IMAGE OF THE TEACHER IN THE POSTWAR UNITED STATES

By

PATRICK ANDREW RYAN

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To my mom, Vernance B. Ryan, and my brother, Miles, and to deceased family members, who supported me along the way but never saw the realization of my goal of a doctoral degree: Helen and Andrew Beste (my maternal grandparents), Miles F. Ryan, Jr. (my dad), Raymond E. Converse, Jr. (uncle), L. Dolores Ryan (aunt), and Dr. Celestine B. Converse (aunt).

A lot of love nurtured me to this moment.
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In the 1950s, United States’ educational policy seemed to shift from endorsing a progressive, student-centered paradigm to favoring a more essentialist, transmission model of instruction. By examining popular fictional representations of classroom instruction and the impact on students’ learning from the elementary through the college levels in radio, television, and film from 1945 to 1959, this study assesses these postwar media models and the consequent possible public perceptions of the roles of teachers and students in schools. Using Judith Lindfors’s (1999) definitions of information-seeking, sense-making, and wondering inquiry for analysis of instruction, this study argues that both progressive and essentialist approaches existed simultaneously within the depicted classrooms, thus suggesting perhaps contradictory purposes for schools, without revealing any discernible shift from progressivism to essentialism. In addition, because the media rarely portrayed teachers in the act of teaching and the opportunities for student-initiated inquiry were rare, teachers and schooling were defined more through moral character than pedagogical methods. These images of teachers further embody gender role expectations for the postwar era that constrain professional identities for men and women.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The Media, the Message, and the Schoolmaster

Ever since I was a young child, I enjoyed watching in syndication popular television programs from another era. *I Love Lucy, Dennis the Menace, Father Knows Best,* *The Andy Griffith Show, Leave It To Beaver, The Beverly Hillbillies, The Dick Van Dyke Show,* *Mister Ed, Bewitched, Batman, That Girl, Gilligan’s Island, Get Smart, Hogan’s Heroes,* *Green Acres, Family Affair, The Brady Bunch,* and *Hawaii Five-0* were among my favorites, although I could add a considerable number of other programs as part of the many hours I enjoyed watching. This was time well spent. As a child, I remember creating with my brother a viewing schedule for a fictional television station that would air all my favorites. Now as an adult, I get to re-live my childhood through many of the programs on the cable channel TV Land. With the success of TV Land, clearly I am not the only one with a fondness for vintage television.

Why are such programs attractive? These scripts are intelligently written; the memorable characters are portrayed with sensitivity, and the timelessness of their messages transcends the time-capsule quality of the clothing fashions and classic cars. Lucy Ricardo, Robert Petrie, Samantha Stephens, and Maxwell Smart are like one’s best friends, who get better with age. After repeated viewings, the plots and the dialogue are so familiar to me, and yet the shows never fail to satisfy. How many of us would have wanted to live in the town of Mayberry of *The Andy Griffith Show* or wished we could have dated Ann Marie (Marlo Thomas) in *That Girl*? I would not be surprised if some of us know the lyrics of the opening ballad (both versions) of *Gilligan’s Island* better than the words of our national anthem. Our intimacy with these programs is further expressed through how the television set competes with and often surpasses
the fireplace as the focal point for the arrangement of our living room furniture. We invite the
programs into our homes, and the characters with their joys and problems become part of our
lives. From *Leave It To Beaver* we might develop models for parenting, and from
*The Beverly Hillbillies* we may internalize and perpetuate stereotypes of the rural Southern poor.
Media representations powerfully reflect and project social values and attitudes, and thus it is
important to situate such programs within historical and cultural contexts. Although for me
television was the primary medium shaping my understanding of relationships and social
situations, the mass media of radio and film also embody and influence our expectations and help
to construct our identities.

As a middle school and high school English teacher, I have used vintage radio, television,
and film to provide context and to further an interdisciplinary approach to facilitate my students’
engagement and understanding of literature. In this study, I am incorporating my media interest
to further understand my own profession and the identity of teachers. By examining popular
fictional representations of the teacher in 1950s radio, television, and film, I want to learn more
about the public perceptions of the roles teachers were expected to play and the methods of
instruction valued in the postwar United States. In my previous scholarship, I have analyzed
teacher images in the *Our Miss Brooks* (1948-1957) radio and television program, in the
*Mister Peepers* (1952-1955) and *Leave It To Beaver* (1957-1963) television programs, and in the
films *Blackboard Jungle* (1955) and *Teacher’s Pet* (1958). These media depictions focused on
the personal lives, extracurricular activities, and moral characters of these teachers rather than
the instructional methods in their classrooms. The image of high school English teacher
Miss Connie Brooks emphasized her maternal, care-giving role and her quest to marry the
biology teacher, Mr. Philip Boynton. Overworked and underpaid, Miss Brooks was ruled by her
male principal, Mr. Osgood Conklin. Similarly, elementary school teachers Miss Canfield and Miss Landers, middle school general science teacher Mr. Peepers, high school English teacher Mr. Dadier, and university journalism instructor Miss Stone, sacrificed personally and/or financially as educators. In the rare moments when listening and viewing audiences witnessed their instruction, these teachers employed both progressive, student-centered strategies and essentialist, transmission model approaches to learning. To some extent, their pedagogical expertise was assumed, and these images instead defined teachers’ professional identities as moral role models guiding their students.

For my doctoral study, I expanded my data sample of radio, television, and film images from 1945 to 1959 to examine the perceived roles and responsibilities of teachers and to use the postwar historical, social, and cultural contexts to explain compatibilities and contradictions about expectations for teachers in postwar America. Although I anticipated similar themes emerging about teachers as have in my previous research, I believe this study has allowed me to investigate further the nuances of these images, to develop more definitive assertions about the postwar identities of teachers, and to discuss the impact of these images on the public perceptions and teachers’ self-perceptions today. My additional data analysis has also corroborated previous findings.

Statement of the Problem

Why do 1950s images of teachers persist to shape our notions of what it is to be a teacher? Much of the public continues to envision dedicated, self-sacrificing educators with apples on their desks facing rows of students. Citing Fischer and Kiefer (1994), Vicky Newman (2001) notes that teachers “often accept as their destiny or as requirements of the role” the media’s definitions of teachers’ identities (p. 416). Although there has been scholarship on the media image of teachers in film and television (Beyerbach, 2005; Bulman, 2005; Dalton, 2004;
Tan, 1999; Kantor, 1994; Crume 1988; Schwartz 1963), no one has explored the image of the teacher across the media through an in-depth examination of the instructional methods depicted within the context of the post-World War Two era. Generally scholars have concentrated on teacher images in either film or television, but I will be considering both these media, along with radio, to note any comparisons and contrasts. There have been separate analyses focused on gender roles and stereotypes (Newman, 2001; Keroes, 1999; Ayers, 1994), social and political trends (Doherty, 2003; Toplin, 1993), the cultural construction of meaning of audience reception (Selnow & Gilbert, 1993; Morley, 1992; Lichter, Lichter & Rothman, 1991; Carey, 1988; R. Berman, 1987; Adler & Cater, 1976), and media literacy approaches (Adams & Hamm, 2006; W. R. Jacobs, 2005), but in my study I am combining these approaches to focus on the construction of the professional identity of teachers as depicted through the 1950s popular broadcast media and film.

These iconographic images of teachers are important because they influence our purposes and goals in public education. In the Cold War, the media projected a generally positive image of the teacher that connected the teacher’s role to the postwar definition of what it means to be an American. With criticisms of progressive and life adjustment education and concerns about Communist infiltration in schools, the identity of teachers became the subject of political and academic debates. The influence of the teacher among his/her students and the influence of the teacher image affect our self-definitions to such an extent that exploring the roles of teachers in the media has personal and national relevance. I believe that a better understanding of the 1950s teacher image will help to explain public attitudes and governmental policies towards schools today.
Purpose of this Study

The following questions guide my inquiry about the postwar image of the teacher:

1. In the postwar media images, what roles were teachers expected to play in and outside the classroom?

2. In the depictions of classroom learning, what types of instruction are exhibited and to what extent are there opportunities for students’ inquiry?

3. How do postwar gender role expectations and stereotypes impact the media representations of teachers?

4. What historical precedents as well as broad socio-cultural-political contexts account for these images and anticipated roles by teachers?

To examine the roles of teachers in the media, I have tried to include different genres from 1945 to 1959 that showed male and female teachers in a variety of educational contexts from the elementary through the college levels in both public and private institutions. The television program *Leave It To Beaver* (1957-1963) and the films *Curley* (1947), *Navajo* (1952), *Bright Road* (1953), *Her Twelve Men* (1954), *Good Morning, Miss Dove* (1955) and *Merry Andrew* (1958) depict elementary school teachers, while the television program *Mister Peepers* (1952-1955) profiles a middle school general science teacher. The radio and television program *Our Miss Brooks* (1948-1957) and the films *Margie* (1946), *Blackboard Jungle* (1955), and *High School Confidential!* (1958) offer high school contexts. In the film *The Corn Is Green* (1945) young children and adults are educated by Miss Moffat and two other teachers in her own home. Colleges and universities are represented through the radio program *The Halls of Ivy* (1950-1952), the television program *Meet Mr. McNutley/The Ray Milland Show* (1953-1955), and the films *Good News* (1947), *Apartment for Peggy* (1948), *The Affairs of Dobie Gillis* (1953), *Teacher’s Pet* (1958), and *Monster on the Campus* (1958). *The King and I* (1956) depicts the role of a private tutor for the King of Siam’s young children. These programs and films include the genres of comedy, drama, musical, and science fiction horror in the
representations of male and female private and public school teachers from various academic levels and subject areas.

To assess depictions of classroom learning, Judith Lindfors’s (1999) model of inquiry was used to classify the verbal interactions between teachers and students and among students to determine the extent of progressive and essentialist instructional approaches as articulated by John Dewey (1938/1997, 1916/1964) and William Bagley (1937, 1905), while acknowledging diverse philosophical and methodical strands among progressive and essentialist proponents. Where learning was guided by students’ own information-seeking, sense-making, and wondering inquiries, the instructional approaches aligned with a progressive approach in contrast to the more teacher-centered, transmission model of instruction in an essentialist paradigm.


To provide social, political, and cultural contexts for these media images, I learned more about the postwar era through consulting the following sources. I appreciated the analysis of Thomas Doherty (2003), Gerald Gutek (2000), Joel Spring (1992), Herbert Kliebard (1987), and Lawrence Cremin (1961), but I also consulted primary sources such as period newspapers (The Washington Post, The New York Times, The Christian Science Monitor, Variety, etc.) and popular magazines (Cosmopolitan, Collier’s, McCall’s, TV Guide, etc.). Postwar era articles
from leading scholarly journals, such as *Teachers College Record, Harvard Educational Review, The American Teacher, Educational Horizons,* and *The Journal of Teacher Education,* helped to situate the popular media representations of teachers within the contemporary academic perspectives and concerns.

My theoretical perspective incorporated Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann’s (1966) social constructionist model of knowledge creation, Judith Lindfors’s (1999) definition of inquiry, the approaches of Jerome Bruner (1986, 1990), Michael Murray (2003), John Rury (1993), Andrew P. Norman (1991), and David Carr (1986a, 1986b) to narrative analysis, and Nel Noddings’s (2000, 1993, 1992) articulation of the “ethic of care.” To understand better the media images of teachers in the 1950s entailed studying not only what is depicted but how it is depicted. This included the historical context of the postwar United States. Examples of students’ information-seeking, sense-making, wondering, and pretender inquiries in classroom depictions were used to assess the extent of progressive and essentialist instructional methods. Narrative analysis provided a framework for constructing and understanding messages articulated by the media, and Nel Noddings’s “ethic of care” illuminated depictions of teacher-student relationships.

**Limits of Scope**

The following parameters limit the scope of this study:

1. Sources for media representations of teachers were restricted to films and episodes of radio and television programs produced from 1945 to 1959. Although the postwar era in the United States, and particularly the Cold War, continued after 1959, this study aims to focus on the 1950s.

2. Although efforts were made to have a representative sample of popular media images from different genres depicting a variety of teachers, academic levels, academic subjects, and settings, not every genre or learning context is represented. Neither is the sample exhaustive in incorporating all the radio and television programs and films produced with teacher images from 1945 to 1959.
3. Because this study concentrates on teacher representations in radio, television, and film, other popular media, where teacher images might exist, are not included. For example, teacher representations in literature, newspapers, and magazines from 1945 to 1959 are not discussed in detail.

4. Although teacher images are framed by discussions of social, political and cultural contexts, this study does not provide a history of the creation and production of the radio and television programs and films.

5. In analyzing teacher images, this study does not significantly explore how audiences in the postwar era reacted to these images. Specifically of interest for future research would be an examination of how teachers responded to these images and to what extent teachers accepted or rejected aspects of the representations as part of their own professional identities.

Images of the teacher in the popular media intersect with our personal encounters with teachers and memories of life in school, and for teachers the media projections personally impact professional identities. In the Inglis Lecture for 1950, Margaret Mead declares that ideas about the American teacher are:

compounded from both stereotype and actual experience, from the teacher in the sentimental song and on the comic valentine, the teacher met on the tourist ship, as well as the teachers of one’s own school days, and the teacher from whom one’s children or grandchildren are learning. (Mead, 1964, p. 4)

This study of radio, television, and film endeavors to understand further the meaning of the postwar American teacher in our public consciousness through explorations of stereotypes, representations of classroom learning, and purposes for schools.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This first section of the literature review discusses previous scholarly approaches to analyzing the fictional representations of teachers in literature, television, and film. In examining literary images from children’s picture books to adult novels, scholars have noted teacher stereotypes and gender roles, relationships between teachers, administrators, and students, and demographic patterns in teacher depictions. Occasionally, these approaches consider the impact these teacher images have upon readers, but rarely are these images examined in historical and cultural contexts. Of the non-print media, most scholarship has addressed the film image of the teacher and to some extent the television representations, while the radio depictions have been largely ignored. Methodologies have included media studies approaches, sociological examinations, and thematic analysis, but often again without historical contexts. Whether in literature or in non-print media, these studies of teacher images usually involve outlining patterns gleaned from a broad spectrum of samples rather than an in-depth analysis of a particular novel, film, or radio/television program.

To situate further the contributions of this study towards understanding the teacher image, subsequent sections of the literature review will introduce scholarship about historical and cultural contexts of the postwar era, particularly regarding the history of education, the representation of teachers as role models, and gender roles in the postwar United States.

The Teacher Image in the Media

The Teacher in Literature

Literary depictions of teachers have primarily perpetuated negative stereotypes and have restricted the identity of teachers according to gender roles. For her master’s thesis,
Fannie Ames (1930) observes that in literary images from 1750 to 1930, teachers and schools generally serve as background for the plot. Teacher characters are also at polar opposites: “teachers tend to be monstrous in manner, dress, and disposition or, at the other extreme, sweet and attractive, in which case they are certain to be rescued from a ‘fate worse than death, ’ by marriage” (summary by Enger, 1974, p. 39). Teachers also generally have oppositional relationships with their principals. In summarizing Don Charles’s 1950 article in The Educational Forum, Malcolm Enger (1974) reports that in American literature “teachers were rarely presented as warm and sympathetic human beings and even more seldom as members of an honorable or respected profession” (p. 44). Examining New York City plays produced and published from 1920 to 1950, Andrew Erskine (1951) compares the characterizations of American teachers to results of the Bernreuter Personality Inventory to classify teachers’ traits and to determine perceptions of their social status. Although representations of teachers were mainly sympathetic, the sympathy verged on pity with teachers “portrayed as helpless and maladjusted” (p. 151, p. 77). These stage teachers also struggle financially and romantically and exhibit a “neurotic tendency” and a “dominance” that is “misdirected” in personal interactions (p. 142, p. 148). Erskine (1951) concludes that playwrights “are doing little to enhance the status of the [teaching] profession” (p. 147). In 85 American novels, Dorothy Deegan (1951) finds the single female teacher to be morally upright, but not particularly pretty (Enger, 1974). In part of a chapter from his book Heroes, Highbrows and the Popular Mind, Leo Gurko (1953) notes the American literary stereotypes of male teachers as the “stern taskmaster,” the “absent-minded pedagogue” or “the inept figure unable to earn a living at any of the respectable masculine professions” (p. 95). Gurko adds that representations of female teachers range from the “angular spinster” to the “pretty young schoolmarm” awaiting matrimony to the “bluff battle-ax” (p. 95). These overviews of literary representations do not display a flattering portrait of teachers.
Corroborating these gender stereotypes, Arthur Foff (1953) categorizes depictions of elementary and secondary public school teachers in 62 American novels according to “Personal Data” (character’s personality traits, appearance, background, teaching experience, role in the plot, etc.), “The Teacher in School” (“interpersonal relationships,” attitudes by and towards the teacher, and teacher “proficiency”), and “The Teacher in the Community” (relationships, attitudes, socio-economic status, and “proficiency,” pp. 42-44). Foff (1953) finds that most of the depictions are of female teachers, usually at the elementary level, who are pretty and young and likely to retire from the career upon marriage or are “the homely or unattractive middle-aged or elderly schoolteacher who, if not already married, will probably remain a spinster” (pp. 66-67). Foff also addresses how the images reflect a public attitude of “ambivalence” toward the teacher through various dualities (p. 80). For example, the male teachers enter the profession either because they enjoy it or “because they are unable to do anything else” (p. 79). Teachers are either “authoritarian” or “democratic” in their management style (p. 114). Also demonstrating public ambivalence, teachers may be respected, but their social status is at best lower middle class, and they are not fully integrated into the community: “In order to become acceptable as a teacher, the individual must become inacceptable as a man or a woman” (p. 109). In his Ph.D. dissertation on teacher stereotypes, Harry Jones (1957) similarly observes public “ambivalence” about favoring local control of schools yet desiring more professional standards, respecting knowledge along with criticizing “egghead[s],” and having mixed attitudes towards the extent of a teacher’s influence over students (p. 48, p. 50). Foff concludes that the teacher stereotypes in literature are “harmful to the community as well as the teacher” (p. 287). In 1958, Foff summarizes much of the findings from his dissertation in an article for The English Journal.
Other studies of the literary image of the teacher address the audience and the historical contexts and reveal more positive representations. Edna Furness (1960), as reported by Enger (1974), is interested in how the stereotypes of high school teachers in literature from 1925 to 1955 affect adolescent readers and correlate with the status of real teachers. Furness finds that the novel image of mainly negative stereotypes coincides with a past status of the teacher that no longer applies. Frances Briggs (1962) looks at novels and autobiographies from 1900 to 1960 to discern chronological changes in the teacher image within social and cultural contexts. Briggs demonstrates how through the decades public school teachers are depicted as being better academically prepared, as shifting from textbook and recitation methods to more progressive, “child-centered” strategies (p. 99), as having closer interactions with students, and as being more fully integrated into their communities. Briggs (1962) notes how in the 1950s, novelists represented more male high school teachers, which appears to correspond with “the modern trend toward attracting more men into teaching positions” (p. 146) and that the depicted teachers did not always have positive relations with their students, thus “reflect[ing], to some degree, the tensions of modern living and the attitude of many adolescents who question authority in any form” (p. 149). In comparing teacher depictions in juvenile fiction (for grades sixth through ninth) from 1945 to 1956 to non-fiction and sociological studies, Melva Kauffman (1962) discovers that “the actual status allowed teachers in society is found to lag behind the fictional picture” (p. 242). Fictional teachers are shown to have generally agreeable physical appearances, “to make learning exciting” (p. 33), and “to be concerned with the emotional and social as well as the intellectual development of students” (p. 188). In 50 short stories from 1900 to 1964, Albert Nissman (1965) similarly notes favorable portrayals of K-12 public school teachers, who are knowledgeable and relate well to their students, but some of these teachers struggle in their private lives. To demonstrate how public expectations about teachers’ roles have evolved, Ann Bass
(1970) writes a literature review of scholarship by Ames (1930), Waller (1932), Erskine (1951), Foff (1953), H. E. Jones (1957), and Belok (1958), who reveal how literary fiction has perpetuated a negative teacher stereotype. Bass believes literature shapes the ways the general public and teachers, themselves, view the profession.

In examining the representation of public school teachers in 26 novels from 1965 to 1971 for his doctoral dissertation, Malcolm Enger (1974) uses Gerbner’s Character Analysis Instrument to calculate percentages of frequency of specific personal qualities and types of relationships among 37 teacher-characters, who tend to be young, single, middle-class men teaching in high school. These educators often heroically challenge the system but usually fail despite their tenacity. Thus, apparently since Schwartz’s (1960) comparison, teachers seem to be portrayed more sympathetically in late 1960s literature, and Enger attributes the teacher idealism to the “reawakened social conscience” of the times (p. 135).

Other scholars concentrate on the representations of professionals in higher education. Richard Boys (1946) criticizes early 20th-century novels before World War Two for their lack of realism in depicting college life and for representing professors as “dreary, depressing, and stifling,” “lovable but eccentric,” “vain and highly contemptible,” a “dry scholar” or as an “enemy” (pp. 382-383). In analyzing 50 novels from 1940 to 1957, Michael Belok (1958) focuses on the image of the college professor, usually a man teaching English at a college in the East or Midwest. Professors are generally “competent,” but not extraordinary, in their teaching and scholarship, but characterizations concentrate on personal dilemmas and life outside the classroom (Enger, 1974, pp. 68-69). According to Belok, the uncritical reader would be left with a negative impression of the college professor. In a 1961 article for the Journal of Educational Sociology, Belok lists the attitudes towards male and female professors based on post-1940 novel representations. Men are
“impractical,” “timid,” “repressed,” “unmanly,” and unable to be successful “in the really important affairs of life” (p. 405). For the women, scholarship tends to “unsex” them. The “unattractive women are perfectly credible as scholars,” although lack of beauty often “warps her soul and makes her a spiteful creature” (p. 405). A physically attractive female professor is an anomaly explained through an “early psychological experience” that altered her pursuit towards traditional gender appropriate activities (p. 405). Male professors, unlike female professors, are usually married in novels. Negative characterizations of women are manifested through ugliness, while this is not necessarily true for negative characterizations of men. Intellectual work “made or attracted hostile and aggressive women” or “nervous and timid men” (p. 406). In a 1961 co-authored article, appearing in the Phi Delta Kappan journal, Belok provides a brief literature review on the scholarship about teacher images in texts and concludes that the negative portrayals may in part account for the numbers of teachers abandoning the profession.

Like Boys, Frederic Carpenter (1960) is not impressed by the quality of the writing of college novels, and he categorizes the novels’ negative attitudes towards higher education according to five emerging themes. These novels criticize colleges for their “lack of economic or pragmatic realism,” “lack of emotional and sensuous realism,” “confusion of values,” insufficient support for the freedom of speech, and inadequate acknowledgement for the personal struggles of college students as young adults (p. 445). As part of these themes, the readers see professors contending with low salaries and as emotionally introverted. In The College Novel in America, John Lyons (1962) devotes a chapter to the image of the professor, and he similarly notes the largely negative depictions. The professor “is either a pedant whose studies have ill-equipped him to deal with life, or he is a person who has used his knowledge to control others” (p. 106). Popular magazines and films also replicate the “chalky-coated, absent-minded, ineffectual, and even impotent professor” (p. 107). Occasionally
novels delineate the professor as a “tweedy, pipe-smoking, sage, and romantic figure” (p. 123), but he can also be characterized by his “uxoriousness” and promiscuity (p. 113, p. 119).  Mary Ann Davis (1987) declares that the most favorable literary depictions of professors occur in mystery novels in the roles of amateur sleuths, but the prevailing stereotypes are as “the absent-minded professor,” the “pedant,” and the soulless “academic automaton” (p. 29).  John Thelin and Barbara Townsend (1988) demonstrate how the college novel can be studied through literary perspectives, genre studies, historical analysis, and ethnography to learn about public expectations for higher education and collegiate customs and procedures not reflected in “official reports” (p. 202).  Although the majority of novels focused on the extra-curricula, such as athletics, dating, fraternities/sororities, and societies, when professors were depicted, Thelin and Townsend argue that the professors were in equally positive and negative relationships with students.

More recent scholarship has further differentiated teacher images according to urban and rural schools.  In fiction and biography from 1900 to 1940, Rosalind Benjet (1994) also observes how the image of American urban teachers is “one dimensional” (p. 232).  Teachers are either “menacing sadists or idealized do-gooders” (p. 231).  Accounts include corporal punishment and racial, ethnic, and class prejudice exhibited by teachers, who “appeared to bring the biases of society into the classroom” as schools “Americanized” immigrant children (p. 237).  In examining the character, classroom management, curriculum, instructional methods, and professional training of the rural teacher in novels, teacher memoirs, and teacher education texts, Mary Manke (1994) finds that the teachers “are described as poorly prepared … as struggling with disobedient students … and as using strictly rote methods to teach a limited and fact-bound curriculum” (p. 255).  Manke postulates that the public still has a sentimental vision of rural schools because in the face of so many
challenges to schools today, it is psychologically comforting to think an ideal school once existed and therefore can be realized again.

Although most of the research on the literary teacher image has focused on novels for adolescent and adult audiences, recently scholarship has also addressed impacts of teacher representations on the youngest of readers. In 46 fictional children’s picture books from 1960 to 1990, Ann Trousdale (1994) finds mainly likeable images of teachers as “[a]lly and [c]omforter” (p. 196), but there are a few less positive portrayals as “[a]dversary or [b]uffoon” (p. 198). Other books incorporate power struggles between teachers and students or teachers and principals. Although female teachers are more often represented, Trousdale regards them to be less prone to stereotypes in appearance than the male teachers, who either are young, friendly, and wearing casual attire or are older, sterner, and in more formal clothes. These female teachers, however, tend to be more maternal and nurturing than the male teachers. Both male and female teachers are primarily of white, Anglo-Saxon ethnicity. In an updated study of 62 picture books since 1965, Sarah Jo Sandefur and Leeann Moore (2004) add that among the prevailing negative images, teachers are “never shown as learners themselves” or as promoters of students’ “critical inquiry” (pp. 48-49). In some cases, teachers are even represented as inhibiting students’ learning. In also analyzing children’s literature, Diane Barone, Maria Meyerson, and Maria Mallette (1995) discover that “traditional” teachers are depicted as exacting, narrow-minded, transmitters of knowledge and are less liked by students, while “contemporary” teachers are creative and relate learning to students’ interests. These students appreciate being so validated and liked and respected by their teachers, while “traditional” teachers have more difficulties with discipline. In children’s books the “traditional” teacher is represented more than twice as often. In 22 “intermediate and early adolescent” books from the 1970s and 1980s (p. 217), Gail Burnaford (1994) observes, along with
Trousdale (1994), that the teachers are generally white, middle-class women, and she suggests that the public is uncomfortable with male teachers and teachers of other ethnicities. Burnaford also explores how writers of these books draw on their personal memories of teachers. Many of these depictions are of teachers as “surrogate mothers” (p. 223). Other teachers are creative “nonconformist[s],” who connect with their students as good teachers, but are often removed from schools for failing to follow expectations and regulations (p. 226). Focusing on the teacher-student relationships depicted in children’s literature, Cheri Triplett and Gwynne Ash (2000) denote five types of representations. There are “relational” teachers, “who concern themselves with students’ affective lives and create friendships with students” and “non-relational” teachers, who either “passively” avoid relationships with students or who are “actively” antagonistic (p. 244, p. 246). The “ethical rebels” defy the rules for the sake of their students, but “unethical rebels” do so for “selfish reasons” (pp. 247-248). The final category is of teachers, who are in “transition from selfish to selfless or from saint to sinner” (p. 250).

Teachers were also often expected to internalize certain images as part of their professional identities. In examining teacher education texts before 1940, Pamela Joseph (1994) observes how teacher identities are constructed according to socially relevant metaphors, such as military engagements, democracy, and industrial capitalism. During wartime, textbook rhetoric urges teachers to serve the national interest, and teaching is also regarded as a vehicle for social improvement. Sometimes in the texts, education is compared to a business model, where the teacher is a “producer” (citing Bagley & Keith, 1932, p. 262) or a customer relations manager in an efficient organization. The teacher “paragon” (p. 264) is also delineated as a self-sacrificing, intellectual and moral role model, who supports the success of students in a well-ordered classroom. Literature could shape public perceptions of teachers, including how teachers view themselves.
The Teacher in Film

Of the non-print media, film has been the most extensively analyzed regarding the teacher image, and one of the pioneering film studies was also the most comprehensive in its survey. For his Ph.D. dissertation, Jack Schwartz (1963) examined films that included representations of “teachers, students, schools, and education in general” from 1931 to 1961 (p. 1). Through film reviews in *Variety, Motion Picture Review Digest, Motion Picture Herald, The Green Sheet, Film Facts, Film Daily, and the British Bulletin*, Schwartz found 470 films. He then consulted additional print media to obtain 2,999 reviews for these 470 films with a resulting average of at least six reviews for each motion picture. Fifteen trained associates with a viewing guide then screened 100 films produced between 1951 and 1961. In these films, education is primarily seen as a vehicle for maintaining existing social values. Thirteen percent of these films depict schools facing problems, such as community dissatisfaction, insufficient funding, and “discrimination within the school,” but Schwartz does not find any motion picture incorporating racial desegregation (p. 38). Female teachers are more likely to be in primary and secondary schools than in higher education and are “more often associated with romance than … male teachers” (p. 93). The most popular teaching subject is the humanities, but most of the film scenes do not involve classroom instruction. Schwartz discovers that “[r]esearch and study by students was portrayed in a much more serious and positive way” than when conducted by teachers (p. 68). Because teacher-initiated research is shown to “either frighten or amuse others,” it is at best impractical and at worst dangerous (p. 65). Although student and teacher relationships are predominantly positive, “[t]he treatment of teacher-administrator relationships in films … [is] favorable to education about as often as it … [is] unfavorable” (p. 69). Schools, however, are generally portrayed negatively.
Despite the great magnitude of the data sample, Schwartz (1963) does not include films, where teachers are private tutors and governesses. Although he convincingly demonstrates the reliability of film reviews as source materials, less than a quarter of his sample is actually screened, and I believe greater reliability and consistency of observation could be achieved if Schwartz alone viewed these films rather than 15 observers with a viewing guide open to individual interpretation. Because Schwartz’s study also encompasses films that ranged from depicting teachers in the title role to having teachers as very minor characters, some patterns or themes may not have the same degree of prominence within individual films, but a comparison across films could tend to falsely equalize the relative importance of the themes.

Acknowledging Schwartz’s scholarship in her Ph.D. dissertation on the images of teachers in 29 novels and 28 films from 1980 to 1987, Mary Crume (1988) also questions his reliance on film reviews for data. For example, “it is highly probable that the reviews did not cover teacher-student relationships in enough detail to justify conclusions concerning these relationships” (p. 56). In addition, Crume suggests that Schwartz’s inclusion of teachers from all academic levels and from diverse contexts results in a homogenization without differentiation. Whereas Schwartz (1963) is not emphasizing the impact of media representations, Crume wants to analyze how media shape adolescents’ opinions of teachers. Crume’s dissertation, however, concentrates more on categorizing the content of the images according to percentages rather than assessing the influence upon adolescent viewers. Moreover, in having a rubric of some predetermined categories for evaluating the films, Crume to some extent discovers what she expected to find, while potentially limiting categories arising from the data, although she acknowledges that other categories emerged from film viewing. In comparing novels and films, Crume finds that literary representations are more positive, and that although films do not show
“overwhelming negative” images, “[f]ilmmakers … [are] much more likely than novelists to depict teachers with negative, stereotypical images, the most frequent being adversary/villain and odd duck/buffoon” (p. ix). Of the positive images she found in novels, the teacher as a “friend/counselor” occurs “most frequently” (p. 98), whereas in films the “most frequently occurring positive image” is that of a “professional” (p. 164). In novel and film depictions of classroom learning, teachers are usually shown as “enthusiastic,” but in novels “students … [are] portrayed as involved and productive slightly more often than they … [are] shown to be bored and unproductive,” whereas in films the reverse is true (p. 130, p. 132, p. 191, p. 193). In both novels and films, the primary function of the school, however, is as a “social setting” (p. 229). Crume also addresses the stereotypes conveyed by the films: “While female teachers … [are] not stereotyped as old ladies, there … [is] a tendency for filmmakers to portray them as attractive, young women” and for male teachers “to be depicted stereotypically as balding, older men” (p. 179). In addition to examining images, Crume discusses the representations of relationships between teachers, administrators, students and the community. Crume then compares the fictional representations of teachers to current statistics and concludes that male teachers are “overrepresented” in the media, and that filmmakers disproportionately show younger or older teachers (p. 247). Moreover, “novelists and filmmakers downplayed student violence and vandalism” (p. 248). In these instances, representation did not conform to realism, but such is often the case according to however one defines “reality.”

Despite these added discussions of context and comparison of films and novels, Crume’s methodology is similar to Schwartz’s pilot study for his dissertation and offers similar conclusions. In analyzing Hollywood films from 1950 to 1958 as a pilot study for his doctoral dissertation, Jack Schwartz (1960) compares and contrasts the genres and thematic content of
films with and without teacher roles to the depictions of teachers in literature. These 1950s films with teachers tend to be “comedies, musicals, romantic love stories, and biographies” and the themes include “mental illness, alcoholism, science, entertainment, romantic relationships, and home, family, and marital problems” (p. 83). Teachers are “most likely to be middle-aged, male, and unmarried” (p. 84), and in romantic relationships the teachers rarely begin the courtship. The prevalence of unmarried teachers in the films also coincides with “the unmarried ‘schoolmarm’ in literature” (p. 89). Non-teacher films are more likely to be westerns or adventure films and have “a greater proportion of superstition, minority group relationships, physical violence, crime, and ‘nature’ themes” (p. 83). Schwartz concludes that Hollywood “perpetuat[es] the unsympathetic image of the educator in literature” (p. 89).

Subsequent scholars confirm the role of films in furthering the literary stereotypes of teachers. Building upon Schwartz’s scholarship in her master’s thesis, Marsha Ehlers (1992) examines the film image of American public school teachers, excluding college professors, from 1968 to 1983, and thus also provides a chronological transition to Crume’s dissertation research. Compared to previous representations, the teachers in this period seem to be “more successful” as adults, particularly in films appealing to general audiences, although female teachers are more liable to be revealed as “inept” (p. 121). In films catering to teenagers, teachers, however, are less prone to be positive role models. Unlike Schwartz and Crume, Ehlers more directly contextualizes the representations according to social and cultural trends and provides a history of the teaching profession for her assertions. Ehlers argues that “the ambiguity felt towards women’s place in society, the loss of trust in American institutions, and the national feeling of futility” in the 1970s are reflected in these film depictions of education (p. 136). In a broader discussion of the teacher film genre, Angela Raimo, Roberta Devlin-Scherer, and Debra Zinicola
(2002) discern a variety of often conflicting teacher roles as “guardian of [culture and]
liberator,” “iconoclast and subverter,” “alien-culture bearer,” “agent of change,”
learner,” and “compassionate mentor” (pp. 315-318). Further discussion of the historical
contexts could explain these contradictory expectations for teachers. Through a historical
perspective in her doctoral dissertation, Ann Tan (1999) argues that all film representations of
teachers are stereotypes, and she wants to understand the sources of the stereotypes and why
Hollywood perpetuates them. In 35 films, mostly dramas, released from 1939 to 1997, Tan
categorizes stereotypes from the “repressed spinster” (citing Edelman, 1983, p. 6) to the teacher
as hero and outlines the history of teaching and of film production to discover the origins of such
images.

In *The Cinema of Adolescence*, David Considine (1985) argues that two images of
teachers and schools prevail in popular film: “the teacher as hero” and “the trials and tribulations
of one youngster or group of youngsters in a school” (pp. 112-113). Considine believes that the
film image of the teacher has become increasingly negative and that the themes and attitudes
portrayed about teachers and schools coincide with film depictions of other authority figures and
institutions. Because of the unrealistic, sensationalistic films about teachers, Considine criticizes
Hollywood for damaging the image of teachers:

The teacher as hero, while dramatically interesting, can only render a disservice to the
teacher profession as a whole. Neither heroes nor villains, teachers are three-dimensional
human beings with the same flaws and faults as others…. While sex and violence may
sell well at the box office, they are not the staple components of a teacher’s day. (p. 141)

Contrary to other scholars’ assessments of teacher images in the media as negative, freelance
writer Rob Edelman argues in a 1983 essay that primarily positive film images of teachers abide,
and that of the “idealized educators” there are the films that are “sentimental … valentines” to
teachers, who have impacted the lives of many students, and the films that portray teachers overcoming challenges to help their students (p. 28).

In a thematic approach to film analysis, Harold Burbach and Margo Figgins (1993) acknowledge the positive representations of teachers, but they find such portrayals to be too few and far between. Of the favorable images, there are the “young idealistic” new teachers (p. 66), the “tough love” teachers, who have “high expectations for themselves and their students” (p. 68), and the “[e]xceptional [t]eacher for an [e]xceptional [s]ituation” (p. 69) as in The Miracle Worker. Unfortunately, negative teacher images predominate. There are teachers as “buffoons,” who are the butts of jokes (pp. 69-70). David Hill (1995) sees Hollywood film as reducing teachers to just these two types, the noble heroes, and the more prevailing “comic effect” images as “letches, buffoons, and self-serving idiots” (p. 41), but Burbach and Figgins further delineate the representations. There are the “anybody can teach” teachers, who become successful without professional training or experience (p. 70). There is the theme of “[p]owerlessness” with teachers having little influence in determining policy over their own jobs (p. 71). The theme of teaching as a “[m]oribund [c]areer” (p. 71) depicts the profession as unfulfilling. Sometimes the teacher is confrontational towards students, and other film images are of the teacher as a “[s]expot” (p. 72). In examining films for adolescent audiences, Paul Farber and Gunilla Holm (1994b) corroborate these findings by noting how the negative images of the teacher as “manager,” “drill sergeant,” “sexpot or sleazeball,” “deranged or demented,” and “lame and boring” surpass the depictions of dedicated teachers connecting with their students (pp. 32-33). Burbach and Figgins also note absent elements from these profiles. Contrary to the film representations of novices in other professions, “beginning teachers must work through their problems on their own” without any mentors and often with critical peers (p. 67). Teacher
characters are generally shown with circumscribed lives with little romance or excitement. Moreover, rarely are teachers seen in the act of instruction.

Other scholars similarly allude to the polarities in these often one-dimensional portrayals of teachers. After examining 116 films, Mary Dalton (2004) observes how the “good” teacher “gets involved with students on a personal level, learns from those students, and does not usually fare very well with administrators” (pp. 25-26). The “bad” teacher, however, is “typically bored by students, afraid of students, or eager to dominate students” and tends to “follow the standardized curriculum” (p. 61). Nicely complementing Dalton’s work, Robert C. Bulman’s sociological approach, in Hollywood Goes to High School: Cinema, Schools, and American Culture, offers an insightful discussion of the teacher as an outsider, an “urban school cowboy” (Bulman, 2005, p. 43). Bulman discerns the disparity between the middle-class values of the teacher, who espouses success through individual efforts, versus the poor, inner-city school context for many films, which however often do not address the “structural obstacles” to students’ success (p. 43). Sometimes substitute teachers as outsiders can be teacher heroes or “guerilla educator[s]” (Weems, 2003, p. 261). The teacher hero can have an oppositional role within the educational system and the resulting conflicts can impact societal contexts.

When the teacher hero becomes further delineated as a “savior,” this “good” teacher image can grow ignoble, if the teacher’s role serves to perpetuate hegemonic relationships. William Ayers (1994) proposes that male teachers in such films as Blackboard Jungle (1955), Conrack (1974), Teachers (1984), Lean on Me (1987), and Stand and Deliver (1988) are depicted as “saviors,” trying to rescue students from their problems, but such teachers often are inadequately equipped for the task. Ayers criticizes these films for failing to address the relevance of the curriculum or the need for teachers to forge relationships with the families and
communities of their students. Amy Wells and Todd Serman (1998) also note that Hollywood often depicts white teachers rescuing African-American and Latino students. This “great White hope phenomenon” suggests that these students “cannot or will not be saved by people of color” (p. 186). Because of the way Dangerous Minds (1995) portrays African-American adults and students, Robert Lowe (2001) enjoins that this teacher-hero film is “blatantly racist” (p. 214). Seeing as how media stereotypes identify students of color as “other,” Xae Alicia Reyes and Diana I. Rios (2003) advocate critical media literacy, so that teachers and students do not play out the roles of savior and victim in reality (p.9). Adam Farhi (1999), in addition, pronounces that this “superteacher myth places an impossible burden on real teachers” and undermines the profession because the superteacher is made exceptional by representing the other teachers as “incompetent, bitter, or drab and boring” (pp. 157-158). When little instruction is depicted, students succeed not because of expert pedagogy but because a teacher cares. Paul Farber and Gunilla Holm (1994a) use the term “educator-hero” (p. 153) to include administrators and coaches, who also overcome obstacles, believe in their students’ success, and are appreciated by their students. Wells and Serman (1998), however, assess that most heroic teachers work “in a sea of celluloid principals from hell,” and as the representations of schools have become steadily more violent, the teacher-heroes have transformed into “warriors” (p. 187, p. 191). Like Ayers (1994), Farber and Holm (1994a) observe that these heroes do not make institutional or structural changes, yet such films are intended to make the audiences feel satisfied and wish for more educator-heroes rather than enact systemic transformation of schools.

Just as scholars focused on the teacher image in novels about college life, they have also examined professorial portrayals in college-life films. In his Ph.D. dissertation, Howard Schuth (1972) uses four belief systems outlined by O. J. Harvey to analyze institutions and characters
through behavioral sciences. Concentrating on a range of college films from 1903 to 1972, with a special emphasis on films directed/produced by Mike Nichols, Schuth contends that up to 1942 college was “a pleasant, non-threatening place where students had fun” (p. 94), but from 1942 through the 1960s the college grew more “threatening” (p. 95). Professors are “absent-minded and, on the whole, ineffectual,” and if there are sexual relationships, it is a male professor with a female student (p. 174, p. 173). In his book *The Movies Go to College*, Wiley Umphlett (1984) organizes his analysis of college-life films by decades from the 1920s through the 1970s and includes the changing images of professors. Just as Foff (1953) credits divergent portrayals of teachers in novels as a reflection of the public’s “ambivalent” attitude toward the teaching profession and schools, Umphlett comments that having both “an amiable professor” and a “crotchety” professor depicted in *Varsity Show* (1937) indicates “the ambivalence that existed in both the movies’ posture and the public’s mind toward the image of the college professor at this time” (p. 62). It is not until the 1930s college musicals and football dramas that the professor “does start to show up with some frequency” as either “a congenial, personable type or, more often, as a crackpot” (p. 62). By the 1940s, films show professors “as brilliant but eccentric and impractical” and often the subject of satire (p. 118). Negative stereotypes of professors persist on film through the 1960s, but by the end of the decade and into the 1970s, the professor is a more “well-rounded character type” as films more realistically address previously taboo topics regarding social behavior and challenges to authority (p. 150).

In films from 1960 to 1990, David Hinton (1994) focuses on the representations of colleges and universities in a social-cultural context, and thus extends the work of Umphlett (1984). Although professors are often not the central characters, Hinton similarly appraises that in the 1960s negative stereotypes prevail in the depictions. By the late 1960s and early 1970s,
films “show professors affected by the same currents of alienation and rebellion experienced by students” to the point of sometimes supporting the causes of the students (p. 103). With John Houseman’s portrayal of a Harvard Law School professor in *The Paper Chase* (1973), Hinton argues that a shift occurs in returning the professor to a “traditional hierarchical position of authority” (p. 106), and by the late 1980s the film representations of professors seem to be more realistic. In discussing specific films at length, Hinton reveals how the films interact with contemporary social movements on college campuses.

Focusing less on the stereotypical nature of the teacher images, some scholars prefer to emphasize even more the films’ educational representations within social and cultural contexts. Through the lenses of individual/community, community/society, nature/culture, and stability/change, Paul Weinstein (1998) in his Ph.D. dissertation thematically addresses the changing image of teachers and schools in film dramas from 1939 to 1989 according to the historical contexts of the Depression, World War Two, the Cold War, the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights and Feminist movements, and the Watergate scandal. Offering in-depth profiles of seven teacher films, one from each decade of the 1930s through the 1990s, Duane Grobman, II (2002), for his doctoral thesis, also incorporates historical contexts. Grobman includes information on plot summaries, settings, protagonists, situations, sequences, and origins of the individual films. In addition, for each decade, Grobman comments on historic developments in the film industry and in education. Such concentrated efforts to relate teacher images to historical contexts by Weinstein (1998) and Grobman (2002) are largely absent from most media analyses.

Many scholars, however, assert that the film image of the teacher affects how teachers perceive their own professional identities. In analyzing 59 films from 1939 to 2003, Barbara
Beyerbach (2005) wants to assess the impact of teacher images according to race, class, and gender on pre-service teachers’ impressions of the profession. Beyerbach finds that white male teachers are overrepresented. Teachers are generally from the middle class, “but frequently without teacher education backgrounds” (p. 277). Gender stereotypes endure with female teachers often delineated as sacrificing and nurturing and “more likely to teach younger children” (p. 279) and male teachers exhibited as “tough, protective, and active” (p. 278).

However, Beyerbach’s characterization of high school English teacher Connie Brooks from the film Our Miss Brooks as “a plotting, manipulative woman whose main role in life is to catch a husband” (p. 278) is inaccurate, because Beyerbach fails to account for the friendly, sacrificing and nurturing side of Miss Brook’s identity emphasized in the CBS radio and television programs that gave rise to the film. Beyerbach classifies the films according to three themes: “fast times,” where the teacher saves students in degeneration, “dangerous minds,” where teachers try to reform the system, and “stand on me,” where teachers are “characteristically devalued and abused” (pp. 282-283). Different from other analyses, Beyerbach presents lesson strategies for how to teach pre-service teachers about these films in a social foundations course. Rather than exploring the nuances of interpretations, Beyerbach, like Schwartz (1963) and Crume (1988), concentrates on categorizing the images without addressing historical and cultural contexts.

Compared to other professions, teaching seems to have less favorable media publicity. H. M. Lafferty (1945) comments that other professions, such as clergy, doctors and lawyers, are usually portrayed positively by Hollywood, but the school teacher in film is often “a poor physical specimen” and intellectually is “nearly always in a blue funk” (p. 93). Lafferty affirms that real teachers are “more modern” and up-to-date than their film depictions (p. 93), and that it
is time for Hollywood to transcend the antiquated teacher “caricatures” (p. 94). Donald Walhout (1961) similarly acknowledges that other professions in the United States enjoy a more positive public image than teachers, but Walhout does not address the role of mass media in reflecting and perpetuating these images. Instead he argues historically that teachers, who were once respected members of aristocracy in Europe, no longer have this elevated position in America and that in a market economy, education and schooling are seen as means to an end, a particular career, rather than the valuing of knowledge for its own sake. In 1996, Cynthia Long offers similar historical explanations for the pervasively negative media images of professors because of “anti-intellectualism in American society” and the lack of esteem for a liberal arts education because people do not see it leading to practical benefits (p. 32). Ultimately, Walhout (1961) recommends that because teachers do not “make the teacher image an inspiring and luring symbol in the American mind” (p. 34), the most viable solution for the teacher image problem is for teachers themselves to change the image, although Walhout does not articulate how to enact this transformation.

In addition to developing composites of teacher images in the media, scholars have also noted how teachers have been depicted according to the subjects of their academic disciplines. For example, Bryan McCullick, Don Belcher, Brent Hardin, and Marie Hardin (2003) have examined recent film depictions of physical education teachers, who are often confused with the roles of coaches and are rarely seen teaching. When physical education teachers are seen teaching, it is usually in using inappropriate instructional methods. Negative portrayals include these teachers as a “taskmaster” and a “bully” (p. 10). Stereotypes further bifurcate by gender with female physical education teachers as “‘butch’ lesbians” and men as “hormone-raging heterosexuals” and “buffoons” (p. 11). Because of these film representations, McCullick et al
are concerned about public support for physical education as a profession and as an important academic subject.

Dana Polan (1996) has focused on the film representations of history professors, how the films define historical truth, and the public perceptions of history teachers based on these images. Polan suggests that the “relative absence” of history professors on film indicates that the public does not understand the nature of their scholarship nor its relevancy (p. 242). Unlike science professors, whose research is depicted as producing something tangible in a laboratory, “one seldom sees images of the historian in the work of active research—on site, in the archives, conducting interviews, and so on” (p. 244). Among the representations of humanities professors, at least English professors are seen “spark[ing] … inspiration” in a student, even if “by accident” or outside the classroom (p. 243). In contrast,

the history professor’s “making” of fact or truth is derivative … a mere reportage both of historical events that are old and of the historical facts or truths that precedent figures have produced. At best, the historian is a skilled lecturer, at worst an irrelevant antiquarian. (p. 245)

Polan even finds the depiction of English professors seducing students as at least having an impact, while “there is virtually no major embodiment of the history professor as effective seducer” (p. 249). Ultimately, Polan concludes that because of “the public assumption that historians don’t ‘do’ anything but repeat facts about the accomplishments of others, there is something essentially uncinematic about the work of history” (p. 255). History professors are just not sexy enough.

The sexual identity of teachers in film and other media has been the subject of scholarship. Alison Jones (1996) considers how the “tension of sex/love and teaching” has been explored in literature, and how teachers and literary critics have responded to such texts as: Shaw’s *Pygmalion*, Braithwaite’s *To Sir With Love*, Russell’s *Educating Rita*, Mamet’s *Oleanna*,
Jones then analyzes the extent of erotic possibilities in university teaching situations. Dale Bauer (1998) argues that “[t]eaching, once represented as a profound calling … is now represented as a sexual proposition” in films (p. 302). Sometimes the teacher is “a model of managing sexuality in professional realms” (p. 302). When a film does not overtly address sexual relationships between teachers and students, Bauer advocates that teachers’ “desire … for discipline” (p. 303) is a sublimation of sexual desire through a more appropriate outlet. A teacher’s sexual identity or sublimation can also be expressed in film through the representation of a lesson’s content, as in the literature being discussed in an English classroom. Comparing media depictions of teachers’ sexual identity to the social and cultural contexts, Bauer declares that during George H. W. Bush’s presidency, sexuality was “repressed,” whereas in President William J. Clinton’s presidency “the teacher’s eroticism is fully engaged” (p. 306, p. 305). Considering such cultural contexts as McCarthyism, American interpretations of Freud, and the Vietnam War, Vicky Newman (2001) examines films about teachers from the 1950s and 1960s. Using a largely psychoanalytic approach, Newman discusses the deviant sexuality of Blanche DuBois in Williams’s *Streetcar Named Desire* (1951), the repressed longings of Miss Sidney, the self-proclaimed “old maid schoolteacher” (p. 427) in *Picnic* (1955), and the “phallic mother” image (p. 430) in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1969). Jo Keroes (1999) also notes the “seductive power” of Jean Brodie’s teaching, which the film emphasizes “with its multiple shots of uniformed little girls gazing yearningly at the romantically commanding figure of Miss B” (p. 37). With the teaching profession often gendered “female,” Daniel Perlstein (2000) explores how the masculinity of Mr. Dadier, a first year high school English teacher, is compromised and constructed in *Blackboard Jungle* (1955). Explorations of
the sexual identities of teachers on film thus connect to other gender studies about the media images of teachers.

**The Teacher in Television**

In comparison to studies on the film images of teachers, much less scholarship has centered on the television image. Acknowledging the lack of scholarship on the television image of teachers, Judine Mayerle and David Rarick (1989) quantitatively analyze 40 primetime programs from 1948 to 1988, where schools and/or teachers featured prominently. These programs, generally comedies, represented about two percent of all series on television, although since the 1950s the actual numbers of programs representing teachers and schools have almost doubled for every succeeding decade. Mostly white male educators are depicted in primarily urban middle-class high schools and colleges, thus under-representing the actual percentages of female teachers, the experiences of elementary schools, and the diverse educational settings in America. In addition, Mayerle and Rarick assert that television teachers are “presented more favorably and more realistically” than their counterparts “in novels, magazine fiction, and movies” as revealed by George Gerbner’s research (p. 154).

Corroborating much of the findings of Mayerle and Rarick (1989), Leslie Swetnam (1992) examines film and television images, but seems to discover an even greater disparity between fiction and reality without noting differences between film and television representations. Concerned about the public perception of teachers and teachers’ perceptions of themselves, Swetnam attributes the “distortion” of the profession and the perpetuation of stereotypes to the failure of media productions to confer with actual teachers. Again, secondary teachers are more often depicted, although in reality there are more elementary teachers. In television and film, the teachers are generally single and/or male and teach in inner city schools. These teachers often have poor relationships with their principals. Teachers’ relationships with
students are then stereotyped as tough “[a]utocrats” more allied to their disciplines than to helping students, “[p]ied pipers” who encourage students to challenge the status quo, “[jerk or clown]” teachers whose negative portrayals are for “comic relief,” and the “superhuman” teacher, “who easily solves all student problems and runs every class effortlessly” (“Teacher Stereotypes Portrayed” section, ¶ 2, ¶ 3, ¶ 4; “Effects of Unrealistically Positive Portrayals” section, ¶ 1). Because “classroom instruction … paper grading, planning, meetings, and the extra duties” are seldom shown, the media “reinforce[s] the perception that teaching is an easy life” (“Subliminal Messages” section, ¶ 2). What is not depicted can be as damaging to the profession as a negative portrayal. In a 1956 article for The Atlantic Monthly magazine, Oscar Handlin credits the television images of teachers with lowering teachers’ status in comparison to other professions:

But who can respect Our Miss Brooks, a female eager to be married, but unsuccessful and therefore condemned to remain in the classroom; or her male counterpart, the ineffectual, bumbling Mr. Peepers? Such people, incapable of the real work of the world, deserve no more than amused tolerance. (p. 35)

Whereas television viewers witness portrayals of lawyers in the courtroom and of doctors in surgery, D. F. Gunderson and Nancy S. Haas (1987) affirm that the lack of depictions of teachers instructing in the classroom makes them appear as “less-than-competent professionals who spend most of their time engaged in trivial non-teaching activities” (p. 30). Although television courtroom scenes may be more dramatic than in reality and viewers may not witness the behind-the-scenes labor of legal case research, at least television affords lawyers a glamorous and powerful venue in the courtroom, while apparently the act of teaching is seen as so uninteresting as to be rarely represented at all. Little seems to have changed since Lafferty’s (1945) assessment of Hollywood film depictions of teachers compared with other professions.
From *Our Miss Brooks* to *The White Shadow*, Darlene Wilson (1986) discerns that television programs have portrayed teachers increasingly as counselors to students with less of an academic focus on curriculum content and with more of a lenient approach to discipline. While praising the *Mr. Novak* series (1963-1965) for showing a principled teacher dedicated to his subject and committed to strong classroom management, Wilson criticizes the Miss Brooks character as a “negative stereotype” of an “unmarried and sexually frustrated” female teacher, the Mr. Peepers character as a “childlike man” (p. 6), and the characters of Lucas Tanner, Gabe Kotter, and Ken Reeves as counselors rather than teachers. In a 1988 article for *NEA Today*, Vicky Lytle reports that NEA members had script approval for *Mr. Novak*, and she similarly celebrates the series for its “authentic classroom issues” and the “glamour and heroism” it brought to teaching (p. 18). Lytle (1988) also berates Miss Brooks and Mr. Peepers as “long on burlesque and short on reality” (p. 18), but such is the nature of fiction in a situation comedy. In 1958, Arthur Foff was equally dismissive about television that “bludgeons us with the antics of a Miss Brooks or a Mr. Peepers,” but Foff further supported his argument about ambivalent public attitudes towards educators because television “alternately regales us with programs deploiring over-attended schools and underpaid teachers” (p. 118). Thus, for some scholars the television image of teachers is primarily negative.

Yet in focusing on the comedic genre, other scholars have observed more positive television images, and this aspect is not simply in achieving laughter from the viewing audience. In profiling the representations of teachers in single episodes of television situation comedies, Ken Kantor (1994) recommends the “assertive and outspoken” Miss Brooks and the “timid and withdrawn” Mr. Peepers as challenges to gender stereotypes, and Kantor finds these character depictions to be more praiseworthy (p. 175). For example, *Our Miss Brooks* reveals the life of a
teacher beyond the school and shows her to be a three-dimensional character. Finding situation comedies inherently less realistic than other genres and more likely to use exaggeration for humorous effect, Kantor argues that audiences tend to disregard inaccuracies and to embrace these programs “if the tenor of the show is sincere, and people in schools are treated respectfully” (p. 176). Kantor’s scholarship thus contributes to understanding how the demands of a genre affect the teacher image. For Kantor, television situation comedies, however, largely perpetuated middle-class values, including stereotypes and gender role prescriptions, and in her analysis of “teacher sitcoms,” Mary Dalton (2005) notes similar stereotypes and gender roles that she found in her film studies. There are the dichotomized “good” and “bad” teachers and the female teachers, who have “divided lives” concentrating on their students, while male teachers could be “heroes” at school and have “full lives outside of the classroom” (pp. 100-101). Yet, Dalton perceives Miss Brooks as a more revolutionary breaker of gender roles by arguing that Connie appropriates male teacher freedom by “pretending to be the unwilling spinster while living a life of relative independence that would not be available to her if she were, in fact, married to Mr. Boynton” (p. 107). To regard the Our Miss Brooks program as giving “lip service” to “marriage, a home, and a family” (p. 106) as Dalton proposes, however, is a misreading that de-contextualizes the program into the modern feminist movement, while ignoring the generally conservative gender role messages pervading the postwar media.

Because of the daily impact of television, increased scholarship on the teacher image in this medium could provide significant analysis regarding public perceptions of teachers. Yet scholars are disposed still to focus on the film image of teachers perhaps because of easier access to these data sources for study. Researchers, therefore, need to be careful not to presume that the same lenses of analysis used for examining the film image are appropriate for television, and
they should bracket their findings about the film image of teachers, so that these understandings do not dictate how they see the television depictions of teachers. Such can be the dangers in privileging one medium over another.

**Cross-Cultural Comparisons of the Teacher Media Image**

Some scholarship on the teacher image outside of the United States can help to identify the specifically American characteristics of the teacher. In a cross-cultural comparative study, George Gerbner (1966) examines teacher images from 1961 to 1963 in films, television and radio drama, and popular magazines in the United States, four countries in Western Europe, five countries in Eastern Europe, and the Soviet Union. He finds a “greater frequency of financial themes, violence, and personal injury in the West and of historical themes (especially of the recent past) in the East” (p. 218). U.S., British, and French media depicted teachers solving personal challenges, whereas in Eastern Europe teachers were shown “helping” or “enjoying” (p. 219). In the U.S. more female teachers were portrayed, and the teachers appeared less professional and “less likely either to advance or to slip on the social ladder” (p. 221). There was also a “high incidence of comedy” in the U.S. teacher images (p. 222). The U.S. images of teachers were usually positive, and “female teachers appeared in a generally better light than male teachers” (p. 223). Western Europe was very similar in its portrayals to those of the United States. Top ranking qualities associated with teachers were “purposefulness,” “morality,” “learnedness,” and “goodness” (p. 226).

Terry Warburton and Murray Saunders (1996) have examined teacher representations in cartoons in Britain in 1976. Taking a “semiotic approach” (p. 307) to analyze the denotative and connotative meanings of political cartoons “as a form of ‘public opinion’” and as a “distinct discourse genre” (p. 308, p. 321), Warburton and Saunders contextualize the cartoons according to the contemporary news events and public debates about progressive versus traditional
teachers, students’ scores on tests, government educational proposals, etc. They argue that in the “politicisation of the image of the teaching profession” teachers are “marginalize[d]” and “demonize[d]” (pp. 320-321). Referencing Weber and Mitchell (1995), they point out that teachers are generally cognizant of the “preconceptions and images others hold of them” and that these inform their identities as educators (p. 322). Also referencing the pictorial teacher image, for his Ph.D. dissertation on teacher stereotypes, Harry Jones (1957) briefly mentions how cartoons in issues of the *Saturday Evening Post* (1951-1952) generally depicted the teacher as an “unattractive female” (p. 38). Further work comparing and contrasting American teacher media images with those abroad could offer more insights about what is uniquely “American” relevant to perceptions and expectations for teachers’ roles.

**Historical and Cultural Context of the Postwar Era**

Rarely do these previous studies address the historical and cultural contexts surrounding these popular media depictions of teachers, and historians generally do not look to the popular media of broadcast programming and Hollywood cinema for answers to their inquiries. Historians have been less inclined to analyze 20th-century mass media of film, radio, and television compared to study of written documents (Isenberg, 1973; Raack, 1983). Michael Isenberg (1973) discusses how commercial film was not initially regarded as art worthy of aesthetic criticism, much less as a medium and form of history. Driven by profit to appeal to a mass audience, the film industry focused less on historical accuracy, even in documentaries. Isenberg, however, urges historians to join other recent social scientists in analyzing film, and a decade later, R. C. Raack (1983) still encourages reluctant historians to examine critically the visual and sound media of film for representations of history, whether produced by news agencies, governments, film corporations or private individuals. Raack believes Hollywood films are appropriate for study because they “may convey a great deal of historically useful
information, and the emotional power of reinforcement in its message may be as great as that of
the actuality film document” (p. 414). Much work lies ahead for historians:

   to learn to assess the media records as sources of information; to identify and catalogue
these records; to learn the forms of expression, or language, of film and sound; to master
the techniques of film and sound production, and begin film reportage. (p. 419)

According to Raack, historians can apply their skills for analyzing more traditional written
records to the largely unexplored medium of film.

   Even if films are historically “inaccurate,” Vivian Sobchack (1997) contends that
historians are nonetheless “often moved by movies” (p. 6) and that motion pictures deserve
critical attention precisely because of the competing discourses generated about “legitimate” and
“illegitimate” history (p. 8). Historical myths perpetuated by the media and the development of
collective memory through iconographic images make the visual a “historiographic form” with
diverse narratives (p. 12). Hollywood films inform a “historical consciousness” and have
validity with “academic histories” (p. 12, p. 19).

   Popular media of the postwar era not only contain history, but they are history in and of
themselves, and understanding the context of the era in which a radio/television program or film
was produced facilitates analysis of the media. Socio-cultural history and the history of
education of the post-World War Two era are relevant to this study.

**History of Education in the Postwar Era**

   Historians of education can demonstrate how educational policy and practice developed
according to social, cultural, and political environments. In *American Education, 1945-2000: A
History and Commentary*, Gerald Gutek (2000) furnishes a chronological and thematic account
of how politics, the economy, legislation, judicial decisions, and societal trends affect and
interact with public education’s goals and practices in the postwar United States. Gutek
discusses the educational policies of presidential administrations; educational approaches such as
progressivism, life adjustment, and open education; and how broader social movements such as anti-communism, racial integration, and Vietnam War protests affected teachers and schools. In the postwar era, Diane Ravitch (1983) argues that the public largely supported providing everyone with equal access to education, but that because people had such faith in public schools to address so many social needs, the institutions were so overwhelmed that they could not live up to expectations. In *The Troubled Crusade: American Education, 1945-1980*, Ravitch discusses such issues as the influence of the G.I. Bill on opening access to higher education, the demise of progressivism for its failure to keep up with changing times, how national concerns with civil rights, President Johnson’s “War on Poverty” and the Vietnam War changed educational goals from addressing Cold War rivalries to social inequities, and how local control of schools weakened with greater federal involvement.

In the post-World War Two era, historians demonstrate how public policy regarding education seemed to shift from endorsing a progressive, student-centered approach to learning to a more “back-to-basics” essentialist, transmission model of instruction. Starting in the late 1940s, life adjustment education had been increasingly criticized, and some were advocating a return to a more academic, college preparatory program in high schools (Gutek, 2000). Anti-communists, such as William F. Buckley, Jr., and educational leaders, such as historian Arthur Bestor, saw progressivism and life adjustment education as weakening America’s moral and intellectual fibre (J. Brown, 1988). With civil defense programs in the schools, JoAnne Brown (1988) argues that public education took on further importance for national preparedness. For Brown, President Truman’s creation of the Federal Civil Defense Administration in 1951 signaled a change in the postwar to more federal government involvement in public educational content through federal aid money. In the interest of national defense, Admiral Hyman Rickover
recommended a rigorous academic curriculum to develop an intellectual elite. The successful Soviet launch of Sputnik on October 4, 1957, became a benchmark for more adamant expression of anxieties about the ability of American schools to prepare students adequately when the United States appeared to be falling behind in the Cold War. Well before Sputnik, however, legislators were working on the National Defense Education Act of 1958, which emphasized a “back-to-basics” approach by funding math, science, and foreign language programs and teacher training (Gutek, 2000). John Dewey’s progressive approach of learning through a continuum of experiences in social interaction lost ground to William Bagley’s essentialist, transmission model supporting textbooks, drill, and examinations (Dewey, 1938/1997; Bagley, 1905).

Well before the 1950s, however, progressivism as an educational movement was so divided by different agendas that it lost philosophic coherence. Instructional methods so varied according to teachers’ divergent interpretations that postwar progressivism was largely absorbed into “traditional” teaching as another methodological tool. Because of the many strands and contradictions within progressive thought, Lawrence Cremin (1961) believes the demise of progressivism was occurring of its own accord before World War Two. First controlled by the child-centered “developmentalists” and the activity curriculum, the Progressive Education Association in the 1930s was then dominated by “reconstructionists” (Kliebard, 1987, p. 227). Some progressivists, such as Franklin Bobbitt and W. W. Charters, emphasized social efficiency and preparation of students for specific roles, while George Counts argued that educators and schools should confront the injustices of capitalism and social stratification (Kliebard, 1987). David Sneeden and Charles Prosser endorsed industrial education, but John Dewey feared that students’ knowledge would be relegated to “the management of machines at the expense of an industrial intelligence based on a science and a knowledge of social problems and conditions”
(Kliebard, 1987, p. 147). Although William Kilpatrick’s “project method” became popular through various manifestations, Dewey questioned the value of the knowledge students gained (Kliebard, 1987). Although favoring curriculum based on students’ interests, Dewey (1938/1997) criticized teachers, who in the name of progressivism, abdicated all their authority when they should use their knowledge and expertise to organize students’ activities and guide their interactions. Often this fractured coalition was only united by opposition to “traditional” education (Dewey, 1938/1997; Cremin, 1961; Kliebard, 1987). Because progressivism had become so hybridized without a united front, by the 1950s it became an easy scapegoat for criticizing schools, which were already vulnerable institutions because they were charged with addressing so many needs (academic preparation, vocational and commercial training, citizenship education, etc.) with outdated facilities, a teacher shortage, and burgeoning baby-boomer attendance (Kliebard, 1987; Cremin, 1961). If blamed for undermining the American way of life through inadequate education and criticisms of capitalistic individualism, progressivism in the McCarthy era could even be condemned as “communistic” without significant opposition (Spring, 1992).

These scholarly approaches by educational historians illuminate the social debates about how instructional methods and curriculum content aligned with changing purposes for public schools in the postwar. This historical context can help to understand the extent to which the popular media images of teachers in the 1950s reflected and responded to these social debates that had implications for the roles of teachers in classrooms.

**The Representation of Teachers as Moral Role Models**

A teacher’s identity is not completely determined by his or her pedagogy ranging from progressive to essentialist approaches to learning. Scholarship on teachers as moral role models concentrates on how the professional role both embodies and enacts ethics in the classroom
through choices in content, methods of instruction and management, and relationships with students and colleagues. Teachers then pass on to students a set of values that inform students’ identities and govern their future social interactions. As “moral agents,” teachers can replicate the status quo or foster critical inquiry leading to transformation (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002, p. 3).

Believing that the moral component of teaching has been ignored in recent proposals reforming educational practices, many scholars reassert how ethical frameworks should be at the core of why and how teachers teach. Hugh Sockett (1993) defines teacher professionalism morally through responsibility to peers, the practice of virtues, expertise, action research, teacher reflection, accountability, service, and the role of in loco parentis. Rather than looking at teaching as an “activity” or as a “science,” Sockett articulates the profession as “a moral epistemology of practice” by individuals (p. ix). Taking a critical theory approach, Cary Buzzelli and Bill Johnston (2002) examine the moral function of teachers’ interactions with students by analyzing classroom discourse, power relationships, and issues of hegemony in cultural contexts. Identifying the teacher as a “moral agent” (p. 3), Buzzelli and Johnston are “concerned with sensitizing the reader” to the complex and “often ambiguous moral meanings that inhere in actual classroom interaction…. to raise awareness of the usually hidden moral dimensions of schooling” (p. 2). Concentrating on value-laden contexts of elementary and high school education, David Fenner’s (1999) edition of essays examines ethics through teacher professionalism, addressing potentially sensitive classroom topics, classroom management and discipline, grading, educating for democracy, and social policies, such as racial integration and school vouchers. In Linc. Fisch’s (1996) edited collection on ethics and teaching in higher
academia, essays explore the moral dimensions of teacher-student relationships, the classroom sharing of political and moral viewpoints, decision-making, and teacher reflection.

To develop the moral dimensions of teachers’ professional identities, scholar-researchers focus on how to foster ethical reflections in teacher preparation programs. Landon Beyer (1997) argues that teacher education programs have advocated a “decontextualized, technical approach,” where future teachers do not develop the expertise to define their instruction within an ethical framework. As a result, businessmen, politicians, and special interest groups have superseded the teacher’s role and determined the moral parameters of the pedagogy (p. 247). For Beyer, moral reflection should figure prominently in teacher education to facilitate for future educators the means to consider the social consequences of their teaching. In a qualitative study of recent graduates from a teacher education program, Deborah Yost (1997) finds that critical reflection of school observations significantly promoted an ethical awareness by these pre-service teachers.

To prepare future college educators, Patricia Keith-Spiegel, Bernard E. Whitely, Jr., Deborah Balogh, David Perkins, and Arno Wittig (2002) offer a text of cases with discussion questions about classroom rules, student behavior, instructional methods, evaluations of students, teacher-student relationships, and professional interactions with peers. Kenneth Strike and Jonas Soltis (2004) similarly provide scenarios to consider ethical dilemmas, using consequentialist “benefit maximization,” where the right decision offers the greatest good for the greatest number (p. 11) and “nonconsequentialist” judgments, where principles and respect for the value of individuals override contemplations about other outcomes (p. 3). Elizabeth Campbell (1997) also supports the case study method, as outlined by Strike and Soltis, to help pre-service teachers practice applying ethics to specific classroom contexts.
Largely absent in these discussions by education scholars of the teacher as a moral role model is the influence of the popular media in defining the ethical identity of teachers.

Educational scholars examine classroom settings and traditional teacher preparation programs at universities, but do not see how film, radio, and television could be important elements in constructing teachers as “moral agents.” These representations reflect and shape public perceptions of the qualities valued in teachers, and these media images affect how pre-service teachers construct their professional identities. In teacher education programs, popular media images of teachers as moral role models could thus be used to instruct pre-service teachers into considering the moral and ethical aspects of their profession. Making interdisciplinary connections between the fields of education and media studies would benefit both the theory and practice of teaching.

**Understanding Gender Roles in the Postwar Era**

In addition to understanding the teacher’s role pedagogically and ethically, the profession can be further defined by social expectations regarding gender roles. Sandra Acker (1995-1996) points out that recent gender studies of women are acknowledging the diversity of women’s lives according to “class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, marital status, age, embodiment, and many other ways” so that defining “any commonality” is complicated (p. 115). Still, much scholarship tends to address notions of shared gendered experiences. Sandra Bem (1993) demonstrates how Western culture has privileged the patriarchal heterosexual perspective through biological essentialism, androcentrism, and gender polarization. According to Bem, the psychological and social constructions of gender identity, through hierarchies that support male authority, perpetuate existing norms and restrictive roles for both men and women. Carol Gilligan (2002) notes gender differences in how beginning in their youth, males construct their identities as autonomous selves through separation from others, while females define themselves through
connections by preserving relationships. Gilligan then explains the moral context for women forging caring relationships: “The ideal of care is thus an activity of relationship, of seeing and responding to need, taking care of the world by sustaining the web of connection so that no one is left alone” (p. 85). Nel Noddings (1992, 1993) similarly ascribes an “ethic of care” to women, but neither Noddings nor Gilligan explore the social construction of this gender role identification to the same degree that Bem does. In fact, other theorists propose that gender identity is primarily genetically determined. For instance, Michael Gurian (2002) believes “that a boy is, in large part, hard-wired to be who he is” (p. 103).

Feminist studies concentrate on the socially constructed nature of women’s gender roles. In the postwar era, Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) analyzed women’s domestic identities and the images of women in popular magazines to articulate how circumscribed women’s social roles had become. Much of the scholarship on women’s studies references and critiques Friedan’s work. Sari Biklen and Diane Pollard (1993) observe how Friedan’s white, middle-class perspective of women did not resonate with working-class women or those of racial minorities. Joanne Meyerowitz (1993) re-evaluates Friedan’s arguments and finds that popular magazines in the postwar era stressed both “the domestic and the non-domestic” professional side of the women profiled in their issues (p. 1458). Meyerowitz notes how the magazines “glorified domesticity, but they also expressed ambivalence about domesticity, endorsed women’s nondomestic activity, and celebrated women’s public success” (p. 1480). In further reaction to Friedan’s assessment, chapter one, “Post-war Conservatism and the Feminine Mystique” and chapter three, “Women at Home: Changes in the Private Sphere,” of Rochelle Gatlin’s *American Women Since 1945* (1987) provide excellent backgrounds on postwar gender roles through discussion of women’s legal rights, notions of femininity, suburban life,
consumerism, and housework. William Chafe (1991) offers an equally perceptive analysis of postwar understandings of women’s roles by examining the contemporary sociological and anthropological research about “masculine” and “feminine” spheres.

In studying gender roles in education, some scholars have focused on the gendered experiences of students in school: the content of their learning, how they behave, and the ways they are perceived by their teachers. In 19th-century American high schools, boys and girls received comparable learning experiences, but beginning in the early 20th century, with the emergence of vocational programs such as industrial education for boys and domestic science for girls, educational inequities that defined and reinforced gender role prescriptions developed (Rury, 1991). In modern elementary schools, boys’ behaviors often do not conform to established rules (Kindlon & Thompson, 2002), and teachers sometimes have different standards of behaviors for boys and girls and expectations for their learning based on middle-class gender role definitions that occasionally conflict with students’ working-class values (L. M. Brown, 2002). Students can have different gendered experiences of schooling when “[t]eachers interact with males more frequently, ask them better questions, and give them more precise and helpful feedback” (Sadker & Sadker, 1994, p. 1). Based upon arguments for addressing the different needs and abilities of boys and girls and the gender discrimination in co-educational schools, debates have arisen about the merits of single-sex programs within schools and separate schools for boys and girls (Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Haag, 2002; Lee, 2002; Sommers, 2002; Campbell & Wahl, 2002; Orenstein, 2002).

Historians of education have traced the gender role expectations for male and female teachers by analyzing the evolution of who entered teaching and why. In these approaches, scholars have largely concentrated upon the gender identities of women. Michael W. Apple
frames historically how “women’s work” has been devalued as being less skilled, having little autonomy, receiving lower pay than comparable work by men, being defined through domestic roles and thus less professional, and filling largely working-class positions. A service or task also becomes denigrated because women are performing it. Among the career options available to women, teaching often held higher status, and when women increasingly taught at the elementary level, teaching became defined as “women’s work.” In noting that during the 19th century, leaders of the common school movement advocated teaching as preparation for women’s roles as wives and mothers, Strober and Tyack (1980) add that this “ideology of feminization” (p. 497) was stronger in urban areas, where teachers were increasingly needed due to rising student populations and men leaving the profession for more promising careers. In rural areas, with fewer job opportunities more male teachers continued and were preferred as stronger disciplinarians for the one-room schoolhouses, whereas the hierarchy of male principals and superintendents in urban school systems existed to support female teachers. When school terms lengthened and teacher qualifications became more systematic, teaching was less convenient for men as an intermediate career, and so more men then also left the profession even in the countryside. John Rury (1989) believes that once more women entered teaching, the public then seemed to esteem teaching less as a profession. For the more marginalized, such as women, immigrants, and African-Americans, teaching became a way to enter the professions, and so teaching for this reason also conferred less status (Rury, 1989; Carter, 1989). Kathleen Weiler (1989) argues that by the early 20th century with the bureaucratization and standardization within the profession, the ideology of the school as “an extension of the home was threatened” (pp. 21-22). More women made teaching a life-long career, advanced into the administrative ranks of principals and superintendents, and became politically active through teachers’ unions and other
professional organizations. Thus, despite the “imposition” of gender stereotypes, “teachers themselves may resist or mediate those stereotypes in varying ways” (p. 26). Tamara Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2005) found that some black female teachers she interviewed “embraced caring as a key force for social activism” in improving their students’ opportunities (p. 440). Media’s messages regarding the representation of teachers may not necessarily be internalized and accepted by teachers or by the public at-large.

Focusing on female educators, historians also demonstrate how these teachers shaped the profession in the United States and abroad. Elizabeth Edwards (2001) looks at the teacher training of women at Bishop Otter College, Avery Hill College, and Homerton College in England from the early to middle of the 20th century, while in post-World War Two America, Linda Eisenmann (2006) assesses the role of continuing education programs for women at the University of Minnesota, University of Michigan, Radcliffe College, and Sarah Lawrence College along with the rise of the feminist movement. Nancy Hoffman (1981) tells the stories of female teachers in their own words in the earliest days of the common school era, teaching in the late 19th-century southern U.S., and working in the urban northern schools in the early 20th century. Ruth Markowitz (1993) profiles the daughters of Jewish immigrants, who were a significant portion of the public school teachers in New York City during the interwar years and the postwar. By documenting Jewish teachers’ experiences in career training, job application, and union involvement, Markowitz tells their professional story. Alan Sadovnik and Susan Semel (2002) edit a compilation of histories about female educators, who founded schools and led movements in the progressive era in the United States, while 19th and 20th-century public and private school female teachers in America, Canada, Britain, and Australia have been profiled by editors Alison Prentice and Marjorie Theobald (1991). Hilary De Lyon and Frances Migniuolo’s
edition (1989) examines the struggles and inequities faced by female educators in England in entering and advancing in their profession. Their study includes the voices of black women and white lesbian teachers. Jackie Blount (2000) and Karen Harbeck (1997) further address the marginalization of gay teachers. Some researchers have examined the experiences of female educators by integrating methodologies. For example, Sari Biklen (1995) combines fieldwork with participant observations of female teachers, interviews, archival work in the 19th century, and textual analysis of autobiographies and two 1950s teacher novels to address perceived gendered notions of teaching. Such interdisciplinary approaches can lead to interesting insights.

Examining the image of the teacher in the postwar era through radio, television, and film affords analysis of the intersection of curriculum debates, role model expectations, and gender role prescriptions in popular conceptions of the professional identity of the teacher. Interdisciplinary in nature, this study integrates media studies, historical approaches, feminist perspectives, and narrative, discourse, thematic, and content analyses to understand better the significance of the teacher in our public consciousness.
CHAPTER 3
METODOLOGY

Data Collection

My exploration of the media image of teachers began with research on the depiction of Miss Connie Brooks, a high school English teacher portrayed by Eve Arden in the CBS radio comedy *Our Miss Brooks* (1948-1957). I then focused on the representation of classroom learning from the elementary through the college levels in 1950s television and film. Finally, I expanded my analysis of the teacher image with an additional survey of primarily Hollywood films from 1945 to 1959. Access to contemporary news and commentary about specific programs and films was provided by the ProQuest Historical Newspapers database on-line through the University of Florida George A. Smathers Libraries’ website (www.uflib.ufl.edu.) and the *Readers’ Guide to Periodical Literature*.

The Teacher Image in Radio

Although I listened to a few episodes of the *Our Miss Brooks* radio program in the Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., most of my sample was obtained through the OTRCAT.com (Old Time Radio Show Catalog) website (www.otrcat.com), which initially started as a trading site for fans and collectors of vintage radio shows. I received 194 recordings on five MP3 CDs. Of these recordings, a few are rebroadcasts, and some are duplicate broadcasts on the Armed Forces Radio Network. This sample begins with the audition recordings of Shirley Booth (April 9, 1948) and Eve Arden (June 23, 1948) and ends with a repeat broadcast (February 24, 1957) of an earlier program. Of these 194 broadcasts, about 6% are from 1948 (11 episodes including the 2 auditions), 27% are from 1949 (53 episodes), 19% from 1950 (37 episodes), 8% from 1951 (16 episodes), 1% from 1952 (2 episodes), 7% from 1953 (13 episodes), 6% from 1954 (12
episodes), 21% from 1955 (41 episodes), 4% from 1956 (7 episodes), and 1% from 1957 (2 episodes). For my analysis, I listened to 100 different broadcast episodes: 9 from 1948, 31 from 1949, 18 from 1950, 6 from 1951, 2 from 1952, 6 from 1953, 6 from 1954, 15 from 1955, 5 from 1956, 1 from 1957, and 1 undated from the Library of Congress collection. In the earlier recordings the sound quality tends to be better and more of the original commercials are included. In some of the mid 1950s broadcasts the commercials are edited out. In studying episodes throughout the broadcast years, I did not notice any changes in the themes or in the characters’ portrayals.

As a counterpart to the *Our Miss Brooks* radio program of a high school teacher, for this study I then examined another popular postwar radio program that depicted college life. *The Halls of Ivy* (1950-1952) on NBC portrayed the life of Dr. William Todhunter Hall, English professor and the president of Ivy College in the town of Ivy, USA. Although this program is very much a love story often told in flashbacks through Dr. Hall’s reminiscences of his courtship with his wife Victoria, *The Halls of Ivy* represents the lives of a college president and other professors. In listening to 32 different episodes on one of two MP3 CDs, I thus expanded the representation of the medium of radio for my current study. My source for these episodes was also the OTRCAT.com website (www.otrcat.com).

**Representations of Classroom Learning**

After consulting several media encyclopedias and websites, I developed a list of television programs and films to explore the teacher image in the 1950s with the focus on the depictions of classroom instruction to note the extent of progressive and essentialist approaches to learning. My sample for analysis was then restricted by what was readily accessible. In a preliminary study, my data sources comprised the viewing of 12 episodes from 1957 to 1959 that included school scenes from the prime time CBS/ABC program *Leave It To Beaver* (1957-1963),
20 episodes from 1952 to 1953 from the prime time NBC program *Mister Peepers* (1952-1955), and 46 episodes from the prime time CBS program *Our Miss Brooks* (1952-1957). These television programs, along with the films *Blackboard Jungle* (1955) and *Teacher’s Pet* (1958), were available on commercially produced DVDs for this initial analysis of classroom learning. *Leave It To Beaver* offered depictions of Theodore Cleaver’s elementary school teachers Miss Canfield and Miss Landers. The title character of *Mister Peepers* is a middle school general science teacher. Mr. Richard Dadier is a high school English teacher in *Blackboard Jungle*, and Miss Erica Stone is a university journalism instructor in *Teacher’s Pet*. These television programs and films thus afforded a variety of school contexts for study.

Subsequently, I was able to view two episodes of the CBS television program *Meet Mr. McNutley/The Ray Milland Show* (1953-1955), which were the only episodes available at the Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. The central character is a college professor, but neither of these episodes revealed scenes of classroom instruction. David Sheward’s *The Big Book of Show Business Awards* (1997) helped to inform me about the popular impact and critical acclaim of the television programs that included teacher representations.

**Further Postwar Film Images**

Using Schwartz’s (1963) Appendix A listing of Hollywood films from 1931 to 1961, I noted the titles of films from 1945 to 1959. Through the internet search engine Google, I then located reviews for these films. Most of these reviews were from *The New York Times*, and I printed reviews if the descriptions of the films seemed to indicate that the teacher’s role and/or school context were prominent elements of the plot. Schwartz defined the identity of the teacher more broadly than I did. Unlike Schwartz, I decided not to include coaches as teachers. I followed Schwartz’s methodology of using film reviews to analyze and classify teacher images,
but only for the purposes of deciding which films to view. I then sorted through these
descriptions by myself and then with my advisor. We selected films to represent a range of years
from 1945 to 1959, different academic levels from elementary through college, different
academic disciplines, both male and female teachers, and a variety of genres (musical, drama,
science fiction horror, comedy, etc.). Following Tan’s (1999) methodology, I found lists of films
that received Academy Award nominations and awards for the film and/or the leading and
supporting actors and lists of films that were top box office earners. Sources for this information
included the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences website (awardsdatabase.oscars.org)
and Cobbet S. Steinberg’s Film Facts (1980). This knowledge helped to assess the critical and
popular impact of the potential of teacher images in the films and also informed which films
should be considered for viewing. However, a film such as Bright Road (1953) was neither
recognized by the Academy nor by the public through high box office earnings, but because it
included the prominent actors Harry Belafonte and Dorothy Dandridge and depicted a black
Southern school, the film was worthy of critical notice. I am glad the Turner Classic Movies
website (www.tcm.com) brought this film to my attention. When this website showcased films
about teachers in September of 2007, I was also able to consider additional films with popular
impact. Although I was focusing on the depictions of teachers and learning environments in
American schools in the immediate postwar era, the films The Corn Is Green (1945) and
Merry Andrew (1958) were included because the popularity of the leading actors Bette Davis and
Danny Kaye as teachers, even in the portrayed settings of Great Britain, could indicate and
impact views of educators and schools in the United States. From this co-created list of films
with my advisor, I then checked on-line for availability through rental, purchase, and viewing on
Turner Classic Movies. For films not readily available, I then e-mailed the remaining titles to a
librarian at the Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division at the Library of Congress. The librarian shared with me which of these titles were available in their holdings for viewing. At the Library of Congress I was able to control the viewing process to obtain quotations that revealed perspectives by and about teachers and to develop transcripts of teaching contexts. Table 3-1 and Table 3-2 summarize the film, radio, and television source materials for this study.

**Data Analysis**

To assess the extent to which progressive or essentialist educational models are enacted in scenes of classroom instruction, verbal interactions between teachers and students and students and their peers were analyzed according to Judith Lindfors’s (1999) definitions and categorizations of inquiry. Narrative analysis provided the means to evaluate thematically the media representations of teachers’ identities and the contexts of the students’ learning environments.

Judith Lindfors (1999) defines inquiry as the act of turning toward another for help in understanding. Purposes for inquiry include information-seeking, sense-making and wondering, and forms of inquiry are not necessarily in interrogative sentences. In fact, although perhaps canonical, the interrogative form does not always embody true inquiry, but may instead be pretender events as a means for managing behaviors, for testing someone’s knowledge, or for enacting other intentions. Because engaging in acts of inquiry involves turning to someone for help with explanations and explorations, this process can be an imposition, but knowledge is also co-constructed through multiple perspectives. Where lessons are guided by students’ own inquiry and concentrate on their own information-seeking, sense-making, and wondering, the classroom environment aligns with a progressive approach. In 1954, Prof. John L. Childs of Teachers College, Columbia University, outlines how “the pragmatists,” the progressives, value...
“the methods and attitudes of experimental inquiry” because “the capacity to think, to examine, [and] to anticipate consequences” promotes active, democratic participation (p. 29). A more essentialist-informed classroom would focus less on student-initiated inquiry and adopt a transmission, “banking” model, where the teacher as the source of knowledge “deposits” information into students’ minds as passive recipients (Freire, 2000, p. 189). Lecturing and a reliance on textbook learning would facilitate the transfer of the cultural heritage and traditions.

After creating transcripts of depictions of instruction, I then adapted Charmaz’s (2006) grounded theory approach to analyze my data. After repeatedly reading through my data, I began open coding for types of inquiry and made other memos in the margins of the transcripts. I then organized my codes on separate sheets. The following code sheet categories initially emerged for teacher inquires directed to students, for student inquiries to teachers, and one category for inquiries between students. Categories marked with an asterisk (*) had the largest number of entries.

- Teacher: Behavior Management*
- Teacher: Pretender Inquiry*
- Teacher: Information-Seeking*
- Teacher: Sense-Making*
- Teacher: Wondering*

- Student: Pretender Inquiry
- Student: Information-Seeking*
- Student: Challenge*
- Student: Imaginative Engagement
- Student: Request Permission
- Student: Sense-Making
- Student: Wondering

- Student to Student [Inquiries]

Although there was a greater variety of student inquiry based on the number of categories, the categories with the most entries were those attributed to the teacher’s role. The predominant
discourse pattern was between teachers and students; rarely were students represented making inquiries between their peers. Using a constant comparison method, I then looked for patterns among the entries within these categories. Developing and refining these categories was somewhat of a recursive process. For example, pretender inquiry by teachers became subdivided into behavior management and testing. Once categories were consolidated and redefined, additional data were analyzed accordingly. Discussion of the findings is presented in Chapter Four.

In addition to defining instruction through inquiry, representations of teachers’ characters can be defined narratively both within the single text of the radio/television program or film and across various media texts. Different definitions of narrative forms allow for multiple meanings of teacher images to occur as we explore the contributions popular media make towards the “cumulative cultural text of teachers” (Mitchell & Weber, 1999, p. 166). Some scholars define narrative as the telling of a story progressively through time. This notion of narrative could be a chronology of events, a story structured with a beginning, middle, and end, or a “sequence of action, connected by causal and temporal terms” (Appleby, Hunt, & Jacob, 1994; D. Carr, 1986a; Nelson, 2004, p. 97). In examining media images, a researcher could construct a narrative of how the teacher image changed from the 1950s to the 1960s and focus less on individual teacher accounts and more on political and cultural trends impacting public education. A teacher may arrange her self-narrative chronologically according to how she and others saw her as an intern, novice, veteran, and mentor teacher over the years. Some theorists insist on defining narrative through plot, while others argue that fragmented stories are still narratives (Chandler, Lalonde & Teucher, 2004, referencing Polkinghorne, 1988 and Frank, 1995). According to this plot definition, a teacher memory of an event may not constitute a narrative, if it lacks the appropriate
structure. Narratives can even exist without words; an oil painting could articulate a story (Chandler et al, 2004, referencing Wildgen, 1994). A caricature or comic strip of a teacher might then be considered another visual narrative form. For this study, I limited my narrative analysis to the popular media or radio, television, and film from 1945 to 1959 to explore, in an historical context, themes regarding teacher characterizations and depictions of the learning environment according to progressive and essentialist approaches through Judith Lindfors’s definition of inquiry. Table 3-3 outlines the analytical methods applied to the data sources to answer this study’s proposed research questions.

Whatever forms a narrative takes, its creation is a co-construction between the initiator of the discourse and the audience who receives it. Gillian Brown (1995) notes that communication “requires effort on the part of the speaker in constructing a helpful message and also on the part of the hearer in working out what the speaker might have meant” (p. 16). Moreover,

> an ideal speaker [A] will consider what B [the listener] might already know which relates to this supposedly new information. In turn, an ideal listener will interpret what A says, not only in light of what B already knows, but also in the light of what B knows, or believes, about A’s own state of knowledge and belief. (G. Brown, 1995, p. 217)

The creation of a meaningful discourse or narrative entails the adoption of another person’s perspective. For radio and television programs and films to be successful, writers, directors, and producers—the initiators of the discourse—must envision what will resonate with audiences according to their perceived values, interests, and needs. The researcher, who tries to construct a narrative of the narrative between the program creators and the audience, should know the context and the background that both the initiators and the recipients of the information bring to the situation. A researcher, however, might have difficulty accessing such information, especially if the radio and television programs and films were produced over fifty years ago. If assumptions made by the participants or by the researcher are ill-founded, then the
communication breakdown inhibits the intended message. An “adequate exchange of information,” however, can occur upon “the establishment of a structure of mutual beliefs,” so that participants “make rational and confident interpretations of the other’s utterances” (G. Brown, 1995, pp. 232-233). If people communicate best within a shared ideology, then Brown (1995) observes that the listener frequently is the cause of any misunderstanding “because of the listener’s difficulty in relating what the speaker has said to the listener’s own perception, or memory, of the nature of features or events in the world” (p. 235). If one considers the historian and the discourse analyst to be the ultimate recipients of the information, then how are they educated “to listen” responsibly? Where does one look to capture the multiple perspectives of a teacher narrative?

To understand and to analyze the non-print image of the teacher necessitates capturing the multiple perspectives of both the creators of the image as “speakers” and the audience as “listeners.” Norman Fairclough (1995) notes that analyzing a television program’s text requires knowledge of “the routines and processes of programme production, and the circumstances and practices of audience reception” (p. 9). Although beyond the scope of this present study, defining the teacher image can include considering the writing process of the staff writers and their prior professional and personal experiences that inform their scripts, the extent of the director’s control, the benefits and limitations of the production technology, the actors’ methods for preparation and their skill level, the presence/absence of a live audience for performance, the situation of the viewer at home, the influence of ratings affecting content, and the role of sponsors. To obtain such knowledge could involve reviewing drafts of scripts, interviewing professionals who worked on the programs, and witnessing the production of similar television shows. Through research one can learn how different formats within and between programs
influenced reception. When *Our Miss Brooks* transitioned from radio to television in 1952, how did the actors’ facial expressions and gestures and the depictions of Miss Brooks’s rented room and classroom affect the themes previously presented only in an audio format? The 1950s television comedy about a middle school science teacher, *Mister Peepers*, was performed live in New York City. How would the comparison of teacher images in separate programs be impacted by one carefully timed, live production versus another program’s videotaped episode heavily edited with a laugh track after several retakes? Hooper and Nielsen ratings, fan letters, articles in popular magazines and scholarly journals, and critical reviews of programs in newspapers help to assess how a media image is incorporated or rejected according to people’s ideological frames.

Once a narrative is co-created, how do we determine its trustworthiness? The qualitative researcher’s quest for comprehension is not the same as a scientific, quantitative search for truth (Norman, 1991). Instead of searching for a “correct interpretation,” the historian and the discourse analyst look for an “adequate interpretation” (G. Brown, 1995, p. 22). “[H]istorical explanations need only be sufficient, not conclusive” (Rury, 1993, p. 258). The personal narratives that construct a teacher’s identity are also “works in progress.” Quantification might address the “what questions,” but narrative addresses the “why” by revealing truths in a version of a “working hypothesis” (Stone, 1981, p. 84; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Through allegory, the historical narrative can re-present truth or reality by replicating experience: “The story told in the narrative is a mimesis of the story lived in some region of historical reality, and insofar as it is an accurate imitation, it is to be considered a truthful account thereof” (White, 1987, p. 27). To negate the possibility of historical narrative to reveal lived truths would be also to “den[y] that literature and poetry have anything valid to teach us about reality” (White, 1987, p. 44). Literary fiction after all “represents an emotional truth and a fidelity to human experience” by using art to
voice shared life themes (Lightfoot, 2004, referencing Calvino, 1977, p. 25). The study of fictional depictions of teachers in the popular broadcast media thus can help to reveal public expectations about the roles of teachers and students. Post-structural and post-modern criticism of narratives for creating fictions reveals a “prejudice” that science has a monopoly on truth and a blindness about how science constructs its own narratives through symbol systems (Cmiel, 1993; Appleby et al, 1994; White, 1987, p. 48).

A narrative may be incomplete and ever ready for revision, but that does not make it false (Appleby et al, 1994; Norman, 1991). In our own “individual realities” we strive to create a “whole and seamless” narrative (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.82), and “historical account[s] should ideally be a virtually seamless description and analysis of events, personalities, and other forces at work in connection with a particular problem” (Rury, 1993, p. 266). The inevitability of gaps, due to missing data or disconfirming evidence that cannot yet be incorporated, does not, however, undermine the usefulness of the existing narrative. Stereotypical images of teachers emerge because certain commonalities prevail through comportment and physical appearance. Individual teacher differences, which may be categorized as anomalies, are excluded from the stereotypical narrative for the sake of seamless coherence. In recorded history, often documented are the elite, who are not necessarily the prime movers of events, and the “persecuted minorities,” who are “by definition exceptional since they are in revolt against the mores and beliefs of the majority” (Stone, 1981, p. 58). The fictional media characters of Miss Brooks, Miss Dove, Mr. Dadier, and Mr. Peepers may represent exceptional teachers, but elements of their narratives still address perceived norms about their profession, and we may then wonder how closely this narrative image corresponds with the actual experience of classroom teachers. For a researcher constructing a narrative, it can also be challenging to
differentiate the various roles a person might play or to discover people’s principles, prejudices, and competing motivations (Stone, 1981). How self-aware might a teacher be about what elements of Miss Brooks’s character influenced her professional identity? In discovering patterns across media and personal narratives about teachers, a researcher may also not fully know if the sample is sufficiently representative to make generalizations (Stone, 1981). Despite these gaps, a narrative’s trustworthiness, however, can be achieved through triangulation, member checking, prolonged engagement at a site, an independent audit, the comparison between local and national studies (micro and macro analysis), the resolution of previous contradictions, and the confirmation of similar findings by other scholars (Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Kaestle, 1992). New narratives, told by the non-print media and by teachers, will be created to accommodate new data and previously unreconciled, disconfirming data. For this study, trustworthiness was achieved through the noted repetition of patterns and the correlation of findings with other scholars of the media image of the teacher.

Audiences, however, can derive multiple meanings from the media images of teachers. Because of the constructed realities created by students, parents, teachers, and administrators the “nature of school knowledge, the organization of the school, the ideologies of teachers, indeed any educational issue, all become relative” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, citing Barton & Walker, 1978, p. 78). Such a diverse audience will often internalize different perceptions of the same image. Just as a “speech community” has its own “discourse norms” and “ideological norms” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 27), my preconceptions as an English teacher impact how I believe English teachers should be represented. My beliefs would then influence the historical and analytical narrative I construct as a researcher about the effects of the media images of teachers. Although any representation will be “mediated by the researcher’s own professional, personal, and
collective knowledge and experiences,” acknowledgment of bias contributes to the narrative’s trustworthiness (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 82). Multiple readings of a text are further “a function of the distribution of a text,” so that availability of the teacher image impacts its response (Fairclough, 1995, p. 128). Thus knowing when a television program is positioned in the daytime/prime time schedule, the influence of the network and the number of affiliates that air the program in certain regions of the country, the other program choices simultaneously on the air, and whether other media, such as magazines and film, offer similar teacher images—all can affect the influence of an ideology in the reception of a text. Although it would be difficult to measure quantitatively the amount of such influence, a future study might qualitatively address these circumstances surrounding audience reception.

This study, however, will concentrate on three narratives articulated through the popular media in the postwar era. Chapter Four analyzes the narrative of the depicted classroom discourse to assess the teacher’s instructional identity according to progressive and essentialist methodologies. Chapter Five explicates how the teacher in the media is defined as a moral role model, and Chapter Six explores how the narratives of gender role expectations affect the representations of male and female teachers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Academic level</th>
<th>Academic subject(s)</th>
<th>Actors/actresses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Corn Is Green</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>Elementary, most mostly college preparation High school</td>
<td>English grammar, history, Latin, Greek, French, mathematics</td>
<td>Bette Davis, Nigel Bruce, John Dall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margie</td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>French teacher</td>
<td>Jeanne Crain, Alan Young, Glenn Langan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curley</td>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>Elementary school</td>
<td>General, athletics</td>
<td>Larry Olsen, Frances Rafferty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good News</td>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Musical Comedy</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>French professor</td>
<td>June Allyson, Peter Lawford, Mel Torme, Clinton Sundberg, Jeanne Crain, William Holden, Edmund Gwenn, Hall Bartlett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apartment for Peggy</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>University (G.I. Bill)</td>
<td>Philosophy professor</td>
<td>Jeanne Crain, William Holden, Edmund Gwenn, Clinton Sundberg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navajo</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>Elementary school on Navajo Indian reservation University</td>
<td>English, “Americanization” of Native Americans</td>
<td>Francis Kee Teller, Hall Bartlett</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Affairs of Dobie Gillis</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>Philosophy professor</td>
<td>Bobby Van, Debbie Reynolds, Bob Fosse, Charles Lane, Harry Belafonte, Dorothy Dandridge, Philip Hepburn, Richard Haydn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bright Road</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>Elementary school for black children in the South, also Sunday school</td>
<td>General (4th grade), Sunday school (catechism)</td>
<td>Harry Belafonte, Dorothy Dandridge, Philip Hepburn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her Twelve Men</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>Elementary boys’ boarding school</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Greer Garson, Robert Ryan, Richard Haydn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Morning, Miss Dove</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>Elementary school (in a small town)</td>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>Jennifer Jones, Robert Stack, Chuck Connors, Jerry Paris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Genre</td>
<td>Academic level</td>
<td>Academic subject(s)</td>
<td>Actors/actresses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blackboard Jungle</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>High school (inner city)</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Glenn Ford, Anne Francis, Louis Calhern, Richard Kiley, Sidney Poitier, Vic Morrow, Jamie Farr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The King and I</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Musical</td>
<td>Private tutor in royal household</td>
<td>Geography, Western customs</td>
<td>Yul Brynner, Deborah Kerr</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monster on the Campus</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Science Fiction Horror</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>Paleontology</td>
<td>Arthur Franz, Joanna Moore, Troy Donahue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher’s Pet</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>Doris Day, Clark Gable, Gig Young, Mamie Van Doren, Marion Ross, Jack Albertson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Confidential!</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Russ Tamblyn, Jan Sterling, John Drew Barrymore, Mamie Van Doren, Jerry Lee Lewis, Jackie Coogan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merry Andrew</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Musical Comedy in England</td>
<td>Archaeology</td>
<td></td>
<td>Danny Kaye, Pier Angeli</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Information on years and actors/actresses and information for film references (directors, producers, and production companies) verified through Turner Classic Movies website (www.tcm.com).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Radio/TV</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Academic level</th>
<th>Academic subject(s)</th>
<th>Actors/actresses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Our Miss Brooks (radio and television)</td>
<td>1948-1957</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Eve Arden, Gale Gordon, Richard Crenna</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Halls of Ivy (radio)</td>
<td>1950-1952</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>College president, English</td>
<td>Ronald Coleman, Benita Hume</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meet Mr. McNutley/The Ray Milland Show (television)</td>
<td>1953-1955</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>College professor</td>
<td>Ray Milland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mister Peepers (television)</td>
<td>1952-1955</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>Middle school</td>
<td>General science</td>
<td>Wally Cox, Tony Randall, Marion Lorne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave It To Beaver (television)</td>
<td>1957-1963</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>Elementary school</td>
<td>General (2nd and 3rd Grade)</td>
<td>Jerry Mathers, Diane Brewster, Sue Randall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research questions</td>
<td>Data sources</td>
<td>Analysis methods</td>
<td>Summary of research findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. In the postwar media images, what roles were teachers expected to play in and outside the classroom?</td>
<td>Across the sample of radio, television, and film representations, 1945-1959</td>
<td>Narrative, thematic, and content analyses</td>
<td>Classroom interactions were rarely depicted, but media representations assumed teacher expertise regarding knowledge of subject matter and methods of instruction. A teacher’s identity was defined largely outside the classroom as a moral role model willing to make sacrifices.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. In the depictions of classroom learning, what types of instruction are exhibited and to what extent are there opportunities for students’ inquiry?</td>
<td>TV: <em>Mister Peepers</em> and <em>Leave It To Beaver</em> Films: <em>The Corn Is Green; Apartment for Peggy; Navajo; The Affairs of Dobie Gillis; Bright Road; Her Twelve Men, Good Morning, Miss Dove; Blackboard Jungle; The King and I; Monster on Campus; Teacher’s Pet; Merry Andrew</em></td>
<td>Judith Lindfors’s (1999) model of inquiry (information-seeking, sense-making and wondering), discourse analysis</td>
<td>Student opportunities for inquiry were rare, with the dominant discourse pattern occurring between teachers and students rather than between students and their peers. Both progressive and essentialist teaching strategies were employed in classroom learning.</td>
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Table 3-3. Continued

<table>
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<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Data sources</th>
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4. What historical precedents as well as broad socio-cultural-political contexts account for these images and anticipated roles by teachers?

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CHAPTER 4
REPRESENTATIONS OF CLASSROOM LEARNING IN POSTWAR TELEVISION AND FILM

In the 1950s, United States’ educational policy seemed to shift from endorsing a progressive, student-centered paradigm to favoring a more essentialist, transmission model of instruction. In the immediate postwar, Bernard Bell’s *Crisis in Education* (1949), Mortimer Smith’s *And Madly Teach* (1949), Albert Lynd’s *Quackery in the Public Schools* (1950), and Arthur Bestor’s *Educational Wastelands* (1953) were among the texts negatively assessing American public schools (Von Schlichten, 1958b; Cremin, 1961). In 1953, Associate Professor Margaret Lindsey of Teachers College, Columbia University, attributed some of the critiques to the general “restlessness and dissatisfaction characteristic of our time” (p. 285), and in 1955, Dr. George D. Spindler of Stanford University associated these “increasingly strident attacks” (p. 145) against education with a societal shift in values from traditional puritan morality, work ethics, and individualism to the “[e]mergent” values of moral relativism and group harmony (p. 149). The 1955 White House Conference on Education aroused further public awareness about problems with schools (J. E. Russell, 1957), and that same year the Progressive Education Association disbanded. In July of 1957 the magazine *Progressive Education* also ceased publication (Ravitch, 1983). With the Soviet launch of Sputnik in October of 1957, progressivism and life adjustment education were more intensely criticized for failing to prepare Americans to compete globally, and the National Defense Education Act of 1958 emphasized a “back-to-basics” approach by funding math, science, and foreign language programs and teacher training (Gutek, 2000).

By examining popular fictional representations of classroom instruction from the elementary through the college levels in television and film from 1945 to 1959, one can evaluate whether public perceptions of the role of the teacher and expectations regarding students’
learning environments coincided with this apparent paradigm shift. Instead of media representations of student-centered classroom instruction based upon the learner’s own inquiry giving way to images of teachers transmitting their knowledge to passive learners, both progressive and essentialist models co-existed within the same depicted classrooms. Such a “teacher-centered progressivism” (Cuban, 1993), where the teacher maintains power and control and determines opportunities, if any, for students’ inquiry, is essentially an untenable compromise because inquiry that is not student-centered is inauthentic. Although essentialism with a progressive veneer is contradictory philosophically, the entailed methodological conflicts coincide with opposing goals given to public schools. When schools are called upon to be forces for socializing students according to existing norms and also to be vehicles for social change, the opportunity for student inquiry in the classroom is necessarily circumscribed.

Recent scholarship has not significantly addressed the methods of instruction depicted in broadcast media to determine public attitudes and expectations towards the roles of teachers and students. In examining images of the 1950s fictional teacher, scholars have discussed gender roles and stereotypes (Beyerbach, 2005; Dalton, 2004; Newman, 2001; Keroes, 1999; Hill, 1995; Ayers, 1994; Kantor, 1994; M. E. Brown, 1990; Baehr & Dyer, 1987; Dominick, 1979), but media analysis generally focuses on sociological and political trends, such as the Cold War (Doherty, 2003; Toplin, 1993) and the cultural construction of meaning through audience reception (Selnow & Gilbert, 1993; Morley, 1992; Lichter, Lichter, & Rothman, 1991; Carey, 1988; R. Berman, 1987; Adler & Cater, 1976). Television and film studies also include attention to teaching media literacy and the use of media as a means of instruction (Adams & Hamm, 2006; W. R. Jacobs, 2005; Cassidy, 2004; S. M. Fisch, 2004; Golden, 2001; Krueger & Christel, 2001; R. Watson, 1990). By studying visual representations of fictional teachers in the act of
teaching and the acceptance of these images through television ratings and box office earnings, one could determine expectations regarding educational purposes and their compatibility with professed public educational policy in the 1950s. Using Judith Lindfors’s (1999) definition of information-seeking, sense-making, and wondering inquiry, this chapter evaluates depictions of the learning process to discover the extent to which progressive or essentialist educational models prevail in these media representations. Inquiries are analyzed through the perspectives of teachers and their students.

Role of the Teacher

Pretender Inquiry: Behavioral Management and Testing

In these postwar media representations of instruction, much of the teachers’ inquiries were really pretender events with purposes to manage students’ behavior and to test their knowledge. In Leave It To Beaver, when Theodore Cleaver carries a Chihuahua to school and hides him inside his jacket during a lesson, the second grade teacher, Miss Canfield, hears the dog’s whimpers and “inquires” to stop this disruptive behavior: “Theodore, are you making noises?”¹ In another incident, Theodore brings a gold ring to school and gets it stuck on his finger.² During a lesson, Miss Landers, his third grade teacher, notices that Theodore is inappropriately preoccupied with other matters, as he struggles to remove the ring: “Theodore, are you sucking your finger?” and “Theodore, are you playing with that ring?” The implications are that he is too old to be sucking his finger and that he should be paying attention to the lesson; classroom instruction is not a time for play. Theodore, however, is not the only student to get into trouble. After Miss Landers informs the class that their composition must be 100 words, Larry Mondello has the following information-seeking inquiries: “Does ‘the’ count as a word?,”

“Does ‘a’ count as a word?,” and “Does a comma count as a word?” After this last question, Miss Landers asks, “Larry, would you like to stay after school?” Rather than desiring his permission or inviting him, Miss Landers is disciplining him; Larry’s control of the topic and structure of the discourse have become too much of an “imposition” (Lindfors, 1999).³

Pretender inquiries also encourage positive behavior. When Miss Canfield directs Theodore to take a letter home to his parents, one of her questions serves as a reminder: “You’ll be sure to give it to them, won’t you?” Another question of hers suggests a better place for safeguarding the letter than underneath his shirt: “Well, hadn’t you better put that in one of your pockets?”⁴ Having his pockets full of dirt for his pet turtle prevents Theodore from complying with this request, but he is able to help his teacher when Miss Landers inquires, “Oh, Beaver, would you pick up the notebooks?”⁵ It is a privilege to be selected by the teacher for assistance, and similarly favorable behaviors can be fostered in an interrogative form: “Now have we all finished copying the assignment?” Miss Landers not only wants to know if anyone needs more time to copy the assignment from the blackboard, but also her question implies that at this time everybody should be completing this task.⁶

Other examples of behavior management through pretender inquiry occur at the college level in the film Teacher’s Pet. Like Theodore, Mr. Gannon, a student, is corrected for atypical behavior. Mr. Gannon is unusual not only for challenging Instructor Stone’s authority (and the other students are surprised by this), but also for being a professional journalist, unbeknownst to the teacher, in an introductory journalism course at the university. When Mr. Gannon argues that

⁴ “Beaver Gets ‘Spelled’,” October 4, 1957.
⁵ “Her Idol,” November 6, 1958.
Instructor Stone has wrongly attributed a quotation to Kipling instead of Emerson and starts to question her authority, she responds, “Whoever it was, the thought is what’s important, wouldn’t you say?” Instructor Stone really does not anticipate an answer to her question, but uses this interrogative form to re-establish her power and control as a teacher. Her purposes are further emphasized when she asks him, “Mr. Gallagher [his pseudonym], are you enrolled in this class?” She already knows the answer because his name is not on her course roster, but her question achieves its purpose of having him leave the classroom. Unusual student behavior can transpire just as easily at the college level (Teacher’s Pet) as at the elementary school level (Leave It To Beaver). Like Miss Canfield and Miss Landers, Instructor Stone uses questions to keep students focused and to encourage appropriate behavior: “Uh, may I have your attention please?” The interrogative form becomes a polite, indirect way to manage the classroom (Heath, 1983; Delpit, 1995). Encouraging good behavior and discouraging inappropriate behavior can facilitate the learning of a lesson’s academic content, but students also internalize the implicit curriculum of socialization (Eisner, 2002).

An interrogative form may also be a pretender inquiry when the teacher knows the answer to a question that is used to test students’ knowledge. Such questions abound in Theodore’s classes at Grant Avenue Grammar School. After Judy, a student, reads aloud from a basal about how a family went to a picnic and had fun at a picnic, Miss Canfield asks her second graders, “Now can anyone tell us what a picnic is?” and “What else do we know about picnics?” After another student, Whitey, rapidly recites the first stanza of “The Wreck of the Asparagus [Hesperus],” Miss Canfield inquires, “Does anyone know what a skipper is?” In the third grade,

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7 “Beaver Gets ‘Spelled’,” October 4, 1957.
Miss Landers uses such questions to test the memory and comprehension of students on material she has previously taught. After a grammar lesson she states, “Now before the bell rings could someone sum up what we’ve learned today and give me the definition of a sentence?” Whitey’s answer that “[a] sentence is where after you say something you put a period” satisfies Larry, but Larry does not exactly soar academically. Miss Landers asks him to recall the names of the oceans discussed the previous day, the Hudson River is one of Larry’s answers. Whether it is for vocabulary, grammar, or geography, testing questions are a favored form of pretender inquiry and implicitly support an essentialist model of instruction whereby a teacher maintains control of the classroom discourse.

**Information-Seeking and Sense-Making**

In 1950s media depictions of classrooms, authentic teacher inquiry occurs but often outside the academics being taught. Information-seeking questions in the classroom tend to elicit brief, factual responses. During a lesson on analyzing a student’s journalism article, Instructor Stone asks for antecedent clarification: “And then, of course, in this sentence whom did you mean by ‘he’?” Miss Landers tries to make sense of the reason for Larry not recalling anything about the Indian Ocean from the previous day’s instruction: “Well, why not, Larry?” More compelling information-seeking and sense-making inquiries by teachers address students personally about issues not directly related to lessons. Miss Canfield is genuinely interested in seeking information about why Theodore brought the Chihuahua to school: “You mean your father doesn’t like dogs?” She sympathizes with his feelings and hopes Theodore realizes why she must still conduct him to the principal: “Well, I—I am your friend, Beaver. That’s one of the

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11 Ibid.
reasons I’m taking you to Mrs. Rayburn’s office. Do you understand?” When Theodore skips a day of school with Larry, Miss Landers tries to make sense of his motivations and uses a non-interrogative form for her inquiry: “Now, Beaver, you’re the one who missed school. Suppose you tell me why.” Some of the most important inquiries by both teachers and students are not in the canonical question form and as a result can go unnoticed. Not happy with his explanation for his truancy, Miss Landers wants to know whether he understands her views about the value of an education:

Beaver, you might have learned something here today, no matter how small, that would have stood you in good stead later on in life. Why it’s just as though you took a day out of your life and threw it away. Do you understand that?

Such inquiry demonstrates teachers’ compassion and concern for their students, the desire to understand students’ individual perspectives, and the dedication to supporting students’ success inside and outside the classroom even though the inquiry is not intellectual in nature (Ryan & Townsend, in submission, n.d.).

In the film Monster on the Campus (1958), paleontology professor Dr. Donald Blake essentially stifles the inquiry of his students to pursue his own information-seeking and sense-making. In a brief scene in his classroom laboratory, he lectures, and the viewing audience does not witness students participating in a discussion or performing experiments. Determined to discover the truth about how a coelacanth fish is connected to his theory about a primitive anthropoid being a serial killer on campus, Dr. Blake cancels his classes to perform his research privately. He declares that once he discovers the “truth” then he will teach. Seeing himself as a
reservoir of knowledge to be transmitted to his students, Dr. Blake does not offer his undergraduates an opportunity to discover their own truths.

**Wondering**

In these television and film depictions, rarely did teacher inquiries exhibit wondering in classroom contexts. To allow for wondering requires extended time for exploring possibilities and generally the media depiction only represents part of a lesson, offering insufficient time for such engagement. The comedic genre, exemplified by *Leave It To Beaver, Mister Peepers, Our Miss Brooks,* and *Teacher’s Pet,* often demands a more rapid pace and quick repartee to set up and deliver the punch line for a joke. Wondering sometimes also addresses more serious topics that may conflict with comedic purposes. Of these comedies, only *Leave It To Beaver* occasionally becomes solemn when it delivers moral lessons, but these lessons generally offer clear choices about what is right and wrong and do not belabor the issue so as to detract from the humor. Dramas, such as *Apartment for Peggy* (1948) and *Blackboard Jungle* (1955), however, offered scenes of extended classroom instruction, although more teacher-initiated wondering was expressed by high school English teacher Mr. Dadier in the 1955 film than by philosophy professor Dr. Barnes in the 1948 film. The crucial messages of Mr. Dadier’s lesson on the “Jack and the Beanstalk” cartoon film also align with the serious educational purposes of *Blackboard Jungle,* which are stated in the prologue: to promote public awareness about the problem of juvenile delinquency.

In the “Jack and the Beanstalk” lesson, Mr. Dadier wonders about his students’ interpretations of the story. He initiates the discussion with an open-ended question that has no right or wrong answer: “What did you think of the story?” He then wishes to know the wonderings of specific students: “Miller, what did you think?” He asks Speranza why he feels sorry for the giant. Mr. Dadier encourages his students to consider moral dilemmas. If Jack
thought the giant killed his father and stole from him, then “[d]id that give Jack the right to steal the hen that laid the golden egg?” Was the giant’s death justifiable homicide?: “Wilson, do you think Jack should have killed the giant?” With follow-up questions, Mr. Dadier invites students to extend their thinking: “Now, why do you suppose that magic harp liked that giant so much?” After West observes that “crime always pays” because Jack is rewarded with riches and marriage to a princess after committing robbery and murder, Mr. Dadier supports his comment and encourages further responses: “It was a crime, wasn’t it?” When Morales confesses that he does not like the giant because the giant is different, Mr. Dadier uses inquiry to connect the literature to students’ experiences: “Is it right to dislike somebody just because he’s different?” Because he values his students’ thoughts, the motivations for Mr. Dadier’s wonderings are to make the “Jack and the Beanstalk” story personally relevant for them (Ryan & Townsend, in submission, n.d.).

Throughout the conversation, Mr. Dadier does not give his opinion as the “official interpretation,” but he instead facilitates the exchange of his students’ ideas. Open-ended questions allow for the “mutual examination of ideas” with no opinions excluded (Bridges, 1979, p. 67). Mr. Dadier wants his students to be independent, critical thinkers:

> Now all your lives you’re gonna hear stories, what some guy tells you, what you see in books and magazines, on the television, rad[io], what you read in the newspapers…. [J]ust examine the story, look for the real meaning … [and] learn to think for yourselves.

Wondering leads to insight and provides students some agency in the process. In allowing students some control of the discourse, Mr. Dadier for the first time connects with his students because this progressive approach engages them more intellectually than other essentialist-informed strategies he has attempted. Facilitating students’ inquiry to guide their own learning thus empowers Mr. Dadier as a more effective teacher (Lindfors, 1999).
In the film Apartment for Peggy (1948), a retired philosophy professor, Dr. Henry C. Barnes, values wondering. In a conversation with an undergraduate, Jason Taylor, who uses the word “wonder” to describe his perplexity about how the U.S. spends more money on liquor than education, Dr. Barnes responds:

Well, wondering is very important. I’ve always felt that if college did nothing more than teach a person to ask ‘why’ it served its purpose. It helps to develop an inquiring mind and that in turn sometimes leads to a few answers.

Despite this endorsement for wondering inquiry, for years he has favored a lecture format that offered limited opportunities for students to engage in their own inquiries during class. Jason, who is earning his degree through the G.I. Bill, has a pregnant wife, Peggy, and they both live in the professor’s attic because of the university’s housing shortage. Peggy asks Dr. Barnes to start a course to help educate the wives of these G.I.’s, and he begins the class lecturing. When a student interjects to ask permission to pose a question, Dr. Barnes allows her the opportunity. One question leads to another. Soon the students are sharing philosophical ideas among each other, and Dr. Barnes allows them to control the topics for conversation. After several minutes, Dr. Barnes interrupts:

Ladies, I taught philosophy for 39 years, and this is the first time in my academic career that I have ever had to remind a class that the period ended 20 minutes ago. [Some students smile, look at their watches, and then apologize.] No, no, no, don’t apologize, please. Perhaps this is precisely the reason Socrates never wrote a book. He believed philosophy was an exchange of ideas—just what you’ve been doing here today. I think you’ve accomplished quite a bit. Although we only skimmed over Socrates, in your discussion, whether you know it or not, you touched upon Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Spinoza, Heraclitus, Bellarmine, and many others. Now, before you go I want to say that I came here today to teach you and you … you have taught me. Thank you.

Although he did not intend for this discussion to occur, points in his lecture prompted student inquiry and Dr. Barnes’s success as teacher, like that of Mr. Dadier, happened because he allowed his students freedom to guide their own learning. Valuing the expression of students’ thoughts entails valuing the students as individuals, and the students appreciate the respect
Dr. Barnes has demonstrated. At the end of class the students applaud him, and Peggy comes up to offer her praise and support: “Gee, Pop, you were tremendous. Honest. The girls are crazy about you.” During class Dr. Barnes offered to share some of his personal copies of philosophy books with the students, and Peggy volunteers to be his librarian for the course.

**Role of the Student**

In the media depictions of classroom instruction, students expressed inquiry for a variety of purposes. From elementary school to college, students sought factual answers to information-seeking inquiries. Mr. Dadier’s “Jack and the Beanstalk” lesson and Dr. Barnes’s philosophy lecture also offered a realm for wondering and sense-making, where questions and comments revealed engagement with the subject matter. Rarely, however, did students express inquiry with each other across the media representations; the dominant discourse pattern was between teachers and students. Sometimes inquiries were primarily challenges to the teacher’s authority. In other pretender inquiries, students might employ a question to stall or to ask permission. Although the television and film images disclosed limited opportunities for students to voice genuine inquiry, the students appeared to thrive in these progressive approaches because teachers appreciated their concerns, interests, and opinions.

**Information-Seeking**

Students’ information-seeking inquiries can exhibit different levels of interest. When given a composition assignment, Theodore asks Miss Landers, “How many words must we gotta write?” For Theodore, the expected length, the form of the assignment, defines the endeavor. Upon learning that he must write 100 words, Theodore’s frown indicates that the anticipated labor of the process overrides any joy of the subject matter. In classroom discourse studies, the most common type of inquiry by students is procedural (Nystrand, 1997; Cazden, 2001). Theodore is not alone in considering quantity over quality. Larry Mondello’s subsequent
questions, such as “Does ‘the’ count as a word?” or “Does ‘a’ count as a word?,” demonstrate his wishes to comply with the minimum standards for the composition. His question about whether a comma counts as word, however, is either an act of desperation or a chance to entertain his peers with humor. While Judy grimaces, Theodore and Whitey smile and giggle with delight.14

Other form and style questions reveal more of an interest in learning to improve. In trying to write like professional journalists, students in Instructor Stone’s university course ask the following questions: “In paragraph five she [the student writer] says, ‘many of the customers.’ Shouldn’t she identify them?” or “[D]on’t you think the first part is uh too long getting to the point?” How something is stated can affect how the content is interpreted, so information-seeking questions regarding style and form can be particularly relevant.

Other information-seeking questions confirm engagement in the content of the subject matter. In the *Mister Peepers* television program the most extended opportunity for students’ inquiry transpires outside the classroom when Mr. Peepers and two of his students are feeding some abandoned fledglings in a nest in a clock tower. Eldon wants to know how to tell a bird’s gender, and the other boy asks, “What kind of birds are these?” Their inquiries further their interest, and information-seeking questions can acknowledge the importance of a personal connection for engagement: “Did you ever have a bird of your own, Mr. Peepers?” His story of his mother once keeping 32 canaries in the sunroom not only gives a factual response, but its intimate nature furthers the friendship Mr. Peepers has with his students. Eldon replies, “Boy, in the molting season I expect you were up to your pockets in feathers.” Information-seeking can also lead to wondering. Showing concern about the young birds’ future, Eldon asks, “Well, where’s their mother?” Mr. Peepers’s answer could have been strictly factual, but instead his

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answer invites the speculation of possibilities: “Well, that’s just one of those things, Eldon. She seems to have disappeared. At any rate, they’re deserted, and it’s up to us to take care of them.” Although Mr. Peepers does not significantly extend his students’ thoughts about the mother bird, knowing the facts can provide the foundation for future wonderings: “Inquiry arises in knowledge” (Lindfors, 1999, p. 120).15

Wondering

Understanding the facts of the “Jack and the Beanstalk” cartoon film becomes the basis for Mr. Dadier’s students to inquire about the characters’ motivations and the story’s message. He then offers his students the freedom to guide their own wondering. Usually “students rarely get to talk in classrooms [because the] … percentage of talk by the teacher far outweighs that by all the students put together” (Delpit, 2002, p. 40). Mr. Dadier, however, recognizes the value of conversations among peers to further understanding. Miller leads the discussion about Jack not being a hero. Instead, Jack is a “pretty dumb hick,” who is tricked by “a con man” into selling a cow “for a couple of crazy beans.” Another student agrees, “Yeah, that wasn’t so smart.” Miller then posits that Jack is a thief without a justifiable motive, and Stoker realizes that Jack “was a real heist man,” who “got away with burglary three times.” Jack is also a murderer without sufficient cause to kill the giant. Despite Jack’s questionable morality, he is still “rewarded” with riches and marriage to a princess. Other students recognize that the tale is rather “cock-eyed.” Sometimes Miller shares wondering utterances in conditional statements to allow for revision by his peers: “If the giant would have been so bad, the harp would have wanted to be snatched” or “That giant, if he done wrong, at least I think he should have had a trial.” Such “uncertainty markers … [make] room for multiple views” (Townsend & Pace, 2005, p. 602).

Even West’s dissenting opinions are designed to provoke a response that would further discussion, albeit sometimes in a different direction: “Who cares? The whole thing is a phony.” As a result of this discourse among peers, “[t]hese students’ collective comprehending of a story [is] … so much greater than any individual interpretation” (Silvers, 1999, p. 66). Students’ comments are not directed just to their teacher, but to each other, where they share a “give-and-take dialogue that encourages [them] … to enrich and refine their understanding” (Alvermann & Hayes, 1989, p. 306). Mr. Dadier’s students are able to build upon each other’s ideas to develop a generally accepted, shared interpretation of “Jack and the Beanstalk.”

This co-construction of knowledge is enabled by the students’ imaginative engagement with the subject matter and by how they connect the story with their personal experiences. In using the different medium of a cartoon film, Mr. Dadier sparks his students’ imagination and their wondering. Karen Gallas (2003) observes, “Imagination feeds our ability to ask the big questions, to think large and deep…. [W]onder is a subcategory of imagination” (p. 35, p. 39). Stoker is the first student to announce his desire to watch more films, and he thinks about becoming a film critic. By appealing to his students’ imagination, Mr. Dadier nurtures their inquiry. For example, one student asks, “How did that giant get up there without any beanstalk?” This could be an information-seeking and a wondering utterance. When students are “drawing upon their own life experience and understanding of reality; they search for a hook to hang their hat on” (Gallas, 2003, p. 104), and the students’ vocabulary for describing Jack demonstrates how they incorporate this character’s story into their life experiences. Miller regards Jack as a victim of a “con man;” Stoker admires Jack for being “a real heist man,” and Belazi likes how he “knocked off” the giant. Morales concludes that Jack “[t]urned out to be a thief like everybody else.” Mr. Dadier’s students identify the story as compatible with what they
know. Although some students may only appreciate the story because it affirms their accustomed worldview, perhaps they then have a foundation for subsequently reaching beyond their present knowledge (Lindfors, 1999).

In Dr. Barnes’s philosophy class, a student’s sense-making inquiry prompts a series of wonderings by other students. To clarify her understanding of Socrates based upon the professor’s lecture, a student asks, “Well, do you mean Socrates was against democracy?” Dr. Barnes explains Socrates’s belief “that only men with the knowledge of government should govern” through a metaphor: “On a ship the passengers don’t elect a captain. He’s appointed because he knows navigation.” This same student (A) then further develops the metaphor, which prompts others to become more engaged:

Student A: [standing up] Yes, but the ship of state is an altogether different thing. If you give the captain complete power, he might take the ship where he thinks it ought to go, and that’s wrong.

Dorothy: [staying seated] Sure. The ship of state belongs to the passengers. They pay for it. They support it. They have a perfect right to decide where it’s going.

Student C: And if the captain wants to go some place else, they have the right to throw him out and get another captain. [Students mumble.]

Prof. Barnes: [tapping the table with a pencil] Ladies, you have just jumped 2,000 years to a man named Bellarmine, who completely agrees with you. He believed in the God-given rights of man and that society must have the power to protect and preserve itself. His principles are embodied in our Constitution.

Student D: Did he write any books?

This last student’s information-seeking inquiry demonstrates her intellectual engagement. The scene then shifts to students’ metaphysical wonderings:

Dorothy: But who’s going to decide what’s good and what’s bad?

Student: [Audience does not see the student.] A thing is good if it’s useful.
Dorothy: But a fur coat is useful at the North Pole, and it’s just a nuisance in the tropics. So, who’s to say whether it’s good or not?

Peggy: And, and take milk. It’s wonderful for some kids, and some others might be allergic to it. Now there you’ve got somethin’ that’s good and bad at the same time.

Student E: [stands] Well, then maybe a thing is good when it has a good result.

Student C: [stands] But it doesn’t have to have a good result. It can be good in itself. For instance, [to Peggy] if I leave Johnny with you while I go shopping, that’s good of you to take care of him. Now while he’s in your trailer, if he falls and hurts himself that gives a bad result, but it was still good of you to take care of him.

Like Mr. Dadier’s students, Dr. Barnes’s students are able to connect abstract concepts to their practical experiences. Students use their experiences as wives and mothers to support their points, thus demonstrating how the philosophy of Socrates and others has personal relevance for them.

As students sort out the moral philosophies embedded in stories and advocated by great thinkers, students’ wonderings lead to further ethical inquiries. Mr. Dadier’s students question the lesson of the “Jack and the Beanstalk” story, and Dr. Barnes’s students discuss the rights and responsibilities of government and the nature of what is “good.” Teachers are not merely engaging in intellectual exercises, but the discussions in class can have real world impact. In *The King and I* (1956), Mrs. Anna Leonowens mentions President Lincoln’s role in ending slavery in the American Civil War, and her remarks prompt the following wondering from the son of the King of Siam:

Prince: I do not understand how slaves can be set free, if their masters wish to keep them.

Mrs. Anna: It is done by the passing of a law, your highness, and by the enforcing of that law, if necessary.

Prince: But my slaves and the slaves of my father—suppose there was such a law in Siam and we did not want it so.
Mrs. Anna: Sometimes things can’t be just a question of what we want, your highness, but of what is right.

As a result of the influence of Mrs. Anna’s teaching, we see the future king making changes in the Siam customs. For example, subjects will no longer need to bow “like [a] toad” to show respect for their king. One senses that significant future social transformations will be made because of the wonderings prompted by his teacher, although Mrs. Anna’s instruction reflects British imperialism.

In the film *Bright Road* (1953) Miss Richards not only teaches fourth grade but also Sunday school, and during a religious lesson she allows her student C.T. Young an opportunity to express his own inquiry which also has social ramifications. During catechism instruction, students respond to the teacher’s questions with the expected memorized answers, but C.T. has his own query, in non-question form, about humans being made in the image and likeness of God:

C.T.: Can’t see how everybody looks like God, when some’s black and some’s white.

Miss Richards: [in voice-over narration to indicate her thoughts] Oh, oh, I walked right into that one, didn’t I? Well, there’s only one answer. I’ll hope he’ll understand it. [to C.T.] Yes, C.T., God created everybody in His image, black and white.

C.T.: How come? What color is God anyway?

Miss Richards: Well, it isn’t a matter of color at all. When God made us in His image, He put a bit of Himself in each one of us. He loves us just like your mother and father love you. We’re all brothers together.

C.T.: If white people and black people are brothers, how come they don’t act like brothers?

Miss Richards: [in voice-over narration] Oh, Lord, let me say the right word just this once. [to C.T.] C.T., it isn’t God’s fault when people don’t act like brothers. It isn’t an easy thing to do, but we can learn because God is always willing to help us when we ask Him.
Upon her response, C.T. leaves the Sunday school classroom with apparent dissatisfaction. Made and released a year before the 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the film *Bright Road* depicts C.T. in a segregated school and daringly raises the issue of racial inequality. According to Miss Richards, God does not support the status quo in race relations, but she does not offer C.T. a solution to his dilemma. Through C.T.’s silently leaving the classroom, the film suggests that Miss Richards’s belief in individual responsibility and action may not be sufficient to overcome structural inequities. The Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Corporation, which produced *Bright Road*, thus made a somewhat risky venture for a mainstream Hollywood company by using C.T.’s inquiry to prompt potentially similar inquiries by viewing audiences towards social change.

**Progressivism, Essentialism, and Constrained Student Inquiry**

Despite these examples of student inquiry and engagement, such scenes of student-centered, progressive approaches to learning were rare. Instead, these postwar television programs and films revealed teachers adopting both progressive and essentialist transmission models. Two middle school boys learn about birds by actually caring for them, but in Mr. Peepers’s classroom all the science experiments are either demonstrations or exercises with predetermined outcomes, so that no “authentic problem-solving” occurs (Whitin & Whitin, 1996, p. 87). Similarly in *The Affairs of Dobie Gillis* (1953), the chemistry professor, Dr. Obispo, gives his undergraduates an element to identify through a series of laboratory tests. Because Dr. Obispo knows the identity of the elements, the students’ investigations are basically practice exercises. The progressive “Jack and the Beanstalk” discussion in Mr. Dadier’s high school class is preceded and followed by essentialist lessons with grammar and writing drills. University students learn about journalism by composing their own articles, but Instructor Stone lectures about “the importance of some fundamental rules” and cites authorities such as Kipling
and Pulitzer to substantiate her position as a source of knowledge. In *The Affairs of Dobie Gillis* (1953), English Professor Amos Pomfritt lectures on the rules of grammar, and he resents when Dobie interrupts to challenge one of the agreement rules. Dobie’s inquiry is immediately dismissed by Professor Pomfritt, who cites scholarly tradition for his support:

> The rules of English usage are made by scholars and learned men and not by college freshman and other such vulgarians…. In the 25 years that I have devoted to this underpaid profession of teaching, I have heard many an asinine outburst, but never one so asinine as yours. I can only assume that your recent passage through puberty has affected your mind for you, sir, are a presumptuous driveller, a cretinous barbarian, a thick-tongued oaf, and an ill-bred churl, and in the future you will be good enough to keep your mindless opinions to yourself.

Ultimately Prof. Pomfritt sees himself less as an authority and comes to reconsider Dobie’s views. Through creative strategies, such as juggling balls to teach gravity and using croquet mallets to demonstrate the Pythagorean Theorem, Andrew Larabee in *Merry Andrew* (1958) helps his students achieve perfect scores on a standard written exam. The prevalence, however, of a more traditional transmission model of instruction is implicitly represented by all the illustrated classrooms having students’ desks in rows facing the teacher (Eisner, 2002; Dewey 1938/1997). Seated in rows facing their teacher, children at a reservation school in the film *Navajo* (1952) learn English not through actual conversations, but through recitations of words prompted by the teacher displaying flashcards. In the media depictions, opportunities for students’ inquiry occurred upon the teachers’ own terms, and when learning is not student-centered with information-seeking, sense-making, and wondering, learning becomes less self-motivated and possibly less connected to students’ theories of the world and their schemata for storing new knowledge.

In the 20th-century United States, Larry Cuban (1993) has argued that teacher-centered instruction dominated, particularly in high schools, with progressive student-centered approaches more likely to be enacted in elementary schools as long as the reforms did not challenge teacher
authority. Cuban (1993) declares that a “teacher-centered progressivism” evolved with some
group work, variable furniture arrangements, supplemental learning centers, and freedom of
movement for students. Although essentialist strategies under the teacher’s control, such as
lecture and drill and practice exercises for students, seem to support the power of the teacher, the
progressive approach of Mr. Dadier’s “Jack and the Beanstalk” lesson demonstrates how his
power and effectiveness as a teacher augmented once he gave his students control over the
discourse (Lindfors, 1999). These 1950s media depictions of fictional teachers’ instruction
correlate with Cuban’s observations as far as combining both essentialist and progressive
approaches. In 1953, Ray Montgomery, an instructor at Teachers College, Columbia University,
asserts that “education is never one or the other of these approaches but both together, and their
value merges in the production of an educated person” (p. 79). Perhaps reflecting this same
notion, the media representations from the early to the late 1950s do not exhibit any discernable
transition from a progressive educational model to more of a “back-to-basics” essentialist
transmission model. Thus, fictional depictions of classroom learning fail to coincide with
professed shift towards essentialism in national educational policy during President
Eisenhower’s administration.

Well before the 1950s, however, progressivism was so divided by different agendas that
it lost philosophic coherence. Instructional methods so varied according to teachers’ divergent
interpretations that labeling instructional strategies as “progressive” in these postwar media
depictions is complicated. Because of the many strands and contradictions within progressive
thought, Lawrence Cremin (1961) believes the demise of progressivism was occurring of its own
accord before World War Two. Often this fractured coalition was only united by opposition to
progressivism had become hybridized without a united front, by the 1950s it became an easy scapegoat for criticizing schools, which were already vulnerable institutions because they were charged with addressing so many needs with outdated facilities, a teacher shortage, and burgeoning baby-boomer attendance (Kliebard, 1987; Cremin, 1961). In 1959, John H. Fischer, Dean of Teachers College, Columbia University, asserts “that more and more work has been assigned to the school without a commensurate increase in the time available for its accomplishment” (p. 7). If blamed for undermining the American way of life through inadequate education and criticisms of capitalistic individualism, progressivism in the McCarthy era could even be condemned as “communistic” without significant opposition (Spring, 1992).

Not only does the “hodge-podge” identity of progressivism make it difficult to determine in media depictions a shift to a more essentialist educational model (Kliebard, 1987, p. 227), but it would also be unlikely for 1950s television and film to show a paradigm shift when in reality schools do not immediately enact new policy initiatives. David Tyack and Larry Cuban (1995) further assert that schools are often forces for social stabilization rather than change. When the official observers leave the classrooms, teachers tend to teach in their own preferred manner regardless of new directives (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Generations of Americans across the nation have had very similar classroom experiences as students, and to appeal to this broad audience, the mass media of television and Hollywood film would probably create images of teachers and students that do not significantly deviate from perceived norms.

Reflecting consistency in advocating progressive approaches that had been endorsed before World War Two (Ravitch, 1983), educators in the postwar era continued to support progressive models of instruction. Amid criticisms, this consistency could reflect obstinacy and hubris, as historian William J. Reese (2005) suggests:
By the early 1950s, educators faced a rising tide of criticism, which they usually dismissed as the work of zealots, the uniformed, and the enemies of free public schools…. Often defensive of their labors, educational leaders frequently dismissed the negative press, citing their superior knowledge about pedagogy and insights into children’s welfare. (p. 222)

Beginning in the late 1940s and through the 1950s, articles in the *Teachers College Record* commended the accomplishments of schools and teacher education in light of emerging criticisms (Mort, 1949; Caswell, 1952b; Lindsey, 1953), celebrated progressive approaches to learning that valued students’ interests and regarded the teacher’s role as a knowledgeable facilitator (Herrold, 1947; “Preparing Teachers for Modern Schools,” 1949; L. B. Jacobs, 1954), and asserted the relevance of John Dewey’s ideas, while clarifying Dewey’s positions (Kennedy, 1955; Blau, 1959, Butts, 1959; Childs, 1959). Although progressivism was under attack, from 1949 to 1960 *The American Teacher*, the magazine of the American Federation of Teachers, included articles, features, reviews, and editorials recommending the progressive theories and practices of John Dewey and William H. Kilpatrick (“Tribute to John Dewey,” 1949; “John Dewey Honored at Convention Dinner,” 1949; Soderquist, 1950; Rothman, 1951; Childs, 1951; Eklund, 1951; Jablonower, 1952; “Guest Editorials: Our Most Honored Member,” 1960). *Teachers College Record* similarly published tributes to Dewey and Kilpatrick in honor of their ninetieth and eightieth birthdays (Butts, 1949; Caswell, 1949; Childs, 1949; Crary, 1949; Gans, 1949; G. Watson, 1949; Benne, 1952; Caswell, 1952a; Childs, 1952; Dubinsky, 1952; Goslin, 1952; Granger, 1952; Melby, 1952; Pertsch, 1952; W. F. Russell, 1952; Simonson, 1952; Skaife, 1952). To address, in part, mistaken notions about the origins of progressive education, Lawrence Cremin in 1957 contributed an article to the *Harvard Educational Review* about the history of the progressive movement’s reforms and initiatives. Responding to how “[p]rogressive education, once an honorific label, has become almost a libelous term … without sufficient provocation” (1958a, p. 77), University of Minnesota Professor Robert H. Beck, wrote
a series of historical profiles of Felix Adler, Caroline Pratt, and Margaret Naumburg for *Teachers College Record* (Beck, 1958a, 1958b, 1959). By contextualizing progressive education within the larger progressive movement in the United States, Prof. Beck was trying to restore the status of progressive teaching methods.

Within the academic community, progressive educational philosophies and practices persisted. C. Frederick Pertsch (1952), Associate Superintendent of New York City Schools, declares that Kilpatrick’s interest in children’s character development has “markedly influenced our program of education” (p. 245). Like Dewey, Lucile Lindberg (1955), assistant professor of education at Queens College, College of the City of New York, believes schools should prepare students to participate as citizens in a democracy: “the teacher in today’s school is not just concerned that children plan and work together in a democratic manner. She is especially concerned that the evaluation which is inherent in the democratic process shall be emphasized in the classroom” (p. 165). Jean and C. Burleigh Wellington (1958) of Tufts University advocate progressive approaches to learning with the teacher as a “guide,” who “exert[s] the necessary direction without becoming the dictator and decision-maker” (p. 15). The “talented teacher” then “blends[s] his aim for knowledge with student needs and desires,” so students have freedom to learn through problem-solving (Wellington & Wellington, 1958, p. 14). In a 1959 article for *Educational Horizons*, Lawrence K. Frank also supports a progressive model in arguing that because schools are “the chief social agency for children and youth” the “traditional role of the teacher … must be enlarged to embrace more understanding of children as living, growing, developing organism-personalities” rather than having a more essentialist approach of educating children “by purely scholarly, academic performance and training in special skills” (pp. 122-123). Specifically addressing “the current stress on more academic pressures and intellectual
discipline in schools,” Frank (1959) states that “learning of the academic content and skills is handicapped and blocked by ignoring these individual needs and characteristics of children” (p. 123). In the face of essentialist challenges, progressivism still endured among educators in the 1950s. Progressive approaches to learning also endure in today’s classrooms, despite public policy emphasis on measuring educational outcomes quantitatively through “high-stakes” testing of often low-level, de-contextualized skills.

Media depictions of educational contexts further reveal that what we knew about fostering student inquiry in the 1950s still applies for today’s classrooms. These fictional representations of classrooms demonstrate that when students have choices in their learning, can imaginatively/sympathetically engage with the subject matter, can connect lessons to personal experiences, and feel that teachers take a personal interest in them—such safe, interesting environments nurture students’ inquiry. In Leave It To Beaver, Theodore and Larry are not particularly excited about a composition topic that they did not choose. In feeding the fledgling birds, Mr. Peepers encourages his students’ identification with the animals by defining relationships between the birds as brother and sister, and this prompts a student to ask about the birds’ mother. Some of Mr. Dadier’s students defy his authority when they perceive the grammar and writing exercises as not having personal relevance. Once Instructor Stone enthusiastically decides to mentor her student Mr. Gannon outside class hours to support his journalistic writing, he comes to appreciate the merits of a formal education and alters his preconceptions about learning only through practical experience. Through choice, engagement, relevance, and a teacher’s personal interest, student inquiry can flourish. In today’s schools, with scripted “teacher-proof” curriculum materials and learning quantitatively measured according to standardized tests, student inquiry, however, may more likely exist in the fictional world of
television and film than it does in reality. Whom should we then hold “accountable,” if originality, creativity, and participation in our democracy are found lacking? Having been socialized in our public schools, will the next generation even make such an inquiry?
CHAPTER 5
THE TEACHER AS A MORAL ROLE MODEL

Because the scenes of lesson instruction are rare, the postwar media represented teachers less through their essentialist and progressive pedagogical practices and more through their character development outside the classroom. Rather than instructing in intellectual academic content, the teacher facilitates the socialization of students according to a moral code, and the teachers themselves come to embody these same social norms and ethical standards. However, if “the attitude that teachers are of a superior moral order is related to attitudes about the transmission of the cultural heritage” (H. E. Jones, 1957, p. 84), then an aspect of essentialism could be implicitly endorsed through the popular media representations. Addressing the Sixth District Convention of the Michigan Federation of Teachers on October 11, 1945, Arthur P. Sweet declares, “As leaders of youth [teachers] … must hold themselves to the highest standards of conduct and character…. [with] no right to be average in morals or manners” (Sweet, 1946, p. 29). Further testifying to the moral influence of teachers, Daniel L. Marsh, Chancellor of Boston University, asserts in 1952, “A teacher’s character is his eloquence. If he does justly, loves kindness, and walks humbly with God; if his words are chaste and honest, and his life pure in its purpose, all life will be purer and better thereby” (p. 11). In a 1949 conference report on the preparation of liberal arts teachers, Harry J. Carman, Dean of Columbia College (Columbia University), also connects the moral function of teachers with the preparation of upright citizens participating in democracy:

We want them [citizens] at all times to subordinate their own success to their public usefulness—men and women who are useful in that they are not above doing humble things, discovering and using for themselves and society the special gifts with which each may be endowed. We want them to realize that the democratic way of life not only cherishes freedom but also entails obligation and even sacrifice for its preservation. (Carman, 1950, p. 14)
In essentially adopting Benjamin Rush’s concept of using education to foster “republican machines,” men and women who privilege the interests of the state over their own private welfare, Carman calls for teachers to model this sacrifice: “We need teachers who have moral strength, a sense of beauty of spirit, the seeing eye, the watchful soul, the inquiring mind” (p. 18). In the postwar era, the popular media thus represent effective teachers as those who practice what they preach, but as a result their personal and professional lives are constrained by these same norms and high expectations.

**Motherhood and the “Ethic of Care”**

Dedicated not only to academics but also to the individual welfare of others, teachers forge relationships with students, parents, colleagues, and community leaders. For Andrey A. Potter (1950), Dean of the Schools of Engineering at Purdue University, it is the positive rapport that the teacher has with his/her students that embodies teaching excellence:

> [H]umanity is a distinguishing characteristic of the great teacher, who understands and loves his students as he understands and loves the subject he teaches. This he shows by his keen interest in the individual student, by his kindness and courtesy, by his candor and fairness, by his tolerance and understanding, by his optimism and unlimited patience. (p. 26)

According to Nel Noddings, such relationships are not altruistic because the teacher, as a caregiver, is fulfilled by the cared-for’s response: “A *caring relation* is ... a connection or encounter between two human beings—a carer and a recipient of care, or cared-for.... [and] ... both parties must contribute to it in characteristic ways” (Noddings, 2000, p. 247; Hargreaves, 1994). The “cared-for” must have a sense of receiving care and acknowledge it to the “carer,” who then feels validated. In the film *Curley* (1947), having positive, reciprocal relationships with her students is so essential to elementary teacher Miss Johnson that on her first day she decides to “forget lessons and regulations” and tries instead to “get acquainted.” When a disheartened Miss Johnson believes she has been unsuccessful in relating to Curley, she re-
locates the class picnic to one of his favorite places to re-establish a friendship with him.

Miss Johnson’s athletic prowess at the picnic and her promise to coach her students after school in sports if they do well academically wins over the entire class, so that her success as a teacher is defined through her rapport with her students outside the classroom. In the 1956 film version of the musical *The King and I*, British teacher Mrs. Anna Leonowens sings that “getting to know” her students is her favorite subject because she gets to like them and hopes they will like her in return. In the film *Bright Road* (1953), fourth-grader C.T. shows his teacher, Miss Richards, his appreciation for all her support throughout the school year by presenting her with a cocoon that transforms into a butterfly and by declaring to her on the last day of school, “I love you.” She beams with smiling satisfaction, as she waves good-bye to him from the classroom window. Because “[t]eaching hardly ever pays off in money…. [or] in glory,” Professor Warren, in *The Halls of Ivy* radio program, affirms that he “stay[s] with it” because of “pride in the job” and that the students “appreciate” teachers’ efforts.¹ This validation through a caring relationship is important to him. Although Dr. Hall intended to achieve his own fame for writing a biography about a particular scientist, his book goes unpublished, while a book written on the same subject by one of his students, Jared Buckley, not only is published but also receives a coveted prize, which Dr. Hall initially thought he, himself, had won. Buckley’s book, however, is affectionately dedicated to his professor, and Mrs. Hall says to her husband, “There’s nothing better. What can compare with it?” Dr. Hall agrees that this appreciation means more to him than if his own book had been published and recognized.²


For female educators, the teacher-student relationship can through the “ethic of care” become similar to the mother-child relationship. Just as a baby might react with a smile to a mother’s nurturing (Noddings, 1993), students demonstrate similar satisfaction and achievement because of the care of teachers: “Teaching, from the perspective of caring, is very much like parenting” (Noddings, 1993, p. 51). For the female teacher, caring may then become a form of mothering and can show that others need her care (Noddings, 1993). This “ethic of care” is then incorporated into a gender role for women. In the Our Miss Brooks radio program, students acknowledged her skill as an English teacher, but they predominantly valued Miss Brooks for her nurturing role outside the classroom. As Stretch Armstrong, the star athlete at Madison High School, tells Miss Brooks, “I feel that you’re more than just a teacher, that you understand kids.”3 Walter Denton, editor of the school newspaper, exclaims: “She’s like a mother to us.”4 Indeed, in one academic year the entire student body honors Miss Brooks for Mother’s Day with the title “Our Mother Away From Mother.” She receives a shawl and knitting needles, and Walter composes a song to the tune of “Mother” with the letters of her last name.5 Students are not validating her professional “ethic of care” as a teacher through improved scholarly performance or eagerness to learn (Noddings, 1993), but instead respond to her domestic “ethic of care” as a mother. Miss Brooks also exhibits her maternal concern when she visits one of her students at home and forgoes her classroom teaching on Monday to care for the student’s siblings while his mother is hospitalized.6 Connie Brooks strongly desired to abandon teaching to become a wife and mother, and as a teacher, she was valued for her maternal care for others.

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3 Our Miss Brooks (radio), February 27, 1949.
5 Ibid., May 14, 1950.
6 Ibid., November 14, 1948.
Students’ recognition of her efforts gave her a modicum of acknowledgement and satisfaction—as a proxy for being a real mother (Ryan & Terzian, in press, 2009).

Miss Brooks’s motherly devotion, however, was merely one expression of an “ethic of care.” Time and again Connie addressed the emotional and material needs of others. She displayed “engrossment” or “full receptivity” of others’ perspectives, and she saw “a world comprised of relationships rather than of people standing alone” (Noddings, 2000, p. 248; Gilligan, 2002, p. 55). When Stretch becomes lovesick over a new girl, for instance, Miss Brooks persuades her to go on a date with him.7 To prevent Walter from possibly being expelled for impersonating the Chairman of the State Board of Education on the telephone to Principal Osgood Conklin, Miss Brooks attempts to hire a vagrant to act as the Chairman.8 Her “ethic of care” extended to adults as well. When Mr. Boynton’s biology laboratory is cold, Miss Brooks appropriates an electric heater for him.9 Believing that Mr. Conklin is losing his position as Madison High’s principal, Miss Brooks collaborates with Mr. Boynton, Stretch, and Walter to organize a laundry service in the Conklins’ home to help him financially.10 She even helps the burglar, who had broken into her home, to obtain employment as the school’s custodian.11 In these ways, this radio program constructed the female teacher’s professional identity by her empathy and action on behalf of others (Ryan & Terzian, in press, 2009).

This motherly, nurturing aspect of a female teacher’s role outside the classroom is replicated in such films as Bright Road (1953), Her Twelve Men (1954), and Good Morning.

7 Ibid., February 26, 1950.
8 Ibid., September 11, 1949.
9 Ibid., February 6, 1949.
10 Ibid., September 11, 1955.
11 Ibid., March 12, 1950.
In *Bright Road*, when fourth grade teacher Jane Richards senses that one of her students, C.T. Young, does not have much to eat at home, she arranges a regular lunch for him at school expense. When her colleagues judge C.T. as “backward,” Miss Richards maintains high expectations for him and offers encouragement. She gives him his first passing grade, a “C,” for the report card category “Desire To Learn.” When she discovers C.T.’s ability to draw wildlife, she supports the development of his talent: “Your drawing is getting better all the time.” When C.T.’s best friend, Tanya, contracts viral pneumonia, Miss Richards is right at the child’s bedside with the doctor, trying to nurse her back to health. In *Her Twelve Men*, a recent widow, Jan Stewart, in her first teaching assignment, is the first female teacher at The Oaks, an all boys’ boarding school. She is in charge of twelve 10-year-old boys in the classroom and in the dormitory. The one scene depicting her classroom instruction is not particularly successful. The boys are mischievous and rowdy during a reading lesson, and many laugh at student Bobby’s mispronunciations. She ends up assigning one boy, Kevin, the task of writing 500 times the sentence: “I must not be a clown in class.” Her relationship with the boys, however, does not rest on her lack of pedagogical expertise. It is her other actions as a dorm mother that endear her to her boys. One evening Bobby complains of a stomach ache, but he is really feeling homesick. Instead of giving him medicine, Mrs. Stewart comforts him with some hot chocolate. In that moment Bobby recalls that once his mom made him hot chocolate when he had a bad cold, but he quickly adds, “it wasn’t any better than yours [hot chocolate] though.” He identifies her as being equal to his own mother. When Bobby is consistently disappointed by not receiving mail from his parents in the Riviera, Mrs. Stewart actually pretends to be his mother and writes encouraging letters to Bobby.
When one of Mrs. Stewart’s “twelve men” sets off the dorm’s sprinklers as a prank, Headmaster Barrett decides to punish all the boys because they refuse to squeal on the mischief maker, a new boy named Dick Oliver. In front of the boys, Mrs. Stewart challenges the unfairness of his decision, but he overrules her objection. When Dick Oliver fractures his leg, Dr. Barrett orders her to accompany the boy to his home in Texas. Dick does not have a mother, and his father often travels on business. Dick asks Mrs. Stewart to stay on, and she agrees with the support of Dr. Barrett. Mr. Oliver becomes so impressed with how she takes care of Dick that he proposes marriage to her. On the last day of school, her 12 boys present her with a brand new coffee pot as a going-away present. Her old coffee pot was always temperamental, and they identify her with her domestic role in the kitchen. At that moment, she decides not to marry Mr. Oliver and be the mother of Dick, but instead retains her teaching position which allows her to be the mother of 12 young men.

A generation of students of the small town of Liberty Hill have known “the impartial justice, the inflexible regulations, and the great calm neutral eyes of the same teacher—the terrible Miss Dove,” so says the voice-over narrator at the beginning of the 1955 film Good Morning, Miss Dove. Stern in manner and appearance, Miss Dove, however, is also beloved by her students for much of what she does for them outside her elementary geography classroom. When she is carried to the hospital suffering from a spinal tumor, former students visit her and in a series of flashbacks the viewing audience learns of her influence.

Maurice Levine, a Jewish boy from Poland, arrived in her class unable to speak English. Outside of class, Miss Dove helps him learn to read. When she discovers that other boys bully him on his walk to school, Miss Dove protects him by requiring him to carry her books as he accompanies her. Students ridicule his Jewish background by calling him “Rab,” and she helps
Maurice to be more welcomed by arranging with his parents a traditional Jewish dinner for his classmates in the Levine home. Maurice grows up to be a successful playwright, and he stands at Miss Dove’s bedside in the hospital.

Bill Holloway lived “on the wrong side of the tracks” with his alcoholic grandmother. We see Miss Dove taking care of him: he would do yard work at her house, and she would provide him with lunch. She pays for his graduation suit, and she is the only one to attend the funeral of his grandmother, who is killed in a traffic accident. As a young adult, Bill enters the Marines, rising to the rank of sergeant. He regularly writes to her, and Miss Dove follows his career with interest. Ultimately he becomes a policeman in Liberty Hill, and he is the first person to send her flowers in the hospital. When a colleague on the police force, who never had Miss Dove as a teacher, criticizes the meaning of her life as she lies near death, Bill Holloway defends her:

Fellow Officer: She couldn’t have had much of a life. Never married. No family. No kids. Never went nowhere. Why they tell me she’s never been more than a couple hundred miles from this burg, since the day she was born.

Officer Holloway: That’s right, but she’s been places you and I never heard of. She’s been more times around the world than you can count. Not much of a life, huh? No family. No kids. No kids! Boy, you’re really off your rocker. Kids—she has a 1,000 of them.

Many of her “kids,” her current and former students (now adults), crowd outside the hospital awaiting word about her health. When she survives the surgery with a good prognosis, the town bells chime, and people happily gather near her hospital window. She is the “mother” to a 1,000 children.

**Teaching Entails Sacrifice**

In 1932, Willard Waller identified the “favorable stereotype” of the teacher as “that of the self-sacrificing, gentle, kindly, self-effacing creature, overworked, underpaid, but never out of
patience and always ready to ‘give freely of her time and money’ for school purposes” (p. 419). Waller saw this “idealization” as representing “the community idea of what a teacher ought to be” (p. 419). In 1952, Boston University’s Chancellor declared that the teacher “must be not only thoroughly intelligent and intensely devoted to his work, but he must also be long-suffering and patient in his spirit and method of service” (Marsh, p. 10). In the postwar era, the popular media perpetuated this self-sacrificing image of the teacher.

The film *The Corn Is Green* (1945) connects teaching and mothering with sacrifice. In the late 19th century, Miss Moffat arrives in a Welsh village to educate illiterate, young miners. When refused the use of a building, she then conducts classes in her own home. To defray the costs to the families of young men, who lose earning potential in the mines so as to attend her school, Miss Moffat gives these families a stipend. Among one of these miners is a promising young student, Morgan Evans, and Miss Moffat devotes most of her time over two years teaching him English composition, history, Latin, Greek, etc., and she effectively prepares him for winning a scholarship to Oxford University. An orphan, Morgan, lost much of his family in a mining accident, and Miss Moffat becomes a surrogate mother intellectually by building upon the rudimentary English education Morgan had learned from his father. When Bessie, daughter of Miss Moffat’s housekeeper, Mrs. Watty, seduces Morgan and becomes pregnant by him, Bessie threatens to derail his chances for Oxford largely because she resents Miss Moffat’s discipline and education. Miss Moffat then pays her “hush money,” but once the child is born Bessie wants to leave the baby with Morgan and marry someone else. Mrs. Watty proposes that Miss Moffat adopt the baby, and she agrees to do so without telling Morgan, to preserve his educational future. When Morgan accidentally learns from the village squire that he is the father, he wants to marry Bessie and/or provide for his baby, but Miss Moffat tells him his
responsibility lies “to the world,” to accept the scholarship to Oxford and to go on to accomplish great things, including to help improve the lives of other Welsh miners. Miss Moffat has intellectually nurtured Morgan, and now she will physically raise and teach his child. Her mothering and teaching will continue at an even greater sacrifice, but it is a sacrifice willingly embraced on behalf of her favored student and for goals beyond herself.

Miss Dove’s entrance into the teaching profession begins with personal sacrifice. When her banker father suddenly dies of a heart attack, she learns from his business partner that her father embezzled over 11,000 dollars. Although not obligated to pay her father’s debt, she does so to preserve his reputation. Her life of privilege ends. She does not return to school and tearfully declines a marriage proposal from her Princeton boyfriend, so she can take the position of a teacher to pay back her father’s debt without any scandal. This sacrifice is further intensified by her not telling her boyfriend the reason why she declines his proposal. Dedicated to teaching and to her students, Miss Dove is in turn willing to make further personal sacrifices. When she becomes seriously ill at school, she initially refuses to be sent to the hospital because the state proficiency exams are next week and the fifth grade is “weak” on the winds and the tides. Ultimately she acquiesces to her doctor’s recommendations, but evidently Miss Dove regularly thinks of her pupils at Cedar Grove Elementary School before herself.

The caring, sacrificial aspect of the teacher identity is similarly emphasized in other postwar portrayals, including those on television and radio. In *Leave It To Beaver*, Theodore’s second grade teacher, Miss Canfield, explains to him that “a good teacher is like a candle—consumes itself to light the way for others.” To help his students succeed on an astronomy exam re-test, Mr. Peepers stays up all night, despite a worsening cold, to revise his notes for a

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class review.\textsuperscript{13} Perceiving the journalistic promise of one of her university students, Instructor Stone in \textit{Teacher's Pet} decides to devote her personal time outside of class to help him with his writing. When Miss Brooks believes that a man is destitute and starving, she abandons buying a formal dress for a school dance and instead purchases some food for him.\textsuperscript{14} She extends an “ethic of care” beyond the realm of Madison High School (Noddings, 1993). These teachers, furthermore, make such sacrifices while earning a low salary. Mr. Peepers can only afford to live in a rented room next to a railroad track, and Miss Brooks regularly struggles to pay overdue bills. For example, a collection agency for Sherry’s department store wants to deduct 25 dollars from Miss Brooks’s salary and inform her employer regarding an unpaid six-year-old Easter purchase.\textsuperscript{15} When she only has 76 cents saved for a vacation, Miss Brooks joins her students Harriet, Walter, and Stretch in the taxidermy business to earn extra money.\textsuperscript{16}

Miss Brooks’s “ethic of care” also often required sacrificing her professional advancement and independence, which might have helped financially. When she thinks Mr. Boynton is ill at home, Miss Brooks is willing to forgo attending a teachers’ convention to nurse him.\textsuperscript{17} Supporting her relationship with Mr. Boynton is more important than career development. When Clay City High School offers her a teaching position, Miss Brooks declines it because no opening exists for Mr. Boynton as a biology teacher.\textsuperscript{18} To pursue her career avidly would have been to engage in a competition leading to social isolation, without a “web” of

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Mister Peepers}, February 1, 1953.

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Our Miss Brooks} (tv), “Mr. Whipple,” November 21, 1952.

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Our Miss Brooks} (radio), April 22, 1951.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., June 19, 1949.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., November 12, 1950.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., March 27, 1949.
relationships (Gilligan, 2002, p. 69). On one of her birthdays Miss Brooks intends to purchase an alligator purse for herself. In the course of the day when colleagues and students ask for money, however, she never denies a request and ends up short of funds. By privileging the maintenance of relationships, caring for others could entail having one’s own concerns met last or not at all (Ryan & Terzian, in press, 2009).

As in a parent-child relationship, the caring connection teachers have with students is reciprocal but “[t]he contributions of teachers and students are necessarily unequal” (Noddings, 1992, p. 108). The teacher not only shares more knowledge and experience, but ultimately sacrifices a bit more to maintain the caring relation. Miss Brooks never wavered in her advocacy for others, and her students often asked her to represent their interests to the school administration. When the building has insufficient heat during the winter, the basketball team needs more uniforms, and the domestic science class has a broken sewing machine, she willingly takes these grievances to the principal. Harriet Conklin, the principal’s daughter, pleads, “Miss Brooks, it’s up to you to make conditions in this school livable.” Students nominate Miss Brooks as their spokesperson to object to Mr. Conklin’s “carelessness codes,” the petty fines he has instituted for minor, if not non-existent, infractions of the rules. Walter expresses the students’ dependence on their English teacher and momentarily confers masculine power upon her: “You are the knight we have chosen to slay the dragon.” Miss Brooks preferred to avoid confrontation with the principal, but she still represented others’ interests and thus exemplified the prevalent Hollywood image of a “good” teacher, who “gets personally involved with students, learns from those students, and has an antagonistic relationship with

19 Ibid., October 24, 1948.
20 Ibid., January 9, 1949.
21 Ibid., February 12, 1956.
administrators” (Dalton, 2004, p. 88). Although this advocacy for others placed this female teacher in a somewhat privileged role, Miss Brooks’s maternal “ethic of care” told audiences that good teachers should privilege emotional validation over professional advancement (Ryan & Terzian, in press, 2009).

Sometimes a teacher’s interest in his/her students and professional dedication involves personal risk. In the college musical Good News (1947), Prof. Burton Kennyon intervenes in the romantic lives of two students, who are facing a series of obstacles, and he facilitates the success of their relationship. In High School Confidential! (1958), English teacher and counselor, Miss Arlene Williams worries about her aggressive, challenging new student, Tony Baker. Her concern leads to visiting his home, and when Tony telephones her in the middle of the night for help, she is at first reluctant because of the lateness, but agrees to his request. When she arrives at his house, Miss Williams is roughed up by some drug dealers and is held against her will as she intervenes to save another student from deepening drug addition. In Monster on the Campus (1958), paleontology professor Dr. Blake even sacrifices his own life for the sake of knowledge. When Dr. Blake discovers that he is the serial killer on campus because of being accidentally contaminated with radioactive plasma from a coelacanth, he asks to be shot by the police once he intentionally injects himself with the contaminated blood and transforms into a Mr. Hyde-like creature before witnesses. Among his last words, Dr. Blake states, “It’s the savage in modern man that science must meet and defeat if humanity is to survive.” Unfortunately, his sacrifice seems somewhat misguided and unnecessary. His suicide does not destroy the knowledge or the effects of the radioactivity, and his death may not be a just punishment because he did not commit murder with the full consent of his will. Yet, as a professor of science he feels obliged to make the sacrifice.
Promoting a Moral Code

Embodying such moral standards, teachers then establish the authority to further guide their students about right and wrong. Duane Grobman, II (2002) points out that in the film image of the teacher, parents are generally either absent or ineffectual, so that the teacher becomes “the primary adult who helps students make meaningful connections in their lives” (p. 339). However, despite the active involvement of Theodore Cleaver’s parents in the Leave It To Beaver television series, Theodore’s teachers still have a leading role in his moral guidance. When Miss Canfield explains to Theodore why she had to take him to the principal for bringing a dog to school, she regards herself as a protector leading him towards virtue: “Well, if a teacher can keep you out of little troubles now, there’s a good chance you’ll keep out of bigger troubles later on.”22 When other students tease Theodore about his friendship with a girl, the problem escalates into a fight, and the next day Miss Landers articulates a moral code for their interactions by explaining that everyone in her class are as members of one family, that there is nothing wrong with a boy and a girl liking each other, and that as family members students need to demonstrate kindness and respect. If they do so, she adds, “you’ll be taking a big step toward becoming … the kind of men and women we want you to be.”23 The viewing audience rarely witnesses Miss Landers’s academic instruction, but this was a morality lesson not to be missed. The teacher can also introduce to young students the consideration of societal ethics. Mrs. Anna wants the children of the king of Siam to understand the injustice of slavery: “Sometimes things can’t be just a question of what we want … but of what is right.” Through moral inquiry, the teacher has the power to influence the way students see themselves and their world.


Such moral instruction continues beyond the formative years of early childhood. At North Manual High School, Mr. Dadier’s “Jack and the Beanstalk” lesson not only reveals his teaching expertise and students’ wondering inquiry, but this class discussion also becomes a forum for students to consider the responsibility and consequences for their own actions. In a university lecture, Dr. Blake is not only interested in teaching scientific principles, but moral ones as well. He tells his undergraduates:

Man is not only capable of change … but Man alone, among all living creatures, can choose the direction…. Man can use his knowledge to destroy all spiritual values and reduce the race to bestiality or he can use his knowledge to increase his understanding to a point far beyond anything now imaginable.

When Dr. Blake later discovers that Man’s introduction of gamma rays into the natural environment brings out bestiality, the film Monster on the Campus expresses Cold War concerns about radiation and annihilation. Similarly, college president Dr. William T. Hall in The Halls of Ivy alludes to the atomic and nuclear threat when articulating the significance of friendship:

Our own little friendships may seem unimportant, but if everyone cultivates his own and seeks new ones the spread of good will, like ripples on a pond, may extend beyond the limits of our vision and go far toward averting the dissolution of my world and yours in a blast of hate…. Living as we are today in the shadow of a man-made cloud, shaped like a poisonous toadstool, it behooves us as individuals to see that friendship doesn’t become the sole concern of … war motto publishers and sofa cushion embroiderers. 24

Rarely, however, do these popular media representations of teachers directly confront contemporary issues, but if and when they do, it is often in the context of a moral message.

In The Halls of Ivy when a Chinese student leaves Ivy College because of students’ “prejudice” and “snobbery,” Dr. Hall addresses everyone at chapel. Rather than advocating “tolerance…. [which] seems to indicate a condescension,” Dr. Hall argues that:

… intelligent understanding is as essential to our study of human relationship as it is to our comprehension of … Latin or science. We must learn not only the meaning of

democracy, but its application and practice or in after years our boast of a superior way of life will be a sham, and Ivy College will have failed in its primary function—a preparation for life…. Ladies and gentlemen of Ivy, the human race is not an exclusive club with a selective membership. We are all members from birth. True, it has both active and associate members, and it is up to each of us to provide our own classification, but I consider it one of the most important functions of education so to instruct you in the humanities that when your membership in this human society has ended the recording secretary may mark you “paid in full.”

Dr. Hall espouses the moral function of higher education to facilitate democratic principles, although he does not clarify what he means by “active and associate members” and the reasons for making a “classification.” Through this 1950 episode focusing on a Chinese student, *The Halls of Ivy* program could be obliquely addressing the segregation of blacks, thus in an unusual moment referencing a controversial contemporary issue. In a subsequent episode, Dr. Hall refuses to accept a much-needed gift to the college of 500,000 dollars when the donor stipulates that her money should not be used as scholarships for students of “certain races and creeds.”

Although the 1950s saw criticism of public education for its apparent “progressive” model and assertions to follow a more “back-to-basics” emphasis on math and science, such curricular debates are largely missing from these popular media depictions of teachers and their classrooms. In *High School Confidential!* (1958), however, the issue of educational philosophy is raised when Principal Robinson and English teacher Arlene Williams identify themselves as progressive educators, who do not believe that Santo Bello High School has a serious drug problem. The principal informs the police commissioner, “Mr. Burroughs, please understand. Miss Williams, like many of us, believes in the progressive theory that there is no such thing as a bad boy or girl.” Commissioner Burroughs then recounts how three years ago an Indiana high

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school did not seem to have a drug problem, but then the death of a 13-year-old, addicted to marijuana and heroine, brought to light that 285 of the 1200 high school students were using illicit drugs. When the commissioner states, “I don’t know whether they followed your progressive theories or not” and the film depicts drug dealing and addiction at Santo Bello High School, progressivism does seem to be attacked as “permissivism.” Yet two model middle-class parents are also shown to be clueless about their daughter’s addiction, and it is the progressive teacher Miss Williams, who knows more about the situation and endangers her own life to save the girl from spiraling downward. In the final scene of the film, Miss Williams is riding happily in a convertible with this cured student, and the voice-over narrator declares how the dealers are in prison or reform school and that Miss Williams “will teach in a school that has cleansed itself of its ugly problem.” The intervention of a progressive teacher leads to success.

The film *Bright Road* metaphorically represents the power of the teacher to transform students’ lives. On the last day of the school year, the students gather around a cocoon C.T. has brought to the classroom, and as they watch the butterfly emerge, Miss Richards as their fourth grade teacher also embodies her Sunday schoolteacher role in promoting morality and spirituality. She alludes to the resurrection after the death of C.T.’s best friend Tanya and implies that the changes the caterpillar makes are comparable to the changes the students have made since the academic year began in September:

Think of it. Last September he was just a little old caterpillar crawling along the ground. Now he’s coming awake after a long winter’s sleep. A beautiful change is taking place. He’s being born all over again, just as you and I will be born again someday and everyone we’ve ever known or loved [looks at C.T.]. We don’t know what it will be like any more than the caterpillar did. And so when the butterfly spreads its wings and flies away, we have to remember that we’ve been very lucky. For here today we have a wonderful promise of things to come.

Appropriate for the last day of school, Miss Richards notes how with endings there are new beginnings. Miss Richards has been instrumental in “resurrecting” C.T. Other teachers labeled
him as “backward,” but she had faith in him and nurtured his abilities. Previously indifferent about school, C.T. in bringing the cocoon inside the classroom has literally and figuratively made school a life-affirming place for transformation. A boy accustomed to repeating grade levels due to academic failure, C.T. earns not only an “A” in mathematics but earns a new lease on life with a new sense of his own worth. Like the butterfly, he has arisen to new heights. Such is the influence of a caring teacher.

The postwar image of the teacher is essentially very positive, and this aligns with other Cold War aims. Historian Herbert Kliebard (1987) asserts that upon the United States’ entrance into World War Two “criticism of American society slipped out of vogue in favor of a wave of patriotism occasioned by an external threat of aggression” (pp. 207-208). In the postwar era with the new external threat of Soviet-style communism, this patriotism continued and incorporated the “idealized” teacher as a noble figure: to portray publicly a negative image of the teacher would be un-American. Despite the largely favorable portrayal of Mr. Dadier, Darryl F. Zanuck, Vice President of Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation, was concerned that the negative depiction of American public schools in MGM’s *Blackboard Jungle* “would be welcomed with open arms by the Communists” (Perlstein, 2000, p. 420), and U.S. Ambassador to Italy, Clare Boothe Luce, who similarly worried about America’s image abroad, asked for *Blackboard Jungle* to be removed from the 1955 Venice Film Festival (Perlstein, 2000).

According to Joel Spring (1992), anti-communism in the 1950s also “made advertisers wary of sponsoring anything that might suggest an attack on the American Way of Life” (p. 165). In the 1954 Senate hearings on television and juvenile delinquency, Joseph Heffernan, Vice President of NBC, declared that children’s programming would aim “to convey the commonly accepted moral, social, and ethical ideals characteristic of American life” (Spring, 1992, p. 191). The
image of the teacher as a moral role model coincided with media’s vision of America as a shining “city upon a hill” (Winthrop, 1838/1985, p. 49).

The scarcity of scenes of classroom instruction in these postwar television and film images also perhaps suggests that the audience and the general public did not need to see a teacher in the act of instruction because having pedagogical expertise was taken for granted. In a survey published in 1951, junior-high-school students rated a teacher’s subject matter knowledge next to last in the qualities that comprise the “best” teacher. Most of the higher ranking qualities related to educators having a positive rapport with students (Mazzei, 1951). In 1955, another survey reported how undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Alabama also found that “friendly relations of teacher and learner” facilitated their studies (Brooks & Davis, 1955, pp. 333-334). Recognizing that educational relationships matter, Santa Barbara College’s teacher training program focused on helping future teachers interact democratically with students, parents, and peers (Irish & Byers, 1952), and these popular media representations likewise primarily depict teachers outside of academic content in relationships with others through their moral values. In the immediate postwar years, several articles in the Teachers College Record urged teachers as role models to be active in the community and politics (Gans, 1945, 1946; Elsbree, 1946; Gillen, 1946; Young, 1946; Boykin, 1957), but in these media depictions teachers’ social relationships were generally within the school worlds. Despite attacks in the press about public schools, a survey, conducted by Elmo Roper and reported in the October 16, 1950, issue of Life magazine, declared that 71.6% of the people interviewed were “quite satisfied” with their local schools (Shapiro, 1952, p.10). Decades later, with additional criticisms in the news media about the performance of public schools, David Tyack and Larry Cuban (1995) similarly acknowledge that most parents are happy with
the professionalism of the staff and the academic standards of the schools where their children
attend. As a society, however, we may need to be reassured that teachers are also caring and
generous, and this is the image reinforced by the entertainment media. A teacher, after all, is
more than just a progressive facilitator of students’ inquiry or an essentialist transmitter of
knowledge. Teachers and schools have a significant role in fostering ethical citizens in our
democracy. Such is the moral narrative told about teachers in the popular media in the postwar
era.
CHAPTER 6
DEFINING THE IDENTITIES OF FEMALE AND MALE TEACHERS

Because teachers and schools participate within larger social structures and ideologies, which include gender role expectations, the professional identities of male and female teachers are constructed differently. Scholars have noted how school governance reflects the patriarchal structures often seen in families and corporations (Griffin, 1997 citing Grumet, 1988 and Hall, 1966; Blount, 2000), and that thus a power differential is accentuated between male principals and female teachers. Scholarship then has focused on the subordinated identity of female teachers:

The choice of teaching as a career, the lack of autonomy and control, low status and salary, the blurring of boundaries of home and school, teacher isolation, evaluations, and problems in career advancement are all part of this gendered experience. (Griffin, 1997, p.8)

There is, however, a “gendered experience” for male teachers too, who do not possess administrative power. Popular media in the late 1940s through the 1950s depicts the gender role constraints for both male and female teachers within this patriarchy.

Female Educators and Gender Role Expectations

The image of teachers in radio, television, and film in the immediate post-World War Two era primarily coincides with the actual employment of men and women in the profession at this time. In the media sample for this study, depictions of female teachers were usually at the elementary school level. According to the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (1960), for the years 1949-1950, 1953-1954, and 1955-1956, female teachers (including librarians, guidance counselors, and mental health staff) outnumbered male teachers on average of about three to one in elementary and secondary schools (Table 7, p. 14). For men entering the education profession in the postwar, the administrative positions were often more attractive than teaching, and the number of women as administrators also dropped significantly in the 1950s.
(Tyack & Strober, 1981; Perlstein, 2000). In this media study, men were more likely to be found as college and university professors, and the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (1960) for the same years reported that in higher education male teachers outnumbered female teachers from about three to one to almost four to one. Men were steadily entering the profession at all levels, but they particularly dominated as “instructional staff members” at colleges and universities (Table 7, p. 14). In the media representations, women were rarely seen as teachers in higher academia, and if they were, it was not surprising to see them in less prestigious positions. Erica Stone, was a university journalism instructor, not a tenure-track professor in the 1958 film *Teacher’s Pet*.

Although the majority of both male and female teachers in these media depictions were single, male teachers were more likely to be married, and this representation of teachers’ marital status corroborates less with actual teachers’ experiences. Historically, more married women increasingly entered teaching in the postwar era (Rury, 1989; Blount, 2000), yet the media representations still projected images of female teachers leaving the profession upon marriage. In the 1945 film *The Corn Is Green*, Miss Moffat is a middle-aged teacher in the late 19th century, who argues that she is unmarried by choice. However, in adopting Morgan’s child, Miss Moffat becomes domesticated into motherhood, yet she does so without marriage, and she will continue to teach. Progressing further into the post-World War Two era, female teachers in the media must choose between a career or marriage with family. In the film *Curley*, Miss Evans gets married in her classroom at Lakeview Elementary School, and the young boy Curley is upset about losing a “good teacher.” In the film *Her Twelve Men*, at the end of the school year, Jan Stewart plans to leave her teaching at The Oaks School For Boys upon marriage to Mr. Oliver, the widowed father of one of her students. When her pupils affectionately give her a
coffee pot as a going-away present, she decides to stay at the school and not marry Mr. Oliver. Both marrying Mr. Oliver and staying at the school is not an option for Jan Stewart. In the *Our Miss Brooks* radio and television program, Miss Brooks romantically pursues biology teacher Mr. Boynton, and both she and other characters in the program presume the end of her career upon marriage. Miss Brooks declares her intentions to Mr. Boynton: “Sometimes I wonder if all this effort [in the classroom] is worth anything, if I couldn’t expend all this time and energy in another direction: say making a pleasant home for some man the way any normal woman does.”

Everybody, except Mr. Boynton, understands her goals. When student Harriet Conklin erroneously believes that Connie is about to marry Mr. Boynton, she assumes that “Miss Brooks can do what she always said she’d do: quit her job and raise a family.”

Although more married women entered the labor force (Eisenmann, 2006), the popular media reasserted a largely conservative message regarding female gender roles that privileged the domestic sphere. A 1945 survey by the American Federation of Teachers found that school systems in Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Minneapolis, St. Paul, Toledo, and Philadelphia did not discriminate against married female teachers and generally offered maternity leave (“Policies Concerning Married Women Teachers in Thirteen Large U.S. Cities,” 1945). In 1946, Professor Karl W. Bigelow of Teachers College, Columbia University, declared that it is “indefensible to forbid teaching by married women, including mothers,” yet in support of his argument he furthered traditional gender roles for women by defining teaching as appropriately “feminine” through incorporating motherhood and domesticity as good professional preparation. Professor Bigelow added that the exclusion of married women and

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1 *Our Miss Brooks* (radio), February 11, 1951.

2 Ibid., January 22, 1950.
mothers as teachers “not only represents a discrimination that has lost any sanction in other feminine occupations, but it excludes from the schools women with a type of experience that is likely to enhance their competence” (p. 388). In discussing conflicting economic and ideological trends for women in the postwar U.S., Linda Eisenmann (2006) suggests: “As women increasingly joined the workforce, cultural expectations for full-time domesticity rose throughout the Cold War period” (p. 27). Depicting maternal, nurturing teachers for young elementary school students, the media projected teaching in school as practice for the roles of wives and mothers in the home.

As a result, female teachers in the popular broadcast media and film were valued less for their academic knowledge and instructional ability, and more for their domesticity. In Her Twelve Men, Jan Stewart is not particularly successful in the classroom with the boys misbehaving, but her students come to like her because of her role as their housemaster, and an initially critical colleague, Mr. Hargrave, ends up admiring her for the caring relationship she develops with the boys. Jan Stewart allows the boys to keep a puppy in the dormitory despite the school prohibitions; she teaches the boys how to dance formally; she makes a comforting cup of hot chocolate for a homesick boy; she helps a student to impress his parents with his piano playing, and she defends her students against the injustice of the headmaster’s punishment. Once fellow teacher Mr. Hargrave learns that Jan Stewart has been writing letters to a lonesome student neglected by his parents in the persona of the boy’s mother, Mr. Hargrave dramatically kisses her for the first time. It is her maternal nurturing that makes this teacher a worthy prospect as a future wife.

Although Miss Connie Brooks in the Our Miss Brooks radio/television program is acknowledged by other characters to be an excellent English teacher, her expertise in classroom
instruction is not exhibited, but her excellence is demonstrated domestically. Mr. Jason Brill, principal of Clay City High School, says she is “the best English teacher at Madison,” but as a woman Connie was still expected to be socially subservient to men. At the opening of the December 13, 1953, episode, the male narrator reveals: “Well, a couple of times a year, our Miss Brooks, who teaches English at Madison High School, is obliged to invite her principal and his wife over for dinner.” It is difficult to imagine Mr. Boynton under the same obligation. Rather, he, too, asks Miss Brooks to “play hostess” to his parents, when they arrive in town for a visit. By defining her femininity through an “ethic of care” in the home, this radio program domesticates a successful career woman. When Miss Brooks forgoes teaching on a Monday to take care of the siblings of one of her students, whose mother is in the hospital, Mr. Boynton, the biology teacher remarks, “Seeing you taking care of those children and then tucking them in for their nap after lunch made me feel this is where you belong. Miss Brooks, did you ever think of giving up your career as a teacher?” Miss Brooks consistently pursues her goal to marry Mr. Boynton, and Mrs. Conklin, the principal’s wife, recognizes that appearing domestic will help in this endeavor. When she invites Miss Brooks and Mr. Boynton to their lakeside cottage to celebrate the Conklins’ wedding anniversary, Mrs. Conklin wants to create a positive vision of marriage for Mr. Boynton. She asks Miss Brooks to prepare the dinner so as to “show … [her] domesticity as well.” When the school district’s psychologist presumes that Miss Brooks is “a happily married housewife … [and] … the mother of a couple of young children,” she interprets

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3 Ibid., March 27, 1949.
5 Ibid., November 14, 1948.
6 Ibid., August 21, 1949.
this as a supreme compliment: “Why you dear man!” The psychologist defines Connie’s identity not by her own professional competence or intellectual acumen, but in a supportive, domestic relationship to others. In this radio program, domesticity was the ultimate goal for women, and Connie resolutely pursued it (Ryan & Terzian, in press, 2009).

All important in this courtship towards marriage is the cultivation of appearances, and the female teachers are judged according to physical allure. When Curley mistakenly believes that a stern, older woman will be his new elementary teacher, he describes her as a “picklepuss” and as a “scarecrow.” Based on her appearance and manner, Curley and the other boys plan to play pranks on their new teacher on her first day of school “to get rid of her.” Upon discovering that their actual teacher is nice, young, and pretty, they become remorseful. When Mr. Gannon first enters the university journalism classroom, he assumes that one woman wearing unfashionable clothes, horned-rimmed glasses, and her hair pulled back in a bun must be the professor. Upon meeting university instructor Erica Stone, portrayed by actress Doris Day, the camera angle replicates his male gaze and focuses on the instructor’s curvaceous legs, which Mr. Gannon admires. Daniel Perlstein (2000) quotes the script for Blackboard Jungle, which sexualizes Miss Hammond as she walks up to the auditorium stage: “Several thousand eyes follow her progress. He[r] skirt, too tight perhaps, rides up over her shapely calves” (p. 410). Similarly, when the film audience first meets the high school English teacher Miss Arlene Williams in High School Confidential!, it is from the rear view as she writes on the blackboard and a new student, Tony Baker, whistles at her. Referring to her as “doll,” Tony subsequently propositions her: “Why don’t we cut out and go to your pad and live it up, huh?” Virtually every morning student Walter Denton greets Miss Brooks with some flattering remark. At lunch in the school

7 Ibid., March 13, 1955.
cafeteria, Walter gushes: “Welcome aboard oh most appetizing morsel of Madison’s faculty…. Your apple-cheeked, cherry-lipped countenance is like meat and drink to my beauty-starved senses.”

So objectified by the male gaze, in Walter’s eyes Miss Brooks has become consumable. In a less elegant manner, Principal Brill refers to Miss Brooks as a “pretty bit of baggage.” Well aware of these physical judgments, Miss Brooks spends time cultivating her appearance, so she can become married. One morning she says to her landlady at one breakfast, “I’ll just have some fruit juice and coffee, Mrs. Davis. If I don’t watch my figure now, Mr. Boynton never will.” Rarely does a male teacher’s appearance become such an intrinsic part of his professional identity, although in Margie (1946), the high school girls do fawn over their handsome new French teacher, Mr. Fontayne, and one of his students, Margie, eventually marries him. The young, attractive Mr. Fontayne certainly countered the stereotype of the old male professor with the pince-nez spectacles and bowtie, the portrait of Prof. Brooks in The Ray Milland Show on television.

**Expectations for Male Educators**

Although in the popular media female teachers are cast as maternal, male teachers are rarely depicted as paternal, loving fathers in the modern sense. Mary Dalton (2005) observes that in these representations:

women teachers are forced into divided lives in which they must focus solely on the welfare of their students to be considered ‘good’ teachers…. a condition that is not the case for male teachers in the movies or in television comedies…. [M]ale teachers are allowed to have happy, full lives outside of the classroom and to be heroes at school. (pp. 100-101).

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8 Ibid., March 26, 1950.

9 Ibid., February 13, 1949.

10 Ibid., March 20, 1949.
The male teacher’s professional identity is not defined through a domestic role, except perhaps as the assumed head of the household he is often the administrative head of the school. Jackie Blount (2000) notes that in education, “[m]en typically hold fatherlike positions in school administration or coaching” (p. 83). In a patriarchal system, men are also more likely to be seen in higher paying, more prestigious positions in academia, as principals and college professors. Thus, in the gendered representation of educators, schools take on the identity of the domestic sphere, where female teachers are in a “domicile governed by a mother (matriarchy) [that] is a more restricted, limited, and private domain than that of a father (patriarchy), which can extend from an individual household to a nation-state” (Enomoto, 2000, p. 385). In radio, television, and film, sometimes the female teachers are subject to oppositional male principals exerting their royal authority over their realm of the school.

In the first half of the 20th century, administrative progressives implemented bureaucratized hierarchies to oversee teachers. The consequences of this development persisted well into the postwar era. David Tyack and Elisabeth Hansot (1982) observe how the “bureaucratization of education” and “feminization of teaching” created unequal gender relations in schools between male administrators and female teachers (p. 181). The dependence on outside experts for curriculum materials and assessment through standardized testing deskilled many teachers, who merely implemented routine tasks and endured intense workloads with less discretionary time. Appealing to women’s “ethic of care” as part of their gender identity, predominantly male administrators could exact more work, while limiting predominantly female teachers’ advancement professionally (Hargreaves, 1994; P. Shannon, 1989; Apple, 1986; Tyack & Hansot, 1982).
This gender hierarchy informed much of teacher-administrator relationships represented in the popular media in the postwar. In *Our Miss Brooks*, Principal Conklin capitalizes on Miss Brooks’s “ethic of care” by expecting her to assume responsibilities beyond teaching. What begins as voluntary service to others is transformed into servitude, as the principal “colonizes” this teacher’s personal time with public, professional work (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 109). Conklin often treats Miss Brooks as his own secretary. In a series of episodes, he expects her to help him write a speech for the PTA, to type his teacher convention notes, and to review other reports at his home. Mr. Conklin also burdens Miss Brooks with sundry extracurricular activities in addition to her regular duty as advisor to the school newspaper, *The Madison Monitor*. At “no increase in salary,” the principal places her in charge of the student bank and appoints her the school safety advisor. When the civics teacher becomes ill, Miss Brooks not only takes over her classes, but she must also supervise Student Government Day, when the high school students manage the city. The principal even delegates the buying of a new school bus to Miss Brooks and complicates the task by giving her only 130 dollars for the purchase. Mr. Conklin directed both when and how her “ethic of care” would be manifested (Ryan & Terzian, in press, 2009). The principal at Madison High also exemplified a general historical trend in overworking teachers to the point of exhaustion (Tyack & Hansot, 1982; Hoffman, 1981). Because “the temporal structures of teaching resemble the routines of domesticity” in being “[f]luid and ubiquitous” (Grumet, 1988, p. 86), administrators can exploit

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14 Ibid., January 27, 1952.
15 Ibid., December 4, 1955.
this work pattern to exact more. Madeleine Grumet (1988) notes that “housework and children have required women to accept patterns of work and time that have no boundaries” (p. 86), and as a result, when female teachers’ professional identities in the media are defined through domesticity, the demands seem almost endless.

Male administrators in the popular media also assume absolute authority and expect compliance. At Madison High School, Mr. Conklin prides himself on his virtually absolute authority, as he informs Miss Brooks: “I happen to be the principal of this institution, and as I have pointed out in the past, it is within my power to make your life here either pleasant or extremely unpleasant.” Expressions of Conklin’s power include: forcing all faculty members to engage in a hobby, demanding that they arrive early for morning calisthenics, taking credit for Miss Brooks’s idea for starting a student police force at Madison, and threatening to close down the newspaper when Walter Denton prints an editorial about teachers being overworked. In *Her Twelve Men*, when Jan Stewart vehemently objects to Dr. Barrett punishing all the boys under her care when they refuse to inform on the one student who set off the ceiling sprinklers, Dr. Barrett angrily retorts to her: “And I will not allow insubordination from anyone!” In using the term “insubordination,” he equates his administrative authority to that of a military hierarchy, where orders are not to be questioned. As punishment, all the boys are soon scrubbing the gymnasium floor. Conklin similarly invokes the language of a monarch, in referring to himself as the “ruler” and “beloved dictator” of Madison High School. He “decrees” a non-fraternization policy between the opposite sexes to reduce the noise of conversation.

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16 Ibid., January 16, 1955.
18 Ibid., March 13, 1949; April 22, 1951.
19 Ibid., July 24, 1955.
controls teachers’ personal lives through an “edict” forbidding them from having their pictures taken by Mr. Laverne of Hollywood, a “notorious photographer” of “cheesecake pictures of cinema starlets.”

Such centralized decision-making power follows in the tradition of the authoritative school governance established by earlier administrative progressives in the early 20th century, when they adapted a corporate model of efficiency and accountability to schools (Tyack & Hansot, 1982).

In The King and I, Mrs. Anna’s “principal” is actually a hereditary monarch, who has hired her to teach his children about Western ways and knowledge. She declares that she is not his servant, but he does insist that she have her head lower than his, and she must campaign for a house of her own as promised, when the king initially requires her to live in the palace. When she helps him solve a diplomatic problem by suggesting he host a banquet to impress the British Ambassador, the king fulfills his promise and agrees to build her a separate home. The success of the banquet proves to the European visitors that the king is not a “barbarian.” Mrs. Anna becomes his teacher of European customs, but this also is not without risk. When the king is about to whip a runaway female slave, she prevents the beating by denouncing it as barbaric. Because of her “scientific” knowledge and assertiveness, other characters often address Mrs. Anna as “sir.” Although male power is occasionally challenged, traditional hierarchies are ultimately reaffirmed. For the widowed Mrs. Anna, her professional identity as a teacher becomes domesticated through sharing almost wifely advice with the king and her growing love for him. Whatever his shortcomings in her eyes, Mrs. Anna still sees him as the King of Siam, the ruler of the palace, the head of the household.

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20 Ibid., October 17, 1954.
In the postwar era, being an administrator was considered an educational position appropriate for a strong, masculine man. Blount (2000) cites a 1946 article in the *American School Board Journal* that praised the appointment of an appropriate male role model for superintendent:

The man selected could not be labeled as an effeminate being. He was a former collegiate athletic hero. His physique was comparable to any of the mythical Greek gods. He was truly the ultimate in manliness. The last, but not least in importance of his personal characteristics, was the fact that he was married. (citing Leonard, p. 92)

Marriage affirmed the heterosexuality and the domestic authority of the male educator and hence a worthy role model as an administrator leading a school. As witnessed by former governor Charley Johns’s chairmanship of the Florida Legislative Investigation Committee in the late 1950s, during the Cold War period homosexuality in education was considered as subversive to democratic ideals as communist infiltration and became reasons for teacher dismissals (Beutke & Litvack, 2000; Harbeck, 1997). In defining gender role expectations, contemporary media representations of schooling also addressed the masculinity of male educators.

Although male administrators in the popular media in the postwar era demonstrate their authority, male teachers wield little power, when power becomes a defining characteristic of masculinity. In a profession dominated by women, male teachers are seen as feminized and hence as weaker men. Daniel Perlstein (2000) observes how the film *Blackboard Jungle* continues “to raise questions” about the masculinity of high school English teacher Mr. Dadier (p. 409). Through the support of G.I. Bill, Mr. Dadier was an English major at a women’s college, and the principal at North Manual High School wonders whether he can speak loudly enough to “be heard at the back of a classroom” (Perlstein, 2000, p. 409). Perlstein points out that when Mr. Dadier brings in a tape recorder to class, Miller refers to it as a cosmetics case. A cynical male teacher at the school argues that their purpose is to contain the students, so that
“women for a few hours a day can walk around the city without getting attacked,” and yet how can Mr. Dadier be a protective male when he is savagely beaten by a gang of his students? Mr. Dadier, however, is able to save fellow teacher Miss Hammond from being raped by a student, and he does disarm the knife-wielding West and restore order to the domain of his classroom. In Our Miss Brooks, however, it is difficult ever to envision high school biology teacher Mr. Philip Boynton as physically assertive. Because Mr. Boynton is so engrossed in the activities of his lab and so lacking in social skills, Miss Brooks then must become the aggressor in the relationship because he rarely initiates anything.

On the middle school level, the soft-spoken, mild-mannered general science teacher Mr. Peepers is not the strong, masculine type, yet he does court the school nurse Nancy Remington and marries her. The popular press, however, did clearly distinguish that the actor Wally Cox was much more rugged than his portrayed character. Unlike Mr. Peepers, “this nice, decent little epitome of ineffectuality,” who is “handicapped by being as mild as a rabbit and as shy as a weeping willow,” New York Times writer Harry Gilroy further adds that Cox earns the very effectual sum of $1,500 per week (p. SM14). The majority of a Newsweek article demonstrates how Cox differs from Mr. Peepers by taking flying lessons, working on a metal lathe, dating regularly, playing handball, and riding his motorcycle (“The Real Mr. Peepers,” 1954). Although many articles want to point out similarities between Cox and his character, Cox, himself, appears eager to share also the differences, whether it is his interest in “internal combustion engines” or building his own house in Rockland County, New York (V. Adams, 1952, p. X9). For Look magazine he states, “I’m more physical than Mr. Peepers” (“Mr. Peepers Grows Bold,” 1953, p.49). The teacher Mr. Peepers may not be particularly masculine, but the
concerted effort not to underestimate the masculinity of the actor Cox suggests public perceptions and insecurities concerning the male teacher’s gender identity.

These concerns about sufficient masculinity seem to be heightened when the male teacher instructs younger children. From an historical perspective, Jackie Blount (2000) asserts that once teaching transformed into largely a woman’s profession in the middle of the 19th century, “the few men who remained in primary grade classrooms to challenge the new gender stereotypes, risked reputations as effeminate men,” and after World War Two school employment “became ever-more gender polarized” (p. 83, p. 92). In *Her Twelve Men*, elementary teacher Mr. Hargrave, portrayed by Robert Ryan, is almost over-masculinized so as to be an appropriate romantic match for Jan Stewart, portrayed by Greer Garson. Mr. Hargrave maintains more male power as a teacher in an elite boys’ school. He instructs the boys in horseback riding and has further authority as head of the lower school. Through his years of teaching experience, he has additional power in being able to influence novice teacher Jan Stewart with his practical advice. His gender orientation is made explicit with his dating of attractive women. The film also, no doubt, uses the persona of Robert Ryan, known for his “tough guy” depictions, to enhance the manliness of this elementary school teacher. The representation of Mr. Hargrave thus indicates an overcompensation of masculinity to thwart the perceived feminization of male teachers. Similarly in the film *Navajo* (1952), the white male elementary English teacher on the reservation is shown as rugged. He wears a cowboy hat and bomber jacket, gives a new student a pocket knife, and rescues a Native American guide caught in a trap of falling rocks. The media apparently project and reflect public concerns about male primary and secondary teachers as gender role models.
In depictions of male teachers in higher academia, the masculinity of the professors is not as much at issue. Perhaps because few female professors are shown at colleges and universities, teaching at this level is perceived as less feminized and so effeminate male professors or overly masculine male professors are not represented. People who teach on the college level are also judged as the leaders of their profession and are further valued for the kind of knowledge they possess (H. E. Jones, 1957). Knowledge is measured by the advanced degrees professors hold, and the association of the “ivory tower” with abstract, theoretical thinking is seen as more intellectually challenging than the type of thinking exercised by an elementary or secondary school teacher. Although this hierarchy of knowledge seems unfair, the public perception is that an elementary school teacher thinks on an “elementary” level, even though many a college professor would struggle to engage and manage a curious class of kindergartners. All of this cultural capital on the college level supports the authority of the male college professor, so essentially in the media his gender identity is not questioned in the way that male teachers are depicted in primary and secondary schools.

Yet because the “those who can do and those who can’t teach” assessment reigns in the public consciousness, male teachers in higher academia still have to prove their practical efficacy. Prof. Pomfritt in The Affairs of Dobie Gillis (1953) is not an effective, engaging teacher. He verbally insults Dobie, who offers a countering opinion about the acceptable use of language. Steadfast in his own views, Prof. Pomfritt subsequently lectures on the “proper use of ‘shall’ and ‘will’.” The professor is only partially redeemed when he prevents the dean from expelling Dobie, who he thinks is a promising writer. Prof. Pomfritt’s judgment is called into question, however, when he fails to recognize that Dobie’s “A” essay was plagiarized. This negative image of the male professor corresponds with Richard Hofstadter’s (1963) observation...
about much of the American public in the 1950s disliking and distrusting intellectuals. When intelligence has pragmatic relevance, however, the male professor can be respected. At first Dr. Barnes in *Apartment for Peggy* (1948) seems ineffectual in transmitting knowledge in his philosophy lecture, but when he gives students an opportunity to lead discussion through their own inquiry he becomes a much admired teacher. His caring concern for students includes sharing his home for student housing, lending his own books for their learning, and persuading a disillusioned student to complete his education. Such concern enacted demonstrates his personal and professional success. In the popular radio program *The Halls of Ivy*, Dr. Hall, President of Ivy College and an English professor, is also shown to be a “doer.” He is personally involved in helping several students determine career paths, and he is an effective fundraiser for the school. If the male teacher is competent in his discipline and is a “man of action,” then his masculinity remains intact in a profession deemed as “feminine.”

Although the profession of teaching may limit the male teacher’s expression of traditional masculinity, for female teachers the more constraining gender role expectations as wives and mothers means that their professional identity in the postwar era is even further circumscribed. A male teacher in the media is defined primarily by his profession and secondarily according to his single or married status. The female teacher, however, is professionally defined according to her maternal “ethic of care” and domesticity, so that teaching does not expand her sphere but it is instead incorporated into an already narrowly defined gender role. Her personal identity is articulated through a subordinate relation to her husband or future husband, and in consequence because her professional identity is fashioned through her personal one, the female teacher is relegated to a subordinate position within academia. Apparently, “androcentric social institutions,” such as schools, then “transform male-female difference into female disadvantage”
(Bem, 1993, p. 177). In the postwar era the popular media thus project and reinforce a rather conservative life narrative for both sexes, but especially for women.

Mary Dalton (2005) assesses the enduring impact of these media representations of teachers in relation to gender roles:

Commercial narratives not only tell women teachers how other people construct them and rearticulate them as characters on movie and television screens, these films and episodic programs also shape the way students and parents respond to teachers and the way teachers respond to public opinion in the construction of their own lives. *Our Miss Brooks* may seem dated and *Welcome Back, Kotter* may seem like a bit of nostalgic fluff, but these stories reproduce and reinforce larger, gendered patterns that cut across genre and era. This alone makes them meaningful and powerful narratives worthy of our consideration. (pp. 107-108)

When in a recent survey undergraduate sociology students inaccurately attributed higher professorial rank and educational attainment to male college teachers and lower ranks and education levels to female college instructors (Miller & Chamberlin, 2000), no doubt the media have contributed to the perpetuation of these gender stereotypes upon public perceptions (Miller & Chamberlin, 2000, citing Purcell & Stewart, 1990, and Tetenbaum & Pearson, 1989). The concluding chapter of this study not only summarizes findings, but also discusses the influence of these media narratives upon the professional identities of teachers themselves.
CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

Teachers’ Roles

In examining teacher images in literature, television and film, previous scholars discovered mostly negative stereotypes. The teacher was often portrayed as an outsider, not fully integrated into the community (Bulman, 2005; Foff, 1953). Female teachers were either stern, physically unattractive spinsters or young, pretty schoolmarms on the verge of marriage (Enger, 1974, summarizing Ames, 1930; Gurko, 1953; Foff, 1953). Male college professors were generally absent-minded and impractical (Enger, 1974, summarizing Belok, 1958; Belok, 1961; Lyons, 1962; Schuth, 1972; Umphlett, 1984). Teachers struggled financially (Erskine, 1951; Carpenter, 1960). Teachers had antagonistic relationships with principals (Enger, 1974, summarizing Charles, 1950; Trousdale, 1994; Swetnam, 1992; Wells & Serman, 1998; Dalton, 2004). Teachers could even be sexually depraved (Newman, 2001; Bauer, 1998; Polan, 1996; Farber & Holm, 1994a; Burbach & Figgins, 1993; Lyons, 1962).

In a positive profile, there was the teacher as a hero, but that image too had a negative undercurrent (Bulman, 2005; Weems, 2003). To highlight the teacher-hero, the majority of his/her colleagues were shown as ineffectual and pessimistic (Farhi, 1999). The teacher-hero was also able to “save” students without much teacher preparation or experience, an accomplishment thus de-professionalizing teacher education and certification standards (Considine, 1985). Because it was often a white, middle-class teacher “saving” disadvantaged students of color, this teacher image had implicit racism and racial superiority overtones (Wells & Serman, 1998; Lowe, 2001; Reyes & Rios, 2005). Despite the success of an individual teacher, the structural inequities within schools and society remained.
In the 1950s, however, there appears to be a more favorable adjustment in perceptions of the teacher. When scholars studied teacher images in the mid-20th century, they became more equally divided in seeing negative (Enger, 1974, summarizing Charles, 1950; Gurko, 1953; Schwartz 1960, 1963) and positive (Briggs, 1962; Kauffman, 1962; Nissman, 1965) representations, with some scholars providing mixed assessments (Erskine, 1951; Enger, 1974, summarizing Deegan, 1951; Foff, 1953). This variation suggests a shift in the postwar era from a primarily negative trend up until World War Two to a gradually improving depiction immediately after the war. Although in the postwar era certain teacher stereotypes continued, this study found the teacher image in radio, television, and film from 1945 to 1959 to be largely very positive across the different media and genres. Teachers were generous, self-sacrificing moral role models, who had mainly friendly, supportive relationships with their students. Miss Canfield and Miss Landers try to teach Beaver the difference between right and wrong and the value of an education. Mr. Peepers stays up all night preparing review notes to help his students succeed on a re-test. Very much involved in her students’ lives outside of class, Miss Brooks also represents their interests to Principal Conklin. Miss Dove helps a Jewish boy from Poland be accepted by his classmates. Dr. Hall addresses racism on the Ivy College campus. Dr. Barnes shares his home with a former veteran pursuing his higher education through the G. I. Bill. Miss Moffat adopts the “illegitimate” child of one of her students, so he can attend Oxford University on a scholarship. Miss Williams risks her life to help a student overcome drug addiction. Although the listening and viewing audiences rarely witnessed teachers’ academic instruction, their pedagogical expertise was evinced by their students’ achievements, verbally acknowledged by other characters, or regarded as a secondary component
of their professional identities. The entertainment media identified teachers very positively primarily through their actions outside the classroom.

Social and cultural contexts of the postwar United States could account for this favorable media image of the teacher. Other scholars have demonstrated how the teacher image evolved according to changing social, political, and economic environments (Briggs, 1962; Ehlers, 1992; Tan, 1999; Umphlett, 1984; Hinton, 1994; Weinstein, 1998; Grobman, 2002). The postwar era with dramatic social transformations—veterans entering higher education, the rise of suburbia, greater availability of consumer goods, baby boomer attendance in understaffed schools, increased Cold War tensions, school desegregation—these and other changes seem to have impacted the representation of teachers in the popular media. With the exception of the film *Bright Road* (1953), which depicts a black Southern school, teachers of color, however, were missing in these postwar era representations, where the mass media privileged white cultural perspectives and racial prejudice was rarely confronted. When issues of racism, juvenile delinquency, or drug addiction were raised in these media representations, teachers were usually demonstrated as effectively responding to such problems. A positive image of American teachers, moreover, aligned with Cold War propaganda of portraying a positive image of the United States. Showing teachers, as embodying and espousing morals, also provided a stability of tradition amid other economic and social changes. If progressive educational methods were under attack, the entertainment media assured the public that there were still dedicated teachers instructing youth to be responsible, ethical citizens. Under societal stresses, people turned to schools as trusted institutions to solve social problems and alleviate anxieties, but often the stability offered by schools was also through their conservative role in the social reproduction of existing norms rather than in transformation. Popular media representations of teachers, which
emphasized their social roles as supporters of established morals, coincided with schools’ apparent socially conservative function. Even the media’s reassertion of traditional gender roles, at a time when they were actually shifting, perhaps offered a comforting sense of familiarity.

**Depictions of Classroom Learning**

Conservatism and stability were also revealed in the rare scenes of classroom instruction in the films and television and radio programs analyzed in this study. Despite public criticism of progressivism and an ostensible shift in public educational policy towards an essentialist, “back-to-basics” transmission model of instruction, most of the depicted learning environments show teachers employing both progressive and essentialist strategies. The progressive “Jack and the Beanstalk” discussion in Mr. Dadier’s high school English class is preceded and followed by essentialist lessons with grammar and writing drills. University students learn about journalism by crafting their own articles, but Instructor Stone lectures about “the importance of some fundamental rules” and cites authorities such as Kipling and Pulitzer to substantiate her position as a source of knowledge. In Dr. Barnes’s philosophy class, students have the opportunity to share inquiries about the nature of the “good” in an extended conversation with each other, but Dr. Barnes initially planned a lecture. When teachers and students engage in inquiry, whether it is information-seeking, sense-making or wondering (Lindfors, 1999), instruction aligns with a progressive model. It is unusual, however, for the media to reveal students engaging in dialogue with their peers; the dominant discourse pattern is between the teacher and the student. A transmission model is also implicitly endorsed with the students’ desks in rows facing the teacher (Eisner, 2002). Students’ scientific experiments in Dr. Obispo’s and Mr. Peepers’s classes are really pretender-inquiry events, where the teacher knows the outcomes of the experiments, which are then practice exercises for the students. With progressive and essentialist strategies employed by the same teachers and across the classroom representations, there was not a radical
transition towards essentialism in the postwar era depictions of teachers in the act of teaching. Before World War Two, the academic community largely endorsed progressive approaches to learning (Ravitch, 1983), and many leading educators in the postwar era continued to support progressive learning models. When schools are often forces for social stabilization rather than change (Tyack & Cuban, 1995), it takes time to enact new initiatives, to abandon one educational model for another. In the postwar United States, the media representations of teachers in their academic roles of perpetuating established educational norms thus corresponded to the depictions of teachers in their social roles of espousing traditional moral values.

**Gender Role Expectations and Stereotypes**

At a time when more married women were teaching and working outside the home (Rury, 1989; Blount, 2000; Eisenmann, 2006), the teacher image defined a woman’s professional identity domestically through motherhood and an “ethic of care” (Noddings, 1992, 1993), and thus the postwar media further reasserted a traditional gender role for teachers. For women, teaching was regarded as preparation for future roles as wives and mothers. Valued less for their academic instructional expertise, female teachers in the popular media were judged instead according to their ability to attract men and their domestic ability to administer to others. Erica Stone’s curvaceous legs are noteworthy; Jane Richards is an able aide for a sick student, and Jan Stewart can make a comforting cup of hot chocolate. For Jan Stewart and Connie Brooks, it was assumed they would abandon their careers upon marriage. Because a woman’s domestic “ethic of care” is practically without limits for it is expressed as needed (Noddings, 1992, 1993; Grumet, 1988), Miss Brooks’s professional workload is almost endless when Principal Conklin capitalizes on her “ethic of care” with his extracurricular demands upon her time. In the popular media images, teaching did not expand a woman’s sphere, but instead was incorporated into an
already narrowly defined gender role, where she was subordinated to her husband or in a subordinate position within academia.

Male teachers were also defined through traditional gender roles, but in a largely patriarchal society their professional identity was much less restrictive. In the media sample, women were more likely to be seen teaching in elementary school positions, and with teaching gendered feminine (Apple, 1986; Strober & Tyack, 1980), men in education needed to express their masculinity through positions of more perceived power as administrators or as teachers in the higher levels of academia. The masculine strength of the gentle middle school general science teacher Mr. Peepers is suspect, and elementary school teacher Mr. Hargrave is almost over-masculinized with extra power as head of the lower school, as a frequent dater of attractive women, and as horseback riding instructor at The Oaks School For Boys. Male professors not only need to demonstrate their intellectual ability but also their practical efficacy. Dr. Barnes offers tangible help to students through lending his books and sharing his home for student housing. Dr. Hall is an effective fundraiser for Ivy College and is instrumental in helping students choose their professional paths. Unlike female teachers, male teachers still had a separate professional identity that was not delineated according to roles as husbands and fathers. Such conservative gender role messages in the popular media perhaps served to provide a psychological sense of stability and aimed to perpetuate familiar expectations amid changing work patterns for men and women and social transformations, such as the rise of suburbia, increased consumerism, and growing Cold War tensions (Eisenmann, 2006, Chafe, 1991).

The Teacher Image and Socio-cultural-political Contexts

Knowing the social and cultural contexts of the postwar United States thus helps to explain the popular media depictions of teachers. In the late 1940s, life adjustment courses had been increasingly criticized as intellectually inadequate, and some were advocating a return to a
more academic, college preparatory program in high schools (Gutek, 2000). Anti-communists, such as William F. Buckley, Jr., and educational leaders, such as historian Arthur Bestor, saw progressivism and life adjustment education as weakening America’s intellectual and moral fibre (J. Brown, 1988). In the interest of national defense, Admiral Hyman Rickover recommended a rigorous academic curriculum to develop an intellectual elite. The Soviet launch of Sputnik in 1957 triggered further anxieties about the ability of U.S. public schools to prepare citizens to win the Cold War. Well before Sputnik’s launch, however, legislators were working on the National Defense Education Act of 1958, which emphasized a “back-to-basics” approach by funding math, science, and foreign language programs and teacher training (Gutek, 2000). Criticisms concentrated on the preparation of qualified teachers. As evinced by articles in professional journals, leading academics still endorsed progressive instructional methods and addressed criticisms by proposing better methods for recruiting high quality teachers and by improving standards for teacher education, certification, and accreditation.

Such curricular concerns are largely absent from the popular media depictions of teachers. In *High School Confidential!* Miss Arlene Williams is identified as a progressive teacher, and in *Blackboard Jungle* Richard Dadier visits his former professor, who admits that the teacher training program did not adequately prepare Mr. Dadier to teach at North Manual High School. However, even in these unusual references to pedagogy, both Miss Williams and Mr. Dadier become successful through the positive relationships they forge with students. Allowing opportunities for students’ inquiry in the “Jack and the Beanstalk” lesson, in part, facilitates connections with his students, but outside of class Mr. Dadier has been nurturing a relationship with Miller, who consequently is more ready to be a leading participant in the class discussion. Miss Williams enters students’ private lives to thwart drug dealing at her school, and
her successful efforts validate her as a teacher. Across the radio, television, and film representations, audiences know much more about the teachers outside their classrooms than within them, and perhaps writers, directors, and producers felt this knowledge of teachers’ personal lives would facilitate audience engagement with the teacher characters. With the *Mister Peepers* program winning a Peabody award in 1952, Eve Arden receiving a 1953 Emmy Award for her portrayal of Miss Brooks, and *Blackboard Jungle* earning 5.2 million dollars in 1955 ($200,000 more than either *East of Eden* or *The Seven-Year Itch*), the media moguls seemed to know what their audiences wanted to see regarding teacher representations (Sheward, 1997, p. 306; Steinberg, 1980, p. 22).

**The Media Narrative and Construction of Teacher Identity**

In the postwar era, the popular media’s characterization of teachers outside of classroom academics contrasts with how teacher education journals of the period, such as *Teachers College Record, Harvard Educational Review, The American Teacher, Educational Horizons*, and *The Journal of Teacher Education*, constructed the professional identities of teachers. Whereas the popular media focused on the image of self-sacrificing role models, professional journals primarily responded to public criticisms of schools by advocating greater academic preparation and higher certification standards for teachers. Discussions of the ethical identity of teachers are rare. This divergence suggests at least two separate public narratives occurred regarding teachers’ roles. Perhaps the entertainment media were more interested in emotionally engaging the listening and viewing audience of the general public, and concentrating on the non-academic, personal side of teachers was more conducive to realizing this engagement. These professional journals, however, in addressing a very specific audience of academicians wanted to advance the prestige, credibility, and effectiveness of teaching as a profession. To emphasize the nurturing, the maternal, and the sacrificial could undermine these efforts because such qualities were
ascribed to women’s roles in the domestic sphere, uncompensated work considered subordinate to the professional, male-controlled career world. Which of these two potential narratives predominated and were internalized by teachers?

**Professional Education Journals: The Moral Identity of Teachers**

If discussions of teachers and morality occurred, it was often in the context of general purposes for schools and not a consideration of teacher preparation. In light of the 1947, 1948, and 1952 U.S. Supreme Court decisions further defining the separation between church and state (*Everson v. Board of Education*, *McCollum v. Board of Education*, and *Zorach v. Clauson* cases referenced in Johnson, 1956; The Legal Information Institute) and the NEA Educational Policies Commission’s *Moral and Spiritual Values in the Public Schools* (1951), several articles addressed the common core of values reflected in schools, searches for truth, and the extent of religion taught in public schools (Caswell, 1953; Parsons, 1953; Norton, 1954; Van Dusen, 1954; Medina, 1955; Phenix 1955; Johnson, 1956). In 1947, aligning himself with Dewey’s progressivism, Prof. F. Ernest Johnson of Teachers College, Columbia University, believed in the spiritual purpose of education “to focus the attention of youth on what they are to be rather than on what they are to have” (p. 376). Prof. John L. Childs (1947), also of Teachers College, asserted that democracy has a “spiritual regard” for the dignity of each individual and that “our system of common schools has responsibility for fostering that sense of justice, equality, and community without which democracy becomes a matter of empty form” (p. 371). Harold O. Soderquist’s review in *The American Teacher* magazine of Childs’s 1950 book *Education and Morals* demonstrates that the moral function of schooling continued to be a prominent educational goal early in the postwar. Soderquist even connected *Education and Morals* to progressive approaches by stating that Child’s book “in its basic reasoning is in the tradition of John Dewey” and is “in spirit, a sequel to *Democracy and Education*” (Soderquist, 1950, p. 11).
In 1952, William H. Kilpatrick affirmed that “education must in appreciably greater and more effective degree seek as its crucial essence the moral and spiritual values of life” (p. 266). At the 1954 commencement of the Rhode Island College of Education, U.S. Circuit Judge Harold R. Medina declared that public school teachers have a “solemn obligation” to teach students:

spiritual values, not only so that they may become good citizens of America, but also so that they may enrich their lives, develop their innate capacities, and exercise the right set forth in the Declaration of Independence to the pursuit of happiness. (Medina, 1955, p. 205).

With progressivism increasingly under attack during the later 1950s, this moral component for education became less important in favor of a more rigorous, academic program in schools.

During World War Two and in the early years of the postwar period, primary and secondary schools stressed character education and citizenship, but in the 1950s moral education programs in schools became undermined by competing interests and goals (McClellan, 1999). Historian B. Edward McClellan (1999) observes that advocates for moral education in schools grew divided according to those favoring a more religious component that adopted an essentialist transmission of “transcendent” values versus others, who supported “progressive notions about the evolution of values” (p. 72). Character education programs thus lost coherence because of conflicting means and ends. Public opinion also changed; many people felt that family homes and churches were better venues for addressing moral issues than schools. As the Cold War intensified, personal moral education was further subordinated to a curriculum of anti-communism teachings, and schools focused less on the “whole child” and instead “emphasize[d] high-level academic and cognitive skills” (McClellan, 1999, p. 73). The prevalent debates in professional education journals about teacher recruitment and preparation, certification, and school accreditation reflect this shift in interests toward improving academic standards.
Education journals, however, also occasionally addressed the ethical identity of teachers. The Executive Secretary of the California Teachers Association, Arthur Corey (1955), acknowledged “Professional Ethics” as one of five areas, where “professional standards are needed” (p. 227). In a survey of 3,109 Indiana high school students about teacher behaviors, Beeman N. Phillips (1955) of the Indiana Department of Public Instruction reported that most disapproved of teachers publicly drinking, smoking, and swearing, but male teachers were allowed more latitude in these activities. Teachers could date, “although students generally gave women teachers more freedom to have dates and to attend dances, and male teachers more freedom to date students (though still not approving of this activity)” (p. 297). For Phillips, the survey demonstrated “that the majority did feel that the teacher should set an example for others and should exemplify the highest moral standards of the community” (p. 299). Popular media representations apparently validated such audiences’ views about the moral identity of the teacher. Scholarly analyses of teachers as moral role models were overshadowed, however, by more pressing professional concerns about curriculum standards.

**Professional Education Journals: Responses to Criticisms of Public Schooling**

In the postwar United States, a need for qualified teachers existed, when schools faced increasing responsibilities amid challenges. During World War Two to address shortages of educational professionals, some teachers were given abbreviated preparation and emergency certification, and these practices continued after 1945 when the numbers of students increased in classrooms, while many adults entered more lucrative and/or more prestigious professions than teaching (“Growing up professionally,” 1952; Gans, 1945). Public school education became vulnerable to criticism. Wilbur Yauch (1959) argued that for two decades, with the most “virulent attack” in the past ten years, “warfare” existed “between professional educators and their critics” (p. 120). Charges had been made that “public education was deviating grievously
from its traditional responsibilities” (p. 120). Answering Arthur Bestor’s criticisms of education professors as responsible for public schools’ failure to intellectually prepare students, Earl Cunningham (1959) of State Teachers College in Kirksville, Missouri, remained defensive in attacking Bestor’s assertions as overgeneralizations without evidence. John Susky (1959), assistant professor of education and philosophy at Kansas State College, Pittsburg, added that Bestor often appealed to emotion instead of reason in his arguments and oversimplified. For Karl Bigelow of Teachers College, Columbia University, Bestor’s advocacy of strict, intellectual education in the liberal arts demonstrated “the narrowness of his ideas” about purposes for schools and how Bestor “grossly underestimate[d] the quantity and quality of special knowledge and skill that good teaching requires” (1954, pp. 20-21). Addressing Admiral Rickover’s recommendations for public schools, Richard Miller (1959), United Nations observer (Committee on International Relations, National Education Association), noted how Rickover also oversimplified complexities, made factually inaccurate statements, misrepresented John Dewey’s views, and failed to recognize how other European countries were modifying their “traditional classic study course” and were adopting elements of America’s educational model (p. 354). Feeling similarly embattled, Asahel Woodruff, Dean of the College of Education at Brigham Young University, commented:

> Recently there have been a number of pronouncements to the effect that education is too important to leave to professional educators…. [and] there seems now to be a growing conviction that teacher education is too important to leave to departments or colleges of education. (1958, p. 244)

Criticisms, however, resulted in educational professionals acting to change perceptions and to improve teacher education.

Throughout the 1950s, debates among scholars intensified about methods for raising the status of teachers through better recruitment, preparation, certification, and salaries (Herrick,
1956; Norris, 1957; W. A. Shannon, 1957; Stinnett, 1957; Von Schlichten, 1958a; Elsbree, 1959). Ruth Willard (1954), assistant professor of education at the University of Oregon, urged interdisciplinary programs to help future teachers “to understand better the family and community environment” of their students and “to see their own work in relation to the practitioners and researchers in the different disciplines” (pp. 252-253). Dr. Charles E. Hamilton (1959), of the California Teachers Association, believed that to prepare teachers the departments of academic disciplines should be upgraded along with university departments of education. In providing a liberal arts foundation for teachers, however, the learning of the “technical skills” of methods should not be overlooked, and Hamilton proposed five-year programs to accommodate more comprehensive studies (p. 359). Perceiving the need to prepare similarly both elementary and secondary school teachers, teacher educators supported the integration of subject matter, liberal arts knowledge with knowledge of instructional methods (Snyder, 1952; Keppel, 1952; Schaefer, 1953; Woodring, 1955; Herrick, 1956; S. M. Corey, 1958; Von Schlichten, 1958b; W. G. Carr, 1959). To address increased educational requirements, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) in 1957 recommended four years of teacher preparation with a fifth year emphasizing “subject-matter concentration and further professional education” after a year or more of full-time teaching (Armstrong, 1957, p. 242). In reporting results of the Twelfth National Conference on Higher Education, Asahel Woodruff (1958) demonstrated the continuing resolve of leading educators to take control of strengthening professional standards. The curriculum for teacher programs should “include solid foundation work in humanities, social studies, physical and biological sciences, fine and manipulative arts, and recreational activities” with future elementary school teachers also receiving “enough solid work in child development and principles of teaching” (Woodruff, 1958, p. 243). Moreover, any
changes in programs should be based on sound research-tested findings, and Woodruff called for such research because there was lack of consensus on how to choose high caliber education students, what were the most important qualities in a good teacher, and how best to prepare them. In 1959, the National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards, under the direction of Dr. Margaret Lindsey of Teachers College, Columbia University, began working on a project assessing “(1) advancement of professional standards, (2) teacher education, both pre- and inservice, (3) accreditation, (4) certification, and (5) identification, selective admission and retention of professional personnel” (Lindsey, 1961, p. viii; Stinnett, 1959; Angus, 2001). Such curriculum debates, however, were largely absent from the popular media narratives of teachers in the 1950s.

**Considerations for Assessing Competing Teacher Narratives in the Postwar Era**

Non-print media of radio, television, and film in the postwar era tell mostly positive narratives about the image and practice of teachers, but primarily outside of academic contexts. How do these media narratives impact teachers in classrooms? What elements of the media narratives do teachers incorporate and reject in the narratives that they construct about their professional identities? In the 1950s, which narratives had more influence on teachers: the entertainment media representations of teachers or the news media coverage of criticism of public schools? How do these media and personal narratives interact with larger social narratives, such as the purposes for schools and gender role expectations?

**Constructing Meaning Through Narrative**

Because we make meaning out of our lives through the telling of stories, narrative analysis provides the means for comprehending how and why we represent and construct conceptions of teachers through mass media narratives, personal narratives by teachers, students, and administrators, and the historical narratives that aim to interpret them all. Multiple
definitions of narrative further allow various structures for positioning our identities in relation to these texts, and the trustworthiness of these narratives rests on their ability to offer sufficient coherence within our ideological frames (Goffman, 1974/1986). Because of the evolving socio-cultural contexts in which we create narratives, these texts are often revised as new information is either accommodated or excluded by our adjusted frames. Even if the teacher images are “fixed” within the media of radio, television, and film, we renegotiate their narrative meaning through our changing perspectives.

The content of these narratives embodies ideologies, and to achieve coherence any narrative revisions will need to conform to existing frames or become part of a newly modified frame. Through reconstruction, texts “provide evidence of ongoing processes such as the redefinition of social relationships between professionals and publics, the reconstitution of social identities and forms of self, or the reconstitution of knowledge and ideology” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 209). Such “scripts,” “dominant discourses,” or “master narratives” can inform media images of teachers in an idealized, stereotypical, or otherwise unrealistic way. In defining Miss Brooks’s professional identity as a caring mother figure towards her students, the *Our Miss Brooks* program advocated a restrictive gender role for women. In one episode Miss Brooks even forgoes teaching on Monday to care for the younger siblings of one of her students.¹ Would a teacher realistically have done this in the postwar United States? Ideologies about teaching methods can also inform the media depictions of classrooms and the expected teacher role. The furniture arrangement of students’ desks in rows facing Mr. Peepers’s desk anticipates a traditional transmission model of instruction, where this general science teacher is considered the source of knowledge (Eisner, 2002). In fact, all the demonstrations and

¹ *Our Miss Brooks* (radio), November 14, 1948.
experiments occur on the symbolic territory of Mr. Peepers’s desk. Ideologies that participate in the programs’ narratives can even be reinforced by accompanying commercials. Recognizing the female audience demographics for Our Miss Brooks, sponsors advertised Palmolive soap, Lustre Crème shampoo, and other home and beauty products, which were typically purchased by female consumers and offered ways to enhance appearances to attract men. Miss Brooks, herself, was always interested in capturing Mr. Boynton’s romantic interest, and so the advertised products coincided well with the program’s narrative messages.

**Responding to the Media Narratives of Teachers**

Because the media project “[m]aster narratives through which and, importantly, against which individuals compose the personal understandings of their lives” (Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004, p. 178), narrative analysis can help us to discover how teachers perceive their identities in relation to the viability of these representations. In a study of life narratives by artists, Mark Freeman (2004) observes that some artists “had bought into a myth about the struggling genius, at odds with the world, [and] that had actually stunted their creativity” (p. 69). The construction of narratives through the media image of educators can influence how teachers define their own roles. When Mr. Peepers, despite a worsening cold, stays up all night to revise his teaching notes to help his students succeed on a re-test, do teachers accept this narrative of personal sacrifice as an inherent aspect of their professional identity?² In 2003-2004, seventy-five percent of public school teachers were women, but their reasons for entering the profession could be very different from the women in the immediate postwar era, because forty-eight percent of public school principals now were also women (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006). Rather than conforming to traditional gender role expectations, women

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² *Mister Peepers*, February 1, 1953.
entering teaching currently may define their professional choices differently. Lisa Smulyan (2004) notes that in a longitudinal study of the career choices of 28 women at an elite college, some decided to enter teaching for the opportunity to promote social justice, perhaps thereby redefining what it means to be a teacher by taking “the gendered notion of care into a more public arena” (p. 529). Through thematic analysis within and across the media narratives and the narratives created by teachers, future research could “reveal the ideological, motivational, and idiosyncratic meanings individuals and groups attach to words, relationships, symbols, and institutions” related to schools (Stewart & Malley, 2004, p. 225). Such analysis can also disclose how personal narratives are renegotiated within such frames based upon new knowledge (Goffman, 1974/1986).

Self-understanding depends on “our ability to construct a narrative and to tell a story” (Murray, 2003, citing Sarbin, 1990, p. 97), and such narratives furnish truths that are open for revision. New information and the accommodation of disconfirming evidence lead to a new synthesis that will no doubt be challenged in the future. This process nurtures growth in our understanding and learning. Rather than imposing an artificial construction on reality, Jerome Bruner (1990) observes how we innately “organize experience narratively” to make sense of our lives and that “culture soon equips us with new powers of narration … through the traditions of telling and interpreting” (pp. 79-80; see also D. Carr, 1986b). As a narrative, mass media reflect and shape cultural norms, thus becoming not only a “forum for negotiating and renegotiating meaning and for explicating action,” but also “a set of rules or specifications for action” (Bruner, 1986, p. 123). When historians and discourse analysts construct and deconstruct media and personal narratives, they engage in a process that individuals negotiate everyday to discover multiple truths about their lives and their world. As students in schools, we
construct our identities through the academics, athletics, and other extracurricular activities directed by our teachers. While these educators inform our personal narratives about our strengths and weaknesses, media images of teachers further influence how we evaluate their judgments. These same media images, however, also affect how teachers see themselves.

Prof. Willard Elsbree of Teachers College, Columbia University, observed in 1959:

We need a Lionel Barrymore to do for teaching what he did for the medical profession by portraying physicians (in the Dr. Kildare pictures) in a light which made the job challenging and appealing. Instead we get a Milquetoast character like Mr. Peepers or an odd ball, even though lovable, like Mr. Chips. (p. 334)

Better publicity in the media improves public perceptions of the profession and teachers’ own sense of efficacy. By analyzing the non-print narratives about teachers in the popular media and teachers’ constructions of narratives in response to them, we can also come to recognize how these role models influence our very sense of self.

**Using Media Narratives in Teacher Education**

Recognizing the influence of these media narratives upon self-concepts, scholar researchers have used films about teachers to promote the reflections of pre-service teachers about their professional identities and instructional practices. Employing such films for teacher education purposes, Angela Raimo, Roberta Devlin-Scherer, and Debra Zinicola (2002) declare: “The value of analyzing teacher behaviors is not to prescribe one kind of good teaching but to engage in critical thinking about a variety of roles responsive to different social and cultural environments” (p. 321). Acknowledging the effect of watching “the wacky caricature of a teacher” in *Our Miss Brooks* and the “very motherly schoolteacher” in *Leave It To Beaver*, Diane Brunner (1994) in her childhood dreamed of becoming a teacher, and in the afternoons she would pretend to be a teacher while a friend of hers was the student (p. 113). Informed by the critical theories of Henry Giroux and Paulo Freire, Brunner believes that “much of our work in
teacher education becomes a matter of helping student-teachers unlearn harmful images of teachers and schooling by offering opportunities to critique inequitable structures” (p. 115). In a teacher education program, she uses Washington Irving’s “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” story to illustrate the “dominant/subordinate” relationship schoolmaster Ichabod Crane has with his students, and this narrative then fosters these pre-service teachers’ thoughts about control and respect in the classroom (p. 116). They also examine depictions of teachers’ control in such texts as Charles Dickens’s Nicholas Nickleby and Evan Hunter’s The Blackboard Jungle and such films as The Chocolate War and Lean on Me. As a counternarrative, Thomas Lasley, II (1998) reports that film images of excellent teachers model the paradigm shifts educators make in transforming their instructional practices by moving “outside themselves and into the minds of their students” (¶ 1). Mr. Holland in Mr. Holland’s Opus, Ms. Johnson in Dangerous Minds, and Mr. Escalante in Stand and Deliver exemplify good reflective practice when they recognize why their teacher-controlled instructional paradigm does not work and switch to a student-centered learning paradigm. Comparable “pedagogical breakthrough[s]” occur in Blackboard Jungle and To Sir With Love when the teacher changes from “an institutional opponent of his students” to an “ally and accomplice of these same students” (Leopard, 2007, p. 37). Such films could then be effective in educating pre-service and novice teachers because “[i]n real classrooms far too many teachers refuse to make the shift, and far too many administrators fail to encourage it” (Lasley, 1998, “Threats to Paradigm Shifts” section, ¶ 1).

In teacher preparation programs, Hollywood films can help future educators examine their beliefs and perceptions of teachers, construct espoused platforms about their own educational philosophies, and enact instructional methods that align with their educational goals. For the pre-service teachers he supervises, James Trier (2001) offers scenes from the films
The Principal, 187, and The Substitute to explore his students’ perceptions of inner city schools. In using film to examine the representations of teachers’ professional and personal lives, one of Trier’s teacher education students responded to To Sir, With Love by wishing that she could “give as much time to [her] work as a teacher as Sir did” (p. 132), and other students worried about public expectations about teachers not having personal lives and that they should be completely dedicated to their professions. After also viewing Conrack, Stand and Deliver, and Dangerous Minds, another student questioned the message being sent about teachers, who are naturally gifted as practitioners without needing teacher training and who are expected to “save” students. Through clips from Dangerous Minds and 187, Dierdre Paul (2001) similarly helped graduate teacher education students develop their critical media literacy skills in examining Hollywood constructions of gender, race, and ethnicity. Also recognizing the power of the film’s narrative to engage viewers, Carla Shaw and Deborah Nederhouser (2005) share activities and discussion questions about cinematic teacher portrayals to promote educational philosophy reflections in a graduate course, “The Portrayal of Teachers in Film.” Shaw and Nederhouser (2005) argue that “[w]hen real teachers vicariously experience the stories of reel teachers, they also come to perceive the narrative threads in their own professional lives, and they zero in on their identities as teachers” (p. 86). Although pre-service teacher-education students were critically aware of how Hollywood constructed teacher identities, Jeff Rosen (2004) discovered that these future educators still wished to conform to the media idealizations and the films still instigated anxieties about their teaching abilities. Because images of Miss Brooks and Mr. Dadier still resonate in the public consciousness, the past very much informs the present and deserves study within historical and cultural contexts.
In sharing popular media images of educators with pre-service teachers, teacher educators must also help to develop the skills of the viewers to analyze these media as texts. Taking a literary explication approach, Ulrich Wicks (1983) advocates film study in school to help students critique films as they would written texts in a literature classroom. For Wicks, the influence of media images on our consciousness warrants such critical attention:

Films and television provide such ready-made images, to the extent that we project them onto the events of our real lives, which may be very different and unique; we become, not controllers of our lives, but an audience to them. (p. 54)

Giving students the means to analyze the media puts them back in control and prevents them from becoming “victims of the rhetorical manipulation” (p. 55). Without the tools and skills for analyzing the media representations of educators, the pre-service teachers in a teacher-education program would benefit less from using these media as a repertoire of experiences for developing teacher reflection practices. Media analysis could help teacher-education students see how teacher representations can be composed through a film’s lighting, music, and camera angles, so they can see how characters get constructed.

**Limitations of Current Study and Venues for Future Research**

**Media Sources**

Although this study incorporated a range of media depictions (radio, television, and film) and a diversity of genres (comedy, drama, science-fiction horror, musical, etc.) to explore the image of teachers from the elementary through the college levels, the study could be further expanded through additional radio and television episodes and feature films. Because the same patterns and themes kept emerging from the data selected for this study, such saturation contributed to validity. However, one limitation of this study was not differentiating how each of the media of radio, television, and film might have affected teacher representations. Instead of focusing on transcripts of these media productions and analyzing them narratively as written
texts, for future research studying the aesthetic features of the teacher representations might help to elucidate how a particular medium impacts the image. Among methodological approaches, discourse, thematic, and content analyses have been used to assess teacher images, and another possibility could be the application of visual analysis to discuss the aesthetic features of television and film representations (Harrah, 1954). Such analysis could yield insights about the strengths and weaknesses of different media in revealing a teacher’s character within varied parameters for developing settings and plots. A television episode may be constrained by time and setting in a half-hour format, but a teacher’s character could evolve through the series. Whereas a film may offer more diverse settings and a two-hour block of time in one viewing for a more intricate plot, this time frame is the only opportunity to realize the teacher character fully.

For future research, it might also be interesting to study the teacher image in one academic level and/or in other media. Some scholarship, including that of Ronald Butchart and B. Lee Cooper (1987) and Kevin Brehony (1998), has focused on the image of teachers in rock and roll and popular music, and this genre offers many further avenues for analysis. Additional examination of teacher images in the popular press of magazines and newspapers and on the internet could also be fruitful for understanding public perceptions of teachers and the roles of schools.

Genres

Although one of the strengths of this study involved recognizing common themes about the teacher image across a variety of genres, and additional genres such as westerns and mysteries could be studied, it would also be worthwhile to explore in detail a single genre regarding the teacher image. In focusing on narrative themes across the genres, all the different genres were analyzed similarly, so that one limitation of this study was not considering that certain methodologies might be more appropriate for particular genres. Instead, comedies and
dramas both shared the treatment of content, discourse, and narrative analyses. Future studies may decide, for example, to use visual analysis for a televised situation comedy, if the humor relies more on physical comedy rather than on verbal joke-telling.

Another limitation was that all the radio and television images of teachers were from situation comedies (with a majority of these episodes from the *Our Miss Brooks* radio and television programs), and the demands of this genre and its over-representation in this study may have affected findings. Extended examples of wondering inquiry were only found in film dramas, such as *Apartment for Peggy* (1948) and *Blackboard Jungle* (1955). Because inquiry may often be on a serious topic and require extended time to develop, these inquiry features may conflict with the situation comedy’s need for humor with quick repartee in a brief half-hour format. It might also be productive to consider if and/or why the teacher image in radio and television was more prevalent in the situation comedy. Are school contexts and teacher characters richer sources for humor rather than for serious dramatic considerations? Is situation comedy more likely to promote a friendly, intimate portrait of a teacher? Are audiences laughing with the teacher or at the teacher? Would a serious drama command more respect for the teaching profession? No doubt in the postwar United States there were some serious teacher representations in select episodes of such highly-rated television programs as *Fireside Theatre* (NBC), *Philco Television Playhouse* (NBC), *Kraft Television Theatre* (NBC), *Ford Theatre* (CBS, NBC, ABC), *General Electric Theatre* (CBS) and *Goodyear Television Playhouse* (NBC, The TV IV, 2007). With many of these anthology formats performed live, their availability as source material for study may be more limited than the situation comedies, but future research might lead to new insights about the teacher image in television dramas, which were not addressed by this study.
Cultural Contexts

Because this study focused on the postwar period of 1945 to 1959 to assess any shifts from progressive to essentialist philosophies in media depictions, additional research might address other time periods and relate educational policies to representations in the popular media. Moreover, cross-cultural comparisons of projected images of teachers could further delineate the American identity of the teacher. Such a study could update George Gerbner’s (1966) research on the popular media images of teachers from 1961 to 1963 in the U.S., Western and Eastern Europe, and the Soviet Union. Although in the postwar media examined for this study the majority of teachers were depicted as white and middle class, other studies could explore how representations of teachers of other races and classes in other decades impact the projected image of the teacher. Although many studies emphasize teacher-student relationships, within such contexts scholars could concentrate on either teacher-parent, teacher-teacher, or teacher-administrator relationships as well.

To understand the cultural contexts for the media images, scholars could further examine teacher education materials and teacher journals of the time to discover among the leaders of academia the anticipated roles of teachers and explain any compatibilities and contradictions between these academic views of teachers and the media representations. Conference paper presentations, widely distributed teacher education textbooks, course syllabi, teacher union records, etc. could be useful resources revealing perceptions of teacher roles within academia, but one would have to address any disjuncture between educational theory and classroom practice.

Audience Reception

More work also needs to be done evaluating the impact of these media images upon audiences. Although it is generally accepted among scholars that the broadcast media reflect and
shape public attitudes, it is difficult to determine causal relationships. The popularity of a television program or film might have little to do with the portrayal of the teacher or the school. The genre, the fame and likeability of the actors, the other competing programs and films vying for audience attention, the non-educational subplots, etc. may complicate audience attitudes, so that ratings and box office earnings may not be accurate indicators of public satisfaction with teacher portrayals. Neither does critical acclaim always coincide with wider audience approval or disapproval. Despite high ratings for Our Miss Brooks, where Variety reported the radio program reaching the eleventh and seventh ranks in the Nielsen ratings and Hooperratings, The English Journal in 1949 was initially critical of the teacher portrayal as unrealistic and denigrating to the profession (“Nielsen’s Newest Top 20,” 1949, p. 22; “Hooper’s Top 15 and the Opposition,” 1949, p. 27; “About Radio,” 1949, pp. 239-240). In a conference paper, Steven Thomsen (1993) reports that results of Gallup and Phi Delta Kappa polls about public teachers and schools from 1969 to 1990 seemed to correlate highly with the contemporary film portrayals of teachers. Because respondents who had connections to teachers and schools evaluated American schools better than those respondents without intimate familiarity, Thomsen suggests that the negative film representations could possibly account for the lower ratings of teachers and schools by non-participants in education. Thomsen, however, does not assert any decisive causality or the extent of the media influence: “It is difficult to measure the size of the effect—whether it is one of reinforcement or cultivation—but the belief that some effect exists has face validity” (p. 24). Through written surveys and interviews of teachers and their students and through videotaped classroom observations as part of a case study, one could assess in a future study how teachers internalize media messages and comport themselves in their classrooms according to their perceived frames (Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Goffman, 1974/1986).
Also interesting would be the development of possible counternarratives by teachers, who oppose certain media depictions. Accurately measuring the impact of the broadcast media continues to be an opportunity for research.

**Final Thoughts**

Because future study of the media image of the teacher is rich with varied possibilities regarding media sources, genres, cultural contexts, audience reception, and analytical methods, much more can be learned about public expectations for the roles of teachers and the purposes of schools and about how teachers construct their own professional identities in relation to popular representations. The frequency of the teacher image in postwar radio, television, and film endures today from the ABC network’s *Miss Guided* to the film *Freedom Writers* (2007), and this persistence attests to the impact of teachers upon our lives and self-perceptions. Thus, words from Chancellor Marsh’s 1952 address to the Massachusetts State Federation of Teachers are just as currently relevant:

> The teaching profession occupies a central place in social influence. It offers a threefold opportunity to serve. It is not the exclusive factor, but it is a mighty important one in interpreting the past, in preserving the present, and in determining the future. (p. 9)

Popular media images of teachers capture past “presents” that resonate today and tomorrow. The lessons learned from analyzing these images will linger beyond the final bell of the school day.

When I think about my own teachers, what I generally remember is not a particular lesson taught, but their personalities, their relationships with students, and how I felt in their classrooms. These are the memories that linger. Although it is important that teachers have knowledge of their subject matter and expertise in instructional methods, their characters and values as role models can have an even more enduring impact. A teacher’s moral example can shape students’ characters throughout their lives. It makes sense that the popular media in the
postwar era would characterize teachers through their personal relationships and extracurricular activities. After all, some of the best lessons are learned outside the classroom.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Patrick Andrew Ryan was born in Washington, D.C. and grew up with his older brother in the suburb of Silver Spring, Maryland. He received a B.A. degree in English from the University of Pennsylvania in 1991 and an M.A. degree in English language and literature from the University of Virginia in 1994. After teaching full-time for ten years in Catholic schools in Maryland and Florida, Ryan entered the doctoral program in curriculum and instruction at the University of Florida in the fall of 2004. This study, as partial fulfillment of the Ph.D. degree, incorporates his interest in vintage television and film that began in childhood with enjoying such programs as *I Love Lucy* and *Father Knows Best* on WTTG, Channel 5.