 2, these terms are defined here to provide context for the research questions and discussion of interpretation and meaning that follow.
Deconstruction

_Deconstruction_ is a term proposed by philosopher Jacques Derrida for an approach to textual examination that attempts to shake metaphysical foundations upon which texts are based (Derrida 1974). Derrida rejects the idea that deconstruction is a method of analysis since that would imply a search for the essence of a text. Instead, the deconstructive project interrogates texts and calls attention to the presence of contradictions or paradoxes based on logocentric assumptions. By showing how texts may undermine their assertions of truth, and exploring slippages of meaning in the play between signifier and signified, deconstructive readings demonstrate the inherent plurality of textual meaning. Although critics argue that deconstruction is a nihilistic approach that opens texts to any and all interpretations (Habermas 1997; Ferry and Renaut 1990), Derrida’s encounters with justice and responsibility emphasize the affirmative and ethical possibilities of deconstruction (Critchely 1999). This emphasis on affirmation is situated in Derrida’s concern for alterity, which, he suggests, may allow deconstructive readings to work toward justice for _the other_ (Derrida 1992).
Aporia

In his later work, Derrida often used the term *aporia*, or paradox, as a demonstration of a text’s uncertainty. A Greek term that refers to a puzzle, the aporia was for Derrida something like a stalemate where a word or concept could simultaneously embody the possible and impossible (Reynolds 2010). For instance, Derrida uses the aporia of responsibility to demonstrate that when someone acts responsibly, they are always acting in the interests of an *other* such as a god, family or community (Derrida 1991). However, an act that is responsible to one *other* may indeed be viewed as irresponsible to another *other*, thus destroying the possibility that the act was truly responsible. Derrida uses other concepts such as *the gift* and *hospitality* to demonstrate textual paradoxes that deconstruct texts by highlighting the uncertainty of meaning.

Text

While there are a variety of approaches to the analysis and interpretation of film, many scholars view the elements of film as a comprehensive unit of communication, which can be read. A broad interpretation of *text*, then, would include any “communication that has been constructed by an author” (Devaney 1993, 182) and can be interpreted by a *reader* or one who receives the communication. In
In this broad sense of the term, many scholars have approached various kinds of media consumption as reading, for instance, in the investigation of television (Gray 2006), software programs (Devaney 1993) or film (Koza 2003).

**Intertext/Paratext**

A term proposed by Kristeva and based on Bakhtin’s dialogism, *intertextuality* refers to the network of meaning that arises through the communication of texts with each other (Kristeva 1980). This concept views texts as a network of connections, where a reader’s encounter with a text will influence interpretations of other related texts (Iampolski 1998). Therefore, the notion of intertextuality demands that textual meaning is always shifting and may take on new meaning as new texts are produced.

Likewise, *paratexts* are those items that are technically outside of the text but which can influence its understanding. As a concept in literary theory, paratexts is often used to refer to items such as forwards, prefaces, cover design and reviews (Fiske 1989a). Applied to film, this term may refer to those items that depend on the work for their existence, yet reside outside of the text, such as movie posters and advertisements.
Dominant Reading

Found within Hall’s (1973) theory of encoding and decoding as applied to media, the idea of the dominant reading is an interpretation that is acknowledged to have authorial intent and one that is likely to be received in similar ways by a majority of readers. In contrast, Hall proposes that many readers may, due to any number of social conditions, interpret texts differently to produce negotiated readings, or may develop a subversive understanding of the text that would lead to a contrary reading (Hall 1973). While Hall generally works within reception theory, recognizing that meaning ultimately rests with the reader, Hall acknowledges, much like Gadamer’s philosophy of hermeneutics and Bakhtin’s concept of the superaddressee, that the text carries some authorial intent. While this intent resides with the text, readers determine the interpretation through a negotiation with the text, filtered by their own unique circumstances.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the images and portrayals of music teachers in selected Hollywood movies and to investigate how these portrayals might shape societal views about the profession. The goal of this examination, then, was to use films as a way to gain insight into issues surrounding music education and to
better understand how music teachers and music teaching are known in society. Additionally, this investigation sought to aid music teachers and pre-service music teachers in developing a better understanding of how the profession is portrayed in society so that they may be able to use these observations to construct pedagogical images for themselves and for the field of music education. Through a deconstructive project that examines dominant readings of these films, I attempted to highlight some of the assumptions and contradictions inherent to the film text that demonstrate how the texts may undermine their own assertions of truth.

With these purposes at the center of this investigation, I addressed the following research questions:

1. In what ways might the portrayals of music teaching and music education in *Mr. Holland's Opus*, *Music of the Heart*, *Drumline* and *School of Rock* reflect particular authorial intentions?

2. In what ways might the dominant readings of these films, as represented by movie reviews, affect the agency of music teachers?

3. What aporias, or paradoxes, in these narratives demonstrate possible negotiated or oppositional readings of the film texts?
4. How might intertextual connections with texts of popular culture shape the interpretations of these films?

**Film Criticism and Construction of Meaning**

Several approaches to film theory have dominated scholarly investigation in the twentieth century. Early in the history of film studies, aesthetic film theory and auteur theory relied on the concept that the director was the primary force behind meaning construction in the film (Allen and Gomery 1985) and the decisions made by the director were the most important elements in critical evaluation. In the 1960s, Christian Metz applied to film study concepts of semiotics, a linguistic theory originally set forth by both Saussure and Peirce, who viewed meaning as transmitted through the inherent signification of images, sounds or words (Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis 1992). Metz’s approach, as detailed in his book *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema* (1974), suggested a vocabulary of signs to be applied to the cinema. Through this approach, the understanding of meaning shifted slightly from one that was dominated by the maker of the film, to one that acknowledged the ability of the viewer as a decoder of the signs implied by the director (Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis 1992).

Later, Metz (1977) adopted a psychoanalytic approach based
largely on theories of Freud and Lacan that proved to be influential in film studies. This approach holds that the viewer of the film is a spectator or voyeur for whom the films’ images (often from the viewpoint of the male role) become the objects of desire. This voyeur aspect of cinema, Mulvey (1989) asserts, is predominantly constructed through the male gaze, where female roles are exhibitionist and passive in nature and the male controls the action, thus imposing a power structure on film narratives. The psychoanalytic approach also acknowledges the importance of fantasy and symbolic meaning, which the viewer can use to shape interpretation of the film. In Andrew’s (1984) history of film theories, he notes that the psychoanalytic model views the film as a narrative that is “... fueled by and satisfies to varying degrees the unconscious drives of its audience” (143).

Poststructuralist Film Theory

While the approaches of semiotics and psychoanalysis acknowledge the role of the viewer within the process of interpretation, the poststructuralist movement views the reader as the primary maker of meaning and challenges the idea of unified meaning within a text by calling attention to the instability of the sign. Poststructuralism extends the structuralist focus on signification within the text, but denies the fixed meaning of any sign and carries a
"distrust of any centered, totalizing theory . . . about the possibility of constructing a metalanguage which might position, stabilize or explain all of the other discourses, since the signs . . . themselves are subject to slippage and indeterminacy" (Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis 1992, 23).

From a poststructuralist view, all texts are inherently plural in meaning. Within the field of film studies, Brunette and Wills (1989) use a poststructuralist approach through the use of Derrida's project of deconstruction, an approach to reading that calls attention to a text's underlying assumptions on logocentric thought. Derridean deconstruction attempts to find the binary oppositions on which logocentric thought are based (true/false, hero/villain, male/female) and overturn the privileged term within the opposition that defines the power structure inherent in the opposition (Culler 1982). As Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis (1992) define it, deconstructive film reading is a strategy of highlighting the "fractures and tensions . . . seeking out blind spots or moments of self-contradiction and liberating the suppressed 'plural' and figurative energies of a text" (26).

Originally a strategy for encountering literary texts, Brunette and Wills (1989) apply deconstruction to cinema and propose a strategy of reading film text that shuns the totalizing concepts on which so much
of film theory has been based. In addition to approaching the text as an open and plural entity filled with contradictions and slippages in logic, Brunnette and Wills also use the poststructuralist concept of intertextuality, originally proposed by Julia Kristeva, by furthering Bakhtin’s ideas on the boundaries of the text. Iampolski (1998) suggests that intertextuality questions the concept of the closed text by acknowledging communication among similar texts and the relevance of related texts that may exist at the fringes of the film. These so-called paratexts such as movie posters, advertisements or “trailers” comment on the primary text and add meaning through a reader’s association with them (Gray 2006). In order to emphasize power structures inherent in the narratives in the current study, I have adopted poststructural ideas and strategies that acknowledge the plural nature of the meaning in film texts and the importance of paratexts to the construction of meaning in film.

**Reception Theory**

This study also relies on ideas related to reception theory, or reader response theory, a framework that emphasizes the reader of a text as the producer of meaning. Scholars such as Jauss (1982), Barthes (1977) and Fish (1980) suggest reception theory rejects the notion of meaning conveyed by an author through the text and
acknowledges the plurality of meaning within textual systems. Reception theory replaces the "omniscient narrator" (Jauss 1982, 61) with the notion that the reader imposes her own perspective upon a text and constructs meaning filtered through a unique personal lens. While writers, directors, producers and actors make numerous decisions as to how characters may be portrayed on screen, a poststructural lens of reception views the audience member as the owner of the filmic image who makes meaning through her own situated viewpoint (Fiske 1989b). Thus, reception theory views the text as an entity that is acted upon by the reader's response to it, rather than acting as a "container from which a reader extracts a message" (Fish 1980, 23).

This open view of textual interpretation influences analysis through the acknowledgement that any interpretation or reading of the text is inherently situated in a reader's own social and historical context. In addition, Jauss (1982) suggests that textual interpretation is temporal, in that interpretations may change over time through the production of other related texts or changing social contexts or understandings. Therefore, each viewer can construct an interpretation and a meaning that is shaped by his unique social, political and historical situations and these interpretations are not
fixed, but fluid and open to varying forces as other texts are produced and cultural contexts change.

Applying this approach to popular culture, Fiske (1989b) asserts that meaning in popular culture texts are especially disposed to intertextual readings since they rely on inference and cultural knowledge. Meaning in these texts, he contends, is not made by the industry but generated by the consumer. He states, "all the culture industries can do is produce a repertoire of texts or cultural resources for the various formations of the people to use or reject in the ongoing process of producing their popular culture" (Fiske 1989b, 25). Thus, Fiske sees the viewer not as a consumer of the text, but as a producer of its meaning.

**Author Intent and the Politics of Representation**

Although poststructuralist thought places an emphasis on the reader as the maker of meaning, other philosophical positions have noted the importance of the reader while also acknowledging the author's intent in the understanding of textual meaning. In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer (2004) describes the interpretive process as one that involves author, reader and context. Gadamer argues that the author can impose their intent onto the text, but this can either be accepted or rejected by the reader when understood in their own
particular context (Young 2004). Therefore, this understanding of hermeneutics views interpretation as a *negotiation* between the intent of the text and the understanding of the reader, acknowledging that the reader ultimately has control over the result of the process.

Likewise, Bakhtin's concept of the superaddressee presupposes an audience for whom the text is understood in the full intent of the author (Bakhtin 1986). Bakhtin suggests that texts are written with three parties involved: the author, the reader and the superaddressee. In his view, the text cannot be written or conceived without the possibility of one who is capable of full understanding of the author's intent (Tindale 2004). Although the reader may interpret the text differently from the author's intent, the reader is also aware of the existence of the superaddressee and acknowledges a meaning that may be inferred by the author. In a sense, Bakhtin views the author and reader as coauthors who conceive the text in the presence of the superaddressee (Tindale 2004).

An extension of authorial intent takes into account the power played out through the means of portraying people, groups or ideas in media. Although Ellsworth (1997) works within a framework of reader-made meaning, she asserts that media texts are a "representation" of reality through political, cultural or ideological
negotiations. She further explains that re-presentation

[is] recognizable and available as a crucial site of social, political and educational struggles over what particular people, events, and experiences will be made to mean. Hence the "politics" of representation and meaning-making. (Ellsworth 1997, 76-77)

Likewise, Hall (1997) notes in a study of media portrayals of race that institutions work from positions of power to attach meaning to texts and thereby influence the way society understands those who are portrayed. Hall's viewpoint acknowledges that media texts support the construction of meaning about events, people or ideas, resulting in a hierarchy of power. In other words, those in control over the production of media hold power over those that they portray, since those without power cannot determine the images that define them. Thus, the lack of power may affect the environment in which groups live and work if interpretations of these media texts act as societal structures for those being portrayed.

Hall's Theory – Dominant, Negotiated and Contrary Readings

In light of Gadamer and Bakhtin's view of the role of the reader and author in the act of meaning production, Hall (1973) also acknowledges that while readers ultimately determine meaning as outlined in reception theory, the intent of the author may indeed play a role in the reader's interpretation. Hall's (1973) theory of encoding
and decoding, as well as Fish's concept of interpretive communities (1980), acknowledge that dominant readings may exist for texts, or interpretations that may be prevalent among a large section of the population. For Hall, his theory of reception acknowledges that there are an infinite number of negotiated readings, or readings that readers filtered through their own social context, and contrary readings where a reader's interpretation subverts the dominant reading, or an interpretation that may have been intended by the author.

In the present study, the concept of the dominant reading is represented by the reviews of films found in major U.S. newspapers, which it is assumed interpret the films in a way that would represent the narrative to the widest possible audience and therefore represent a possible dominant reading of the films. Through the convergence of interpretation in these reviews, the dominant reading may then be deconstructed to show where differing interpretations may conflict, how the text is open to multiple interpretations and how these texts are based on privileged oppositions that may affect the perception and identity of music teachers.

**Overview of the Study**

In Chapter 2, I lay out the poststructural framework of the study, explaining the deconstructive and intertextual approaches to
textual analysis and contextualizing the use of these models in the area of film studies. Methods of data collection and analysis are presented in Chapter 3, with a detailed account of the selection of films and approach to conducting the readings. Here I provide a more thorough description of the process of reading films through deconstructive and intertextual lenses.

Chapters 4 and 5 are the primary chapters of film analysis. Chapter 4 provides an investigation of prominent themes produced from deconstructive readings, exploring the issues of professionalism through the aporia of responsibility, access through the aporia of hospitality, and salvation or hero images using Derrida's model of the gift. In Chapter 5, I explore issues of gender, race, and arts funding and advocacy through connections found in related texts and items of popular culture. In the final chapter, I consider the affirmative possibilities resulting from the deconstructive approach and incorporate Derrida's understandings of justice and responsibility toward the other. Using my research questions as a guide, I further explore some of the meta-narratives common to the films, including expanded discussions of responsibility, occupational identity and intertextuality.
CHAPTER 2

POSTSTRUCTURALIST APPROACHES: DECONSTRUCTION AND INTERTEXTUALITY

In this chapter I elaborate on the theoretical concepts introduced in Chapter 1, and place philosopher Jacques Derrida's epistemological foundations in the context of other philosophical approaches. In addition, I introduce the poststructural strategies of deconstruction and intertextuality that frame my approach to the texts under investigation.

Derrida and Poststructuralism—Background

In this discussion of Derrida's philosophical strategies, I first look at his ideas situated against the backdrop of metaphysical thought, and then discuss some of the key terms and neologisms that define Derrida's approach to textual encounters. Following that, I examine the poststructural strategies that were helpful in encountering the film texts, including intertextuality, reception theory and Derrida's project of deconstruction.

Metaphysics

In order to place poststructuralism in context, it is necessary to recognize its opposition to metaphysics, a branch of philosophy that
deals with the understanding of abstract concepts such as being, presence and time (van Inwagen 2007). The questions which metaphysics seeks to answer would seem to be beyond the scope of the physical world, and any empirical investigation would claim these concepts unknowable. However, Western metaphysics has attempted to find truths that will ground such questions. The truths that metaphysics seeks are the fundamental origins, foundations or principles that serve as a central point from which claims to knowledge can be based. Derrida refers to this search for central truth as logocentrism, or an ultimate source of truth, whether it is believed to come from human logic or divine sources (Derrida 1974).

Logocentrism

Logocentric thought is supported by binary oppositions that lie at the heart of metaphysical thinking. Binarisms such as God/man, truth/false, presence/absence and male/female are used as the basis for logocentrist arguments, and these binarisms are always cast against themselves in order to proceed toward truth claims. Howells (1999) suggests that side of the opposition is necessarily privileged over the second, which serves in a subordinate role and is defined in relation to the first term. For instance, the concept of false can only be understood in relation to its privileged counterpart, truth. Since
false can only be understood in the presence of truth, truth would seem to hold privileged status over its opposition of false. For example, in logocentric thinking God is privileged over man, truth over falsehood and presence over absence. Culler (1982) describes the inherent privileging of one term over the other in the binary opposition, stating:

The superior term belongs to the logos and is a higher presence; the inferior term marks a fall. Logocentrism thus assumes the priority of the first term and conceives the second in relation to it, as a complication, a negation, a manifestation, or a disruption of the first. (93)

Therefore, logocentrism defines the second, or inferior, term in relation to and in the presence of the first term. The second term, in this way of thinking, is fully dependent upon the first term for its meaning.

While binaries serve as a foundation for logocentric arguments, Derrida views these assumptions as structures that must be overturned if the assumption of hierarchy is to be exposed (Derrida 1974). He calls the binary into question by reversing its structure and privileging the second term over the first, thus calling attention to the assumption of superiority (Culler 1982; Evans 1991). Brunette and Wills (1989) explain that Derrida’s aim is to “unpack the operations of logocentrism, the functions of which Western thinking has assured its sameness and repressed its otherness, but in such a way as to avoid
falling back into a system of analysis that does nothing but repeat . . . those very same pitfalls" (12). In other words, Derrida attempts to subvert logocentrism and at the same time, avoid the same metaphysical thought that pervades all Western thinking.

In film study, epistemologies such as *phenomenology* and *auteur theory* are grounded in logocentric thought, seeking to find a singular and true meaning, by looking to the intent of the author or creator as the text’s guiding force (Allen and Gomery 1985). In contrast, the current study seeks to study films using poststructural strategies to avoid a search for the essence of a film’s true meaning, since claims to truth, as logocentric structures assume, is something that cannot be grasped with certainty.

*Derrida’s Relationship to Phenomenology and Structuralism*

Derrida’s early work was influenced by Saussure’s structuralist linguistic theories and Heidegger’s ideas on phenomenology, but was also influenced by Husserl’s work in phenomenology, a *philosophy of consciousness* that rejects empirical claims to knowledge, and instead relies on human experience as a basis for truth claims (Howells 1999). Husserl attempted to understand consciousness by employing the strategy of phenomenological reduction: a procedure of bracketing out everything conditional to produce a pure understanding of experience
(Howells 1999). However, Derrida was skeptical of Husserl’s claim that all ideas and assumptions could be adequately eliminated from the pure experience (Norris 1982). What phenomenology does not account for, Derrida suggests, is the subjectivity of Husserl’s process of bracketing, or the ability to eliminate all conditions of experience without one’s own subjective experience attacking the process (Derrida 1974).

Two consequences of Husserl’s bracketing were of particular interest to Derrida: the isolation of meaning to the interior and the subjugation of language to an inconsequential role in the production of meaning (Derrida 1974). Derrida suggests, then, that phenomenology’s attempt to eliminate external forces—in particular, language—privileges inner meaning over external language that could be generated by personal or social forces. Thus, what results is a binary opposition between internal and external, with internal given the place of privilege over external (Derrida 1974). Derrida then demonstrates that although phenomenology rejects positivist thinking, it is in fact based on metaphysical, or logocentric, assumptions. Derrida concludes that Husserl’s thinking is flawed in the assumption of presence, or the conflict between the exterior/interior productions of
meaning (Derrida 1978), in that no meaning can be produced entirely through internal or external means.

The Sign in Structuralism and Poststructuralism

Central to structuralist theory is the concept of the sign, which serves as the basis for understanding language and culture. In his Course in General Linguistics (1960), Ferdinand de Saussure proposes the sign is the basic component of language and is made up of two parts. The signifier is the audible, spoken referent to the signified, that to which the signifier refers. The structuralist concept of the sign is one of fixed understandings, with each signifier referring only to its signified (Culler 1982). Saussure contends that signs are not defined by their fundamental properties, but through their differences from all other signs (Culler 1982). This, however, does not indicate that meaning arises through a direct correlation between signifier and signified, rather, Saussure understands language as a chain of signs where the only way that meaning can arise is through each sign's difference from all other signs in the language (Weedon 1987). Because Derrida saw language as a necessary inhabitant to consciousness, he used Saussure's linguistic theories as a starting point for his own philosophical inquiry (Howells 1999).

Saussure established meaning in language not as fundamental,
but as relational between all of the signs in a language system. For Derrida, this poses a question of presence, as the signifiers that are absent from a meaning are actually present through their absence (Derrida 1974). In other words, the meaning of a particular signifier depends upon the absence of other meanings for its own understanding, which creates a situation where signifiers are both present and absent, rejecting, in a sense, the either/or priority of metaphysics (Howells 1999; Weedon 1987).

Derrida's theories are greatly influenced by Saussure's underlying principle that "meaning is produced from within language rather than reflected by" it (Weedon 1987, 23) and that signs do not carry any inherent, fundamental meaning. The poststructuralist departure from Saussure is found in the assertion that a sign's meaning can be fixed. In Derrida's encounter with Saussure, he rejected the idea that a sign could have a singular meaning from which central truths can be established because of the subjective nature of knowledge.

Derrida points out a conflict with the assumptions made by both phenomenology and structuralism. He suggests that both phenomenology and structuralism rely on undecidable concepts and contends that both the structuralist presence/absence of signifiers and
phenomenology's internal/external sources of meaning are both *undecidable* in nature (Derrida 1967, 1976). The undecidable, according to Derrida, demonstrates contested ground where a fixed determination cannot be made, and thus signals a disruption of the logocentric assumptions of metaphysics (Derrida 1994).

**Meaning and Interpretation**

It is necessary for the purposes of this study, then, to draw a distinction between meaning and interpretation. To focus the discussion specifically within the realm of film studies, the idea of meaning is central to approaches such as auteur theory and semiology, which view the film text as containing inherent messages to be deciphered by the viewer (Andrew 1984). Meaning can be thought of as an idea represented by a word or sign.

Auteur theory, for instance, views the director of a film as its creative force and one who imbues the film with meaning through the placement of expressions, actions and signs (Allen and Gomery 1985). In this theory, meaning is contained within the filmic text as something to be drawn out by the viewer (Andrew 1984). Interpretation, on the other hand, focuses on the reader of the text and how they might explain certain events or happenings within the film. In reception theory, for example, the interpretation of events on
the screen by the viewer takes precedence over any intended meaning of the author (Stam 2000). This theory, discussed in detail later in this chapter, does not discount meaning, but views it as something produced by the reader through their interpretation of the filmic text.

**Derridean Concepts and Terminology**

In the following section I investigate some of the terms and concepts that Derrida uses to carry out deconstructive readings of texts. Many of Derrida’s concepts are similar in purpose because they often demonstrate the instability present in claims to knowledge. While concepts such as *undecidability*, *différance* and *trace* will serve as conceptual underpinnings for this investigation, others such as *hospitality*, *responsibility* and *the gift* will serve as frames through which the film narratives are read.

**Undecidability**

A foundational concept of poststructuralism and Derrida’s philosophical approach is that of the *undecidable*. An uncertainty, or unstable middle ground that disrupts binary oppositions, Derrida states that undecidables are to be understood “in terms of [binary] philosophical opposition, and which none the less inhabit it, resist it,
and disorganize it, but without ever constituting a third term” (quoted in Howells 1999, 79). Derrida further explains the idea:

The confusion between the present and nonpresent, along with all the indifferences it entails within the whole series of opposites . . . produces the effect of a medium . . . enveloping both terms at once. . . . It is an operation that both sows confusion between opposites and stands between the opposites “at once.” (Derrida 1991, 185; italics in orig.)

Derrida gives the example of a ghost as having undecidable characteristics through uncertainty of its presence and absence (Derrida 1994). The ghost is neither fully present nor absent, Derrida suggests, but shows characteristics of being in both states simultaneously. The undecidable, then, cannot be labeled by either side of the binary and as such, makes the fixed nature of the opposition an impossibility (Reynolds 2010). As I explain in Chapter 4, some of the music teachers in the films under investigation may be viewed as undecidables themselves. The major characters in these films often belie their dominant images to position themselves between a binary opposition; I argue for instance, that although the narrative may portray the protagonist as a heroic figure, the music teachers in these films can also be viewed as villains, or more aptly, somewhere between the hero and villain, exhibiting qualities of each. In this way, some of the dominant readings of the films may be
questioned and alternative interpretations suggested that may expose conflicts within the narratives.

Derrida claims that the undecidable pervades all of Western thought and uses Plato’s *Phaedrus* an example in his essay *Plato’s Pharmacy* (Derrida 1981). The *Phaedrus* is Plato’s examination of the value of writing as demonstrated through a fictional conversation between Socrates and Phaedrus. Here, Socrates tells Phaedrus of an Egyptian inventor-god Theuth who invented a form of writing. Theuth brought his inventions to the god-king Thamus to demonstrate their benefits for all Egyptians. Although Theuth offers writing as an invention that will make people wiser and improve memory, Thamus claims that writing will become the exact opposite—a crutch that will dull people’s ability to remember. Socrates uses this story to strengthen his argument to Phaedrus that speech is privileged over writing because writing does not have the ability to argue or defend itself.

Derrida, however, points out that Theuth describes his invention of writing as a *pharmakon*, a term that can be translated from the Greek as either a poison or a cure (Derrida 1981). Thus, writing takes on a double meaning. It is similar to the modern concept of “drug,” in that it can be either helpful or harmful—it simultaneously embodies
both good and bad qualities. According to Derrida, Plato uses this example to frame the debate between writing and speech and relies on several binary oppositions in his argument: writing is bad but speech is good, memory is internal but writing is external, speech is alive but writing is dead (Derrida 1981). Derrida suggests the result of the ambiguity created by these opposites is that,

The *pharmakon*, or, if you will, writing, can only go around in circles: writing is only apparently good for memory . . . to know what is true. But in truth, writing is essentially bad, external to memory, productive not of science but of belief, not of truth but appearances. The *pharmakon* produces a play of appearances which enable it to pass for truth. (Derrida 1981, 103)

Derrida believes that the nature of writing indeed cannot be determined through oppositional thinking and uses the *pharmakon* to demonstrate the undecidable (Derrida 1981). Through the *pharmakon*, Derrida claims that writing is neither the cure nor the poison and that characteristics of both writing and speech lay across and between the oppositions presented by Plato. Derrida concludes that the Plato's *Phaedrus* is conceived within logocentric assumptions where the privileging of speech is used in order to make claims of truth. Some of the filmic portrayals of music teachers can also be viewed similarly, since their actions and words may be viewed as both a cure and a poison. I explain further in Chapter 4 that they come to
embody the pharmakon through work that is both helpful and at the same time, damaging and therefore demonstrating the undecidability of signification.

*The Undecidable in Film Study*

Brunette and Wills (1989) explore the undecidable in their application of Derridean ideas to film analysis. They suggest that Alfred Hitchcock's appearances in his own films are one example of the undecidable. Although this may seem like a minor detail in the film, Brunette and Wills point out that Hitchcock's presence calls into question his role in the film. The audience understands that Hitchcock is director of the film, but his presence on screen questions whether or not he is also an actor. The fact that his appearance is usually in the background and that he rarely speaks a line makes the question more difficult. Must he be central to the plot to be considered a character in the film? Do we now consider him in a dual role as actor/director? Brunette and Wills state, "the very fact that the question 'Is he a character in these films?' is unanswerable reveals the undecidability of the inside/outside dynamic" of his presence as both director and actor (Brunette and Wills 1989, 123).

Smith (2000) notes that films are inhabited by a presence/absence binary, which plays across temporal boundaries to
destabilize meaning. Films exhibit presence in the sense that they display a record of what is in front of the lens at a given time. However, what is present in the film may also be considered absent for the viewer since the screen only displays the image of what was once present in front of the camera’s lens. Since the repeatable nature of cinema points to what is yet to come, films may be haunted by how they may be known in the future, or what Derrida described as the iterability of the text. As Smith states, “If a part of the present . . . already relates to itself in the future, the future in a sense already exists . . . the future interferes with the present before the future has happened” (122).

Thus, in film there is a coexistence of present and future, which denies the boundaries of the binary of presence and absence. A metaphysical view of film might hold that if film records presence, then the future must, by nature, be absent. However, a Derridean view of the medium of film might view the temporal qualities of absence and presence as something that is not clearly definable or knowable. Film, then, would seem to play across the boundaries of presence and absence, just as Derrida attacked the same notion in regards to speech and writing by suggesting that both speech and writing are mediated through language and as such, have no essential meaning.
In the current study, then, film is viewed as a text that, while acting as a record of events, is always negotiated through its iterability, or repeatability. The repeatable nature of the film medium necessitate its understanding as influenced through its past and future.

The Trace

Derrida's notion of the trace is vital to demonstrating the undecidable, by pointing toward presence and absence at the origin of meaning. In the trace, Derrida questions the fixed relationship of the signifier and signified, drawn from Saussure's linguistic theory that proposed that language depended on the differences in signs in order to produce meaning (Evans 1991). For Derrida, meaning is not just a simple correspondence between signifier and signified, but a play between presence and absence where a signifier takes on its meaning only through its differences with every other sign. For instance, if the meaning of a sign depends on the differences from all other signs, then these other signs may be considered to have some form of presence within the meaning of that sign.

Because of the undecidability of presence and absence in the meaning of language, for Derrida, this demonstrates how all language is subject to variation in meaning. Derrida suggests that the
should not be thought of as a case of ambiguity, but rather as an uncertain relationship between the signifier and signified that creates doubt at the origin of meaning (Derrida 1974). If the trace questions the idea that the meaning of language is fixed, then it must also call into question the philosophical language that is used to explain the metaphysical questions of being, time, truth, etc. Thus, the trace attacks the very foundations of Western thought.

The concept of the trace, then, may also be applied to signifiers found in the filmic textual system: text, image, gesture, sound, music and the cinematic technical apparatus can all signify meaning in a film. However, meaning in any part of a textual system depends on the absence of other signifiers for its meaning, which gives that which is absent from the screen some form of presence. In the examination of the film texts in this study, I attempt to consider those things that are absent from the screen as having some form of presence through their absence. In addition, the trace works to destabilize meaning, adding to the foundation of this study, which seeks to examine the multiple meanings found in film texts.

**Différence**

In order to demonstrate undecidability in meaning or signs, Derrida developed the neologism *différence*. This word is related to
the French words *différence* (noun: a distinction) and *différer* (verb: to differ from, and to defer or delay), but is not a word found within the language. There exists a gap in semantics with these terms, which is the noun-verb, or the activity of putting off or of differing (Howells 1999). Derrida altered the spelling by changing an *e* in *différence* to an *a* in *différence*, in order to create a word that plays across the meaning of all these terms and fills in any gaps in meaning that may exist.

*Différence* calls attention to the fact that the meaning of signs can both *differ* to take on different meanings and *defer* to take on new meanings over time (Norris 1982). Howells (1999) explains that *différence* is a "gerundive formation implying not only difference but also differentiation, differing and deferring" (50), thereby occupying the space between and playing across all of these terms. Through its similarity to the other terms, *différence* also alludes to a similarity that is not necessarily identical. The term can be understood as a representation of the undecidable, the middle ground or the play in between (Culler 1982). Derrida states that it can be seen as

the juncture . . . of what has been most decisively inscribed in the thought of . . . our epoch: the difference of forces in Nietzsche, Saussure's principle of semiological difference . . . impression and delayed effect in Freud, difference as the irreducibility of the trace of the other in
Levinas, and the ontological difference in Heidegger.
(Derrida 1967, 130)

Derrida (1967) suggests that différence can operate as a play between speech and writing. Speech, as exemplified in the earlier example from Plato’s *Phaedrus*, is usually seen as privileged over writing in Western thinking because it is closer to thought than is writing. However, there is no distinction in pronunciation between différence and différence, so the neologism works to overturn that hierarchy, thus privileging writing over speech, since the written forms are the only site at which the full meaning is known.

Derrida points out that différence plays across both the signifier and signified as “that which produces different things, that which differentiates . . . the common root of all the oppositional concepts that mark our language” (Derrida 1982, 9). Différance, then, may operate as an insertion between words and concepts and as an example of an undecidable between speech and writing (Culler 1982).

**Iterability**

Derrida (1985) uses the term *iterability* to explain how speech is repeatable, and as he contends, repeatable with difference. The nature of speech, Derrida contends, is such that every iteration of language is derived from something before it. Thus, in speaking, we
are always re-using and recycling speech, and for any word to have
comprehensible meaning it must, by nature, be repeatable (Derrida
1985).

Derrida’s concept of iterability is best understood through his
encounter with J.L. Austin’s ideas about the meaning and context of
language (Howells 1999). Austin viewed speech as having two broad
functions that were in opposition to one another. *Constative*
statements are those statements of fact that can be either true or
false. On the other hand, *performative* statements are those that
perform an action; for instance, a declaration of war or the naming of
a building (Howells 1999). Performative statements can either
succeed or fail, but for Austin the success depends on context. For
example, the pronouncement of marriage by one who was not
recognized to do so could not be seen as successful. This view also
places emphasis on the difference between serious and non-serious
language, meaning that the context of performative speech ultimately
governs its meaning (Norris 1982).

For Derrida, writing provides an example of how Austin’s
grounding in context is logocentric. While a text’s context has an
influence on meaning, it does not exert absolute control over meaning
because it is separated from intention and can be interpreted
differently by different readers (Derrida 1985). Likewise, intention plays a part in meaning as well, but "intention . . . is never fully present [just as] context is never perfectly defined" (Howells 1999, 66). Iterability, then, undermines context as the sole basis of meaning and affirms that language and writing go beyond their contexts through their repetition. Speech can always be repeated and re-used in varying contexts, which demonstrates that "speech-acts cannot be confined to the unique self-present moment of meaning" (Norris 1989, 110).

Derrida states that iterability ensures "every sign . . . spoken or written . . . can break with every given context, and engender infinitely new contexts" (Derrida 1982, 320). This view of the contextual and shifting nature of language has several implications for this study. First, there exist differences in understanding that occur through the contextual reading of each viewer despite the repeatability of a medium such as film (Brunette and Wills 1989). Additionally, there exist differences over time as films take on new contexts as different films are produced (Meinhof and Smith 2000), a concept that is further developed later in this chapter in the discussion of intertextuality. The meaning of a film, therefore, is always in process as new texts are written and new understandings developed;
therefore, the differences that occur through context and over time assure plurality in textual meaning.

Brunette and Wills (1989) explain that any utterance can be repeated outside of the context of its original intention:

Established first as a principle of written language . . . Derrida extends the principle to all linguistic utterance by proving the structural similarity between writing and speech. As a consequence, since language necessitates the use of utterances out of the context of their imagined original conception, it can be said to be constituted by citation. (Brunette and Wills 1989, 87)

This brings many important factors to bear when investigating film in particular. For instance, since every viewing of a movie could in itself be thought of as an utterance of speech, film lends itself not only to changing interpretation given a context in which it is viewed, but also to changing interpretation over time. This temporal aspect of a film's meaning is due to its nature of being recorded and repeatable, which more easily enables quotation and citation. These aspects of film assure that its interpretation is not fixed, but plural and changing over time.

Austin disregards performative speech not intended to be serious or fully intended, such as quotational language, dialogue from plays, or something said as a joke (Norris 1982). Performative statements in this context cannot be taken seriously, Austin suggests, because they
are not intended to be taken seriously in the first place. Derrida’s view of quotational language, however, is exactly the same as all other language: context can never be assured (Derrida 1985). Howells (1999) states that for Derrida, quotational or parasitic language is interesting precisely for what they have in common with the operation of ordinary performative utterances. For it is the notion of iterability that underlies these excluded, hollow performatives: they involve a kind of citation, and a non-presence of the intention of the speaking subject, whether this be in jest, on stage or in fiction. (Howells 1989, 65)

Applied to film, speech and image could be cited or grafted into other texts or discourses that could then take on different contexts and meanings (Brunette and Wills 1989). Certainly, the repeatable language present in film ensures that the context in which it is viewed is subject to change. Brunette and Wills (1989) comment, “rather than ensuring the coherence of language, [iterability] introduces the possibility of irreducible difference . . . and the undermining of language as a simple act of communication, as the conveying of a message from sender to addressee” (87). Certainly, early film theory such as auteur theory or psychoanalytic film theory views the film as a container from which meaning is extracted by the viewer (Andrew 1984). However, Derrida’s notion of iterability questions the capability of the film to communicate a singular message because, as Brunette
and Wills (1989) state, “repetition is the mark of difference” (86).

The concept of iterability, then, situates meaning as not entirely governed by either author or reader. In the deconstructive project, iterability demonstrates that “the difficulties of any theory that would define meaning in a univocal way: as what an author intends, what conventions determine, [or] what a reader experiences” (Culler 1982, 131). Therefore, meaning is not made entirely by author, reader, linguistic structure, or context—to say that it is would constitute logocentric thinking. In this way, Derrida’s understanding of meaning is somewhat similar to Gadamer’s hermeneutics, in that Gadamer acknowledges a reciprocal pushing and pulling between text and reader in the construction of meaning. In other words, meaning does not reside entirely with the text or the reader (Young 2004).

Parergon

Derrida’s notion of the parergon confronts the physical boundaries of the artwork. In his work The Truth in Painting (1987), Derrida examines what peripheral elements might be considered inside or outside the work of art. This appears to be another way for Derrida to call attention to the undecidable and/or play between binarisms that could occur in the consideration of art or texts. In The Truth in Painting (1987), Derrida challenges Kant’s idea of the aesthetic object
through the examination of the *parergon*, a Greek term that refers to something secondary or incidental. Arguing that art objects have intrinsic meaning and do not rely on anything extrinsic to be complete, Kant sees the parergon as something extrinsic or subsidiary to the art object in an attempt to define its boundaries. However, in Kant's attempt to establish the boundaries of works of art, Derrida finds an undecidable that cannot fully be determined, which he illustrates with the notion of the picture frame (1987).

For Kant, the frame is extrinsic to the work of art and acts as an ornament that cannot be counted into the consideration of the intrinsic meaning of the work. While the frame is usually considered as nonessential in Western thinking, it can also be seen as "constituting the painting entity within by framing it" (Brunette and Wills 1989, 101). This leads to the question, "Is the frame an intrinsic part of the work of art or not?" For Derrida, the frame is a contested area that occupies a place both inside and outside of the work. If the work of art is complete without the frame, then why is it there? If the work is incomplete without the frame, why did the artist stop at the edge of the canvas? Brunette and Wills (1989) assert that "The status of the frame is completely relational—like a border between two countries whose precise location can never be exactly specified" (Brunette and
Wills 1989, 101). The frame is the undecidable inside/outside of the work of art.

The major issues surrounding the parergon, then, are the function of the frame and how extrinsic objects might affect perceptions of the artwork. At some point the frame ceases being a frame and contributes to the perception of the artwork. As Derrida states, the frame “is no longer merely around the work . . . the frame, the title, the signature, the legend, etc.—does not stop disturbing the internal order of discourse on painting” (quoted in Kamuf 1991, 9).

While the frame of a painting is a common illustration of the parergon, the concept can be applied to any number of objects which frame in the general sense, or can be viewed as a supplement or addition. This creates an interesting position in film study, for the frame is actually an internal structure—the way in which subjects and objects are organized within a shot (Hayward 2000). Thus, the frame of a film could be seen as embodying the contested ground of the inside/outside. While the frame exists as an internal structure of the film, it can also be seen as the boundary of the absence of light around the screen. Brunette and Wills (1989) state, “what usually refers to the outside border, as in painting, here also names the inside, or some undefined combination of inside and outside” (103). They also suggest
that the *filmic frame* might also include what the audience imagines as the real world juxtaposed against the backdrop of the images on the screen. This view of the frame consists of the outside world set against the inside of the film that functions on "an immediate visual level involving the whole problematic of analogical reference, and . . . on the level of realist conventions and other such cinematic codes" so that the image "creates its own frame that, conversely, constructs its own inside" (Brunette and Wills 1989, 105).

As a binary opposition, the inside of the film could be viewed as privileged over the outside world, and viewers may hold up the standards of the film against their own experiences. The inside status of the film, then, might place it in a position of all-knowing, subordinating the experiences of the viewer in favor of the "reality" on screen. This view of the frame will be used in this study to examine the possible ways in which the narratives could play a part in shaping the occupational identity of music teachers, and to explore the ways in which the inside of the film may exert influence over the outside world of music teaching.

Derrida (1978) proposes that the signature and title of a work of art are a part of the parergon, there are also many extrinsic objects in addition to the filmic frame that could be considered as well. For
instance, the film introduction and credits might be considered outside the frame, because they are not contained within the film's temporal boundaries. Specifically in the DVD version of *School of Rock*, there appears a commercial for VH1's Save the Music Foundation, which I suggest is a part of the film that factors into its interpretation. From one perspective, the commercial appears before the film begins; however, the presence of the commercial appears to be undecidable since it would influence a reader's interpretation of the film text.

**Aporia**

Derrida uses *aporias*, a textual paradox or undecidable contradiction, as a way to undermine a text's stability and demonstrate the plurality of possible meanings. The term aporia is derived from the Greek term *aporos* meaning an "impassable path." For Derrida the concept represents a paradox or contradiction that can bring the singular meaning of a text into doubt (Reynolds 2010). Although the concept "occupied a suspect, even sinister, place in the system of traditional rhetoric," it operates for Derrida as "the nearest one can get to a label or conceptual cover-term for the effects of *différence*" (Norris 1982, 49).

In Derrida’s book *Aporias* (1993) he explores the meaning of death by his usual method of examining texts by Diderot, Cicero and
Heidegger. Derrida argues that *dying* is a restrictive term since a person is not able to experience his own death and exists as an entity of both nature and culture. He uses death as an example of an aporia because *death* could never be thought of as an experience that one could call their own, since one would no longer be alive to possess it; yet death is a concept that could never be called anyone one else's (1993). Thus, death exists as a paradox and contradiction that disrupts its own logic. The idea of dying, then, is an irreducible concept that points to the undecidability of a metaphysical argument, and serves as another tool to demonstrate undecidability and plural meaning within texts. In this example, Derrida takes the binary of life/death and demonstrates its undecidability through the concept of the ownership of death.

*Responsibility*

Derrida explores examples of aporias in his later writings that are particularly useful in the analysis of film texts to explore contradictions that exist within the major themes in these narratives. In his book *The Gift of Death* (1991), Derrida explores the *aporia of responsibility* through the implicit response humans have to others, such as humanity, family, civil law or a god. Derrida’s suggestion is that one can never be responsible in the true sense of the word,
because our actions that are made in the spirit of responsibility to an other is always negotiated in the best interests of one party and to the detriment of another. For Derrida, this presents a complex problem that is often presented by those in power as a simple and easily-accomplished task of behaving responsibly and accountably. He uses the Biblical story of Abraham and Isaac as an example of the negotiation of responsibility, where Abraham is forced to decide between the responsibility to his family or to God when God instructs him to sacrifice his son Isaac. This dilemma, Reynolds (2010) suggests, places Abraham simultaneously on moral and immoral ground and points toward Derrida's project of deconstruction.

In the story, Abraham must make a decision whether or not to sacrifice his son, and at the same time, must negotiate his responsibility or allegiance either to God, or to society and family. Derrida states in his exploration of this Biblical story, that "Abraham is faithful to God only in his absolute treachery, in the betrayal of his own and of the uniqueness of each one of them . . . He would not be able to opt for fidelity to his own, or to his son, unless he were to betray the absolute other: God, if you wish" (Derrida 1991, 68). In other words, either path chosen will place Abraham as simultaneously moral and immoral, which explains Derrida's position that
responsibility is ultimately conditional and not as clearly-defined as Western thought would believe. Derrida suggests this idea pervades our lives, and necessitates a consideration of the other, stating "I cannot respond to the call, the request, the obligation, or even the love of another without sacrificing the other other, or the other others" (68).

Applied to the current study, the Derridean notion of responsibility provides a useful means of interrogating the actions of the filmic music teacher. In Chapter 4, I explore the possibility that a character's actions might be viewed as responsible to a student or group of students, but can also be viewed as irresponsible to others, since the decisions one makes to act responsibly in one realm is, by its very nature, injurious in another. As these actions may appear to be undecidable, the understanding of music teacher may depend on the reader's interpretation of how responsibility is negotiated.

Hospitality

Derrida also explores the notion of hospitality as an example of aporia in Of Hospitality (2000). Derrida argues that acts of hospitality are inherently exclusionary, and while being perceived as an act of charity to one party, they can also be viewed as the denial of hospitable acts to others. His concept of hospitality is placed against
what he terms *genuine hospitality*, or the sacrifice of all of one's possessions. When viewed in this light, acts of hospitality are inherently flawed through the decisions one is forced to make about what to withhold from the act and whom to withhold it from.

Derrida suggests the act of hospitality inherently enacts a power structure between the one showing hospitality and the recipient of the act (Derrida 2000). The implication of power results from the condition of ownership. One who makes a hospitable act necessarily enacts power over what he owns, and in turn, power over the one toward whom he is hospitable. This power structure also assumes control over one's possessions, and in the act of hospitality, this control extends beyond the possession to the control over the one subordinated by the hospitable act. Derrida claims that hospitality also embodies exclusion, in that any hospitable act must always choose one over another, and in doing so, the hospitality can also be viewed as inhospitable (Derrida 2000). In this way, Derrida demonstrates the aporia, or undecidable conflict, that lies within the notion of hospitality through the necessary condition of being simultaneously possible and impossible.

This concept is valuable to the current study by providing a concept through which film narratives may be interrogated. Further
explored in Chapter 5, the music ensembles in the films analyzed in this study are often portrayed as places of hospitality, welcoming those who may be outcasts, lacking in experience or are looking for a group with which to identify. However, the acts of music teachers in the films, while hospitable toward their students in one sense, may also be interpreted as exclusionary to others. The lens of hospitality, then, demonstrates how Derrida's concepts of aporia can be used to deconstruct film texts and the assumptions that they rely upon.

*The Gift*

Closely related to Derrida's concept of hospitality is the notion of *the gift*, which he explores in several texts, but perhaps in most detail in *The Gift of Death* (1991) and *Given Time* (1994). Again, Derrida adopts the gift as a demonstration of an undecidable aporia, and suggests that a genuine gift is nearly impossible to achieve. Gifts always demand something in return, even if it is a "thank you" by the one who receives (Derrida 1994). These expectations or conditions of repayment destroy the gift because it attempts to give back some equivalence of what was given. For Derrida, the genuine gift must exist outside of the realm of giving and taking and beyond the interests of the giver and taker.

Bennington (1999) describes the fundamental problem with the
gift when he states "if the essence of the gift is not to be an object of exchange, then we see that strictly speaking the gift annuls itself as such" (188). In Derrida's (1991) estimation, the genuine gift necessitates the giver not even knowing they have given (even in anonymity - one could relish in the fact that they have given anonymously) and the receiver not knowing they have received (otherwise, there would be an expectation of "whom do I thank?" or "how can I repay?"). The anonymity of the genuine gift, then, would eliminate the benefits of giving and the obligation of receiving. Derrida points to the cyclical nature of the gift, where taker responds to the giver with yet another gift (even the gift of "thank you" or a kind word, etc.) as the paradox of the initial gift (Derrida 1994). The aporia of the gift, then, would seem to lie in the understood expectations that tarnish the nature of the act of giving. Derrida seems to be asking, simply, "is a gift really a gift if something is expected in return?"

Similar to responsibility and hospitality, there is a link to Derrida's notion of the gift and educational discourse. In the current study, the aporia of the gift is particularly useful in exploring the salvation narratives on which many of the films rely. Discussed further in Chapter 4, salvation narratives often rely on the image of
the teacher as a hero who saves her students through the imparting of knowledge. This act might easily be seen as a gift from the teacher, who is admired for her sacrifice, unselfishness and giving. However, through the Derridean lens, these gifts are often subverted by expectations of recompense by the teacher and obligation by the students. In this way, the aporia of the gift helps to suggest alternate ways of looking at narratives that question the assumption of the purity of the gift.

These three aporias are the primary lens through which the deconstructive readings of the film take place. Because Derrida frames these concepts as paradoxes and undecidable, when they are used to approach the reading of a film, they help to point out contradictions and assumptions that could undermine the reading of a text, and ultimately suggest divergent ways of interpreting the film text.

**Encountering the Text:**

**Derridean and Poststructural Approaches**

In the following section, I explain the two major approaches that were valuable in the consideration of the film texts in this study. First, I examine Derridean deconstruction, building on the terms and concepts presented previously along with a discussion of reception.
theory and how it is used in the deconstructive readings. Then I go on to explore intertextuality, a concept that is used throughout my analysis but also specifically as a theoretical lens for Chapter 5 in the discussion of arts advocacy and funding.

**Deconstruction**

Terms such as *différence*, *iterability*, *undecidability*, *the trace* and *aporia* are all tools Derrida used to encounter texts. Derrida's notion of *deconstruction* was a strategy for disrupting textual foundations by calling attention to their logocentric assumptions. While the term has taken on a number of meanings and has been used in a variety of ways, Derrida uses it to describe an approach to literary criticism that destabilizes texts by pointing out the binary oppositions on which the text relies and attempting to overturn them.

Derrida resists the idea that deconstruction is a kind of analysis, critique or methodology, since those terms assume that there is some kind of truth to be found within the text (Derrida 1974). Despite his emphasis on describing what deconstruction is *not*, Derrida perhaps comes closest to a definition of deconstruction in his *Letter to a Japanese Friend* (1987), where he states that deconstruction resists the label of analysis because this implies movement from the complex toward the simple, stable and knowable. Thus, by its very nature, the
act of analysis is imbued with metaphysical logic—the very thing deconstruction attempts to subvert. Derrida shuns the label of *critique* because it suggests the external commentary upon the text which creates an inside/outside binary which is anathema to the deconstructive project. Additionally, Derrida rejects deconstruction as a methodology because in a method "the technical and procedural significations of the words are stressed [and named]" (quoted in Kamuf 1991, 273).

Most of Derrida's explanation of deconstruction focuses on what it is *not* rather than defining its parameters; he states that "all sentences of the type 'deconstruction is X' or 'deconstruction is not X' *a priori* miss the point, which is to say that they are at least false" (Derrida 1987 *Reader*, 275). However, Derrida does seem to imply that deconstruction can be thought of as a type of reading in which occurs the "delimiting of ontology" (quoted in Kamuf 1991, 275). In addition to a type of reading, Collins (1996) suggests that it can also be thought of as a *project* as long as there are no predetermined goals or outcomes to which the reader ascribes. Keeping with the view of deconstruction as a project, I have approached texts in this investigation with the aim of exploring possible interpretations rather than seeking to uncover a unified meaning through textual analysis.
Deconstruction as a philosophical strategy, then, might be considered an approach to textual reading where the natural hierarchical nature of metaphysical thought is reversed or subverted in order to call attention to the undecidable nature of the oppositions on which textual assumptions are based (Culler 1982; Norris 1982).

**Yale School Deconstruction**

Literary critics Paul de Man, Geoffrey Hartman, J. Hillis Miller and Harold Bloom constitute what is commonly referred to as the Yale School of deconstruction, a movement that rigorously applied Derrida's project to the analysis of literary texts. Active in the 1970s, the Yale School applied Derrida's ideas in a variety of ways, but most often focused on the play and slippage of meaning found in signifiers within texts. Culminating with *Deconstruction and Criticism* (Bloom et al. 1979), the Yale school approach, and the work of Miller and de Man in particular, uses Derrida's concepts to suggest alternate meanings of signifiers, demonstrating the unstable nature of textual meaning.

While the manifestation of Yale School deconstruction took a somewhat destructive and hostile approach to textual reading, Derrida's later work diverges from such adaptations to emphasize the affirmative possibilities of justice in the deconstructive project (Derrida 1992).
Deconstruction, Justice and Affirmation

The approach to deconstructive reading that dominated the Yale school focused on the possible play of meaning for signifiers, however more recent manifestations of deconstruction go beyond simply reversing the hierarchy of terms in a binary opposition, and attempt to undermine the foundations of textual assumptions with an eye toward the ethical and political implications resulting from the interrogation of the text. Norris (1982) states "[D]econstruction is not simply a strategic reversal of categories . . . [I]t seeks to undo both a given order of priorities and the very system of conceptual opposition that makes that order possible" (31). Adding to this, Higgs (2002) points out that deconstruction "is a questioning of all assumptions, not as an act of demolition, but as a striving for an awareness of what is involved in a text" (173). Indeed, the "awareness" that Higgs alludes to is, for Derrida, an awareness of the absence or suppression of alterity. Therefore, the project of deconstruction does not seek to analyze texts in comparison to external standards, but instead to test each text by its own claims of logocentric thinking and hierarchical oppositions to show inconsistencies, gaps in logic and assumptive thinking (Evans 1991). In addition, Dyndahl (2008) suggests deconstruction seeks to highlight that which is marginal in the text,
and in so doing, works toward Derrida's (1992) concern for justice, ethics and the other.

For Derrida (1992), justice is always in relation to the other. He suggests that justice can be seen as an aporia insofar as it is impossible to do justice to the singularity of the other while applying the law, which claims to be universal. One cannot make claims to justice, Derrida asserts, when the other has no say in whether or not they have been treated justly (Derrida 1992). Although justice assumes universality, or an equal application of the law, it is impossible for a fixed system of standards to be applied equitably in the consideration of every other (Critchley 1992). Thus, justice is never something that can be present, but something that only exists as an unreachable condition that is always on the horizon (Derrida 1992). However, Derrida's envisioning of justice is one that attempts to respond to the unique otherness of every other. For Derrida, this is where the deconstructive project takes on ethical and political dimensions: deconstruction takes the form of justice as it responds to alterity. Since deconstruction is a response to the other, it takes on ethical and political implications, affirming the otherness of the other (Caputo 1997; Critchley 1992). Higgs (2002) points out, however, that the affirmative in deconstruction is not simply an
acknowledgement of what already exists, but rather a consideration of what Derrida calls the à venir, or that which is to come.

Ethical and political dimensions of deconstruction have been used to explore aspects of responsibility and justice in education. Following Derrida’s (1992) assertion that application of the law is not a just decision at all, Biesta and Egéa-Kuehne (2001) hold education as an example of that which seeks responsibility to the other through the educator’s constant negotiation with alterity, paradox and incongruity. Discussing educators’ dilemma of dual responsibilities to singularity and plurality, Biesta and Egéa-Kuehne (2001) state,

This paradox of universality, is a challenge for all educators to develop an ability to mediate differences and boundaries, exclusions and violence, hierarchies and boarders, whether they are concerned with language, ethnicity, race, gender, and so on . . . [H]ow does one respond to, respond for, and be responsible to and for two imperatives? (191)

Based on Derrida’s (1992) writings on justice, Biesta and Egéa-Kuehne (2001) suggest that justice and responsibility in education demand an acceptance of the dual demands of responsibility rather than prescriptive justice. In this light, the current analysis is directed toward the other through the consideration of race, gender, and access in Chapters 4 and 5, and how justice and responsibility affirm alterity in the educational arena in Chapter 6.
Deconstruction in Film Study

While Derrida himself did not apply the deconstructive project to the medium of film, others such as Brunette and Wills' Screen/Play (1989), have taken on the project of using deconstruction in the reading of film texts. Before one can discuss how a deconstructive film study can play out, however, it seems necessary to grapple with the questions of the nature of film and the consideration of the medium as a text. Films may seem to be the congruence of word and image, and perhaps they are more fully considered textual systems, or layers of different forms of communication. Films do rely on images and are, in a sense, texts since they are based on a script that is written word. However, as Metz (1974) has pointed out, other layers of communication such as sound, music, gesture and the technical aspects of film construction also come into play as a part of the overall textual system of cinema.

In the consideration of film as a type of text, it may be useful to look closely at Brunette and Wills' (1989) application of Derrida's ideas of speech and writing and how these may be applied to cinema. As I alluded to previously in this chapter, Derrida rejects the privileged position speech has been given over writing in the tradition of logocentric thought because it has been considered closer to thought
and therefore closer to truth. In this line of thinking, writing has the
disadvantage of having distance between author and reader.
Therefore, there is a negotiation between reader and text brings with
it the possibility of doubt in the certainty of meaning. In his essay
“Signature Event Context” (1985), Derrida suggests that every form of
communication or reproducible language, including speech, is
inhabited by repeatable words and phrases. To the extent that it is
repeatable, just as writing is repeatable, then all forms of
communication can be considered writing. Brunette and Wills (1989)
explore the concept of film as writing, stating that film is a "system of
representation" (61). They elaborate on the written nature of film:

Cinema, like all other forms of writing, leaves something
behind, something involving material effects that cannot
be hidden if the operation is to continue to function, like
printed letters and words or reels of celluloid. This is of
course the way all language functions, for spoken words
only seem to disappear after they enter the ear of their
listeners, but they are very much there. . . . In the case of
cinema, its "writtenness" simply seems less obvious
because it is received as still more natural and direct than
speech. (Brunette and Wills 1989, 61)

The operation of cinematic textual systems as layers of
communication and meaning, then, may be thought of as writing in
the sense that the communication is recorded by means of an
apparatus (film in this case) that can be repeated, cited or grafted
onto other texts. Even though the cinema is not a text in the
traditional sense of a written word, and is not only speech since there are other levels of communication at play within the system, from a Derridean perspective, it is a text in the sense that it is a communication that is repeatable. Therefore, the treatment of filmic texts in this study acknowledges that texts are not unified in their meaning and are inherently contradictory. Again, Brunette and Wells (1989) explain the effect of approaching film analysis through the view of film as text by stating,

From a deconstructive standpoint, analysis [of film] would no longer seek the supposed center of meaning but instead turn its attention to the margins, where the supports of meaning are disclosed, to reading in and out of the text, examining other texts onto which it opens itself out or from which it closes itself off. (62)

Brunette and Wills' application of the deconstructive project to film focuses on the exploration of the inconsistencies, flaws in logic and contradictions that arise from an un-unified text. They set out to explore "certain problems seeming to arise in the texts" of the films The Bride Wore Black (1967) and Blue Velvet (1986). Regarding the application of Derrida's concepts to film, they state:

The words that Derrida throws into a constantly mutating chain of signification . . . cannot be properly called concepts, nor can they easily be applied to textual systems other than those he discusses, such as literature, painting, or philosophy—for example, a textual system such as cinema. Yet the various domains in which these terms
were first employed may not exercise proprietary claim over them, hence leaving them open to adaptation. (60)

Studies adapting the deconstructive project to film include Morris’s (1997) deconstruction of the idea of direction in Hitchcock’s North by Northwest, Boyd’s (1989) reading of Hitchcock’s Vertigo, During’s (1990) analysis of Coppola’s Apocalypse Now, Paul’s (1993) investigation of educationally-themed movies and Tatlock’s (2009) deconstructive reading of movies with scenes of violence. Despite limited application of deconstruction in film research, the studies cited above demonstrate the adaptability of Derrida’s vocabulary and textual interrogation to film texts. In the current study, a deconstructive approach will interrogate dominant readings of films and offer negotiated or contrary interpretations so that music teachers might consider how these films affect agency within their own environments.

A deconstructive reading of film will adopt Derrida’s vocabulary in order to identify binary oppositions found in Western discourse upon which the film operates (Brunette and Wills 1989; Paul 1993). Because binary oppositions such as man/woman, day/night, true/false always privilege one term over the other, a deconstructive reading of film will attempt to overturn these hierarchies in order to expose the logocentric assumptions upon which the film is based. In order to do this, the readings of the film must attempt to find words, moments or
actions that demonstrate these oppositions and hierarchies (Paul 1993). In so doing, aporias or undecidables may be found that open up the text to multiple interpretations or expose undecidable meanings within the films (Brunette and Wills 1989; Paul 1993; Tatlock 2009).

For example, in Chapter 4 I discuss the opposition of privileging white musical traditions over those of visible minorities. For instance, *Music of the Heart* relies on the positioning the white teacher (Roberta) as the privileged savior of her African American and Latino students. In examining the hierarchical relationship, I attempt to show how Roberta's privileging is subverted through her complete reliance on the Black\(^1\) and Latino communities for her continued work and support. In so doing, I offer an alternative reading of the film and demonstrate the plurality of interpretation that exists within the narrative.

The deconstructive reading replaces the search for a singular interpretation with the project of understanding the films through their inherent contradictions (Brunette and Wills 1989; Paul 1993; Tatlock 2009). Ultimately, the use of a deconstructive reading will lead to the consideration of these films as open structures that affirm the

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\(^1\) In discussions about race, I use the term *Black* to denote cultures or communities of those associated with the African diaspora. When referring to groups comprised of various persons of color, I employ the term *visible minority* to indicate non-whites who are not of the majority race within Western culture. When referring to specific characters, individuals or cultural productions of those persons of African descent in American society, I use the term *African American.*
otherness of the other through the consideration of that which is marginalized or absent in dominant readings.

_Restoration Theory and Its Use in Deconstructive Reading_

Reception theory is a literary theory that “considers relationships among user, program and producer” (DeVaney 1993, 182). It has been used extensively in literary theory, as well as in other areas such as films (Koza 2003) and computer software programs (DeVaney, 1993). In these applications, scholars have used reception theory to place more importance on the understanding of the reader and her social context. Fish (1980) explains the intent of reception theory as looking at the response of the reader as the site of meaning. As referenced in Chapter 1, he states that meaning is “an action made upon a reader rather than as a container from which a reader extracts a message” (23). Similarly, Barthes (1974) argues that literature “make[s] the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text” (4). In other words, the basis of reception theory is that a text is not a vessel from which meaning is extracted, but a site where readers interpret and produce their own meanings.

According to Jauss (1983) any meaning that may have been intended by the author is not pertinent in the analysis of literature, events or works of art. He states:
It makes no difference whether the conventionally accepted answer of a text has been given explicitly, ambivalently, or indeterminately by the author himself; or whether it is an interpretation of the work that first arose at its reception . . . the answer presented by the work of art . . . is now set within a changed horizon of aesthetic experience, and so is no longer asked as it was originally by the past text, but is the result of an interaction between present and past. (69)

Therefore, Jauss contends that the reception of a text is not only tied to social context, but is also dependent upon social and historical developments that occurred between the creation and the reading of the text. The interpretation of texts, then, is not only plural from one person's experience to the next, but is also fluid in time as social and historical events change readers' viewpoints and understanding of the text. Likewise, Fish (1980) proposes that the analyst must take into account the fact that what happens in the text as it unfolds has a great effect on subsequent interpretations made by the reader. In his view, the reader is not able to separate her unfolding reaction and interpretation from her previous thoughts and reactions to the text. Fish explains by stating "any one moment in the reading experience must take into account all that has happened (in the reader's mind) at previous moments, each of which was in its turn subject to the accumulating pressures of its predecessors" (26). Thus, the analyst is charged with capturing the unfolding nature of interpretation, which,
as Fish later states, results in the text having "no point of termination" (67).

Reception theory cannot account for every potential interpretation of a text, or ensure consistent interpretation among groups of readers. However, reception theory does allow the researcher to account for some of the possible interpretations and acknowledge the fact that texts have plural meanings that are made at the site of each individual reader.

While acknowledging that textual meaning is made by the reader, Hall (1973) proposed that readings fall broadly into three different categories. The dominant reading is one that is viewed by Hall as the intended reading of the producers of the text and one that is made by the majority of readers. Accounting for the possibility that readers bring social and historical contexts with them as they encounter texts, Hall describes the kind of varied readings affected by a reader's unique situation as negotiated readings. Finally, Hall suggests that some readers may develop a contrary reading where they understand the intentions of a text and the dominant reading that may come from it, yet interpret it in a completely oppositional mode. In these three concepts, Hall outlines how readers may encounter, interpret and use texts.
As used in the current study, Hall’s notion of the *dominant reading* is represented by reviews of the films found in major newspapers and by user reviews taken from movie websites such as rottentomatoes.com. These reviews are taken as representative of an interpretation that many viewers might come to after seeing the films. The themes that emerge from these dominant readings will then be used as a backdrop from which to approach the deconstructive readings of the films. Since textual interpretation is subjective and plural, the use of the dominant reading as the source of themes to be deconstructed takes away at least some of my own subjectivity of interpretation when engaging the text.

**Intertextuality**

Intertextuality is a term first proposed by Kristeva that acknowledges that texts exist as a network of communication and meaning (1980). Kristeva originally suggested the term as an interpretation for Bakhtin’s *dialogism*, which referred to the relation of any text to other related texts (Stam 2000). Similar to deconstruction, this concept challenges the autonomous text, suggesting that each reader understands a text depends largely upon his/her own knowledge of associated texts, which can influence one’s expectations and interpretation (Kristeva 1980). In this way, Gray
posits (2006) that the “reader’s supposedly impervious textual borders begin to lose their sealant” (23). The idea of intertextuality also demonstrates that texts are not closed entities, but take on new meaning as other texts are written and as new meaning is made through contextual or historical changes (Hill and Gibson 2000).

**Quotation and Allusion**

Gray (2006) notes that perhaps the most common mode of intertextual play is that of influence or quotation, where a text draws a specific reference to some other text, be it a film, television show, music or pop culture reference. While this is usually seen as a one-way transaction, intertextuality theory holds that this is a moment at which a communication occurs between the texts, so that intertextuality is always evolving and adding to textual conversations. While direct quotation is one, and the most obvious, avenue to an intertextual reference, it can also take place in more subtle ways, both in communication with multiple texts or within the same text (Iampolski 1998; Orr 2003). For instance, an intertextual association may take into account the “dependence of any text on a host of prior figures, conventions, codes and other [related] texts” (Stam 1992).

Specifically in cinema, intertextual references may be manifested through a reader’s associations of films that are closely related in
subject matter or setting, such as Westerns, science fiction, war movies or documentaries. Iampolski (1998) suggests that viewer expectations and understandings of films can be shaped through their knowledge of other films, as readers often form expectations based on perceived similarities of genre or subject matter. Similarly, a film's intertextual network could incorporate films with the same actors or directors, where films in which an actor has appeared may be said to have an intertextual relationship because a viewer's impression of the film may be partly influenced by his encounters with other roles played by the actor (Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis 1992). Viewers may also have certain expectations when viewing a film directed by Stephen Spielberg or starring Meryl Streep, for instance, since a director's or actor's body of work could comprise an intertextual network from which readers may draw meaning. In the same way, readers may be likely to understand the presence of a popular actor as a portrayal of a character, as informed by the reader's knowledge of other roles. This may be especially applicable to "true story" depictions such as Streep's role as Roberta Guaspari. On the other hand, audiences may associate films with lesser-known casts, such as in Drumline, as closer to reality because of a lack of intertextual knowledge about the actors. Likewise, such character-based
interpretations could regard narratives such as *School of Rock* less seriously because of familiarity of Jack Black’s body of films that feature slapstick, silly or outrageous humor.

### Intertextuality and Textual Analysis

Intertextuality has several important implications for textual analysis. First, acknowledgement of intertextuality, or that texts are linked and dependent upon other texts for meaning, would imply that texts by themselves are incomplete (Eco 1979). In addition, Iampolski (1998) states that texts can be understood as having dynamic interactions with other texts where there exists constant negotiation and communication that influence a reader’s understanding of the text. Stam (2000) suggests that this communication represents a text’s dialogue with historical and cultural traditions:

> In the broadest possible sense, intertextual dialogism refers to the infinite and open-ended possibilities generated by all the discursive practices of a culture . . . which reach the text not only through recognizable influences but also through a subtle process of dissemination. (202)

Therefore, intertextuality works to “deny the notion of organic unity” of a given text and brings to light its interdependence on other texts and discourses for its meaning (Culler 1982, 200).

Additionally, the theory of intertextuality challenges the
traditional borders of texts that Western thinking applies. The result of the consideration of textual influence and quotation is the multiple interpretations and meanings that may be understood in the reading of a given text. Producing multiple layers of texts and meanings, intertextuality guarantees that the ultimate possibility of a true or final meaning has vanished (Iampolski 1998). Therefore, through intertextual theory, each reading of a text can generate a unique interpretation because all readers bring their own unique textual knowledge to the act of reading. These references can be seen as a part of the theory of reception, in that the intertextual links are always made by the reader, irrespective of an author’s (or, perhaps in the case of film, director’s) intention to link certain other texts into his work (Iampolski 1998). In this way, the movie reviews used in the current study take on intertextual connections with the film texts, which may ultimately contribute to a reader’s interpretation of the film.

Genre Knowledge as Intertextuality

Another important aspect in the reading of films is the consideration of genre as an intertextual factor. Gray (2006) claims that, particularly in media studies, knowledge of genre plays a vital role in the interpretation of a text. It is necessary to point out, that
while the concept of 'genre' has many ties to metaphysics and the Enlightenment, the purpose of the inclusion of genre into intertextual studies is not to classify and codify texts, but to acknowledge 'genre' as a way that readers come to develop expectations about texts. The understanding of genres varies from reader to reader, and the construction of boundaries that delineate such constructs affects the way readers interpret films through the lens of intertextuality. In keeping with a poststructuralist framework, it must be acknowledged that genre is not a unified system, and must be thought of as a construction of the reader with permeable boundaries (Orr 2003). In addition, different groups of readers may approach certain genres differently depending on their background, for example, audiences of music teachers as opposed to the general public.

While genres may seem to exist as fixed entities, Gray (2006) suggests that they are actually arbitrary categories that can change and shift over time, and which society organizes texts for the convenience of their own consumption. As Gray (2006) points out,

Each genre has its own 'common sense' rules that, by and large, we internalize and use to make sense of future texts. . . . In a world of seemingly infinite texts, genres help us to taste-test and select what to watch. Once we have selected, and are listening, watching, or reading, genre codes serve as shorthand to tell us what is going on. (28)
Thus, the knowledge of genres helps a reader of films to know how to select texts, what to expect out of texts and how to interpret them (Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis 1992). If one has an understanding of horror films, for instance, genre knowledge will enable that reader to choose which films they want to watch, and will give them a set of expectations based upon other horror movies they have seen before. Also, genre knowledge would contribute to the viewer's understanding of the villain and the role that suspense, violence and death will play in the reading of the film. Stam (2000) suggests it is through these previous encounters with films in the same genre that films take on some of their meaning. A reader may gain a "proficiency with . . . generic codes" (Gray 2006, 28) that contributes to an intertextual understanding. In this way, all of the films within a reader's perceived boundaries of the same genre instantly take part in intertextual communication with other films. Another important aspect of genre knowledge is a consideration of the type of audience that might be predisposed to view movies with certain subjects or settings. In the current investigation, this may emphasize the likely interpretations of music teachers, students and other stakeholders since they would be prone to have an interest in films with portrayals of music teaching.
The current study investigates four movies that share a similar subject matter of music teaching, and because of this connection, intertextuality played a significant role in interpretation. Using an intertextual approach acknowledges that the films in this study engage in dialog with each other, with other films of similar subjects or settings, and with texts of popular culture to construct meaning about music teachers in society. Intertextuality, then, shaped the current study in several ways. Namely, I look at similar scenes among all of the films as points of intertextual reference, along with scenes that recall or point toward other films about educators in general. Also, there are many instances in the films that invoke songs, texts or images of popular culture, which play a significant role in painting the picture of music teachers and music education within these films.

Secondary and Tertiary Texts

In Fiske's (1989a) discussion of intertextuality, he suggests the terms secondary and tertiary texts, for items which stand at the boundary of another text where they can add to the text’s meaning and contribute to its understanding. He notes that popular culture, including films, circulates in society through intertextual knowledge. He makes the distinction between what he calls primary texts, or the “original cultural commodities” (Fiske 1989a, 124) and secondary texts
such as reviews, interviews, and advertisements that refer to the primary texts. Tertiary texts, he suggests, exist as conversations and adaptations of the texts to everyday life that serve to circulate the text widely in society. About the relationships among these varying types of texts, Fiske states, “the interrelationships between primary and secondary texts cross all boundaries between them; equally, those between tertiary and other texts cross the boundaries between text and life” (Fiske 1989a, 126). Secondary texts, or paratexts, play a vital role in the understanding of any text as they may determine our desire or non-desire to consume certain texts and shape our understanding of the text even before we encounter it. Gray (2006) observes that “we all regularly pre-judge texts based solely or largely upon our exposure to their paratexts . . . we actually consume some texts through paratexts and supportive intertexts, the text itself becoming expendable” (37).

Secondary texts are significant to the understanding of textual communication because they expand the boundaries of the original text by considering the knowledge that readers may bring to a primary text. For instance, movie reviews, trailers, and movie posters could be considered secondary texts in film study—texts whereby readers acquire an impression of the primary text that may shape their
understanding of it. Studying the communication between primary and secondary texts of the films in this study can lead to a better understanding of how these films contribute to discourse on music teaching.

In this study the concept of intertextuality will serve as one lens through which the films will be viewed. This approach will recognize that intertextual knowledge is vital to meaning production in film and that quotation, genre knowledge, and paratexts influence the interpretation of the texts. Through this lens, I rely upon my own intertextual references and associations, and paratexts such as movie reviews and posters. These points of intertextuality may communicate with one another and provide a method of interpretation that acknowledges the plurality of meaning made by readers of the texts.
CHAPTER 3
METHOD

This study seeks to examine the portrayals of music teachers in four Hollywood films, using poststructural strategies to investigate how these films comment on music education discourse. Using movies to study issues in education is helpful pedagogically, Paul (1993) suggests, demonstrating both the “vitality” and “poverty” (67) of the situations presented in film texts. For this reason, I also aim to make applications of my analysis to the areas of occupational identity and music teacher training.

The films in this study were examined using two different poststructural lenses. An intertextual reading sought to incorporate references to other texts within the films, and to examine the communication among the four films in this study through common narrative themes. I also employed a deconstructive approach that attempted to identify the paradoxes and assumptions upon which the texts rely to identify some possible negotiated or contrary readings of the films.

I conducted these two readings with an understanding that the interpretations presented in this study represent only some of the possible ways that the films could be understood, and that the
readings of the films found in my analysis were influenced by my own biases, history and context.

**Selection of Movies**

I began the search for potential films by using the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) to determine potential movies, using character searches for *music teacher* and keyword searches for *school music*, and *teacher* (refined with keyword *musician*) in order to find movies that had themes of music, music teachers, or education (see Appendix A for a partial list) (Hershey-Freeman 2008; Thomas 2009). The initial search returned 261 potential films. In order to refine the search to a list of films for the study, I used a set of criteria to determine the most relevant films to this study.

The first criterion for selection was the years 1988–2009 to allow for the consideration of images that were relevant in considering current discourse on music education. In contrast to Brand and Hunt’s (1997) study, which sought to give a broad overview of the history of music teachers in film, I wished to conduct a more focused study on recent film texts, examining the ways that these films commented on music education discourses. I chose 1988 as a starting point because it seemed to mark the beginning of a period of an increased presence of music teachers in movies. I allowed for the possibility that the
search might identify additional films that warranted extending the time period backwards. For instance, a movie such as *Fame* (1980) could have been included for consideration, but finding only this one significant film that met the criteria did not seem to necessitate moving the starting date back to that point. I also chose this date range in order to include more recent movies that have yet to be included in a study of music teachers in film.

The second criterion was that the movies considered were released (either in theaters or on video) in the United States and that the setting was that of an American school. I used this criterion so that the investigation would center on films produced and disseminated within the same culture, with settings of similar educational systems (Eddleman 2008). The third criterion was for the movies to be readily available for rental or purchase, from sites such as Netflix or Amazon.com, which ensured that only films still in circulation and widely available to the public would be included in the study.

Reynolds (2007) proposed that the elimination of historical films from a study of the filmic images of a specific time period because it "deflect the effect of layers of interpretation" (59). As this study is concerned with films as a reflection of societal perceptions and as a
potential agent in shaping occupational identity, historical films naturally separate themselves from this type of association. This condition necessitated the elimination of a film such as *Amadeus* (1984) due to the fact that images of music teachers from other time periods would not contribute to the contemporary portrayals of music teacher portrayals that I sought to examine in this study.

### Narrowing of Final List

The previous criteria produced a list of 15 possible films for the study (see Appendix A). I read synopses of the films to determine their suitability for inclusion in the study and further delineated the list by applying the following criteria: (1) the music teacher should be one of the major characters in the movie, (2) the film should show the character as an active teacher in an educational setting. Grobman (2002) asserts that films depicting educators are often teen-centered films where the teachers are minor characters, or teacher-centered films where the teacher and educational setting are the primary focus of the narrative. With this criterion in place, I eliminated those films where the music teacher was not a central character in the plot.

This process eliminated eight of the 15 films from the list. I made the final selection of films through the consideration of gross box office earnings of each film through February, 2010. Only movies that
were located in the top 100 films in box office earnings for their year of release were considered. While a movie’s popularity does not determine its influence or importance, the frequency with which it has been viewed can be taken as evidence of its existence within public consciousness (Hess 2012; Tatlock 2009). The status of these films as a part of public consciousness may place them in a position to contribute to music education discourse and portray images of music teachers that exist within the general public. The selection process ultimately yielded four films to be included in this investigation: Mr. Holland’s Opus, Music of the Heart, Drumline, and School of Rock (see Appendix B for synopses of the films).

**Conducting the Readings**

Following Grobman’s (2002) study on filmic images of music teachers, I initially viewed each film six times in its entirety, focusing on different aspects and questions upon each viewing. The two theoretical approaches of intertextual and deconstructive reading (outlined in Chapter 2) were used for three viewings for a total of six viewings of each film. I watched the movies in succession rather than viewing each film six times in a row so that I might gain a better sense of how the movies communicated with each other to aid in the intertextual readings. All of the films were viewed in DVD format,
obtained through a local or online retailer.

During the first viewing for a particular reading (i.e., deconstructive or intertextual), I played the film without interruption, jotting down brief, open-ended journal notes on major themes that arose from the narrative. During the coding process I focused only on grouping scenes, images or dialogue into categories without rigorous analysis or interpretation, to allow the categories to emerge throughout the process (Rossman and Rallis 2012). Following Althide’s (1996) suggestion, I coded my notes focusing on the themes, or recurring theses, in order to define the major categories for my analysis. During the second viewing of the film, I paused the film as needed in order to take more extensive notes, and then re-coded the data, revising the themes that were produced from the first reading (Creswell 2009). The third viewing was continuous and served to confirm the more detailed analysis that had been drawn from the second viewing. The intertextual viewings were conducted in June, 2010, the deconstructive readings in July, 2010. After the initial analysis was complete, I conducted another reading of all of the films to test my analysis and look for additional insights. This reading was conducted in the Fall of 2011. As the investigation progressed, I
frequently returned to the films to view selected scenes to gain clarity and perspective in my analysis.

**Framework: Two Poststructural Readings**

The idea that texts can be read and interpreted in a variety of ways is central to any study based on poststructuralist theories (Weedon 1987). The framework for my analysis was chosen to facilitate the examination of these texts as sites of plural meaning (Peters and Burbules 2004). Koza (2003) observes that film texts contain multiple layers of communication, or textual systems, and therefore lend themselves to multiple, sometimes conflicting interpretations. With this in mind, the intertextual and deconstructive framework for this study was chosen specifically because it does not lead to a suggestion of a true meaning of the film, but takes what Brunette (2000) calls a "questioning stance" (89) that "challenges ... the institutional and contextual constraints that necessarily accompany all attempts at reading" (90).

The first reading was carried out through the lens of intertextuality, which enabled the exploration references, quotation and commentary of texts with each other. This approach also used what Fiske (1989a) calls *paratexts*, or those texts that exist at the boundaries and as supplements to other texts. For the intertextual
reading, I examined movie reviews, movie posters and movie trailers before viewing the film so that those paratexts could inform my readings. Before viewing each film, I also reflected on my own knowledge of other films and media about music teachers so that I could be aware of the influence of intertextual knowledge on my interpretations.

The second reading used Derridean deconstruction to look at the contradictions and assumptions that may be present within the texts. In his study of educational relationships in film, Paul (1993) notes that a deconstructive reading can be used to "[have] the filmic text face its own contradictions and assumptions" (68) so that the foundations of the text are destabilized. While many, such as Dowd (2012), use analysis forms to aid in the examination of film texts, my approach more closely followed Paul's (1993) study that used a free approach to the analysis process that unfolded over several readings of each film.

One of the difficulties I encountered with approaching the deconstructive reading was that any suggestion of interpretation or emergent themes was, in the poststructural understanding of the plurality of meaning, only one way of looking at the films and was open to the deconstructive process itself. In order to deconstruct the film text and remove my own preconceptions from the interpretive
process as much as possible, I used reviews of the films from major U.S. newspapers and user reviews from the website rottentomatoes.com to represent what Hall (1973) terms the *dominant reading* of the text. In this way, I took the observations of the reviewers as an interpretation that *might* have been intended by the author, and one that *could* be plausible for many viewers of the film. The reviews were used in this way because any reviewer of the film, I propose, would attempt to view the movie as they suppose a majority of the public might, so that the movie review is applicable to the widest possible audience. In employing user reviews, I considered similar, multiple comments to be indicative of a reading that could be viewed as dominant. Inclusion of movie reviews into the film analysis is helpful not only because it is an intertextual document that could influence the way a prospective movie-goer interprets the film but also because, as Paul (1993) suggests, the reviews are often beneficial through the perceptions and observations that they offer.

Movie reviews from the *San Francisco Chronicle, Chicago Tribune* and *New York Times* were used because they represented three distinct regions of the country, had widespread circulation and contained reviews of all of the films examined in this study. After collecting these reviews, I used them to shape my readings of the
films by relying on the observations and comments of the reviewers as representations of dominant readings of the film narrative. These dominant readings were then held up against the film texts that, through their paradoxes and assumptions, worked to deconstruct this dominant understanding.

Using poststructural approaches, I explored several meta-narratives identified during the readings of the films. Using a deconstructive approach, I examined professionalism, membership, and the hero image of the music teacher. Meta-narratives about gender, race and the value of music in schooling were considered through an intertextual lens. In the following chapters I investigate how various groups might interpret the texts and what effects those interpretations might have on teachers and the environments in which they work.
CHAPTER 4

FILMIC PORTRAYALS OF MUSIC TEACHERS: THE APORIAS OF RESPONSIBILITY, HOSPITALITY AND THE GIFT

Films examined in this study portray music teachers in diverse ways. Meta-narratives such as teacher responsibility, access, and hero images of the teacher may be viewed as dominant readings; however, through a poststructuralist lens, these readings become open to alternative interpretations. During the deconstructive readings of these films, I attempted to identify inconsistencies or assumptions in the text that undermine interpretations that could be considered dominant readings. Through multiple readings, I identified professionalism, membership or inclusion, and salvation narratives as some of the most pervasive themes among the four films. Subsequently, I used Derrida’s aporias (paradoxes) of responsibility, hospitality and the gift to show the inherent contradictions of meaning that arise when applied to the textual assumptions of professionalism, membership, and salvation. As these films portray music teachers in ways that contribute to societal knowledge, I explore how these portrayals may affect the agency and occupational identity of music teachers.
Professionalism and the Aporia of Responsibility

Supporting the narratives of Mr. Holland's Opus, Music of the Heart, Drumline and School of Rock is the assumption that these filmic music teachers are guided by a moral code framed as professional behavior, which demands responsible action toward students, colleagues, administrators and school boards. Music teachers may act out of obligation to this code, but an act viewed as responsible to one group is often a negotiation of responsibility made at the expense of another.

Derrida (1974) suggests that all texts grounded in Western metaphysical thinking are based on undecidable constructs and assumptions of truth. The film texts under consideration here seem to assume the professionalism of music teachers by framing the intentions of the teachers as responsible and in the best interests of their students. However, a teacher's responsibility to one student may require the negotiation of responsibility to others, whether family, themselves or administrators, which may call into question the teacher's assumed professionalism.

Deconstruction of Responsibility

As Derrida's project of deconstruction examines meaning on the level of the signifier rather than an entire text, the meanings of the
signifier *responsibility* hold implications for interpreting the texts under consideration. Responsibility is primarily used here as a noun to indicate the state of being accountable *to someone or for something*, which carries with it a state of power and ownership, in that there is the implication of control. Similarly, as an adjective, responsible implies trust and reliability. However, responsibility may also inhabit blame, or the act of taking responsibility for failure or unmet expectations.

A character framed as responsible might be understood as reliable or accountable in their actions toward others. However, when responsible actions are understood as simultaneously irresponsible to others, perceptions of trust may be contaminated. If teachers act responsibly in their work, then they may be viewed as caretakers of the education of their students. However, any action by the responsible teacher could also imply their accountability for an unmet expectation. In this way, the responsible teacher is one who is diligent, caring, trustworthy, but also derelict and unsuccessful. The responsible teacher, then, may inhabit both praise and blame.

This play of meaning across the signifier of responsibility corresponds to Derrida’s (1991) understanding of the term, which suggests that responsible action to one party often results in
irresponsible action to another. In both situations responsibility exists as a contested and undecidable construct, resulting in plural meanings for texts that rely on a stable meaning of the term.

*The Teacher as a Professional*

The professional and moral codes by which teachers perform their jobs may be open to debate, but many scholars suggest that there are commonalities in the ways teachers operate in an understanding of professionalism. These codes work from an understanding that teachers are judged on their professionalism from the perception of responsibility toward their students (Popkewitz 1998). For instance, Carr (2006) argues, based on the idea of education as a human right, that the professional conduct of teachers is not just a contractual obligation, but extends to the teacher's ethical and moral responsibility to the student. Similarly, Audi (1994) suggests that teachers are judged primarily upon the ideals of competence and fairness, and Bowman (2002) proposes that the "ethical encounter is grounded in commitment, caring and responsibility" (68).

Terhart (1998) comments that a teacher's work is often viewed as having ethical implications, namely, that the quality of the teacher's work is reflected in their commitment to students. This echoes
Sockett (1993), who suggests that the qualities of character, commitment, subject knowledge and pedagogical knowledge serve as the foundation of teacher professionalism. Terhart (1998) further suggests that teacher standards for goodness no longer reside in subject knowledge, but rather the pedagogical genius whose talent for reaching students is both idealized and mysterious, setting unattainable standards for those teachers who do not possess natural talent. Popkewitz (1998) also notes that the conventional wisdom of schooling views the successful or professional teacher as one who has a passion for teaching and is committed to being a positive force in the lives of students. He suggests, however, that discourses about commitment and professionalism rely on "what is perceived as 'real' and practical in teaching" (61). This view of professionalism and its portrayal in these narratives would seem to stem from a common sense understanding that teachers are expected to be competent, fair and responsible in their dealings with students (Popkewitz 1998).

Codes of professionalism, then, may condense the teacher's work as an act of responsibility toward the student. However, teachers may feel professional responsibilities to other entities such as administration, school boards, parents or the community, which may conflict with the perceived responsibility to the student. In the
complexity of everyday work, teachers are expected to do their jobs in a professional manner which raises the question of what ultimately constitutes a teacher's responsible actions and choices, and how these acts of responsibility are negotiated between competing interests.

As Derrida (1991) points out, actions that are framed as responsible may embody irresponsibility to another. While logocentric thinking would understand responsibility so that one can always act in a responsible way, a poststructuralist views responsibility as a paradox, or aporia, where there is no absolute responsibility to an other, but only a negotiation of responsibility among competing interests. Sachs (2010) suggests that competing discourses in education often influence the way teachers view their occupational identity, and likewise, filmic portrayals of music teachers may contribute to conflicts in the understanding of a music teacher's work.

In the following section, I examine some of the ways that the film narratives under consideration rely on the concept of the music teacher as professional and responsible, and how these individuals deal with decisions that necessitate a choice of responsible action to an other that shuns another other. In this way, the understanding of the professional music educators in these films is cast into doubt, so that
some light might be shed on the complexity and paradox that may
surround the everyday work of the music teacher.

*Professionalism as a Dominant Reading*

A reading of these films as discourses of professionalism can be
demonstrated through movie reviews, which, for the purposes of this
study serve as representations of dominant readings of films. The
meta-narrative of professionalism is frequently referenced in regard to
the teacher’s dedication to students. For example, Mr. Holland (*Mr.
Holland’s Opus*) is described as touching the lives of his students
(Stack 1996) and helping them to mature (Ebert 1995), whereas Dr.
Lee (*Drumline*) is pictured as a teacher who believes his job is to teach
rather than to entertain (Ebert 2002). Holden (2003) notes teacher
professionalism in *School of Rock* by identifying Dewey as one who
transforms his class through music. Likewise, Roberta’s (*Music of the
Heart*) work of creating a music program “more or less out of thin air”
demonstrates the perception of commitment and passion for her job
(Ebert 1999). These observations demonstrate the centrality of the
teacher’s moral responsibility to the narratives and frame these
movies as primarily concerned with the teacher’s work as accountable
to their students.

The portrayal of music teachers also relies on images of hard
work. For example, Mr. Holland is described as embodying “sacrifice ... discipline ... and hard work” (Hinson 1996), Dr. Lee as a tough disciplinarian (Curiel 2002) and Roberta as a persistent educator (Ebert 1999). Some of the teachers are noted for their ability to inspire their students, including Maslin’s (1999) account of Roberta’s character and Stack’s (1996) description of Mr. Holland’s “knack for awakening [students] to his passion.”

In these reviews, responsibility and commitment to students emerge as dominant readings that frame the music teachers as competent, caring and inspirational. Above all, reviewers seem to paint responsibility to the student as the defining characteristic of the music teacher’s success. While this portrayal of professionalism shows the teacher’s work as defined by an obligation to the student, it may also diminish the teacher’s responsibility to other stakeholders. However, the work of a teacher is rarely so straightforward and such a portrayal of teaching may minimize the complex work a teacher must do as she attempts to negotiate responsibility and professionalism in an arena of competing interests.

The Teacher’s Responsibility to Students

A demonstration of the negotiation of responsibility may be found in Mr. Holland’s Opus when Mr. Holland encounters resistance
from administrators as he begins to use rock and roll to reach students in his music appreciation class. When he discusses his new approach with the administration, Holland defiantly declares that he will use any means necessary to reach his students if it helps them love music. Although the administrators are split in their support of Holland's approach, he takes a stance that demonstrates his responsibility is to his students rather than to the wishes of the administration. Similarly in *Drumline*, Dr. Lee stands up to the president of Atlanta A & T when the president requests that the band play more entertaining music. When Dr. Lee asserts that education is his primary objective, he takes a student-oriented stance as opposed to the administration's concern of pleasing football fans and donors. Not only does Dr. Lee choose to act responsibly to his students rather than the administration, but also over potential donors to his program, perhaps heightening the perception of commitment to his students.

While both of these situations may be read as a teacher acting in a responsible way toward his students, it may also be read as a rejection of the authority of the administration. Both Mr. Holland and Dr. Lee take positions that choose responsibility of students over that of their administrators, which would seem to frame teacher responsibility as only to one's students. On the other hand, if these
portrayals of teacher responsibility demonstrate the teacher’s need to reject responsible action to the administration in favor of responsible action toward the students, it could undermine the authority of the administrator and confirm a filmic image of the renegade teacher as more effective and concerned about his students (Faber and Holm 1994). As I discuss in greater detail later in this chapter, the image of the outsider who bucks the system in order to achieve positive results is a common portrayal of teachers in film, which may contribute to an understanding of anti-establishment behavior as the most effective path for successful teachers.

For each situation, a dominant reading would seem to confirm that these music teachers are acting in the best interest of their students. When Mr. Holland has difficulty stimulating his students’ curiosity about music, he integrates popular music styles with which they more readily connect. Dr. Lee, on the other hand, also seems to put his students first as he rejects the use of contemporary music that he views as entertainment. Using “traditional” music, he emphasizes the importance of education, which casts his preferred music as more suitable for education. Beyond the choice of music, however, these readings reflect two views about the value of music education. While Mr. Holland would seem to view the importance of music learning as
inspiring a love for music, Dr. Lee views the value of music in teaching technique and discipline. Each music teacher may, in effect, betray the values they seem to advocate. Mr. Holland, for instance, rarely uses popular music with his band or orchestra, which would seem to imply that popular music is suitable for the masses but not for those interested in the serious study of music. Likewise, Dr. Lee rejects the idea of music education as entertainment even though the crowd’s reaction at halftime clearly signals the performance as entertainment, regardless of what genre of music they play. It would seem that each view attempts to be exclusive of the other, maintaining an either/or requirement for music as entertainment or education, rather than a more practical both/and model, in which multiple styles of music could be used to foster a love for music and to teach technique and discipline.

Another way of interpreting responsibility may understand Mr. Holland as being responsible for failures, in that he may be viewed as accountable for the ultimate demise of his music program, and the viewer may question whether Mr. Holland did enough to try and save the program. Since he is entrusted with the responsibility of his students and the music program, he may also be seen as responsible for both its success and its failure. In this way, Mr. Holland’s character
is responsible, while occupying both positive and negative connotations of the term.

\textit{Responsibility to the Self}

Another account of responsibility comes from \textit{School of Rock}, where Dewey is framed at first as irresponsible, but after developing an interest in his students' education and well-being, is transformed into a more responsible teacher. However, this new-found responsibility may be in conflict with the underlying reason for his making the students into a rock band—his own financial gain in winning the Battle of the Bands competition. Although Dewey appears to become more responsible, his actions throughout the movie demonstrate the use of students for his own gain, displaying a responsibility to \textit{himself} rather than to his students. In addition, the use of the students for self-serving purposes highlights the way responsibility to the self could be read as an abuse of power.

Similarly in \textit{Music of the Heart}, Roberta negotiates responsibility to students in her job interview, where she offers use of her own violins in order to offset the lack of funding. In another case of overcoming adversity, she circumvents the school board’s funding cuts by organizing parents and community members to raise funds independently so that the program can continue. In both instances,
Roberta acts sacrificially to ensure the success of the violin class, which may be cast in a dominant reading as acting responsibly toward her students. Such a reading could see these actions as necessary if the children in the school were able to have access to a strings program. However, these choices also seem to be made with several possible others in consideration, one being Roberta herself who needs a job to provide financially for her family. Though the responsible action would seem to be made in order to help her students, these decisions can also be interpreted as serving her own interests so that actions seemingly made for the good of her students may be read as only to ensure that Roberta keeps her job. Since the purpose of the teacher’s decisions can be called into question through this reading, so too can the teacher’s professionalism become a contested area. If a teacher acts with his own best interests in mind, is the teacher acting responsibly and professionally toward students?

Responsibility to the self can be found in other narratives as well. Examples include Mr. Holland’s attempts to attract attention to himself as his band marches in a parade for the first time and Dr. Lee’s reinstatement of Devon to the drum line in order to win the band competition and keep his job. In these instances, the actions taken by the music teachers would seem to be responsible to themselves rather
than to their students. For instance, if Mr. Holland were acting responsibly toward his students, he might have attempted to bring more attention and praise to the band rather than himself. Likewise, if Dr. Lee had the best interest of his students in mind, it seems that a responsible act would maintain the rules of the band to keep Devon out of the competition no matter the consequences. These portrayals may produce varied interpretations for different audiences; for instance, music teachers or other stakeholders may view these acts of self-interest in a way that redefines professionalism, highlighting a negotiation of responsibility to multiple others. However, the general population may interpret these images as a sign about the importance of competition and the presence of "win at all costs" mentalities in music education programs.

If a teacher's actions are made in deference to a party other than the students, this may raise questions about the teacher's professionalism and responsibility. Yet, in the films, it seems that the music teachers can be acting responsibly to another interest at the expense of their students. If so, this challenges the fundamental image of the "professional" teacher. However, both readings seem to limit the complexity of how teachers negotiate in their daily work as a teacher's responsibility is not only to but also to stakeholders and
administrators.

Confining understandings of teacher responsibility and professionalism in relation only to their students may act as a structure to music teachers’ agency by defining these constructs against an either/or binary. This binary may influence the work of teachers by jeopardizing their status as professional when they feel they must decide between responsible actions toward students or toward other stakeholders or administrators. Calling their own professionalism into question, teachers may defer to the interests of their students in order to conform to discourses that frame good teachers as always acting in the best interests of their students. The conflict of responsibility between students and other aspects of the teacher’s life may create what Scheib (2003) defines as role conflict, which, he suggests, may significantly contribute to increased job stress. For teachers, this portrayal may affect their work by limiting their ability to act and make choices freely, as they may avoid situations or decisions that would cast their behavior as unprofessional. In particular, this would seem to distinguish teaching as exceptional compared to other occupations where it may be accepted that employees will occasionally act out of self-interests.
A Teacher's Conflicts at Home

Another common narrative aspect in films about music teachers is the responsible action to a teacher's family and the tension that exists between home and school life. In Mr. Holland's Opus and Music of the Heart, this is especially apparent where the music teachers' families constitute a major part of the narrative. Relationships between teachers and their families are portrayed as strained due to the demands of their jobs, and both Mr. Holland's Opus and Music of the Heart demonstrate similar scenes of arguments about the reduced time the teachers have to spend with their families. The narratives may seem to question the commitment of the music teachers to their families, and the viewer may sense the teacher's conflict of responsibility between home and school. In contrast, the teacher's commitment to her students is rarely questioned in the narratives, confirming the readings of professionalism and responsibility that, as noted earlier, are commonly viewed as grounded in caring for one's students (Bowman 2002). However, the films present images of school and home as a struggle for the music teacher's responsibility, which questions the motivation of their actions.

A reading of the teachers as choosing responsibility of students over family may be reinforced by two contrary images. When Mr.
Holland is a new teacher, he is portrayed getting up late and leaving school early in order to spend more time at home and pursuing his own personal interests. However, this contrasts with later images of Holland's long hours at work, which corresponds to increasing conflicts at home and the growing success of his music program. A similar image of Dewey in *School of Rock* provides commentary on Holland's early years through a similar escape from school at the end of the day. Dewey's unprofessional behavior throughout *School of Rock* would seem to confirm the initial lack of responsibility in Mr. Holland's character. Thus, Holland's portrayal as a teacher whose commitment increases throughout the narrative, combined with his corresponding lack of time at home may be read as affirmation that teachers must make sacrifices at home in order to be committed professionals at school. This reading emphasizes the way that the good teachers always appear to be responsible to the student, which may resonate with discourses in teacher education, noted by Shacklock (2002), where professionalism is largely understood as care for students. Although this may seem a worthy goal and may spur a teacher's motivation for effective teaching, it also simultaneously increases demands on student outcomes. The portrayals of "good" teachers in film, then, may affect the agency of teachers through a perception of a
moral code that emphasizes the care of the student above all other obligations, and portrays the best teachers as those who produce consistently high results due to their own sacrifices.

Interpretations of responsibility may also contribute to understandings of teacher professionalism. Demonstrated in Mr. Holland's Opus and Music of the Heart, teachers often choose to spend extra time at the job either before or after school giving extra help to students or at performances, rehearsals or fundraisers. The family conflicts that arise as the result of time spent away from home are framed as a negotiation of responsibility to either family or job. In this choice, the teachers can be viewed either as responsible or irresponsible, which exhibits how these texts can be read in multiple and conflicting ways. What these film narratives may present through their dominant readings is a logocentric viewpoint that names the job, school or students as the preeminent other to which all decisions of responsibility must defer. Relying on assumptions of truth, this view does not acknowledge the multiple others that may compete for a teacher's responsibility on a daily basis.

Juxtaposed with the portrayal of Mr. Holland's Opus and Music of the Heart is the image of Dr. Lee, who is apparently not married and thus, never depicted as having a home or family conflict. On several
instances, Dr. Lee is shown working late at his office, providing an intertextual reading with *Mr. Holland Opus* and *Music of the Heart* that demonstrates the work of music teachers as time-intensive and all-consuming. Yet, if music teachers are single as in Dr. Lee's case, they may have less stress and more perceived commitment to their job. This reading may affect the agency of music teachers by signaling that choices of responsibility must be made between commitments of work and family, successful or unsuccessful music programs or professional and unprofessional behavior. The apparent success of Roberta, Mr. Holland and Dr. Lee as demonstrated by the triumphant final scenes of each film may contribute to a societal understanding of the professional success of music teachers corresponding with the necessity of neglecting responsibility in other areas of life.

Adding to the portrayal of successful teachers as those who sacrifice in other areas of life is the nature of teaching as a salaried position where overtime pay is not available. Teachers are commonly expected to demonstrate their professionalism and responsibility by logging non-compensated hours in the evenings or on weekends. This expectation may be even greater for music teachers who are often expected to show commitment to their students through organizing trips, competitions and fundraisers outside of their normal work day.
These uncompensated expectations are exceptional among highly-trained professionals and may play a major role in the understanding of what constitutes a "good" teacher. These portrayals may, again, correspond with Scheib's (2003) investigation of stress indicators for music teachers, in which he asserts that the requirements of attending to administrative details and work overload contribute significantly to music teachers' stress, and consequently to their job satisfaction. Film portrayals of music teachers like Mr. Holland, Roberta or Dr. Lee may add to an image of the music teacher whose success stems from an "all in" mentality and work ethic. Ultimately, this may add to a common sense code of morals by which music teachers are judged, linking expectations of a singular responsibility to students to their perceived effectiveness.

The daily work of teachers, as Terhart (1998) suggests, often responds to competing stakeholders and agencies with hidden pedagogical ideals held out as an untenable benchmark. The aporia of responsibility would seem to contaminate the ideal image of professionalism since no teacher can be truly responsible to all agencies equally. Thus, the daily actions and decisions that constitute teachers' professional work, rather than being judged by a set of moral standards, might be realized as a constantly shifting project that
cannot always be responsible to every other, but must be negotiated among responsibilities to other entities. With a deeper understanding of how responsibility affects practice, teachers may gain a better perspective of their work, constructing professionalism through a lens that acknowledges multiple meanings and multiple others.

**Access, Membership and the Aporia of Hospitality**

A recurring theme identified in the readings of the films is access to, and membership in music performing ensembles. The inside/outside status of membership often plays out through social factors of acceptance and the willingness of teachers and students to provide the resources to make access and insider status possible (Benjamin et al. 2003). In relation to music teaching, membership and access may be read as an act of *hospitality*—a welcoming atmosphere that is sometimes lacking in institutions such as music performing groups that would appear exclusionary by their underrepresentation of visible minority and low SES student populations (Abril and Gault 2011). Since music teachers retain power in the hierarchy of the music ensemble, the decisions of whom to welcome into the ensemble and the decisions that limit or facilitate access may play a key role in student participation. Derrida and Dufourmantelle (2000) suggest, however, that hospitality is a paradox
where any hospitable act also necessarily inhabits exclusion, ownership and power. Using the lens of Derrida's aporia of hospitality, the film texts examined here show themselves to be open to ambiguity and conflict through the status of those who exist at the fringes of school music groups.

As it relates to the current investigation, dominant representations of the filmic music teachers as inclusive and hospitable may contradict other situations in the narratives and portray music education as a closed and exclusive place. When hospitality and inclusion are also acknowledged as inhabiting exclusion, music teachers may find that access and membership work to maintain this exclusivity. Although success in school music programs often centers on performance achievements, these films may help music teachers understand the inherent power structures of performing ensembles as they negotiate program success with decisions of membership and access.

_Inclusion as a Dominant Reading_

Supporting texts such as movie reviews suggest a dominant reading of music teachers as helpful and welcoming to students. The reviewers frequently describe the music teachers as providing students with access to music education and opening their groups to those who
otherwise might not have the opportunity. For instance, Ebert (1999) notes how Roberta expands the violin program to three other schools to create opportunities for other students, and LaSalle (1999) recounts a scene where she shows special attention to a student with a disability. Similarly, Ebert (2003) emphasizes how Dewey finds a role in the band for all of his students and encourages one who does not want to perform because she is insecure with her body image. Holden (2003) also recounts how Dewey's relationship with keyboard player Lawrence helps the boy to "stop feeling like a hopeless outsider" and more an integral part of the band. Similarly, the reviewers' description of Mr. Holland notes how he helps a number of struggling students and tries to connect with them to help them feel a part of the group (Stack 1996; Ebert 1995).

These reviews and other scenes in the films seem to paint a picture of music teachers as inclusive, helpful and working to provide their students with increased access to music education. If a dominant reading views the teachers as hospitable, other approaches to interpretation may emphasize how the music ensembles are closed groups that limit access to some while providing it to others. The portrayal of music ensembles as sites of negotiated membership may help music teachers better understand what part they play in creating
student access and maintaining music education as an exclusive rather than inclusive institution.

Access and Hospitality

The film narratives under investigation appear to rely on images of inclusion and reaching out to marginalized students as characteristics of successful music teachers and music programs. These gestures of inclusion could also be viewed as gestures of hospitality through the sharing of resources, knowledge and the opportunity to participate in a musical group. However, interpretations of exclusion may also appear as related to allocation of resources, access of students with disabilities and limitations to musical experiences through such filters as musical literacy.

As Derrida's concept of hospitality indicates, providing access to resources for some necessarily puts limits on access to others. In order to explore how access may play out in the arena of music education, it may be helpful to examine theories of social exclusion that could be applied to membership in a school music group. Cass, Shove and Urry (2005) suggest that social exclusion is determined by an individual's access to financial, physical, organizational and temporal resources, and overcoming these limitations is necessary to achieve inclusion. Likewise, Bhalla and Lapeyere (1997) stress that
matters of access and exclusion are primarily affected by economic and social status. For music education, social exclusion may include such factors as access to transportation to extra-curricular rehearsals, funds to purchase a musical instrument or the ability to schedule classes that allow participation in music programs.

*Music of the Heart* may serve as an example of the limitation of access to music education through the inadequacy of organizational structures within the educational system. As the strings program gains popularity, Roberta holds a lottery to choose the students who will participate in the violin program. The dominant reading of this scene may be that this strings program was so successful that an excess of students wished to participate. However, this system also practices exclusion through the guarantee that only *some* would gain access to the program. This would seem to fall under Cass, Shove and Urry’s (2005) dimension of “organizational resources” that limits access to the violin class. Because the program was not properly funded to allow the participation of all who were interested, those who lost the lottery also lost access to the program. Through the aporia of hospitality, then, the strings program run by Roberta cannot make claims to the inclusion of inner-city children since the program was fundamentally set up to exclude and limit access. While the film
shows those who are selected celebrating, Roberta tells those who did not win the lottery, "maybe next year."

In addition to organizational limits of access, the narrative also suggests that exclusion cannot be overcome by any efforts on the part of the children or their families, but rather by luck. Perhaps the narrative attempts to excuse those in power from the responsibility of choosing those who were most likely to benefit from participation in the program. This reading may see that if the teachers and administrators leave the process up to luck, then they no longer carry the responsibility of creating criteria for admission and evaluating the students individually. In effect, such a reading attempts to distance the teachers and administrators from the power they hold over inclusion. Decisions of inclusion and exclusion, then, are not made explicitly by the teachers and administrators, but are framed as chance and serve as a demonstration of organizational power devised for the purpose of excluding students who wished to participate in the program. While claims of inclusivity are heralded as indicators of successful music programs, the exclusion of others undermines these claims of success.

Another demonstration of exclusion in *Music of the Heart* occurs when Roberta threatens to dismiss a student from the program for
being late to a rehearsal before school. A dominant reading of the film might interpret this action as demonstrating discipline and high standards; however, the cause of the student tardiness—issues with transportation—indicates a physical and temporal limitation of access rather than a problem with laziness or lack of commitment. Although Roberta’s high standards may portray her as the kind of disciplinarian who causes students to work harder, the student’s lack of access to adequate transportation potentially excludes him from the opportunity of music education, and also demonstrates Derrida’s (2000) concept of hospitality.

If Roberta excludes the student because of his inability to arrive on time, she then makes a decision as to who will receive her hospitality, or welcome, into the strings class. This decision, then, undercuts the program as a site of inclusion and Roberta as a teacher who is giving and welcoming. In addition, it may create a classroom environment that functions on the fear of being excluded through the power held by Roberta to deny access to any student at any time. This display of limiting hospitality to some also enacts the power structure in these relationships that Derrida (2000) suggests takes place as one who offers hospitality demonstrates ownership and chooses what and how much to offer to others. When Roberta
threatens exclusion, she demonstrates the power she holds over the students' musical education. The powerlessness of the students is also evident here, especially for those who have issues of overcoming financial, physical, organizational or temporal access.

The aporia of hospitality may indicate the kinds of dilemmas music teachers face in their day-to-day work where decisions and rules that restrict student access may be decided for reasons such as keeping order in the rehearsal, instilling discipline in the students or to attempting to keep all of the students learning at the same pace. Also at issue are student achievement and the onus placed on music teachers to improve performance and demonstrate program success (Allsup and Benedict 2008). Such issues may place the teacher in a position to make rules or restrictions that appear to aid music programs as a whole or to instruct individuals. However, as in the example of Roberta's student who cannot get to practice on time, students are excluded and denied access, despite individual circumstances, in the name of creating successful programs. The portrayal of Roberta as an effective music teacher, made in part through her high standards, may also give reason for music teachers to assess their own effectiveness in terms of discipline and order if they come at the expense of inclusion and access.
A paradox would seem to arise between the teacher's hospitality toward some of her students, and the denial of that same hospitality to those who do not have the ability to overcome limitations to their access. The challenge for music teachers, then, as illustrated by Roberta, may be to find a way to help these students overcome their issues of access, whether through stratification of instruction for those who have limited resources or by working with administrators to find ways that those students can be accommodated through organizational means such as additional class time, extra rehearsals or extracurricular sessions to help keep these students on pace with others.

Membership and Hospitality

Another manner in which the concept of hospitality may be evident is through the definitions of membership in school music groups. Because music teachers often retain ultimate power in decisions of membership, the invitation to join the group can be viewed as an act of hospitality by the teacher. Derrida's (2000) concept of the possible/impossible nature of hospitality suggests an act of hospitality may mask some of the necessary decisions of exclusion that, in turn, disturb the dominant readings of inclusion and welcoming for film narratives.
As Adderly, Kennedy and Berz (2003) suggest, school music groups may serve as close social communities for students who are linked by musical, academic and social interests, which all shape students' identity formation. Hylton (1981) also posits that school music groups emphasize belonging, which may contribute to the meaning that the student derives from the experience. If belonging and identity are indeed factors that shape the school music experience, they also, through the Derridean lens of hospitality, must be seen as communities of exclusion that also deny access.

Elpus and Abril (2011) suggest that high school music ensembles are places of exclusion, where there exists an overrepresentation of whites and an underrepresentation of visible minorities and students of low SES. Noting similar conditions of exclusion in a 1966 study, Miller comments that the nature of school music ensembles to emphasize achievement might lead to the exclusion of those who do not meet performance standards. As both studies point to a history of exclusion in school music groups, the conditions of exclusion, whether overt or hiding beneath the surface, point to organizational structures controlled in large part by music teachers. Teachers, then, hold power over their students through acts of hospitality, and while many teachers may be framed as accepting or
welcoming, the exclusionary side of the same decisions may comment on the decisions and negotiations that music teachers make in their daily work. For example, decisions regarding school music ensemble membership may be affected by such factors as funding, scheduling, student ability, and limitations imposed by educational systems. However, an example from *Drumline* may demonstrate that the conditions of membership are often blurred and perhaps undermined when competing interests are encountered.

In *Drumline*, a condition of membership central to the narrative is the ability of band members to read music. While the film’s main character, Devon, initially hides his deficiency in music reading, this condition is eventually made known to the band director, Dr. Lee, which results in Devon losing his place on the field for the remainder of the season. Later in the film, however, Dr. Lee realizes the need of Devon’s talent in order to win the band competition and save his job. Here it seems that Dr. Lee privileges his own job security over the membership requirements of the band. While his initial exclusion of Devon is reversed, this also brings into question the way that hospitality plays out in membership decisions. By allowing Devon to play in the competition, Dr. Lee’s actions could be read as extending hospitality to a student who, despite his deficiency, demonstrates
obvious talent. However, since he has undermined the membership requirements of the band, it also calls attention to those who may have been denied membership without the opportunity for a second chance. In fact, as Devon initially watches the competition from the stands, he sits alongside others who appear to be in a similar situation—members of the band who are not allowed to perform on the field. The fact that Dr. Lee makes an exception only for Devon highlights the power structure that Derrida (2000) suggests is inherent in the act of hospitality. By exercising his ability to bend the rules for Devon, Dr. Lee asserts power that he holds over student access to participation.

Likewise, Mr. Holland’s inclusion of football player Lewis Russ as a favor to the football coach, may serve as another example of the power the music teacher holds over membership. While the film narrative does not disclose Mr. Holland’s requirements for band membership, it would seem that any membership standards are circumvented since Coach Meister asks Mr. Holland to accept Russ so that he can raise his grade point average and participate on the wrestling team the following semester. A dominant reading of this scene may be Holland’s welcoming of Russ into the band and teaching him to play the bass drum as an act of inclusion. Contributing to an
inclusion reading, Holland goes beyond accepting Russ into the band by working with him individually, and shows patience with his slow progress even as the other band members express their frustration. These problems are evident in the film, where rehearsal scenes suggest that Russ’ lack of music experience serves as a limitation to the entire band. There are also indications that Russ may be from a lower socioeconomic status (SES) which would correlate with findings by Abril and Gault (2008) that students from a lower SES are less likely to have access to the resources to study music, and Elpus and Abril’s (2011) findings that students from a lower SES are underrepresented in school music programs. Thus, Holland’s hospitality may seem to open opportunities for music study to those who are traditionally less likely to have access to it.

However, a negotiated reading of this situation through a poststructural lens may acknowledge that Holland’s hospitality to Russ also excludes all others who did not have the opportunity for the coach to ask a favor on their behalf. Excluded were those students who face obstacles to access through financial, physical, organizational or temporal limitations (Cass, Shove and Urry 2005) and are not afforded the invitation or individual help that made it possible for Russ to succeed as a member of the band. Another understanding of this
aspect of the narrative may interpret Holland's extra help for Russ as a use of resources that necessitates a lack of attention to the problems of other band members.

Another byproduct of inclusion may be that the increased work for teachers may impact job satisfaction. Heston et al. (1996) suggest that a lack of support and heavy workload contribute to music teacher job stress, and conversely, student enthusiasm, performance and competence contribute to the music teacher's job satisfaction. If a music teacher carries a heavy workload as Holland exhibits in the film, then any additional work to increase student achievement could potentially result in job dissatisfaction. This may create a paradoxical situation where a music teacher must do more work to achieve job satisfaction. For example, the increased time Mr. Holland spends with students after school can be interpreted as a key factor in the improvement of the orchestra. At the same time, however, his extra work can also be seen as a cause of growing difficulties at home and impinge upon his ability to compose—both of which negatively affect his job satisfaction.

That students may serve as both the primary source of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction for music teachers may further the tensions in regard to workload, job stress and job satisfaction (Heston
et al. 1996). A comparison may be drawn here to Derrida's (1981b) discussion of the *Pharmakon*, where, as discussed in Chapter 2, he submits that the term "drug" can exist both as poison and cure. In the same way, the music teacher's work with students may embody a similar paradox, serving as the reason that teachers enter the profession, but also, perhaps, the reason they eventually leave it. This paradox can provide pre-service teachers with a framework for negotiating student access, inclusion and membership, as well as an understanding that these negotiations may ultimately affect their own job satisfaction.

Popkewitz (1998) notes that discourses about success in the classroom involve the ethical dimension of commitment to students. Discourses about teacher obligation, however, may be destabilized by the everyday work a teacher carries out, which is inhabited by negotiations of access and inclusion. While teachers may strive for an ideal of access and inclusion for all, they are inevitably forced to decide how resources such as time, organization and finances are distributed to students, and obliged to act within the framework of power that these decisions of access demand. Such decisions, then, not only undermine the possibility of teachers' success, but also act as structures to agency by holding up their work against unachievable
standards that is understood in society as a possibility.

As Popkewitz (1998) asserts, “mission and commitment embody a particular selectivity of norms, values and principles that govern action and the participation of the teacher” (61). When teachers strive to be committed to their students they attempt to conform to moral codes of professionalism that may, in part, be defined by outside influences and expectations of teachers. Portrayals of music teachers as inclusive and accepting, then, may work to overturn the view of restrictive membership as evidence of effective teaching if the images link commitment and inclusivity to the professionalism of the music teacher. Such portrayals, however, may also cause music teachers to reexamine their approach to access since the filmic images of successful teachers are aligned closer to inclusivity than they are performance standards. Possibly, these views of music ensembles as open rather than closed could help move music education away from the problems of “competitiveness . . . exceptionalism and means-ends pragmatism” (Allsup and Benedict 2008, 157) that are promoted through the pervasive culture of meritocracy in school music ensembles.
Salvation as *The Gift*

Derrida's concept of *the gift* serves as another deconstructive lens through which I examine the salvation narratives common to the films in this study. As discussed in Chapter 2, Derrida uses the gift as an example of aporia because a gift always brings with it the expectation of reciprocity. The *genuine gift* is impossible, Derrida (1991) asserts, because it could only occur if a gift is given without the knowledge of giving or receiving. Giving and receiving, then, carry with them the expectation of compensation for the gift even if it is something as small as an acknowledgement or "thank you." Therefore, gifts are always contaminated with an expectation of reciprocity that renders the initial gift as something other than its intent.

With the gift as a backdrop for this discussion, I explore the idea of the savior or hero educator. This meta-narrative is common not just to music teachers in the movies, but to filmic educators in general (Farber and Holm 1994). Ayers (1994) posits that the portrayal of the filmic educator is one who can save his students through the gift of knowledge and rescue them from their deprived condition of ignorance. In this discussion, I explore how the concept of the teacher as savior may be viewed in terms of Derrida's gift.
While a dominant reading may frame the gift as one of great value given out of the selflessness of the teacher, this gift can also become corrupted through the expectation of reciprocity. If teachers assume hero status in these narratives, how does the conditionality surrounding the gift influence what teachers may expect in return?

*Deconstruction of Salvation*

The signifier of salvation may be inhabited with uncertainty, causing a slippage in meaning and casting doubt over its stability. My interpretation of salvation in these film texts generally uses the term to mean a kind of liberation of the student from an impoverished or ignorant state; however, salvation may also be understood as *preservation from* something else. While the former implies action through rescue, the latter infers stasis in *keeping from*.

The meaning of salvation may be questioned here because teachers may be viewed as attempting to rescue students from their surroundings, yet in an alternate view, the teacher may enact salvation by preserving the status quo. Derrida (1994a) implies a similar understanding of the gift, namely, that giving implies ownership and as a result one may give away *some* of their possessions, but not all. Derrida’s gift implies both ownership and privilege since giving also embodies the exclusion of those who did not
receive. In the same way, the teacher who offers the liberation to some must offer the status quo to others who may reject the teacher's offer. In the film texts, the image of teachers as heroes through salvation of some may undermine itself through the necessary preservation of others.

**Salvation and Heroism as a Dominant Reading**

The salvation narrative and hero image have been identified by scholars as common portrayals of the filmic teacher (Farber and Holmes 1994; Ayers 1994; Tan 2000); reviews of the films in this study demonstrate the trope as a dominant reading. Often, the filmic music teachers are described in grand terms; for instance, Mr. Holland's work is referred to as his "destiny" (Ebert 1995), and his "calling" (Hinson 1996), while Stack (1996) describes him as an "unsung hero." The language used to describe Dewey's influence on his students in *School of Rock* is also rich with the suggestion of salvation, including the view of his students as "apostles" (Hartlaub 2003), and "converts" to rock and roll (Ebert 2003). In addition, Holden's (2003) description of Dewey as a "self-appointed healer" and his rock band project as a "re-education program" points to the transformative effects Dewey is perceived to have had. The image of the hero-teacher also establishes close bonds with students; for
instance, Curiel (2002) notes the "father-figure" role that Dr. Lee fills for Devon, whose father was not present during his childhood.

Another common image of the "hero" teacher is one who comes from outside of the system and brings new vision and methods to the classroom. The reviewers also comment on these portrayals, noting Roberta's "unconventional ideas about teaching" (Maslin 1999), and Dewey's abandonment the curriculum in order to teach the students rock and roll. This collection of images paints a dominant portrayal of filmic music teachers as those who arrive as outsiders, bringing new approaches to an established system where the gift rescues students from their ignorance. This portrayal frames the music teacher not only as a great educator, but as a savior capable of transforming students' lives.

**Hero Teachers**

Ayers (1994) notes a common portrayal of the hero teacher is one who is in conflict with the other educators in the film. Often, this image goes further than contributing to the hero image of the teacher to portray the other teachers as cynical, having either failed or given up. In *Music of the Heart*, for instance, this is expressed through the relationship Roberta has with Dennis Rausch, the classroom music teacher who seems indifferent, burned out and uninspired in his
teaching. There is a conflict between these two teachers throughout the narrative as Roberta shows hopefulness that the children will be able to succeed, while Rausch, doubtful that they could ever learn violin, tries to undermine her efforts by keeping her students from attending class. Consistent with Ayers' (1994) suggestion, Rausch exists in this narrative as the anti-hero and represents the establishment from which Roberta attempts to save her students, offering them salvation from ignorance and their urban environment through music.

Likewise, Dr. Lee may be seen as the hero against the establishment image of the band director, Mr. Wade, at Morris Brown College. Dr. Lee demonstrates a commitment to education over Mr. Wade's emphasis on entertainment, and Dr. Lee's portrayal as morally upright by holding to the standards he sets forth for the band provides a stark contrast to Mr. Wade's underhanded tactics in trying to poach band members from Atlanta A & T. This situation echoes Wells and Serman's (1998) observation that the hero teacher fights against the system through their higher standards and make other teachers look bad in their complacency, and portrays them as incapable of rescuing students. The juxtaposition of the hero teacher with indifferent veteran teachers also emphasizes the gift by painting the hero as the
only one with the knowledge, commitment and method necessary to rescue students. This trope may shape occupational identity of music teachers, then, through the emphasis on saving rather than educating, which may influence teachers to assume responsibility for drawing students out of their surroundings, and thereby privileging the social position of the teacher over that of the students.

The Hero-Teacher as Outsider

One of the major components of salvation narratives and hero images is the status of the teacher as an outsider. In this narrative, teachers come from outside the community and bring with them the unknown gift of salvation to their students. Ayers (1994) observes that the teacher's otherness plays a key role in this portrayal, in which her or his position of power defines the role of savior. In addition to arriving from the outside, music teachers may also derive their outsider status from their reputation as performing musicians. The social standing of musicians as outsiders echoes Becker's (1963) suggestion that individuals attain outsider status from their willingness to break societal rules, which casts them as deviants. Images of music teachers as performing musicians, then, may also contribute to their outsider status in the films through images of unconventional or subversive behavior. Additionally, contentious relationships with
administrators and colleagues may contribute to an understanding of these characters as outsider.

In particular, Dr. Lee’s outsider image may come in part from his position as a college professor, which Reynolds (2007) claims is a common trait when post-secondary educators are portrayed in film. Dr. Lee does not arrive from the outside in this narrative, but may be depicted consistent with other filmic professors as distant and set apart from the world of their students and others in the educational setting. Additionally, Roberta’s character in *Music of the Heart* is depicted as a “fish out of water,” a white teacher who arrives to save visible minority students. In this environment, Roberta conforms to an image of the music teacher as one who stands outside of his or her own community finding common images in the portrayals of educators such as Joe Clark in *Lean on Me* (1989) and Louanne Johnson in *Dangerous Minds* (1995). In contrast, Dewey’s character comes from a lower socioeconomic status to the privileged atmosphere of a private school, where he uses his outsider status to expose the sheltered children to new styles of music.

Farber and Holm (1994) describe portrayals of educators as outsiders who must “enter hostile territory, find a way to earn the trust and respect of students, and build bonds with them which make
some tangible victory possible” (168). Read together, these portrayals may form a composite image of music teachers as heroes who come to their teaching situations as outsiders, creating expectations for professionals to use the gift of music to draw students out of their impoverished situations. Seen as outsiders, teachers may face expectations to bring new approaches to curriculum and instruction, increased energy or new understandings that were impossible under the established system they entered.

_Deconstruction of the Education Establishment_

Scholars have argued for the consideration of specific films as deconstructive texts that work to overturn societal ideas and concepts, as in Morris’ (1997) suggestion that Hitchcock’s _North by Northwest_ (1959) deconstructs the idea of direction. Similarly, I would suggest _School of Rock_ could be read as text that deconstructs institutions of traditional schooling. By undermining traditional teaching practices and authority of administrators and parents, _School of Rock_ positions itself as a destabilizing force that works to expose flaws in the logic of accepted educational practices. In Dewey’s role as an untrained substitute teacher, he often uses unconventional, if not outlandish, approaches to curriculum and instruction. In doing so, he undercuts many layers of established and accepted practices, where his
techniques reach students on intellectual and personal levels. Dewey's unconventional tactics open up creativity and excitement in his students in much the same way that Mr. Keating in *Dead Poets Society* motivated his students to take an interest in poetry and literature. In both instances, the teachers subvert conventions of traditional education and influence their students' enthusiasm for the arts.

As *School of Rock* is a comedy, however, there is likely an expectation of exaggeration and suspended realism for the viewer. While this may allow the narrative to break with the possible, its use of comedic devices may create a more penetrating commentary on education. Through exaggeration, the narrative incorporates unlikely situations that may be read as satire. While Dewey could be viewed as a buffoon, his comedic antics could also be read as observations on the state of teaching in schools. Likewise, his outlandish and unconventional methods might be read as inexperience, or on the other hand, as an observation about traditional schooling as an outdated institution.

In their research on movies about education, Ayers (1994), Farber and Holm (1994) and Johnson (2008) indicate that a common archetypical character is the teacher who rebels against the system in order to reach the students who could not be helped by traditional or
conventional methods. Dewey would seem to fit this mold, yet in a different way than most filmic teachers. For instance, both *Stand and Deliver* (1988) and *Lean on Me* (1989) show rebellious educators as enforcers of discipline in out-of-control classrooms or schools where unconventional methods make possible the gift that enables student success. At the same time, these characters comment on the failures of educational systems taking on outsider status which seems to advocate a “succeed at all costs” mentality, especially when actions could be understood as a deliberate undermining of the authority of administrators or school boards.

Dewey’s character, however, seems to have more in common with the subversive Mr. Keating (Robin Williams) in *Dead Poets Society* (1989), as both eschew harsh discipline for affirmative and inspirational action that inspires creativity in their students. Similar settings of traditional private schools serve as a backdrop where teachers are depicted as pied-pipers who help the students eschew the conformist environment of the school to find passion in the arts.

As McLaren and Leonardo (2001) suggest in their analysis of *Dead Poets Society*, the arrival of the subversive teacher spurs the students to willful acts of subversion and resistance. Noting that subversive acts often take place in private—a cave in *Dead Poets*
Society—McLaren and Leonardo assert that the subversive message of the teacher’s curriculum is supported through the secretive nature of instruction. Similarly, instruction in *School of Rock* takes place furtively, with surveillance cameras outside the classroom and elaborate cover-ups as administrators pass by. Dewey and the students actively hide their subversive curriculum of rock music from those who might oppose it. Whether the teachers’ gifts are framed as trying to instill discipline or inspiring creativity, both portrayals work to subvert the hierarchies of power in education, portraying the teachers as those who are best suited to determine the teaching methods best suited for their students.

*School of Rock*’s deconstruction of the education establishment and portrayal of the music teacher as a rogue outsider may signal that subversion of educational institutions is an effective way to inspire students to learn. These narratives may in fact frame the role of music teacher as an agent of change through their gift, and therefore build up professional and societal expectations about the means they may use to accomplish goals.

*Expectations in the Gift of Salvation*

The rogue status of the music teacher may also contribute to the understanding of the hero image as part of the gift. Derrida (1994a)
suggests that the gift is an expectation of reciprocity, where both the giver and receiver of the gift anticipate some form of acknowledgement or repayment. Because music teachers in these narratives come from outside of the system, the gift of salvation can be viewed as a gift that was not possible before the arrival of the hero. The narrative's reliance on established teachers as incapable of giving what the hero brings places emphasis on the unique nature of the gift and the salvation that it offers to students.

Brand and Hunt (1997) note that a common theme in movies about music teachers is the miraculous transformation, in which groups of untrained or unmotivated student musicians are easily shaped into an excellent performing ensemble. Because these images make the transformative process look easy, the non-hero teachers who do not measure up to these standards may appear to be inadequate. This scenario may generate a wide range of interpretations, for instance, a viewer without direct knowledge of school music programs may view music learning as an easy process that can be taught by anyone with some background in music. On the other hand, music teachers may view such scenes as imposing structure on their work by creating unrealistic expectations that may ultimately affect teachers' agency.
What, then, does this gift require of the students and what response might the narratives suggest is appropriate and expected? Perhaps the reciprocal expectation in response to the music teacher's gift is the elevation of the teacher to hero status, which a dominant reading might view as a *deserved* status. In *Mr. Holland's Opus*, *Music of the Heart* and *School of Rock*, the students work to promote the teacher's status as one who has made a difference. For instance, Roberta's students help to save the program from budget cuts by helping with the benefit concert, which affirms Roberta's status as hero. In contrast, the students who shower praise on Mr. Holland are, in many cases, students who have graduated and returned to express gratitude for the difference he made in their lives. In both films, the demonstration of gratitude, when viewed through the lens of the gift, occurs as an *obligation* to the teacher rather than a celebration of the teacher's work. The return of thanks seems to be in response to what Derrida (1994a) might describe as the gift of "goodness" and imposes upon the students a necessary return of thanks. Through this lens, the teacher's gifts are confirmed by the students' thanks, yet this imposes the expectation of something in return and contaminates the act of teaching as a situation where adoration is expected as repayment to the teacher.
**Appropriate Responses and Worthy Students**

The students' respect and adoration shown toward the hero teacher falls within the framework of the response to the teacher's gift. As Faber and Holm (1994) suggest, the hero-teacher is usually framed "in ways that prove him (or her) worthy of the students’ respect, and students who do not enter into the union created are seen to prefer (and thus deserve) some realm of crime or empty drudgery" (169). Therefore, the students who demonstrate the "appropriate" reception of the gift with the response of respect for the teacher are ones who are presented as worthy of being saved. On the other hand, those who do not respond appropriately are shown relegated to their own ignorance. Ayers (1994) likewise notes the presence of students who are "not salvageable" by teachers in the movies, stating that those who are not deemed worthy of salvation "are irredeemably sucked back into the sewers of their own circumstances" (148). The filmic image of music teachers would indicate that some students are framed as not worthy of the gift from the hero-teacher. The ones who are, however, inevitably participate in the reciprocity of the gift as they demonstrate their thankfulness to the teacher for saving them from their condition.

This perspective of the gift is demonstrated in the narrative of
Drumline, where in the opening of the movie the viewer learns that Dr. Lee came to New York specifically to offer Devon a scholarship to play in the band at Atlanta A & T. Devon is shown as a talented musician who comes from a single-parent family living in an urban environment, and is given an opportunity by Dr. Lee to escape his surroundings. Initially, Devon's encounters with Dr. Lee would indicate a lack of reciprocity. He is arrogant, late for practices, does not respect authority and seems to carry a sense of entitlement. Because of his attitude, it could be read that Dr. Lee kicks Devon out of the band as a punishment for Devon's lack of thankfulness for the gift rather than for a violation of the rules. The scenario can be read as an acknowledgement that Devon did not respond to the gift and therefore deserved to be punished, which may also validate Dr. Lee's punishment since the terms of the gift were not fulfilled.

Later in the film, however, the reading of salvation as a gift may be confirmed as Devon appears more agreeable and defers to Dr. Lee's demands to learn how to read music. When Dr. Lee directs Devon to perform in the final competition, it could be read as an acknowledgement of Devon's repayment of Dr. Lee's gift. However, considering the reciprocal and perhaps cyclical nature of Derrida's concept of the gift, Dr. Lee's renewal of Devon's membership in the
band may demand yet another response from Devon. Dr. Lee's response results in Devon providing the necessary talent for the band to win the competition, allowing Dr. Lee to keep his job. Throughout this narrative, the concept of the gift underlies the intentions and expectations of the actions of Dr. Lee and Devon and creates an undercurrent of obligatory actions and responses on the part of teacher and student.

**Implications of Power**

As it pertains to discourse in music education, salvation as gift places the music teacher in the position of power and places the responsibility of repayment on the student. The gift implicitly contains the demand of a response (Reynolds 2010), instilling the gifts of the hero-teacher with an expectation of response from students. In *Drumline*, the expectation of response places the teacher in greater control over students through the power of the gift. Allsup and Benedict (2008) suggest that school instrumental music ensembles are places of traditional autocratic authority, with the music director retaining much power over her students. With this in mind, the gift as a reciprocal concept confirms, or perhaps magnifies, the concept of hierarchical power traditionally found in instrumental music groups.

The reciprocal nature of the student-teacher relationship may
heighten the awareness of band directors' positions of power in music programs and in their relationships with students who may view them as heroes or saviors. When music teachers begin to relinquish the hierarchy of power and control, a traditional structure that Allsup and Benedict (2008) posit may hinder creativity; they become empowered to give up part of the reciprocal nature of the gift. If teachers work toward an equalization of power in music education programs, students may then take back some portion of control over their learning and lessen the feelings of indebtedness, obligation and reciprocity in the student-teacher relationship.
CHAPTER 5
INTERTEXTUAL EXPLORATIONS OF GENDER, RACE AND MUSIC EDUCATION ADVOCACY

This examination of *Music of the Heart*, *Mr. Holland's Opus*, *Drumline* and *School of Rock* relies on poststructural strategies of analysis that highlight some of the possible interpretations of the film texts. In this chapter, I have employed the concept of intertextuality, which approaches textual interpretation as an interwoven textile of meaning. This approach acknowledges that a reader's interpretation of a text is developed, in part, through encounters with other related texts. In addition, intertextuality acknowledges that all texts are reliant upon other texts for the construction of meaning and are open-ended in the sense that textual meaning is constantly evolving as new texts are created. As such, the understanding of any text is fluid and may change over time, creating an unfinished border at the fringes of this textile of meaning.

Using this intertextual approach, I have incorporated other films, TV shows, movie reviews and items of popular culture as texts that may shape the interpretation of films and give a better picture as to how they might comment on music education discourses. By using a variety of textual resources, I aim to explore how these texts
collectively comment on music education discourses such as gender, race and arts advocacy that may inform pre-service and current teachers about the perception of music education within society.

As I described in Chapter 3, the four films in the current study were viewed multiple times, using a deconstructive lens for several readings and an intertextual lens for others. After conducting the intertextual readings, I examined my notes to determine the most common tropes among the films and found the themes of gender, race and arts advocacy to be the most prevalent. Since the films comment extensively on these three meta-narratives, I examine each of them in this chapter and attempt to draw conclusions about how these portrayals of music teachers might contribute to discourses within music education.

**Intertextual Exploration of Gender Issues in Music Education**

In my reading of the films, issues surrounding gender and music education were prevalent, whether through the portrayal of a female music teacher in *Music of the Heart* (Roberta), or the relegation of women to traditionally gendered roles or instrument choices in other narratives. Scholars have noted the absence of women in images depicting music education, or the relegation of women to images of clearly defined and gendered roles (Koza 1988, 1991, 1994; Leppert
The filmic portrayal of women and girls as participants in school music raises such issues as male-female power structures in music education, conformity to gender-based musical instrument associations, the treatment of women and girls in music education settings and the relegation of females to passive and submissive roles within music ensembles. These portrayals of women in the music classroom offer commentary on gender and music education discourses as texts that circulate within public consciousness. Green (2002) notes the prevalence of divisions of gender in music education, stating, "[T]he school plays a major role in reproducing pre-existing musical gender divisions in the wider society, through reinforcing discursive constructions about gender, musical practices, and music itself" (137). In turn, the films in this study demonstrate divisions of gender roles, with intertextual connections contributing to portrayals of women and girls in music education. An examination of these issues may help develop an understanding about how gender roles are constructed within music settings and how these images might be used to problematize gender issues in the music classroom.
Teacher-Student Romance as a Display of Power

Some of the most powerful images of teachers in the media come from the depiction of sexual relationships between student and teacher. Not only do these images have implications for the abuse of power structures found in the student-teacher relationship, but also speak to broader issues of the status of women within of music education and to the occupational identity of music teachers.

Perhaps the most striking example from the films under consideration is in Mr. Holland's Opus: an implied romantic relationship between Holland and his student, Rowena, whom he casts as the lead in a musical production. While this is the only romantic student-teacher relationship in the four films examined in this study, it is not without a connection to other texts that explore similar themes. The relationship that develops in Mr. Holland's Opus is one that may operate on an abuse of power inherent in the student-teacher relationship (Bauer 1998). Holland not only possesses power as a teacher, but also as music director of the production, where he uses his authority to arrange private lessons with Rowena.

Despite the inherent power possessed by Holland, the narrative may attempt to lessen the blame on him by framing Rowena as the aggressor. For example, she overtly tries to get his attention at
rehearsals and "accidentally" runs into him at a coffee shop. The image of the aggressive younger girl pursuing an older man plays off of an intertextual connection to popular texts that attempt to blame the girl and portray the older male as the helpless victim. This image of the sexualized teenage girl draws from texts such as Nabokov's *Lolita* (1958) or The Police's song "Don't Stand So Close To Me" (1980), which also references Nabokov's text. In the lyrics of song, it is the young girl who is the aggressor, and the teacher who tries to deny her advances. It is this sort of denial of the power relationship between teacher and student that enables Holland to be read as a victim himself.

While Rowena may not be overtly sexual in her interactions with Holland, there are circumstances that paint her as promiscuous, such as her question "How was I?"—a double entendre that seems to catch Holland off guard, and her pursuit of Holland despite the fact that she already appears to have a boyfriend. Additionally, Rowena directs her singing of Gershwin's "Someone to Watch Over Me" (1926) toward Holland, which may emphasize the romantic nature of their relationship. Lines from the song such as "he's the big affair I cannot forget," and "I'd like to add his initial to my monogram" may be interpreted to imply a sexual relationship, whereas the text "I'm going
to seek a certain lad I've had in mind," may serve to reinforce Rowena as the aggressor. These images may attempt to relieve Holland of some of the ethical and moral implications of the abuse of his power by framing the student as the initiator, perhaps casting Holland as more ethical for not engaging in a sexual relationship despite his desires.

Educator-student romance is common in filmic portrayals of teachers (Bauer 1998), and while Mr. Holland is only one of many that generally fall into the category of movies about schooling, it may be worth noting that there are other recent examples of music teacher impropriety depicted in media. For instance, the pilot episode of the television series Glee (2009) begins with an experienced music teacher being fired for an inappropriate relationship with a student, and the episode "Families" (2004) of the television series Law and Order: Special Victims Unit depicts a choir teacher in a long-term sexual relationship with one of his students. Other instances include "The Day the Music Died," an episode of The Drew Carey Show (1996) in which the main character reveals that he lost his virginity to his high school band director and an episode of Saved by the Bell: The New Class ("Tommy the Tenor," 1994) where high school girls swoon over their handsome new choir director. More recently, the 2009 film The
Marc Pease Experience implies a sexual relationship between a choir director, Mr. Gribble, and his student, Meg, where abuses of power are evident not only through their physical relationship, but also in the way Gribble praises Meg’s singing, only to constantly relegate her to chorus roles in musical productions.

In the episodes of Law and Order and Glee, the music teachers are punished through both the loss of their jobs and the threat of legal action; however, there are no such ramifications in The Drew Carey Show or for Mr. Holland. For Drew Carey, the sexual encounters could be read as a special experience as the band director and their sexual encounter are remembered fondly rather than negatively. Although the offenses are equally egregious whether the teacher is female or male, the influence of macho culture may shape the reading of the female encounter with male students as “cool” rather than an abuse of power. Interestingly, both narratives seem to diminish the role of power in the teacher’s actions as Mr. Holland is absolved of abuse through the aggressiveness of the female student and Drew Carey’s female band director is exonerated through the boys’ sexual prowess. When considered as a series of texts linked by indiscretions of music teachers, it may frame Mr. Holland as innocent of any indiscretion and deny the power inherent in the student-teacher hierarchy.
While *Mr. Holland's Opus* shows only a kiss between teacher and student, other related texts that imply a sexual relationship may paint Holland as another unscrupulous music teacher who is willing to cross the line with one of his students. Indeed, even though Holland may stop short of a sexual relationship, the intertextual reading of music teachers as those who get too close to their students is apparent in the user reviews of *Mr. Holland's Opus* on the website rottentomatoes.com. Two reviewers in particular describe their reaction to Mr. Holland kissing Rowena:

As much as I like this film and, more specifically, like the performance of Richard Dreyfuss, there is one moment that absolutely makes my skin crawl. When Mr. Holland accompanies one of his students to the bus station as she leaves to pursue a music career in New York, he kisses her right smack dab on the lips! No, no, no, no, and hell no. A high school teacher does not and should not do that. If he does he should never teach again. Period. I don’t care if he is having a midlife crisis. That’s so very, very wrong.

Another reviewer echoes this sentiment: “I hate this movie! The fact that he falls in love with a teenager is so disturbing!” Portrayals of music teachers across visual media may be interpreted as those who may be inclined to abuse power through the close bonds naturally formed within school music ensembles.

Music teachers may not be depicted as any more or less inclined to engage in a sexually inappropriate relationship with a student than
other educational specialists; however, it may be of some significance that this theme reappears in various forms of media. Indeed, other instances of students having crushes on music teachers such as the episode “Thanksgiving” from television series New Girl (2011) and the previously mentioned episode of Saved by the Bell: The New Class (1994) may work to support the impression of music teachers as the likely objects of a student’s romantic interest. Adding to this portrayal is the mentoring model that is so often found in school music ensemble instruction that inevitably lends itself to close relationships between student and teacher. Long hours spent together and common interests in the arts may indicate that close relationships are more easily formed between music teachers and their students. In addition, music teaching is often conducive to one-on-one instruction and physical contact, which Stufft (1997) notes anecdotally as a reason that music teachers should be cautious when contact is required during instruction. Given the presence of sexual harassment within high schools (Larkin 1994), these media sources could serve as useful tools to raise awareness among music educators, and to encourage deeper thinking about appropriate relationships with students.
Women on the Sidelines

The portrayal of women as relegated to the margins of performing groups carries many implications for music education. Although a dominant view of some portrayals of women could be read as positive—Roberta’s status as a strong, independent woman in Music of the Heart, for instance—there are many images that could read as women being assigned to supporting and inferior roles in the music classroom.

A theme that is reinforced across the film texts in this study is the relegation of women to roles as spectators. It is noteworthy that among all of the films under investigation, only Music of the Heart shows a woman as a music teacher, and most of the major roles of students in the filmic music ensembles are male. Aside from the prominence of males in the music classroom, it is the roles given to girls that may say more about the discourse of gender within music education.

In School of Rock, many images can be read as girls being relegated to lesser roles in the music classroom. Dewey assigns three girls with limited musical ability as groupies, whose role he defines as “worshipping the band.” In the film, only one girl—Katie—was given a role as an instrumentalist, while others were made back-up singers.
Even though Katie is assigned bass guitar, she plays an instrument that traditionally supports the guitar and lead singer—all played by males.

The relegation of girls to secondary status is not only apparent in the assignment of roles in the band, but also in the way music is learned and decisions are made. For instance, musical decisions are usually made by Dewey, and when the students learn new music, it is the boys who assert themselves creatively as they are encouraged to contribute ideas as songs are arranged. Abramo (2011) suggests that boys and girls compose and rehearse popular music in differing styles, with boys relying on non-verbal gestures and girls on verbal communication. Abramo's findings are consistent with the type of rehearsing and composing demonstrated in School of Rock, as the girls are not shown participating in the compositional collaboration. The dominance of males in this setting, as Green (2002) points out, may be a result of a commonly held perception of music as the domain of males, where boys are celebrated for originality and imagination in the compositional process, whereas girls are often discouraged from exploring their creativity. In School of Rock, the relegation of girls to passive roles eliminates the chance to engage in the creative process or to demonstrate an alternative to the male-dominated approach of
collaboration. Koza (1994) and McWilliams (2003) have also noted the relegation of girls to second-class status in the music education environment in the study of other images and media, and this scene in *School of Rock* would seem to propagate music education spaces as unwelcoming and unsupportive of girls.

Although most apparent in the rehearsals depicted in *School of Rock*, images of privileged males in the music classroom is a recurring theme in other films as well. In *Mr. Holland’s Opus*, two scenes that feature students struggling with proficiency on their instruments are presented in ways that conform to the assertive male/passive female trope. Mr. Holland helps Lewis Russ become proficient enough on the bass drum that his efforts are applauded by the entire band. This image of accomplishment is contrasted with Holland’s work with the clarinetist, Gertrude, who, when it is apparent that she has limited ability, is instructed by Holland to find joy in playing her instrument. As a result, her squeaks and wrong notes are ignored in the attempt to connect with the emotional aspect of the music. Here, a commonly held assumption suggested by Green (2002) is affirmed, that the expression of feeling is an essentially feminine pursuit, while the assertion of one’s self through music is seen as a masculine pursuit.

Likewise, scenes from *Drumline* reinforce these assumptions;
women are featured in passive and supportive roles such as the dance line, and the showmanship and creativity of Devon and Sean playing as soloists are celebrated by the crowd, the band and the band director. Lamb, Dolloff and Howe (2002) suggest that traditional gendered power structures in music education must be challenged if equal opportunities for boys and girls are to become a reality. Insofar as film images contribute to these understandings of gender in music education, music teachers may want to promote images that challenge traditional gender roles to help change the assumptions of their students.

Gender and Instrument Association

In addition to the relegation of women to subordinate roles, some of the films comment on the association of instruments with male and female students. Much research exists on the gender association of instruments within school instrumental programs, and research conducted by Abeles (2009) suggests that these associations have changed minimally over the last 30 years, with boys preferring traditionally masculine instruments such as drums and brass instruments and girls favoring high woodwind instruments and strings. All of the films contribute to this discourse through the confirmation or rejection of such historically gendered associations.
These films comment to some degree on the gender appropriateness of certain instruments, and especially to the male preference for percussion. The clearest example of this is in Drumline, where males dominate the percussion section with assertive personalities, with only one female represented in the group. When females are shown playing other instruments in the band, these images tend to follow gender lines with females playing high woodwinds and males playing the majority of brass instruments. The females who have larger roles on the film do not typically play instruments, but are members of the dance team. Likewise, School of Rock shows boys assigned to all of the instrumental roles aside from Katie on bass guitar, reinforcing the traditional gender association of popular music instruments, which are almost entirely associated with males (Green 2002). While an exception to this can be found in Katie being assigned to bass, it is the assignments of all of the other instruments to boys that serve to reinforce the associations that researchers suggest still permeate in society and in school (Ables 2009; Green 2002).

It is noteworthy that there exists only one girl in both School of Rock and Drumline who breaks the boundaries of traditionally male instruments and domains. Diedre, the lone female drummer in
Drumline, and Katie, the female bassist in School of Rock may serve to interrupt the homogeneity of these settings; but, in doing so they also call attention to the disparity that exists in these domains. It may be that the presence of these feminine roles in male dominated spaces may not be read as a sign that these spaces are equally open to females, but rather reinforce perceptions that for women and girls to break through as members of these groups, they must conform to the masculine and assertive atmosphere created in the rock band and drum line. Notably, Dewey and Dr. Lee do not celebrate the presence of a female in a traditionally male world, nor do they attempt to lessen the machismo atmosphere that permeates both settings. As Roulston and Mills (2000) assert, male teachers may unknowingly reinforce the power structures present in such settings, and further suggest that in order to provide for equal access for females, male teachers must become more aware of their practices and attempt to balance their approaches in order to lessen the dominance of masculinity in music classrooms.

Gendered instrument associations are not as overtly apparent in Mr. Holland's Opus. Many scenes of the orchestra depict boys and girls on stringed instruments; however, the images of bands seem somewhat more divided along gendered lines and the students who
are featured in the film—Lewis, Gertrude and Rowena—play drums, clarinet and sing, respectively. A scene that may provide more commentary on gender discourse, however, is a group of football players who are featured singing and dancing in the musical. Initially, the idea is proposed as a way to get more people to come to the show, but Coach Meister, who minored in modern dance, suggests that he will teach the team how to dance and shock the audience, who will not expect them to do well. Perhaps this scene serves to break down gender expectations that boys are less likely to be drawn to singing and dancing than girls. However, it would also seem that this situation could also be read as a celebration of the boys’ participation, confirming what O’Toole (1998) suggests, that school vocal programs offer advantages to boys over girls. In *Mr. Holland’s Opus*, O’Toole’s (1998) observation that “boys who sing are special, while girls who sing are ordinary” (9) is certainly present, since the participation of the football players is viewed as so exceptional that it will draw a bigger audience than if they did not participate. This also carries with it a connection to *School of Rock*, where girls who sing are labeled back-up singers, and the lead singers, always male, are given prominence musically and visually on the stage.

These images of gender instrument association, while seemingly
in the background of the narratives, work to affirm many of the traditionally defined roles of boys and girls within the music classroom and demonstrate the power structures in place that relegate women and girls to more passive and less assertive roles than their male counterparts. Abeles (2009) holds that these associations largely remain in place in school music programs, and Green (2002) notes that music teachers must realize that boys and girls conform to the ideas of conventional masculine and feminine roles held in society.

These films, then, also shape the experience and environment of music students through the affirmation of historical conventions of gender roles within the music classroom.

Objectification of Women

While the images of sexual harassment and misogyny in *Drumline* may not relate directly to the actions of Dr. Lee, the film seems to portray an environment that signals music education as hostile to women. This theme is not only present in the dialogue and actions of the characters but also in the images presented in the publicity materials for the film. For instance, the movie poster for *Drumline* contains several sexual implications that demonstrate the male position of power. The poster features Devon holding a pair of

drumsticks in the form of a cross with two dancers in the background as well as a partial image of the band. The dancers’ poses and costumes show their status as sexual objects, and Devon’s drum sticks may also signal a theme of power over the women through the image of the sticks as a sign that the dancers are off limits to others. This scene may set the stage for the privileging of men over women in the band and the relegation of women to supporting roles that depict them not as musicians, but as objects of male desire. Mulvey (1989) suggests that a consistent filmic image of the woman is one of desire, which is intended for the pleasure of the male view. She states:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness. (19)

Throughout the narrative of *Drumline*, images of women serve as the object of the male gaze, both for the characters in the film and for the viewer, creating what may be read as a hostile environment for women in the context of music education.

Further instances of the subordination of women arise in *Drumline*. One such example occurs with Diedre, the only female
member of the drum line. When the new members of the drum line do push-ups, Ernest taunts Diedre as he says, "Hey . . . we got a girl on the line . . . a G.I. Jane in the house . . . hey baby, you might want to do some *girl* pushups because, you know, guys like a little *something soft* to hold onto." However, in this instance Diedre resists the male drum line members' objectification by switching to one-handed pushups in order to show up the male members. The position of women is highlighted further in a subsequent scene at a house party, where Laila and her sorority sisters are the object of the male gaze as they perform a provocative dance, closely watched by Devon and his friends. Mulvey (1989) refers to this as scopophilia, (or, pleasure in looking) which takes place here both through the gaze of Devon and through the potential male audience member. This is but one example of how power is displayed through the male gaze. Mulvey states,

> The male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification . . . Hence the split between spectacle and narrative supports the man's role as the active one of advancing the story, making things happen. The man controls the film fantasy and also emerges as the representative of power . . . (20)

These scenes do not directly comment on band directors since Dr. Lee is not implicated in the mistreatment of women, however it may point toward a culture of hostility toward women within music education settings. In contrast to Dr. Lee, the band director at Morris
Brown College, Mr. Wade, does seem to possess an objectified view of women when he encourages Devon to sit with him in a luxury box during the upcoming competition claiming that "you can see the honeys way good up there." Again, the women in the film are relegated to roles as objects of the male gaze, which reinforces the power held by men in music education settings.

Through the male gaze and status as protagonist, Devon subjects the women, especially Laila, to roles as spectacles who serve to support his position of power. This same gaze is clearly at play in Mr. Holland's scene with Rowena where she rehearses "Someone to Watch Over Me" while directing the lyrics of the song toward Holland, who seems to take pleasure in watching her perform. Even though Rowena is the star of the show, her role is equally submissive in her role as the object of Holland's desire. In both narratives, the gaze of the male musician, who owns power in the situation, places women not only as subservient, but also diminishes power that may have been present in their portrayals—Laila as the captain of the dance team and Rowena as the female lead of the school musical.

Similarly, School of Rock positions girls in the class as supporting or passive members of a group dominated by the interests of the male members. When Dewey establishes the rock band project, the
creative responsibilities are held by the boys, and the girls are largely limited to supporting roles. Rehearsals are largely dominated by males, with Dewey or one of the boys accepting creative responsibilities and giving direction to the others. In this instance, the girls are not only relegated to backup roles as musicians, but they also lack the power to contribute creatively as well. Perhaps the only instance of individual creativity among the girls is when they improvise a short vocal solo, although this is still performed at Dewey’s behest.

Popular music scholars have commented extensively on gendered discourses within rock and roll, including Shepherd (1989) who notes the hegemonic nature of much popular music, and asserts that “[male] solidarity is reflected in the rock world where women’s role is . . . peripheral and over-determined by men . . . with their assertions of male supremacy, narcissism and self-pity” (165). Likewise, Walser (1993) notes the patriarchal nature of heavy metal as it is made and consumed primarily by males. As rock perpetuates itself through males, the band in School of Rock emulates traditional heavy metal through the structures of “texts, sounds, images and practices” (109) that Walser suggests work to confirm gendered identity.

In music education, Green (2012) notes that popular music
study typically privileges boys, with girls more likely encouraged to pursue the "conformist and conservative cultural sphere[s]" (270) of classical music. She elaborates on the assumptions of male proficiency in popular music:

Even though teachers quite explicitly see boys as uninterested, disruptive, and more concerned with peer-group opinion than with teachers' assessments, they nonetheless describe them as "naturally" more adept, spontaneous, and creative. . . . These proclivities are linked to boys' associations with popular music, especially its improvisational qualities, its technology, and its greater potential for symbolizing nonconformity. (270)

Therefore, while the films show popular music as the territory of boys, this portrayal would also seem to confirm common assumptions that persist in music classrooms about the natural abilities and appropriate roles for girls.

When viewed as a whole, the treatment and objectification of women in these films seem to paint a picture of a hostile environment for women in the arena of music education. The scenarios of abusing power, sexual innuendo and misogynistic behavior create a barrier for women in the cinematic music classroom, one that privileges men over women and positions the man as the holder of power within that setting. Much is written about feminist perspectives in music education, but of particular interest here is Lamb's (1994) feminist critique of music education, where she argues that looking at music
education from a feminist perspective requires an “accounting of difference as if differences matter and play some central role in the meaning of music” (63, italics in original). Historically, performance interpretation has been dominated by male conductors, and this privileging of male interpretation is highlighted in the films through the autocratic leadership of Mr. Holland and Dr. Lee. An aspect of *Music of the Heart* that seems to assert the conductor as a male position of power is the image of Roberta as a strings teacher rather than a conductor. Although she is shown leading string ensemble concerts, Roberta usually plays along with her students, which may cast her as more of a performer than a conductor and deny her, as a woman, the power typically associated with males and conductors in the musical world. This denial of power is particularly evident in the final concert when, with a larger ensemble of students and distinguished professional musicians, Roberta again assumes a more passive role of participant rather than asserting some measure of power as a conductor.

In comparison, a dominant reading of *Music of the Heart* would seem to be a narrative that emphasizes and celebrates the role of women in music education. Koza (2003) points out that the majority of music teachers in the United States are women; however women
are underrepresented in the filmic images of music teachers. Yet, absent from *Music of the Heart* is an emphasis or celebration of Roberta as a female music teacher. More prevalent in this narrative is the theme of race, where Roberta as a white music teacher enters an urban environment to save her students which, as I argued in Chapter 4, may appear as a dominant reading. In this way, Roberta may be disempowered as a female music teacher, whereas males in other films draw upon common intertextual images of the male teacher-hero to emphasize their gender. While *Music of the Heart* portrays women as capable music teachers, it may also mask the issue of gender through its emphasis on differences of race. Further, since Principal Williams is an African American woman, the interactions between her and Roberta may accentuate differences of race and thereby obscure gender in the portrayal of both music teachers and principals. The gendered power hierarchy of music education, then, is maintained by emphasizing Roberta's race rather than her gender.

Particularly in *Mr. Holland's Opus* and *Drumline*, power structures are magnified by the objectification of women and the use of power to relegate them to secondary roles. These situations may echo the role of women throughout the history of music education, which has traditionally minimized the status of women in school music...
programs (Howe 1998; Livingston 1997).

Given the dominant image of males in music education, it seems, then, that filmic portrayals of music education provide another avenue through which the male image is privileged over women, reflecting and/or furthering the lowered status that women have experienced, particularly in the field of instrumental music education. These narratives may reflect both traditional attitudes about women in music education and the privileging of men that traditionally exists in these settings. Because the portrayal of women in these narratives illustrates the traditionally diminished role of women in music education, these films may serve as important tools in developing awareness of gender issues for current and pre-service music teachers.

**Intertextual Exploration of Race Portrayals in Music Education**

The filmic portrayal of race in music education has significant intertextual implications through the examination of ancillary texts and the broader discourse about race relations in the United States. Although all of the films have some diversity among cast members, *Drumline* and *Music of the Heart* seem to contribute most significantly to this discourse, due in part to their respective settings at a
historically Black university and in East Harlem. Assumptions about race position these films as useful commentaries about the effects of diversity in music classrooms and the implications for music teachers. Koza (2003) explores some of the implications of race portrayal in her examination of *Music of the Heart*, and some of the themes she points out will be explored further in this section through an intertextual lens.

*Intertextual Readings and Racial Discourse*

With *Drumline* set on the campus of the fictional Atlanta A & T, there exists a subplot involving the bass drummer Jayson, who is white, and attends the historically Black university because of his love for HBCU bands' style of performance. When he first arrives on campus, Jayson defends his presence at the school by making a connection to the film *White Men Can't Jump* (1992) when his roommates question his ability as a percussionist and his presence at A & T. Jayson responds, saying “don’t give me that ‘White Men Can’t Jump’ bullshit!” Through this reference to the Spike Lee film, there is a connection to two discourses on race, which identify basketball and rhythm as places where African Americans excel. In making such a comparison, Jayson’s comment would seem to acknowledge the achievements of African Americans in these arenas, yet challenge the notion that they are closed entities. Likewise, Jayson asserts himself
as possessing the talent and worthiness to enter this seemingly closed
space of the HBCU drum line.

A type of reversal of Jayson’s situation may be seen in *Music of
the Heart*, where the mother of Naeem, an African American student in
Roberta’s class, prohibits him from learning violin because she feels
that he does not need to learn the music of “dead, white men” and
because Roberta is attempting to “save” students from the inner city.
Roberta counters with the example that Arthur Ashe excelled at tennis,
a predominantly white sport, and that the class was only playing songs
such as “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” that presumably are not attached
to any specific culture.

There are many intertextual connections in these two scenes,
including the comparison of musical and athletic ability, the association
of certain musical styles as the domain of a particular culture and
outsider participation in cultural traditions. While Jayson’s
participation in the drum line is predicated on his love for the
particular tradition and style of the band, it is the exclusivity of
Western classical music that prompts Naeem’s mother to stop his
attendance. Both scenes use the athletic world as a place of clearly
defined race lines, and frame the music world in a similar way.
Roberta’s comparison of Arthur Ashe’s accomplishments in tennis
implies that Western music is an unwelcoming place for people of color, just as Ashe had to break down barriers and expectations in the world of sport. Similarly, Jayson’s reference to *White Men Can't Jump* may suggest that people of certain racial or ethnic backgrounds are at a disadvantage in particular genres of music. Both comparisons may paint music as a whole, and music education in particular, as a place where barriers must be overcome in order to participate and place the onus of overcoming those barriers on the student rather than those in positions of power. The connection to sport may bring to their interpretation the cultural knowledge of the struggle many African American athletes had in gaining access to professional sports leagues. As Elpus and Abril (2011) note, white students are disproportionately over-represented in high school music ensembles compared to overall populations of students in schools, which may suggest that to some degree, school music groups are seen as closed institutions to minorities just as most professional sports were in the first half of the twentieth century.

*Connections to Race in Music Education*

A deeper study of the role of race in music learning may lend some insight into the assumptions that the musical world is divided along lines of race. Studies by McCrary (1993) and Morrison (1998)
suggest that African American students more readily identify with music from their own culture, particularly if there is a visual image of an African American performer associated with the music. Additionally, Walker (2006) indicates that African American students may be drawn to music that has rhythm as a predominant characteristic, and this preference may likely be connected to the strong rhythms present in African American music. It may be that for visible minorities, school music groups are not only often the domain of white participants, but of white music as well. Naeem's mother was correct when she pointed out that her son was learning the music of dead white men, and Roberta's example of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" confirms this by using a melody associated with Mozart as an example (Koza 2003).

While the film points out—and ultimately dismisses—the lack of repertoire associated with visible minorities, the absence of instrumentation associated with those musical traditions also works to privilege Western classical music. Despite playing the civil rights anthem, "We Shall Overcome," the students' use of violin perhaps betrays an interpretation of the song as a triumph over oppression, signifying instead that educational institutions still oppress urban students through the Western tradition. The predominance of the
violin in *Music of the Heart* supports a reading that views Western classical music as better suited for music study in schools, and contributes to a meta-narrative that suggests Western classical music contributes to the saving of visible minorities in urban schools.

*Power Structures and Musical Traditions*

While *Drumline* celebrates African American musicians and musical traditions and *Music of the Heart* depicts a diverse group of children learning violin, *School of Rock* and *Mr. Holland’s Opus* are dominated by white musicians and musical traditions. It is noteworthy that in both of these films, the African American students depicted are in roles that conform to discourse about African American participation in music. When Mr. Holland accepts Lewis Russ into the band, the young man has no known background in music, yet Holland’s choice of percussion would seem to follow the notion that African Americans have a natural ability in rhythm. This situation echoes similar implications in *Drumline*, although in *Mr. Holland’s Opus*, ironically, Russ struggles with rhythm, which may portray music teachers as assigning students to instruments based on race regardless of their strengths and weaknesses.

Likewise, Tomeka’s role as a soulful backup singer in *School of Rock* would seem to place African Americans outside of the
traditionally white domain of hard rock. Tomeka's character also presents a suppression of women in rock and roll, since hard rock has been traditionally dominated by white males with females commonly relegated to roles as back-up singers. The images in *School of Rock*, then, fail to draw upon cultural examples where these dominant roles have been disrupted by African American musicians such as Chuck Berry, Jimi Hendrix, Prince or Ben Harper, women lead singers such as Tina Turner, Grace Slick and Pat Benatar or prominent women instrumentalists such as Joan Jett, Sheila E., or Meg White.

The preponderance of Western musical tradition in films about music education, along with the paucity of filmic images of African American music teachers, would seem to reflect indications by scholars that not only are African Americans underrepresented as students, but also as music educators. Hamann and Walker (1993) assert that students are likely to identify teachers as role models when they are of their same race and gender. Further, they comment that music is the most likely subject area to find teachers who serve as role models for students and suggest that a more diverse body of music teachers are needed in order to serve as role models for diverse student populations (Hamann and Walker 1993). Likewise, media and filmic images of music classrooms must become more diverse—similar to
that found in the television series *Glee*—in order to change the perception of music education as a closed institution.

*Urban Schools and Images of Chaos*

Another theme that connects several of the films in this investigation, as well as other films in educational settings, is African Americans as representative of disorder and chaos in the classroom with white teachers portrayed as responsible for bringing order to out of control students. Ayers (1994) labels these images as the “barbarians at the gate” (152), and notes this theme has underpinned many filmic narratives about education, such as *Blackboard Jungle* (1955), *Conrack* (1974), *Teachers* (1984), *Lean on Me* (1987) and *Stand and Deliver* (1988), and television series such as *Welcome Back, Kotter* and *21 Jump Street*. This meta-narrative depicts the children as uncivilized and aggressive toward educators, setting the stage for their conversion to civilized status through the teacher’s hard work and innovative methods. Describing the opening chaotic scenes that set the stage for this film narrative to play out, Ayers (1994) states,

It plays excitedly to all the received wisdom of teaching and schooling, as well as to the wider fears—racial and sexual—of a precarious middle class. Its portrait of the idealistic teacher struggling to save the delinquent boy with the good heart is imprinted on our collective consciousness . . . much of our common sense, as well as every popular film since, is in a sense derivative. (148)
The scenes of chaos and danger frame schooling, and especially urban schools, as places where this is the normative state until the arrival of the teacher whose mission it is to fix at least some of the students.

In various ways, all of the films play off of this notion of chaos as the "normal" state of students and schooling in urban settings. Perhaps the most obvious connection is the opening scenes of *Music of the Heart*, where the viewer experiences the inner city through drug deals, rap music and aggressive behavior of people on the street. While this sets the stage for the school's neighborhood, Roberta's encounter with her students for the first time relies on the viewer's intertextual knowledge of the barbarians at the gate, by showing out-of-control children who seemingly do not know proper behavior in a classroom. Although Roberta's class has students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, the theme is confirmed by the similar behavior of the adults on the streets. The dominant reading would see these urban students as wild children who need to be tamed.

In the context of music education, it would also seem that Roberta's image as a disciplinarian and the music she brings to this setting—Western classical music—is the means by which the students will learn discipline. The association of rap to chaos and classical music to order seems to suggest a reading that the music of urban
students contributes to their unruly behavior, and the music identified with whites is music that will lift urban students out of their ignorance and into conformity. Contributing to this interpretation of Music of the Heart is a scene where Roberta visits the home of her student Ramon to find the adults in the living room drinking beer and watching sports with loud music playing outside. Meanwhile, Ramon is isolated in his room practicing his violin and is told to be quiet by his family. The image appears to identify the family as a lost cause and Ramon as the one who has the hope of salvation through his experience in Roberta’s class.

For music educators, this reading calls into question the idea that a culturally diverse curriculum is appropriate for a class such as the one portrayed in the film, and the exclusive use of Western classical music throughout the film reinforces the idea that whites possess the means by which people of color must find culture, learning and discipline. Research suggests that African American students more readily identify with and prefer music closely related to Black and urban culture in America (McCrary 1993; Morrison 1998; Walker 2006). In addition, Ladson-Billings’ (1995) research on culturally relevant pedagogy asserts that diverse classrooms are best approached in a way that makes connections to the students’ cultural
backgrounds, and thereby increases the relevance of the content to each child's experience. In contrast to this body of research, the images in *Music of the Heart* may result in an interpretation for music teachers that casts doubt over the appropriateness of non-classical music for teaching through its privileging of Western music in the curriculum.

The opening scenes of *Drumline* also play into the theme that urban school children are out of control and in need of discipline. Here, Devon is shown calling attention to himself during his high school graduation by improvising a drum solo in the middle of a band performance. Although his band director is dismayed by the rebellious behavior, Devon's ability is praised by his peers and the audience. After he enrolls at Atlanta A & T, his actions indicate that his urban roots have left him in the mold of the barbarians at the gate: he is disrespectful of his section leader and the band director and continues to play what he wants to, evidenced by his audition where he ignores the prepared piece and plays an extended improvised solo. Again, the theme here calls upon intertextual knowledge of familiar classroom settings in the movies such as *Dangerous Minds* (1995) and *Lean on Me* (1987) where urban students are largely portrayed as rebellious and deviant.
Although he exhibits talent and potential, a dominant reading of urban students as the source of problems frames Devon’s “urban-ness” as his most significant obstacle to education. In contrast to *Music of the Heart*, Devon is not saved by classical music; however, I would suggest that a possible reading of the narrative is that he is saved by the *practices* and perceived discipline associated with classical music. Devon’s success is realized only when he learns music as a written tradition, framing his aural approach to learning as insufficient. This reading stems from a strongly held viewpoint in music education of Western classical music and written music as the means to musical knowledge. Through this lens, Western music and the practices that correspond with it are privileged because of its perception as an art form that is superior to popular music and other forms that are learned aurally. Although rejected by scholars such as Green (2002b) and Shepherd (2012) who suggest that all music is socially constructed and beneficial for music teaching, the privileging of written over aural traditions stands alongside repertoire and instrumentation to stress the suitability of Western traditions for music teaching. Colleges and universities are institutions that have long relied upon the European conservatory model for training musicians and music teachers, and the images of Devon conforming to the
institutional demands of written music serve to underscore the supposed superiority of Western classical music.

Through a completely different setting, *School of Rock* comments on unruly urban school environments through the *absence* of chaos in the orderly, structured environment of Horace Green Elementary. When Dewey first stands in front of the class, he does not encounter the chaotic scene that may be expected when a substitute teacher begins his work. Rather, the students are well-behaved, respectful and appear ready to learn. Because the setting is an affluent private school, it also comments on the differences between wealthy private schools and urban public school. As Wells and Serman (1998) posit, films about private schools often depict places governed by tradition, oppression and students' entitled attitudes. Indeed, Hollywood has a long history of these images from *Goodbye, Mr. Chipps* (1939) to *Dead Poets Society* (1989). But while the *School of Rock* narrative draws upon these themes, it also signifies the private school as a place where chaos does not exist and that learning *can* occur. Through the absence of chaos, images of urban public schools as places in need of repair are reinforced. In turn, images in *School of Rock*, which features a predominantly white and affluent student body, contribute to meaning in films such as *Music of the Heart* by suggesting that
urban schools and diverse classrooms are places to be feared and can be saved only by someone outside of the urban environment.

Because these films both showcase situations of music teaching, it would seem to frame urban student populations as unprepared and less likely to respond to music education, and their counterparts in elite private schools as more easily controlled and taught. This further contributes to a reading of Music of the Heart as a narrative about finding a solution to urban problems by injecting the culture of whites into inner-city schools. Ainscow and West (2006) suggest that the resources and creativity necessary to solve problems in urban schools are often already present in the communities and schools themselves. Since popular texts often portray solutions as coming from outside of the community and culture of the urban setting, this may diminish the chance for communities to creatively solve their own problems. In the context of music education, Fitzpatrick’s (2011) suggestion that urban music teachers benefit from their knowledge of the urban setting by modifying their curriculum to create specialized approaches stands as one example of how solutions can come from within the urban community.

Portrayals of race in movies about music teachers may have many far-reaching implications for the field of music education. Since
these narratives portray a lack of African American participation and music within school music ensembles, the perception of music education as open and accessible to diverse populations may ultimately suffer. In addition, intertextual interpretations about urban students as unsafe and out of control may discourage potential music teachers from pursuing jobs in urban settings.

On the other hand, it is possible that the under-representation of visible minorities and music in these films highlights a problem within music education—namely, that music education may be viewed as closed to certain groups. The exchange between Roberta and Naeem's mother confirms as much, since music education often relies on the "music of dead white men" on the basis that it is the most suitable for teaching and training young musicians. If the films represent a societal perception of music education, then much work remains to be done integrating music from diverse traditions and cultures as a way of increasing access to a wider population of students.

**Intertextual Examination of the Value of Music Education**

In addition to themes of gender and race, the films in this investigation also contribute to discourses about music education advocacy and the value of music in the curriculum and in society. Through connections to advocacy groups such as NAfME (National
Association for Music Education) and the VH1 Save the Music Foundation, *Mr. Holland's Opus, Music of the Heart* and *School of Rock* also comment on perceived value of music as advertisements for music education funding. As these films contribute to discourses about music education value, filmic images of successful music programs and admired music teachers may frame an interpretation of these narratives as arguments for music education that speak for the profession.

Due to the similarity of their narratives and connection to NAfME, *Music of the Heart* and *Mr. Holland's Opus* offer intertextual dialogue about the place of music in education. The commonalities between the two films are striking: cuts to both of the successful music programs eliminate the music teacher's job, and various forms of protest and advocacy occur as a result. However, the two situations arise under different circumstances and the battles to retain the programs are waged in decidedly different ways. The difference in approach may comment on the diversity of solutions to retaining the programs that exist within different community settings.

**Problems with Principals**

In *Music of the Heart*, Roberta confronts Principal Williams about the elimination of the program, something she learns not from
administrators, but through her students. That the principal did not notify Roberta directly and later defers responsibility of the cuts to the school board, may paint the administration as not only ineffective, but also without a say when it comes to major decisions affecting their schools. Despite Principal Williams's admission that the program has touched the lives of numerous students, the principal claims that she has no power in the decision-making process and she has been forced to eliminate the violin program. However, since the board directs the principal to make cuts and leaves the decision of which programs will be affected, the focus of blame is placed on the principal. While Roberta tells a concert audience that the school board will have a "big fight on their hands," friends, students, parents and colleagues collaborate to put on a charity concert that will privately fund the program. Rather than fighting the board directly, the film paints a subversive approach without direct confrontation as the preferred method of restoring music program funding. Eventually, even Principal Williams appears at the meeting to organize the benefit concert, but she is labeled the enemy by Roberta's mother despite Williams's argument that her hands were tied.

Likewise, *Mr. Holland's Opus* depicts Principal Wolters as having power to make specific budget decisions, and he determines that art
and music will be cut to comply with the school board’s fiscal demands. While Roberta encounters a somewhat sympathetic administrator, Holland’s conversation with his principal is confrontational and antagonistic. When Mr. Holland labels Principal Wolters the enemy, he demonstrates the singular blame of the administrator in the same way that Principal Williams is culpable in *Music of the Heart*.

The two scenarios present similar accounts of the power structures in determining whether music will remain in schools, and in each case there is a vilification of the principal for the elimination of the program. After meeting with Principal Wolters, Holland’s meeting with the school board is less a debate of ideas than a chance for Holland to present a soliloquy on the virtues of the arts. Since the board does not overturn Principal Wolters’ decision, the portrayal of the administrator as the enemy may support a reading of the film as a direct conflict between teachers and the principal.

Wells and Serman (1998) assert that while films often portray school boards and superintendents as a part of a larger institutional problem within education, it is the principal who most often takes the blame for the fiscal problems in schools and acts as a “symbol of what is wrong with education” (189). Both Eddleman (2008) and Wells and
Serman (1998) suggest that images of incompetence, corruption and indifference are common in filmic portrayals of principals, who serve as convenient scapegoats for the problems created by broader institutional forces that often go unseen. Intertextually, then, these films rely on the image of the adversarial and incompetent principal as portrayed in a host of movies and television shows to frame the administration as not only the enemy, but as an impediment to progress. Films such as *The Substitute* (1996), *187* (1997) and *Dangerous Minds* (1995), and television series such as *Saved by the Bell*, *The Simpsons* and *Glee* paint principals as either inept or uncaring, contributing to an understanding of the principals in *Mr. Holland's Opus* and *Music of the Heart* as the source of the music teachers' problems. Ultimately, these kinds of interpretations may serve as a structure to music teachers by defining their relationships with principals as adversaries rather than allies.

**A Focus on Funding**

Advocacy for music in the curriculum tends to center on funding issues, which are frequently raised in these narratives. Instead of focusing on arguments for or against the place of music in schools, the principal is shown as responsible for funding cuts to music programs—usually as a last resort—while alternatives to these decisions are not
expressed. Such a portrayal seems to leave music as the obvious choice when budgets demand significant cuts. What may be left out of the narratives are the many other problems that music programs routinely face and how these problems might contribute to decisions affecting music programs.

The oversimplification of conflict seems to be a necessary ingredient in Hollywood movies and the portrayal of Roberta’s and Mr. Holland’s music programs are defined by the focus on funding as the reason for the elimination of the programs. While both narratives center on the issue of money, music teachers deal with many diverse and dynamic problems that may ultimately contribute to the success or decline of their programs. In their research on the perspectives of principals about music programs, Abril and Gault (2008) suggest that many school administrators perceive No Child Left Behind legislation and increased standardized testing as likely to have the most negative impact on school music programs.

Further findings of Abril and Gault’s (2008) study are revealing, in the suggestion that principals are divided on the impact of budgets and scheduling, viewing other teachers, school boards, parents, students and music teachers as having the most positive effect on school music. What this may say about filmic portrayal of music
programs, is that although many principals feel the effects of tightening budgets on music programs, there are other factors that may have as great an impact on the access and survival of many programs. Additionally, this may signal music education as having value to stakeholders that belies its position as a casualty of budget constraints. Neither *Mr. Holland’s Opus* nor *Music of the Heart* confront issues of legislation, state testing requirements or scheduling, and the absence of these themes may work to narrow the discourse on music program survival to the single issue of funding.

*Portrayal of the Music Teacher’s Allies*

Abril and Gault’s (2008) assertion that other teachers, school boards, parents, students and music teachers are likely positive influences on school music programs also indicate a conflict between these two narratives in the way that Mr. Holland and Roberta go about trying to save their programs. Mr. Holland is shown single-handedly fighting for *his* program as he argues with the principal and later sits alone in front of the school board, placing the responsibility of the survival of the program on the music teacher. In contrast, *Music of the Heart* draws upon many of the positive influences pointed out by Abril and Gault (2008). When the violin program is cut, colleagues, parents, former students and community members stand alongside
Roberta and offer their support in order to save the program. While these groups are also represented at Holland’s farewell, their purpose here is to praise the work of Mr. Holland rather than help to save the program.

Suggested guidelines for music programs over the past several decades have noted the use of parents, colleagues and community members as key components for success (Bess and Fisher 1993; Elpus 1998; Gaines 1972, Young 1981). It would seem that because Mr. Holland’s Opus focuses more on the music teacher than the music program, it misses an opportunity to emphasize the importance of community to the formation of strong music programs. Perhaps Mr. Holland’s Opus reflects common situations in real band programs, as alluded to by Allsup and Benedict (2008), where directors have authority as autocratic leaders in school music ensembles. It would seem, then, that the privileged status of director may be reflected by the emphasis that these films place on the individual rather than the program. To the public, this may signal the importance of the band director to a program’s success; however, band students may interpret this portrayal in a way that disempowers them as stakeholders, diminishing their contributions to program success.

While there are contrasts between the ways that parents,
students and community members support the music programs in *Mr. Holland's Opus* and *Music of the Heart*, negotiated readings of both narratives may overlook the value of these music programs to their respective communities due to the focus on the music teacher. Ultimately, the images of community involvement with the acquisition of outside funding in *Music of the Heart* and the show of support by Mr. Holland's former students, including the governor of the state, are not portrayed as significant enough to reverse decisions of program cuts. Such ineffectiveness may diminish the perceived value of community support for music programs, and paint these programs as good, but not necessary, to the missions of schools and school districts.

Both *Mr. Holland's Opus* and *Music of the Heart* could be read in ways, however, that are problematic for advocacy. For instance, Mr. Holland constructs a highly successful music program despite having received little help from any outside agency, which paints Holland as the sole reason for the program's success and diminishes the possibility that successful music programs do not require anything but the hard work and dedication of the music teacher. In contrast, the images in *Music of the Heart* present a possible reading that school boards and administrators are not useful allies and that music
programs actually work better when funded by outside agencies. What seems to be lacking in each of the narratives is the idea that music programs may be most successful when a broad base of support is assembled from among stakeholders within educational and arts communities (Gee 2002). Given the conflict between the approaches to funding and advocacy in the films and the proven strategies for success in music education programs, it may be incumbent upon music teachers to inform and educate invested parties about the value of sustaining music programs in schools.

**Connection to Institutions of Advocacy**

Themes of advocacy and connections to NAfME may emphasize these two films as marketing tools for the music teaching profession, which may open the narratives to criticism as tools both for and against the value of music education. Since *Music of the Heart* is a true story and *Mr. Holland's Opus* a narrative that attempts to connect to the collective schooling experience in society, these narratives, as Koza (2003) points out, tout the benefits of music education through the transformative power it has on students. However, evidence for a reading of music education as transformational in these two films would seem rather thin. As messages of advocacy, then, the films trumpet the benefits of music without answering questions of why or
how, something Gee (2002) alludes to when she suggests that political
and popular messages of advocacy often attempt to condense
messages, where "hype, oversimplification, and assumption rule in the
media world" while the "subtleties, qualifications, and ambiguities are
ignored" (955). By building up excitement about the possibilities for
the benefits of music education, these messages, while attempting to
advocate, may be detrimental by furthering ideas that funding issues
have simple solutions or through the oversimplification of the benefits
of music learning.

The elimination of arts programs is also a repeated subject as
films and television explore the music classroom, and may add to
public consciousness on the issue. For instance, the made-for-
television movie *The Music Teacher* (2012) contains a similar plot to
*Music of the Heart*, where a choir teacher in the Midwest is a potential
casualty of funding cuts before her former students come back to
stage a benefit concert to save the program. Although this shows
similar images of strong community support for music programs, it
may also affirm the idea that saving a program requires only the
benefit concert found at the end of each of these narratives—an idea
that is in contrast to the educational, political and community
partnerships that have been the foundation of building strong support for music programs for decades (Desay 2002).

Institutional Influence, Authorial Intent and Propaganda

Authorial intent in film narratives, while viewed with skepticism in reception theory, is suggested by Hall (1997) as a source of political power since those who determine the content of media portrayals hold some amount of control over the people they portray. When those holding power attempt to further ideologies or political agendas, the resulting portrayals might be thought of as propaganda, especially by those who are not in positions of power. Both Mr. Holland's Opus and Music of the Heart share connections to NAfME, which used the films in a marketing strategy to music teachers, arts organizations, students and parents as a vehicle for music program advocacy. Serving as a partner in the production and marketing of the films, NAfME would appear to be in a position to shape content in a way that dominant interpretations of the film might share. This association, Koza (2003) argues, places NAfME's in a powerful position as the mouthpiece for efforts to build strong programs and increase awareness about the benefits of music learning. A dominant reading of these films might align with the organization's goals of building up music education; however, negotiated or oppositional readings are possible, and may
view messages of advocacy negatively and subvert the organization's purposes.

A useful insight into the analysis of these films as advertisements for music education comes from critical reviews found in major American newspapers. Hinson's (1996) review of Mr. Holland's Opus may serve as an example of a contrary reading of this narrative. Calling the film "a well-intentioned, high-minded, primitively manipulative commercial for arts education funding and increased awareness of the value of art," Hinson goes on to describe the film as harboring a "cultural agenda" that reads like a sales pitch for music education. He explains that the film serves as a "thinly veiled position paper that beats the humanist drum so obnoxiously that you almost begin to root against its platform." By reading the film as over-zealous propaganda, audience members may reject the message of advocacy, ultimately undermining the efforts of advocacy groups. While the connection of the film to NAfME may have aided in the marketing by legitimizing the film for music educators, this connection may also serve to strengthen these types of contrary readings that view the association as an effort to influence policy through the guise of an emotional, feel-good story.

In contrast, Maslin's (1999) review of Music of the Heart would
seem to represent a dominant reading intended by NAfME, as he lauds the film's message as "an affirmation of the power of music to provide beauty, pleasure and a sense of accomplishment." Ebert (1999) echoes this sentiment, advocating for the arts and humanities in schools, stating "think what our society might be like if the funds spent on high school sports were used to help kids access the humanities." However, in a contrary reading, LaSalle (1999) states that *Music of the Heart* seems "more like an earnest commercial for music education than successful entertainment," noting that the film appears to try "too hard" to promote music in the schools. These reviews represent the array of possible readings of the texts, but also highlight the dangers for arts organizations when they collaborate with institutions such as Hollywood, enabling the dissemination of texts to so many in society. What this means for music teachers, is that groups such as NAfME may assume a positive influence of film narratives because their intent was to make film that advocates for music education. However, if meanings in film texts are ultimately made by readers, then there can never be any certainty that the film achieved the aims intended by the producers.
Save the Music and School of Rock

A similar association exists between the film School of Rock and the VH1 Save the Music Foundation. Since a commercial for Save the Music appears at the beginning of the DVD version of School of Rock, the film’s connection to corporations may also inhabit the underlying purpose of the film as one that benefits the music industry rather than advocating for music education. The commercial features a beginning violinist playing a melody, with various students appearing to extol the virtues of music learning. Among these qualities are providing mental stimulation and focus, building self-esteem, developing a strong work ethic and becoming a better person. These qualities are linked to success outside of the realm of music by the children’s comments that the mental stimulation is something that is needed in schoolwork and that the self-esteem they feel helps them to achieve their goals. The commercial concludes with the announcement, “Only you can help VH1 save the music . . . keep our music programs from disappearing” and an appeal to donate to the foundation.

Certainly, the commercial stakes bold claims on behalf of music education, indicating that music can help children’s academic achievement. Many of these kinds of causal claims for the ability of music study to boost performance in other areas have been grounded
in the "Mozart Effect," despite the fact that Winner and Cooper (2000) and Eisner (1998) suggest that there is no evidence to support such claims. This furthers a trend noted by Gee (2002) where the citations by arts organizations of the benefits of music for achievement in other areas are often based on doubtful claims.

*Negotiated Interpretations of School of Rock*

*School of Rock* may be viewed as a subversion of the traditional music class at Horace Green Elementary but can also be understood as an interrogation of the value of music learning in light of its connection to Save the Music and NAMM (National Association of Music Merchants). The link to the Save the Music Foundation may cause incongruity for music educators and music education advocacy. For instance, the reference to an advocacy program may provide a connection to other films such as *Mr. Holland's Opus* and *Music of the Heart*, which were promoted and used by the NAfME as a part of an advocacy campaign. While the *School of Rock* narrative may not be read as advocacy for the benefits of arts education, the Save the Music commercial may bring that aspect of the narrative into play during the reading.

Throughout the film, the children gravitate toward rock music and give up their classical music training, exemplified by the lead
guitarist, Zach, who says that he "used to play classical guitar" but now prefers rock. However, this may also prompt a negotiated reading that views the subversion of the music curriculum, the rejection of classical music and the opening of Dewey and Ned's after-school music program as a sign that "saving the music" might best be accomplished outside of school and traditional teaching methods. As I argue that films may contribute to the occupational identity of music teachers, portrayals of the value of music education could be influential on the way music teachers perceive their work. Depictions of traditional school music ensembles and teaching as less effective than other approaches may influence music teachers' perceptions of the value and benefits of popular music and non-traditional teaching strategies. Additionally, such portrayals may be influential to those entering the field of music teaching, as they formulate understandings about the aims and purposes of teaching music. For the general public, however, such portrayals may lead to an interpretation of school music as out of touch and less effective, and informal musical experiences as holding more benefit than structured school-based experiences. Whether considering audiences of music teachers or the general public, both interpretations may prompt music teachers to re-examine curricular assumptions so that they can offer students diverse
and beneficial music learning experiences.

One such influential portrayal may be found in the final scene in *School of Rock*, where the children are engaged, enthusiastic and thriving in the after-school rock band program established by Dewey and Ned. Gee (2002) notes that out-of-school arts programs are often billed as more enjoyable and effective than in-school music programs, and these images of music learning may be influential to music teachers' understanding of the benefits of school music. Moreover, the framing of popular music as *more* suited to outside-of-school music programs could dissuade music teachers from implementing popular music groups in the curriculum, in spite of Green's (2002b) assertion about the effectiveness of popular music in school music programs. The association of Western classical music as better suited for school curriculum may reinforce similar observations about *Music of the Heart* (made earlier in this chapter), which frames Western classical music as more suitable for visible minorities and urban schooling environments. Read through an intertextual lens, this may paint a severe picture of the continued value attached to Western classical music as better-suited for music learning.

For music education, these interpretations may signal an incongruity between school music programs and independent outside-
of-school music programs. This understanding may frame school music programs as lacking in relevance and outside-of-school programs as innovative and more effective at helping children connect to music. If out-of-school music learning in programs taught by untrained music teachers is viewed as more effective, then this understanding can be used to argue against the need for music in the curriculum, and thereby undermine some of the efforts of music advocacy groups such as VH1 Save the Music.

Political Power, Documentaries and Waiting for Superman

Questions about power structures and authorial intent in film portrayal may also apply to recent documentaries such as The Cartel (2009), Waiting for Superman (2010), and The Lottery (2010), which critique the state of public education in the United States. The importance of these films to education discourses can be observed through publicity, attention in the media and popularity among viewers. As texts that contribute widely to discourses about education, these films may hold positions of power through the dominant interpretations about problems and solutions within

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3 For instance, box office information from Internet Movie Database [http://www.imdb.com/title/ tt1566648/business] indicates Waiting for Superman grossed over $6 million in two months at theaters. Additionally, both Waiting for Superman and The Lottery continue to be available on instant streaming movie sites such as Netflix and Amazon Instant Video.
Documentary often implies a fact-based exploration of real people or events and viewers may use them as a source for information about education. However, documentaries do not tell stories without ideological bias, as is particularly evident in *Waiting for Superman*. Through a connection to conservative financier Philip Anschutz, whose company Walden Media served as a major donor (Cavanaugh 2012), the film’s status as an impartial critique of the educational system is subverted by its connection to a politically active organization. *Waiting for Superman* identifies failing schools and incompetent teachers as significant problems within education and suggests that lack of accountability and protection of teachers by unions persist as underlying problems. The solution, as suggested in the film, is a charter school system that allows students to opt out of failing public schools to attend specialized, privately-managed schools.

Based on the connection to Anschutz, it may seem that *Waiting for Superman* serves as propaganda for the political right, but in fact the film has ties to both conservative and liberal backers, as evidenced by additional financial support of left-leaning group

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4 For instance, the director of *Waiting for Superman*, Davis Guggenheim, was also the director of *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006), which detailed the dangers of global warming and starred former Vice-President Al Gore.
Participant Media. The significant connection, however, is that many of the financial supporters of this film have ties to for-profit educational companies who stand to benefit from the privatization of schools. This connection to corporations reveals a possible agenda for the promotion of charter schools since they receive government funds in return for managing failing schools. For audiences of teachers, such connections may lead to oppositional readings of the film that reject claims of problems (teachers) and solutions (charter schools).

Similarly, the recent feature film *Won’t Back Down* (2012) addresses parental response to failing schools and promotes the idea of parent-trigger laws—legislation that allows groups of parents to force failing schools to transform into charter schools through legal action. The hero narrative here may be shifted to focus on parents who take responsibility for their children’s education by forcing changes to school administrations. However, this narrative is undermined by the same forces as *Waiting for Superman* through its ties, again, to Philip Anschutz and Walden Media (Cavanaugh 2012).

Hall (1997) submits that institutions assert power by working to affix meaning to media portrayals and thereby limit the agency of individuals in society. While the author’s intent cannot be fixed with any certainty, the *positions* of these institutions to shape public
understanding through dominant readings of the narratives may diminish the agency of educators by shaping their environments and the assumptions under which they work. In the case of documentaries about education, not only do filmmakers assert a point of view about schooling, but those with financial interests such as Walden Media may endeavor to shape the text so that they will benefit from dominant readings. For the films in the current study, this assertion of power works through institutions such as NAfME and Save the Music Foundation that formed associations with film production companies and, presumably have an interest in the film's perceived message and how they may benefit from it. Although these advocacy groups would appear to be supportive of music educators, the power held by these groups would, as suggested by Hall (1997) still work to diminish the voice of individuals such as music teachers who do not have the same power to disseminate portrayals of themselves in society.

Responses to Power

Although knowledge about corporate ties to Waiting for Superman may influence a reader to reject claims of the effectiveness of charter schools, there may also be a similar effect to the influence of music advocacy groups on readings of Mr. Holland's Opus or Music of the Heart. Music educators, then, should be aware of the
institutional power of film narratives as they influence the agency and occupational identity of music teachers, whom the institutions presumably aim to help. In turn, music teachers may also seek to contribute to these discourses, finding ways to balance the political power exerted by institutions.

One example of countering political power may be found in the documentary film *The Inconvenient Truth Behind Waiting for Superman* (2011) produced by New York City school teachers who refute many of the claims of the documentary *Waiting for Superman* (Resmovits 2011). This work stands as an example of teachers asserting their own voices to debates about failing schools, and in effect, reversing the power held by the media by taking control over their own portrayals. While all educators may not have access to the resources to voice such oppositions to media images that circulate in public, a response such as *The Inconvenient Truth Behind Waiting for Superman* may demonstrate the importance of additional voices to balance institutional and political power in media.

Beyond serving as a response to discourses in education, *The Inconvenient Truth Behind Waiting for Superman* also demonstrates how teachers can use deconstruction as a strategy to gain power within the institution. Without overt reference to deconstruction or
Derrida, the teachers behind this documentary in response to Waiting for Superman, in effect, carried out a deconstructive project by exposing the assumptions, paradoxes and positions of power from which the original film was conceived. The teachers' response attempts to counter the portrayals set forth in Waiting for Superman, and moves forward an agenda for reform that negotiates the assumptions of the original text (Resmovits 2011). Deconstruction of dominant voices that assume to speak for education, Dyndahl (2008) suggests, may highlight "marginalized" issues and "taken-for-granted attitudes" that can be exposed for what they overlook (141-142). Although providing a way to counter the assumptions of texts such as Waiting for Superman, Derrida (1974) warns us that deconstructive writings are always open to the same procedures and strategies by which they deconstruct other texts, as deconstruction "does not take place above or outside the discourses to which it refers" (Dyndahl 2008, 140). Therefore, deconstructive approaches to these types of documentaries are valuable because they do not discount or marginalize other perspectives, but rather affirm multiple perspectives through the knowledge that all are based on assumptions of truth.
Effects of Interpretation on Teaching

Considerations of authorial intent or corporate influence assume that meaning can be conveyed through the text and interpreted by the reader in a way that is consistent with that intent, and Hall (1997) understands the author’s portrayal as a position of power that can limit the agency of those portrayed. I previously acknowledged how Gadamer’s (2004) philosophy of hermeneutics and Bakhtin’s (1986) concept of the superaddressee account for a connection between intent and interpretation. Hall’s (1974) theory of reception holds that the intent can either be interpreted similar to an author’s intended meaning in a dominant reading, or interpreted differently through negotiated or contrary readings.

Since texts can be read in a variety of ways, it is possible that filmic connections to corporations or advocacy groups could influence interpretations for dominant and contrary readings, just as Hall (1973) notes the possibility of context in determining dominant, negotiated or contested readings. For instance, dominant readings of films such as Music of the Heart or Waiting for Superman could be viewed as positive by the public or by stakeholders who interpret them as highlighting the benefits of music learning (Music of the Heart) or raising awareness about problems in schooling (Waiting for
Superman). In these readings, the perception of corporate or institutional power could be viewed positively by the general public who may regard these institutions favorably because of their financial success (i.e., Disney or Anschutz) or because of their close ties to the profession in the case of NAfME. In other words, these films may be interpreted positively because they work under an assumption of trying to help education. However, contrary readings by teachers, for instance, might interpret these narratives skeptically because of the same connections to institutions that may be seen as holding power over them and assuming to speak for them. Just as Ellsworth (1997) casts media images as "re-presentations" of reality, filmic portrayals could be seen by teachers as attempts to speak for the profession and to show the nature of their work, thus providing a basis for the rejection of the narrative because of its incongruence with experience.

The possibility of such contrasting readings may make it seem impossible for teachers to take away anything useful from these films. However, the process of interpretation, negotiation and opposition may provide an opportunity for teachers and other stakeholders to become empowered through the acceptance or rejection of these corporate connections. Attention to the authorial intent through corporate or institutional influences, and the consideration of possible
dominant, negotiated or contrary readings may give teachers greater freedom by enabling them to name the structures of filmic portrayals that ultimately affect their teaching environments. Through the identification and naming of the portrayals that affect their occupational identity, teachers may more freely understand their work and the value of it to society.

**Conclusion – Intertextual Readings**

In this chapter I examined films through their dependency on other texts for meaning, with gender, race, and arts advocacy emerging as the prominent meta-narratives in the intertextual readings of these films. The examination of the films in this study noted the objectification of women and girls, their subjection to lesser roles and traditionally gendered instrument choices and portrayal as aggressors in implied teacher-student romantic relationships. In the area of race, the narratives depicted music education as a place where Western classical music is privileged over the music of other cultures and where urban schools are portrayed as chaotic and dangerous. Aside from *Drumline*, African American characters were often relegated to culturally defined instrument choices. Additionally, debates about arts advocacy and the value of music programs to the curriculum were framed as battles between principals and music teachers, and when
programs were cut, the music teacher either fought the battle alone (Mr. Holland) or subverted administrators to find community support for the program (Roberta).

As many of these meta-narratives are rooted in connections to other texts, powerful portrayals of music education may become established through the recurrence of such images. Additionally, these narratives have implications for music education advocacy by minimizing the value of music education programs in school curriculum. Because the narratives often show easy solutions or lack consequences for the elimination of music programs, the understanding of the need for negotiation and debate that accompany such decisions may be minimized. The filmic portrayal of the benefits of music in schools has potential to shape the perceptions of music education by those with influence over policy. In the future, as new texts communicate intertextually with those in this study there may be further contribution to discourses about the issues presented here, which demonstrate the importance for music teachers to increase awareness of the ways music education is portrayed in media.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In this project I examined four film texts—Mr. Holland's Opus, Music of the Heart, Drumline and School of Rock—that portray music teachers and music education. I sought to examine the ways in which dominant readings of the films might shape the way teachers are understood in society, and the negotiated or contrary readings based on textual paradoxes or assumptions. Using this approach, I sought to address the following questions about the portrayal of music education in film:

1. In what ways might the portrayals of music teaching and music education in Mr. Holland's Opus, Music of the Heart, Drumline and School of Rock reflect particular authorial intentions?
2. In what ways might the dominant readings of these films, as represented by movie reviews, affect the agency of music teachers?
3. What aporias, or paradoxes, in these narratives demonstrate possible negotiated or oppositional readings of the film texts?
4. How might intertextual connections with texts of popular culture shape the interpretations of these films?
In Chapter 1, I noted the assertion by scholars that films occupy a dual role as a reflection of widely-held societal attitudes and as texts that contribute to common-sense understandings of groups and individuals (Faber and Holm 1994; Fiske 1989b; Wells and Serman 1998). Using poststructural approaches to textual interpretation, I examined issues of professionalism, access, power, gender, race and advocacy as they relate to music teachers and music education. The major sections of analysis in this study were conducted using deconstructive and intertextual readings. Adopting Derrida’s aporias of responsibility, hospitality and the gift, I examined textual paradoxes that destabilized the image of filmic music teachers as professionals, calling attention to possible negotiated and contrary readings of the text. The intertextual approach in Chapter 5 explored ways that communication among the films in this study, along with other texts of popular culture, play into the construction of meaning and contribute to music education discourses on gender, race and the value of music in schooling.

Although films are not direct reflections of reality, they may serve as sites where the perception of reality about groups or individuals is constructed. Ellsworth (1997) suggests that media texts do not represent a reality to be consumed by a viewer, but rather “re-
present the world” (76) through political, cultural or ideological negotiations. Thus, filmic portrayal carries with it political and ethical implications which may affect the agency and occupational identity of those groups represented in film. Approaching films as representations of music teachers and music education, the following discussion will expand on interpretations presented in Chapters 4 and 5. However, this discussion diverges from the close scrutiny of the text in the previous two chapters and moves toward the affirmative—the political and ethical implications made possible through the deconstructive project (Caputo 1996). This is not an affirmation that attempts to propose easy solutions to the problems of education, but rather, an affirmation of otherness and of how filmic analyses might play out in the work of music teachers. Deconstruction affirms education’s embrace of the contradictory nature of the aporia to inform a way forward rather than accepting singularity or simplified and prescriptive answers (Egéa-Kuehne 2001). Therefore, this chapter will both expand on ideas from analysis in preceding chapters and attempt to connect theory to practice.

Although responsibility, hospitality and salvation remain, in a Derridean view, impossible to fully achieve, in the following sections I discuss how striving toward these conditions in music education may
lead to more responsible teaching, more hospitable spaces and more fulfilling purposes.

**Toward Responsibility**

In Chapter 4 I used the aporia of responsibility as a lens through which alternative readings of the films were suggested. Derrida (1991) asserts that responsibility is inhabited by the necessity of irresponsibility to another. If one acts responsibly toward an other, the same decision or action may cause damage to another other, thereby leading to the act as a simultaneous embodiment of both responsibility and irresponsibility. Filmic portrayals may frame acts of the music teachers as responsible; however, the same acts might be interpreted in ways that undermine responsibility and the teacher's perception as a professional. This undecidable state need not place teachers in a position of viewing every responsible action as failure. Rather, through the aporia of responsibility music teachers may come to understand their work as plural, complex and negotiated instead of singular, straightforward and based on common-sense understandings of responsibility and professionalism.
Egéea-Kuehne (2001) suggests that political and ethical considerations in education are traditionally framed as questions of responsibility. As responsibility may take on, as Derrida (1991) points out, a state of undecidability, the ethical implications of the work that teachers do may also become contested and undecidable. When music teachers attempt to make professional and responsible decisions, an acknowledgement of the contested nature of these constructs may enable them to work with greater sensitivity to those who are inside, outside or on the fringes of school music. If teachers come to understand their responsible actions as undecidable in the sense of both/and, they may not feel the burden of impossible responsibility as understood through the metaphysical either/or paradigm.

As an example, music teachers are often asked to serve school and community through public performances, while simultaneously increasing participation and demonstrating student achievement. While a metaphysical view may see a teacher's actions as either responsible to the student or irresponsible, an undecidable view may accept the multiple responsibilities to students, communities, administrators and other stakeholders. Using this paradigm, teachers may not view school pep rallies or community parades as taking away
time from student achievement, but rather adding to students' understanding of the value of music to communities. The multifaceted view of responsibility may empower teachers to embrace diverse expectations of music ensembles rather than viewing them as a burden or an infringement on student learning. Ultimately, this view could relieve the kinds of stress that may lead to teacher dissatisfaction and attrition.

*Responsibility to the Other*

Outside of those examined in this study, very few films feature visible minorities in contexts of music learning.\(^5\) The meta-narrative of race in music education films is highlighted by the absence of visible minorities and multicultural music, which, as noted in Chapter 5, may portray music education as an unwelcoming place for non-white culture and music. In these filmic narratives, the practices and instruments of Western classical music are often privileged over world musics and portrayed as a preferred genre for music learning with assumed benefits of discipline and increased intelligence.

Ayers' (1994) suggests a common portrayal of urban students that he terms "barbarians at the gate," or out-of-control students

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\(^5\) Of the few films that portray African American music teachers, *Sister Act* (1992) and *Sister Act 2* (1993) are likely the most popular, although Whoopi Goldberg's character is not a trained music teacher and the narratives do not take place in a school setting.
whom the teacher assumes need to be saved. The use of Western classical music in the films under investigation plays to this image as the means by which visible minorities and urban schools can be saved and cultured. The "barbarians at the gate" meta-narrative relies on images of disorder and chaos in the classroom or community, setting the stage for the salvation of these students by white teachers, who use the music and instruments of Western culture to bring order to unruly students. These images reinforce the idea that only whites can help visible minorities overcome their lack of discipline and find culture. Additionally, the absence of visible minorities in school music ensembles underscores a problematic portrayal of race for music education.

In *Music of the Heart*, Roberta's authoritarian approach and reliance on Western classical music and instruments in an urban setting underscores her efforts to bring discipline to her students. Likewise, *Mr. Holland’s Opus* shows the relegation of Lewis Russ to drums despite his inability to keep a beat. While Russ’s character does not play into the assumption of African American’s rhythmic ability, Mr. Holland’s instrument assignment may in fact demonstrate this same assumption. In *Drumline*, Dr. Lee’s insistence that Devon learn music reading, traditionally associated with Western classical music,
reinforces the idea that the music of whites is superior to aurally-learned music of other cultures. Further, School of Rock may comment on the disorder in urban schools through the absence of disorder in an affluent private school where all of the children participate in orchestra.

While such portrayals could be read by some—urban school children, for instance—in a way that views music education as out of reach to those without access, the same images might be used as a mirror for music teachers, enabling them to see what music education looks like from the outside, or through the eyes of the other. The consideration of the viewpoint of the other, Egéa-Kuehne (2001) suggests, is a central part of education as a human right. She asserts that for education to be responsible to the other, it must be “willing to actually listen, to actually try to understand what is different” (italics in original, 178) so that affirming dialogues might take place. Perhaps films can serve as a way of empowering music teachers to overturn traditional practices as they consider the privileging of Western classical music throughout these narratives. For instance, because the selection of repertoire in Music of the Heart may not represent the student population portrayed, the film could be used in conferences or in-service programs to provoke thought about culturally relevant
curriculum as it applies to music selection. In other words, scenes of culturally diverse children playing Western repertoire may prompt music teachers to consider their students in determining concert programs, not just from a consideration of ability, but by choosing music that the children may relate to, or use in their own cultural experiences. On the other hand, scenes from Drumline could provide a counterpoint to Music of the Heart at these same conferences. Specifically, one could point to Dr. Lee's incorporation of contemporary African American musical styles into halftime shows as a way that teachers can simultaneously work toward positive musical outcomes while connecting repertoire with their students' cultural background and experiences.

However, this need not only be concerned with repertoire. Consideration of the place of the cultural background of their students may provoke teachers to explore the benefits of not only multicultural repertoire, but also the practices and instruments of various cultures as well. In this way, music teachers might affirm otherness instead of diminishing it through the privileging of Western classical traditions, perhaps enabling the construction of a curriculum that is more culturally responsive to visible minorities. Just as Derrida (1992) suggests that responding to otherness can be an act of justice,
attention to the needs and interests of visible minorities may be a way for music teachers to act responsibly and ethically toward their students.

**Responsibility and Justice**

Critiques of education often identify teachers as the problem with schooling, and legislative restrictions on teachers unions stand as but one example of the designation of teachers as ineffective or entitled. Goldstein and Beutel’s (2009) research on the construction of teacher image in media suggests that media coverage of No Child Left Behind legislation simultaneously painted teachers as the problem and solution to schooling. This dichotomous, and perhaps undecidable, position may diminish the perception of the value of teachers since they serve as convenient targets where stakeholders look to apply blame, yet expect solutions.

In Derrida’s *Speech and Phenomena* (1979), he critiques the phenomenological idea of *presence* through the suggestion that every moment regarded as “now” is compromised by the presence of things past, or *traces*. He further develops this idea by arguing that the deferral of meaning, where present meaning is shown as unstable, is inhabited by things *to come*. Related to the understanding of teachers as the cause and solution to problems in education, *cause* may be a
signifier that inhabits the past as previous actions result in problems for the present. As such, the trace of cause will always inhabit any solution in which teachers may participate. Similarly, solutions will always be on the horizon, constantly deferring the success of teachers to the future and at the same time recalling the cause for the failures that made necessary the solution. Teachers, then, may be viewed as solutions to problems, yet at the same time can be inhabited by the causes of the past and the potential problems to come.

While the position between problem and solution may seem debilitating for teachers, it also provides a challenge to move forward from such a position. It may seem that this dichotomy traps teachers in a metaphysical understanding of problem and solution; however, if this position is conceived through Derridean views of justice and responsibility, educators may be able to embrace the dichotomous situation and envision a way forward. For instance, if teachers understand their own work as negotiated among multiple responsibilities, they could consider how their students may face similar demands among responsibilities to extracurricular activities, jobs, family, schoolwork and social life. These multiple responsibilities that students encounter may act as limitations to their access of music learning. If music teachers can reflect on how negotiated
responsibility may impact students’ access to school music, they might reconsider rehearsal scheduling and membership requirements, or offer alternative solutions to costs and fees that limit student participation. By considering students’ responsibilities, backgrounds and social contexts, teachers might move toward a consideration of their otherness that provides access to more students using Derrida’s (1992) understanding of justice toward the other.

Derrida (1992) emphasizes the difference between justice and the law, or ethical codes, as an attempt to universalize judgments or responses. However, moral or professional codes are incapable of responding to the complexities of particular situations. When one makes a judgment according to an ethical code, this is the act of applying the code to the situation rather than taking responsibility for the decision. From a metaphysical point of view, an ethical decision is one that is justified through the adherence to a code and its faithful application in similar circumstances. These kinds of ethical decisions, then, may actually release one from the responsibility to the other and allow for a justification of universal standards.

Applying this thinking to education, Edgoose (2001) suggests that the ethical response is one that grapples with the undecidables of ethical dilemmas and attends to the otherness of the other. In the
negotiation between the universal and the particular, Edgoose (2001) asserts that teachers may feel moments of hesitation that define the struggle in the consideration of every other. These hesitations expose ethical dilemmas where "one is unsure of one's own boundaries and the limits of one's liability" (119). Instead of operating within the constraints of ethical codes of responsibility, then, teachers may be able to escape the imposed power of prescriptive codes by embracing hesitation and taking on responsibility for the other.

The deconstruction of such binaries may provide teachers with an affirmation of their responsibility. First, ethical codes under which teachers must operate are often imposed systems that highlight power not in the hands of the teacher. When teachers open themselves to the ethical dilemma, moment of hesitation or the otherness of the other, they move away from prescribed action and reverse power hierarchies by attending to alterity. Second, instead of being caught between problem and solution, deconstruction of this binary enables one to embrace the undecidable condition, allowing responsibility to be played out through attention to the other rather than conformity to power structures. In this way, teachers may work out their own understanding of ethics and justice face-to-face with those for whom they are responsible.
Toward Hospitality

In Chapter 4 I presented a deconstructive reading of films using the aporia of hospitality to explore dominant readings of music education as a welcoming and accessible place. Derrida (2000) points out the simultaneous welcome and exclusion that inhabit hospitality, as well as the implications of power and ownership that reside in hospitable acts. For music education, hospitality may affect how the profession considers issues of access to music learning and membership in school music ensembles.

Problems with participation in school music have been noted in several recent studies, either anecdotally, as in Allsup and Benedict’s (2008) assertion that school instrumental ensembles remain closed communities, or through survey research where Elpus and Abril (2011) observe that students from lowered socio-economic status are less likely to participate in school music ensembles. Though access has been a focus in music education, Derrida’s reminder that hospitality also embodies exclusion can serve to continually challenge music educators to find ways for students to find access to music learning. Questioning how music education spaces might become more hospitable may not solve problems of access, but it may encourage music teachers to acknowledge the shortcomings of school music
programs while at the same time empowering them to work toward solutions that welcome those who may otherwise be excluded. Much of the discussion of hospitality in Chapter 4 used the films to demonstrate ways that music education may exclude even when it promotes inclusion. However, some aspects of the films could be used to promote dialogue and creativity among teachers in finding ways to make music education spaces more open and welcoming.

In Chapter 4 I noted the exclusion that inhabits Mr. Holland's decision to admit Lewis Russ into the band. Made as a favor for Coach Meister, the hospitality shown by Mr. Holland also highlights the special consideration for Russ that was not shown toward other students at the school. Although this demonstrates Derrida's (2000) paradox of hospitality, the way Mr. Holland incorporates Russ into the band could be used as a model for opening access to music ensembles. As Mr. Holland incorporates Russ into the band, he tutors him privately on the bass drum until he reaches a proficiency level that allows him to play with the rest of the ensemble.

For a student like Russ that has no prior experience playing an instrument, the world of high school band may seem a closed institution. However, following Mr. Holland's approach, a music teacher could help a student to gain proficiency on a specialty
instrument and then facilitate experiences in other areas after they have been integrated into the music ensemble. Gradually broadening the student's musical knowledge could allow for a deeper and more meaningful participation as that student progresses in musicianship. Although such an approach requires extra work for the music teacher, unless alternative approaches are taken, secondary instrumental ensembles may remain closed to all students who have not been through a band sequence in elementary and middle schools.

Another example of access can be derived from *School of Rock*, where Dewey's concept of the communal "project" includes all of the students in the class. Although not all of the students have roles as musicians, Dewey looks to incorporate everyone's talents so that all of the students contribute to the band. As I pointed out in Chapter 4, some of the students who are given minimal roles may exist at the fringes of the membership of the band; however, the project concept could be adapted by general music teachers as a way of differentiating instruction to highlight a student's strengths or present others with attainable challenges. Music teachers might then practice responsibility and justice, as explained by Egéa-Kuehn (2001), through the consideration of each student's own strengths, needs and challenges.
Hospitality as a lens for music education may have further implications for increasing participation and reducing obstacles to student access. If students encounter transportation issues that may limit their participation in before- and after-school rehearsals, a teacher’s hospitable reaction may explore greater flexibility in rehearsal times. Likewise, organizational limitations such as class scheduling could give teachers the opportunity to offer multiple sections of ensemble classes in order to accommodate growing curricular demands. In addition, approaches that open music learning to new students may require teachers to reconceptualize the large school performance ensembles in favor of smaller, specialty ensembles that facilitate the participation of those who lack the experience of participation in traditional bands, orchestras or choirs. Such an approach would necessitate sweeping changes for traditional school music ensembles. It may be that a drastic transformation is required to adequately address issues of access and change the status of school music as limited and closed spaces.

**Toward Salvation**

The view of teaching as an act of salvation may influence the way that teachers understand their purpose as well as the function of education in society. Popkewitz (1998) points out that salvation is a
common rationale for teaching, especially for new and pre-service teachers who may view their purpose as helping students overcome their social situation rather than facilitating learning. Teachers may shape their perceptions of the goals and aims of teaching through their occupational identity, perhaps developing these from societal expectations of teaching. Because films may contribute to societal views about the purposes and goals of teaching, I explore in this section the connections between occupational identity and salvation, and suggest alternate ways of understanding salvation.

Salvation and Identity

In Custen's (1992) examination of biopics, he suggests that films are one way that society learns about prominent and historical figures. Similarly, members of society may come to know groups of people through their experience with films and the interpretations developed about different people, groups and occupations. Film texts, then, may affect the occupational identity of music teachers through contributions to societal knowledge about the profession. As meanings made from film texts may shape the way teachers understand their work, the environments in which teachers work may ultimately be affected through encounters with those who form assumptions about music teachers and their perceived value to society.
Salvation narratives (or hero images) in these four films seem particularly important to occupational identity of teachers, as they speak to societal expectations of educators. Films about teachers often rely on hero images, and Ayers (1994) suggests that most films about educators are connected through this meta-narrative. This image extends beyond film portrayal, however, as Popkewitz (1998) notes that new teachers in rural or urban areas often understand their purpose to be centered on the salvation of disadvantaged students. The hero-teacher image may have a significant impact on education, then, as pre-service teachers form occupational identity and this image is reinforced through films and other media.

Construction of occupational identity at the pre-service level is of particular importance because it may contribute to new teacher retention or attrition. Donnison (2007) notes that pre-service teachers rely on cultural models (constituted in part by media portrayals) for the formation of teaching philosophies, which may inform their understanding of purpose as educators. When new teachers enter the classroom, their occupational identity may be shaped to a greater degree by knowledge attained from culture than from their limited experience as a student teacher. Media images of salvific teachers, then, may contribute to a pre-service teacher’s understanding of
purpose and shape societal beliefs about what constitutes a teacher's success. Instead of focusing on the facilitation of music learning, salvation narratives may contribute to an emphasis on saving children from their musical ignorance. A narrative such as *Drumline*, for example, could be particularly helpful in addressing the concept of salvation in a music education methods course. Considering the relationship between Dr. Lee and Devon, music education majors might be able to debate the merits and pitfalls of salvation as an aim of music teaching. If students are inclined to interpret Dr. Lee's helpfulness as "saving" Devon from the inner city, they might also consider how this status might overshadow the aspects of music learning and place an onus on Devon to repay Dr. Lee's work. Likewise, students may understand Dr. Lee's work as a facilitation of Devon's music learning when they envisage the power implied by salvation and the subordination of urban environments implied by Devon's salvation.

The impact of these portrayals in the educational environment might be demonstrated through two possible readings given disparate audiences. For audiences of pre-service teachers, images of salvation may be interpreted as an important aim of teaching. This scenario is evident in *Music of the Heart*, for instance, where pre-service teachers
may interpret the primary purpose of Roberta's teaching as either rescuing those students who are in danger or giving them a chance at a better quality of life. Such a reading may further amplify the power structures inherent in schooling as the hero-teacher may be viewed as the source of all student success from the point of salvation forward. This type of reading resonates with the image in *Music of the Heart* where former students who have gone on to great accomplishments in college and careers attribute this success to Roberta. In contrast, audiences of visible minorities in urban areas may develop a negotiated or contrary reading that views the teacher's efforts with suspicion, interpreting their presence as an attempt to normalize the students through enculturation. This type of reading could ultimately foster suspicion of new teachers or outsiders as those who may seem motivated by salvation rather than education.

As occupational identity is an understanding of the social value of occupations, images of salvation narratives may contribute to the occupational identity of music teachers by presenting images about the reason for their work. If these issues are embraced in music teacher education programs, more music teachers may avoid defining their work and their success by the saving of urban or visible minority students. New music teachers may then develop teaching
philosophies that more effectively sustain their work by developing an affirmative occupational identity. Given the traditionally high rates of teacher attrition during the first years of service, the formation of occupational identity based upon media images such as heroes and salvation may prepare teachers for unfulfilled professional expectations. Films, then, may be valuable resources for pre-service teachers to negotiate societal expectations and cultural understandings of teaching, ultimately helping prospective teachers to define more accurately the purposes and aims by which they will define their success.

An Alternate View of Salvation

In Chapter 5, I noted that salvation may imply two contrasting meanings. Salvation is most often thought of as liberation from, but it can also refer to the act of preservation. If a dominant reading of salvation views a teacher's work as rescuing students from a state of deprivation, a contrary reading might view the student as being preserved as a part of their culture and community while the teacher facilitates learning within the student's cultural surroundings. This reversal of the dominant understanding of salvation could approach the student in his own context rather than implying the inferiority of his surroundings. As a form of resistance, salvation as preservation
challenges the superiority of dominant culture and, at the same time, celebrates the culture, values and history of students outside of dominant culture.

This contrary view of salvation may resonate with Egéa-Kuehn's (2001) suggestion of teaching as a consideration of the other, in which the responsible encounter with a student is accomplished in the student's own language and environment. Re-framing salvation as a preservation of the student's cultural context not only affirms the student's frame of reference, but also lessens the privileging of the teacher's context over that of the student's. Additionally, salvation as preservation enables the teacher to focus on learning in context rather than saving the student from her context. Affirming the cultural context of the student may then create a platform from which the teacher can facilitate a culturally relevant pedagogy with the consideration of the student at the center of the curriculum.

An example of salvation as preservation might be imagined in urban music classrooms where teachers could use music from the community as a way to celebrate the students' environment, rather than imposing Western classical music as a superior form of culture. Such an approach might empower a music teacher in an urban school to design lessons that incorporate the musical styles, instruments and
vocabulary of her students in order that they might gain a deeper understanding of music in their own cultural context. For instance, in an urban school, a music teacher might consider a lesson on hip hop that incorporates a turntable, sampler or beatboxing so that consideration is given to the otherness of the students who may identify with the styles and instruments they encounter on a daily basis.

Conversely, salvation as *liberation* may be demonstrated in *Music of the Heart*, where the consistent use of Western classical music seems to diminish the importance of the students' own musical heritage and instead privileges Roberta's cultural background. The problem here may not lie in the use of classical music itself, but in the teacher's use of it as a tool of salvation. What, then, might a non-salvific use of Western classical music look like in the music classroom? It would seem that if such an approach is possible, it demands classical music be placed alongside music from other cultures in a way that does not privilege one type of music over another.

As an example, a music teacher could facilitate an instrumental

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6 I am not suggesting here that Western classical music is exclusively the music of white culture, since it could also exist, for example, as the music of an African American child or Hispanic community. For the sake of this discussion, however, I am operating on the assumptions portrayed in the film, namely that Western classical music exists as the music of dominant culture.
music project where instruments from different traditions and cultures join together, adopting aural learning styles as opposed to relying on the traditions of notation associated with Western music. By adopting non-classical practices of aural learning on Western instruments, it may signal to students that notated music is not necessarily privileged over aural, nor is reading music privileged over hearing. Another possibility for using Western classical music in a non-salvific way might be to use motives or phrases from the standard repertoire as material for improvisation exercises. If students engage with the classical repertoire as material that can be re-arranged and adapted outside of its context within the Western canon, then its status as "high art" might be diminished and its privileged status lessened. Using such contrary approaches to salvation, students could learn music in a context free from implications that they are in need of liberation, and that the liberation must come through the music of the dominant culture.

**Implications of Intertextuality**

As an approach to textual interpretation, intertextuality acknowledges the influence of a reader's encounter with other texts on his understanding of new texts. While new texts may impact the way one understands portrayals of music teachers in films, intertextuality
may also have practical applications for music teaching. In the following sections, I first discuss the implications of temporality on the interpretation of film portrayals, specifically how newly written texts might shape the interpretation of the films in this investigation. Then, I explore the possibilities for intertextuality as a lens through which teachers might view their influence on students and curriculum.

Interpretation and Temporality

The films in this investigation were produced between 1996 and 2003, representing only a small sample of movies and television shows that portray music teachers. In recent years, and even since the start of my investigation, media portrayals of music teachers have continued to be produced. Of particular interest are the portrayals of music teachers on television, which seem to have increased in recent decades. Indicated by a search on the Internet Movie Database (imdb.com), more than 30 television programs, episodes or TV movies portraying music teachers or music teaching appeared in the last two decades, including episodes from Glee (2009), Modern Family (2012) Law and Order: Special Victims Unit (2004), The Drew Carey Show (1996), That 70s Show (2002), and The Simpsons (2011).

As described in Chapter 2, intertextuality acknowledges the temporal aspects of meaning, because new texts continually add to
understandings of prior texts (Kristeva 1980). New films portraying music teachers may form intertextual connections with previous texts, and interpretations of these new films may likewise contribute to the meaning of texts already in circulation. Thus, the films in the current study, as well as other texts, cannot be interpreted “once and for all,” and their interpretation will continue to shift in the light of the production of new texts and contexts relating to music education.

The popularity of current television shows such as Glee, and recent feature films such as The Marc Pease Experience (2009) and Here Comes the Boom (2012) demonstrate an ongoing interest in narratives that include music teachers. However, recent films and television shows may indicate a preference for images that highlight informal music-making experiences rather than traditional school-based music ensembles. For instance, the portrayals of music-making in Glee, Pitch Perfect (2012) and the High School Musical trilogy may mark a change away from images of traditional school music ensembles and toward informal music-making in a cappella vocal groups.

What may be of greater significance than shifts from formal to informal music making, is how these narratives appear to de-emphasize the role of the music teacher in music learning situations.
Reading more recent narratives with knowledge of those examined in the current study would seem to highlight the role of autocratic music directors such as Mr. Holland, Dr. Lee and Roberta, which correlates with Allsup and Benedict’s (2008) view as the traditional approach to instrumental ensemble direction. In recent narratives, the autocratic director has been replaced by characters that seem to function as democratic facilitators, such as Glee’s Mr. Schuester. For music teachers, such portrayals may create oppositional readings to narratives such as Glee, which they may view as diminishing the music teacher’s importance to music learning, especially when compared to earlier narratives. However, other stakeholders may adopt dominant readings where more emphasis is placed on the music program and the experience of music-making than on the director’s influence of building music programs and transforming lives.

As recent images of music learning impact the interpretation of previously created texts, they may serve to draw a reader’s attention to the music programs as portrayed in the narratives rather than emphasizing the music teachers. For instance, a reading of Mr. Holland’s Opus influenced by the student-centered narrative of Glee may provide for an interpretation that emphasizes the contributions of Principal Jacobs, Coach Meister and the students to building of a
successful high school music program in spite of Mr. Holland's miscues and reluctance to accept his role. Such a reading may perhaps view the narrative as a story about how the community supports and ultimately loses a music program, rather than a story about "one man's journey." This intertextual approach to interpreting the films may in fact be closer to the experience of students who likely understand the importance of a support structure to school music ensemble success, rather than the director-centered images that dominate Mr. Holland's Opus.

It is also notable that recent portrayals of music ensembles in media tend to show the leaders of the ensembles as untrained in the field of music teaching. The most significant of these are Glee and High School Musical where teachers—but not music teachers—direct a glee club or school musical. This may find common ground in earlier portrayals such as Leader of the Band (1988) and School of Rock where those with some musical experience are portrayed as qualified to teach school music. As Brand and Hunt (1996) point out, a typical filmic theme about music teaching is that nearly anyone with some degree of musical experience can succeed in directing a school music ensemble. While this may represent an interest in informal music making, it may also indicate the continued effects of music program
cuts and budget constraints that have often enlisted those with *some* musical experience as a stop-gap measure in order to continue offering a school music experience.

 Perhaps the interpretations of hero-teachers such as Mr. Holland and Roberta will seem less spectacular and triumphant when held up against portrayals of "ordinary" musicians or teachers building music programs that appear equally successful. In this way, the interpretation of *Mr. Holland's Opus* and *Music of the Heart* might change in a way demonstrated by Gray (2006), where the production of new texts using similar characters or settings make possible new interpretations of old texts. When an interpretation of *Mr. Holland's Opus* is informed with a reader's knowledge of the *Glee* narrative, for instance, it could answer the question of what becomes of the music program at Kennedy High School that viewers may be asking at the end of the film. Intertextually, *Glee* may now provide the reader with an answer that a teacher with some musical background could effectively lead a music program as an extra-curricular club. While this creates a solution for students to have musical experiences at school, it may also demonstrate a diminished value of music in the curriculum.

 An alternate view of these portrayals may be that images of
informal or popular music experiences may in fact prompt more students to join school music ensembles. As an example, the impact of such portrayals may be played out through student expectations of singing as portrayed in shows such as *Glee* and the kinds of expectations these images help to construct as students join school choral groups. In turn, these effects may necessitate adaptation on the part of music teachers who may realize a need re-examine their curriculum and instruction approaches in order to better connect to the interests and prior experiences of their students.

**Intertextuality and Teaching**

Although I have used intertextuality primarily as an approach to textual interpretation, it may also serve as a lens through which to consider meaning construction within the classroom. Hicks (1996) and Lemke (1992) suggest that intertextuality may be one way of understanding classroom discourses, and both authors note how written classroom texts contribute to student learning through a student’s encounter with other texts both in and out of the classroom. While much of the research in this area investigates traditional literature and textbooks, intertextuality could be applied to other kinds of texts. As a broad view of “text” understands all forms of repeatable communication as texts (DeVaney 1993), intertextuality in the music
classroom may encompass traditional texts, music, and other forms of media. Intertextuality in the music classroom, then, may have implications for understanding how students make meaning of their experiences and how teachers may shape meaning through the texts they bring to the classroom.

Students may carry with them any number of musical preferences and experiences into a music classroom. Students therefore construct meaning of their experiences in school music class or ensembles against the backdrop of their previous encounters with other texts. Such an acknowledgement may highlight the variety of experiences and contexts that students represent, but it may also point to the multiple meanings that students likely construct in the classroom. For teachers, intertextuality may present an opportunity to celebrate alterity and differences in background and culture. For instance, a choir director could use a folk song setting as an opportunity to discuss the use and function the song may have in relation to its community of origin, and then facilitate a conversation with students about the way they may use music unique to their own backgrounds. In this way, students could construct meaning about the music they perform through a connection to their own cultural experiences.
Considering intertextually in the classroom may also highlight the ways teachers contribute to students' construction of meaning. As music teachers hold considerable control over the musical texts used in the classroom or rehearsal, they may also affect the intertextual frames from which students construct meaning. Such an acknowledgement not only emphasizes the teacher's position of power in shaping students' understanding of texts, but also places a responsibility on the teacher to assign readings and program concerts with a consideration of their students' alterity. If a music teacher considers the otherness of their students they might, for example, try to assemble concert programs that represent a wide range of cultures and backgrounds so as not to focus only on the Western tradition. In doing so, teachers might avoid a one-dimensional context that might associate school music only with a Western tradition that might diminish those cultural and musical traditions with which some students identify.

An intertextual frame could also be useful in pre-service methods classes, where professors may shape their students' teaching philosophies through assigned readings. Considering that these readings may be a contributing factor for prospective teachers' understanding of the purposes and aims of teaching, professors might
consider a selection of readings that represent a wide variety of perspectives and methodologies. New teachers might then develop an understanding of a variety of viewpoints, giving them more power to make informed decisions rather than following a prescribed path by their own teachers. Similar to a conductor's influence over concert repertoire, professors' choices of course material shape their students' intertextual frames as prospective teachers. This leaves open the possibility that if the professor selects readings based solely on her own biases, students may simply adopt the professor's perspectives on teaching rather than develop their own ideas through experience with a diverse body of literature. Efforts toward broad intertextual frames may enable students and future teachers to approach music learning with a wider "textile" of reference that may build deeper meaning or provide context for a new piece of music, a new teaching methodology or a consideration of the other in the music classroom.

**Conclusion**

Because film texts inform public consciousness about music teaching, music educators may wish to continue to examine these portrayals as a way of understanding more about the occupational identity of music teachers. As they currently remain a frequent image in media texts, portrayals of music teachers will continue to inform
ideas about the value of music education in society and about the nature of the work that music teachers do. Through a close consideration of film texts, music teachers may ultimately know more about the way they are known in society and better understand the ways that such perceptions affect their work in the classroom. In addition, these films present opportunities to address portrayals of gender and race in school music programs that may help teachers create more just and accessible programs by challenging some of the traditional limitations to music education as portrayed in these film narratives.

The relative lack of research on music teachers in film is, perhaps, somewhat surprising given how firmly images from *Mr. Holland’s Opus*, *School of Rock* and *Drumline* have become rooted in public consciousness. If these are the images about music teaching that many know best, it would seem advantageous for music education to better understand the ways that music teachers are portrayed in society. In addition, the importance of these images to the occupational identity of music teachers is significant because film portrayals provide insight about the perceptions that are carried with students, parents and administrators as they enter music classrooms, booster functions or budget meetings. If music teachers understand
more about how the profession is viewed in society, they may be able to resist such structures and push back against those perceptions that would affect their work.

As music teachers continue to appear in media, these portrayals may be examined as indicators of societal knowledge about teachers and as texts that potentially shape perceptions of education (Farber and Holm 1994). Looking toward the future, media images of music teachers that are yet to be produced may be used to examine future trends and to consider the similarities and differences to those media images that already exist. The continued examination of media images of music teachers may then be valuable for understanding such constructs as occupational identity and agency.

Ultimately, these—and other—films may serve as a way to better understand music teaching. Through the constructs of responsibility, hospitality and the gift, music teaching may be shaped by a consideration of the other that places the student’s unique context at the center of teaching. As music teachers ask questions about what it means to be responsible, to provide access, or what we give and expect in return, traditional models of music education as a place of autocratic leadership, closed and narrowly defined membership, and the teacher’s salvation of students may begin to be challenged.
Likewise, if music teachers begin to understand their work as more undecidable than unproblematically clear cut, then professionalism might be understood not as a prescriptive checklist, but by how well we attend to our students’ otherness in all aspects of teaching. By attending to these aspects of our work we may be able to better serve students and work toward stronger and more relevant music education programs.
APPENDIX A

Films Considered for the Study


APPENDIX B

Synopses of Films

Mr. Holland's Opus

In Mr. Holland's Opus, music teacher Glenn Holland (Richard Dreyfus) takes a job as a high school music teacher in order to gain stability he lacked as a touring musician. Initially uninterested in teaching, Holland begins to make connections with students by helping them learn to love music and to become better musicians. At the same time, his increased time commitment begins to take away time from pursuing his dream of composing. Over several decades, Holland establishes a successful instrumental music program.

Late in Holland's career, the arts programs at his school are cut due to budget constraints and Holland accepts an early retirement. On his final day as a teacher a celebration is held in his honor and the State's governor, a former student, thanks him for his years of service. Surrounded by students, friends and colleagues affirming his good work, Holland is invited to the stage filled with former students, ready to perform the "Opus" he gradually composed over the course of his career.
Music of the Heart

Based on a true story, *Music of the Heart* (1999) chronicles the work of violin teacher Roberta Guaspari (Meryl Streep), who overcomes personal and professional struggles to establish a strings education program in East Harlem. Roberta and her two sons move into the urban neighborhood near the school and she initially struggles with students' behavior and lack of discipline. Though her approach is, at times, harsh and she has high expectations for the students, Roberta establishes a program that thrives. The interest in the violin class becomes so great that a lottery system is instituted to select students each year for a limited number of places.

In spite of success, however, the school board mandates budget cuts funding for the violin program is discontinued. In response, students, parents and community members work together to organize a benefit concert at Carnegie Hall in an effort to fund the program. At the concert, Roberta and her students are joined on stage by number of well-known violinists including Isaac Stern, Itzhak Perlman, Joshua Bell and Mark O'Connor, as a packed house responds with a standing ovation.
*Drumline*

*Drumline* (2002) is set at fictional Atlanta A & T University, a historically Black college known for its outstanding marching band tradition. Band director Dr. Lee (Orlando Jones) recruits a confident and talented drummer, Devon Miles (Nick Cannon), to come to the school on a full band scholarship. Devon gets off to a rough start when he breaks several band rules and tries to show up his section leader, Sean, in front of the rest of the drum line. When Dr. Lee learns that Devon cannot read music, Devon is demoted from his on-field position and required to take a course in the fundamentals of music.

Dr. Lee, a traditionalist, battles with the university over his refusal to place more emphasis on entertainment rather than education. President Wagner (Afemo Omilami) tells Dr. Lee that he should aim to please crowds at the football games and must win the upcoming band competition if he wants to keep his job. At the competition A&T gives a well-received performance, but the competition ends in a tie with the winner decided by a drum line showdown. With his job on the line, Dr. Lee reverses Devon's demotion. Devon borrows a uniform, rejoins the drum line for the play-off and helps the band win the competition.
School of Rock

In *School of Rock*, Dewey Finn (Jack Black) is a down-and-out rock musician pressured by his roommate, Ned Schneebley (Mike White), to pay his rent. After being kicked out of his band, Dewey answers a call intended for Ned that turns out to be an offer to substitute teach a 5th grade class at an elite private school. Passing himself off as Ned, Dewey takes the job with the intention making enough money for rent. Doing away with the curriculum, grades, and the demerit system, Dewey spends most of his time sleeping. However, after a few days, Dewey observes that some of the students are talented musicians, and plans to form them into a rock band that can compete at the Battle of the Bands competition.

Dewey involves all of the children in the class project he calls "rock band," and eventually establishes his own curriculum including rock history, rock appreciation and music theory. After his true identity is revealed Dewey loses his job, however, the students sneak out of school the next day and pick up Dewey to compete in the Battle of the Bands. Despite not winning the competition, the band is clearly the crowd favorite as Principal Mullins (Joan Cusack) and the parents arrive to rescue the "kidnapped" students only to find that Dewey and his rock and roll curriculum has transformed the students.
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VITA

Andrew Cook (b. 1973) received the Bachelor of Music degree from the College of Wooster and the Master of Music degree in saxophone performance from The Boston Conservatory. He began his music teaching career as the instrumental music director at the Fenn School (Concord, MA) and has since served on the faculties of the Longy School of Music (Cambridge, MA) and Ohio Valley University (Vienna, WV). Currently, he is Associate Professor of Music and Director of Bands at Faulkner University as well as Instructor of Saxophone at Alabama State University. In addition to serving frequently as a clinician and guest conductor, he has presented papers on instrumental pedagogy at the Alabama Music Educators Conference and the Christian Scholars Conference. His experience as a conductor spans the wind band, orchestral and theatrical repertoires.

Mr. Cook has performed as a saxophonist with the Boston Civic Orchestra and has been a member of the Boston Saxophone Quartet, Odyssey Saxophone Quartet, the Doug Hess Big Band, and Undertango. His appearances as a soloist include performances at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the Hans Raj Conversations, Alabama Music Educators Convention and as a featured performer with guitarist Pablo Gonzales at the Argentinean Consulate in New York. As
a student at The Boston Conservatory, he won the 1998 Conservatory Concerto Competition, the first saxophonist to do so in the history of the school. Mr. Cook is an avid performer of new music and has premiered numerous compositions for saxophone by composers such as Matthew Herman, Seung-Ah Oh, and Kenji Kikuchi. In 2014 he will participate in the Worldwide Concurrent Premiere of David Amram's *Greenwich Village Portrait* for saxophone and piano.

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