DO POLITICAL FILM ADAPTATIONS AFFECT VOTER KNOWLEDGE?

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ABSTRACT

"Do Political Film Adaptations Affect Voter Knowledge?" examines the educational influence of films on viewing audiences. Using the film *Recount* (2008), an HBO television movie, as a case study, I conducted a multi-method project. I analyzed *Recount* in regards to how information was presented to the viewer and the potential implications it may have. I held seven focus groups, in which viewers were given a pre-survey, watched *Recount*, completed a post-survey, and discussed the film. Upon completion, I analyzed their answers to determine knowledge gained. I also spoke with two of the real life inspirations for *Recount*'s characters, Ron Klain and John "Mac" Stipanovich, helping to differentiate the facts versus fictionalized elements of the film. All research was conducted over a year-long study.

Key Words & Phrases: film studies, film adaptations, recount, 2000 election, HBO, TV movie, knowledge gain, mise-en-scène, news footage, and dramatizations.
“Do Political Film Adaptations Affect Voter Knowledge?” is the result of a year-long study that involved a great deal of time and research. I want to thank all of my focus group respondents who took the time to participate in my study. I really appreciate your time and kindness. Your willingness to spend an entire evening with me completing surveys, watching Recount, and discussing the film helped my project immensely.

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My family for their continued love and support. You always encourage me to achieve my goals. My successes would not have been possible without you.

Lastly, to everyone who reads this thesis. I hope you learn to examine political film adaptations more carefully. Films are an extremely powerful medium and a subject matter that deserves to be examined.

Sincerely,
Angela Maria Hart
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INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the degree to which dramatic films affect political knowledge. With a growing number of film adaptations of political events being produced by Hollywood, it is important to examine the potential benefits and negative consequences of such movies. To examine these elements, I designed and implemented a study of the film *Recount* (2008), which depicts the issue of hanging chads, voter tabulation, and voter suppression in Florida during the 2000 election (Bush v. Gore). Vice President Al Gore, a Democrat, ran for president against Governor of Texas, George W. Bush, a Republican. Bill Clinton was not eligible to run again for president, already having served two terms, thus the campaign field was open. The election night news coverage miscalled the winner due to the networks relying on exit polls rather than counted results. Subsequent issues involved the voter tabulation machines and the best method to hold a recount. *Recount* demonstrates the reoccurring themes that influenced the 2000 election.

As Linda Hutcheon wrote, “Film is usually said to be the most inclusive and synthesizing of performance forms” (Hutcheon 35). The universal appeal of films makes it an important medium to analyze. Film and television viewings can be a group event or solitary activity. While everyone may not read the same textbooks, they may have access to films via numerous channels such as Netflix, On Demand, or DVDs. People with varying backgrounds, education levels, and ages can watch political films, thus the effects of films need to be examined.
Research Questions

I seek to determine the impact of political film adaptations, which alter, change, or modify original source material to tell a comprehensive narrative for a film goer. In order to study these elements, I selected the film *Recount*. I examined the accuracy and implications of the actor portrayals and historical events in my content analysis to demonstrate how the information is presented to the audience and what it may imply. In order to gauge the knowledge gained from *Recount*, I held focus groups to specify what people specifically took away from viewing the film.

In regards to *Recount*, I seek to determine, “How true to life did it stay?”; “How factual is the knowledge from *Recount*?”; and “What did people take away from the film?” My thesis questions focus on two main areas of inquiry: “What information is conveyed by political film adaptations?” and “What knowledge do people gain from this information?”

Methodology

My data is comprised of all original information. I employed a multi-method approach. To begin my analysis, I conducted a content analysis of the film *Recount*. I noted the importance of key dialogue, the directing style, mise-en-scène elements, and the incorporation of authentic and inauthentic news footage within the film. I also held seven focus groups that included film viewings of *Recount*. Participants were given a pre-test and post-test, then asked to participate in a discussion of the film. Lastly, I conducted four
interviews with film studies professors as well as Ron Klain, former Chief of Staff to Vice President Al Gore and Ebola Response Coordinator for President Obama, who Kevin Spacey portrayed in the film. I met with these individuals in person and recorded the conversations for accuracy.

Hypotheses

I designed my surveys to test a respondent’s ability to identify key individuals as well as their political parties, important definitions that pertained to the recount process, and information that pertained to the 2000 election.

H₁: The film Recount will educate viewers about the 2000 election, allowing them to identify the participants involved and their political party affiliation.

H₂: Viewers of the film Recount will be able to define key terms and information that pertain to the 2000 election such as hanging chads and dimples.

Entering the viewings, many of the participants had a general sense of the 2000 election, but the film seemed to reaffirm their beliefs or expand their knowledge base. My first two hypotheses, “The film Recount will educate viewers about the 2000 election, allowing them to identify the participants involved and their political party affiliation” and “Viewers of the film Recount will be able to define key terms that pertain to the 2000 election such as hanging chads and dimples” were demonstrated to be accurate upon examination. Participants were able to define more pivotal terms post-viewing, than they were able to pre-viewing, demonstrating that Recount contributed to their sense of knowledge. Similarly, post-film, participants were able to identify people and their parties.
On average, focus group members were able to increase their correct identification of political affiliations by four answers. The most dramatic increase in knowledge occurred with Ron Klain, Katherine Harris, and James Baker.

**Thesis Argument**

Readers will learn about the various methods I utilized to conduct research in order to examine if viewers of *Recount* learned pivotal information in regards to the 2000 election. I found that information regarding the election was secondary to learning about the major themes of the film. In order to tell the Florida recount story, the writer, Danny Strong, and director, Jay Roach, needed to include basic definitions so that the viewer could follow the story. They were motivated to tell a story, not offer an educational experience. The inclusion of terms such as dimple and chad informed viewers about the pivotal challenges the Democrats were facing to petition for votes to be counted, which were demonstrated in the movie. The film seeks to demonstrate the challenge Democrats faced, and in order to do so, must provide a foundational knowledge of the 2000 election events. Therefore, knowledge gained from the film is a byproduct of other motivations such as entertainment.

**Key Research**

At the moment, there is a lack of studies that analyze political film adaptations, particularly since most studies pertain to the medium of television, such as *The West Wing* (1999), or older movies such as *JFK* (1991). My research brings older studies into the present moment by analyzing contemporary media. Additionally, since *Recount* is a
television movie which aired on HBO, it is a niche genre that interweaves real life news footage with sensationalized representations of characters. Rather than enter a movie theater where people check their disbelief at the door, viewers will watch this film from home, just as they would watch the news. Thus, Recount offers a unique viewing experience.

**Thesis Chapters**

This project has been organized into several chapters; a content analysis of Recount, several interviews with film and media experts as well as Ron Klain, the real life individual Kevin Spacey portrayed on film, statistical analysis of participants’ survey results, and concluding statements. Chapter One is my literature review, Chapter Two is my methodology section, Chapter Three examines the film Recount, Chapter Four compares the accuracy of Recount to the historical 2000 election, Chapter Five analyzes the respondent results, and Chapter Six concludes my findings.
CHAPTER ONE
LITERATURE REVIEW

As Richard Walter wrote, “story is to movies as melody is to music” (Walter 58). Every film, no matter what genre, needs to have a clear narrative that audiences can follow with ease and enjoyment. The film *Recount* is masterfully written and uniquely executed by director, Jay Roach. *Recount* depicts the difficulties the political parties encountered during the 2000 election. Due to the nature of *Recount* being based on a real-life event, the story needed to be transitioned from history to film, “change is essential in order to make the transition to another medium” (Seger 8). According to screenwriter, Kevin Downs, the goal of an adaption is to invoke an “emotional, visceral, and entertaining” story (Downs). Viewers should leave the film knowing more about the electoral recount process and have an enlightened perspective about the potential negative ramifications involved with outdated voting practices. There have been numerous instances demonstrating the power of film adaptations invoking the key techniques screenwriters have cultivated.

**From a Screenwriter’s Perspective**

Presently, adaptations make up nearly ninety-five percent of mini-series and seventy-five percent of television movies (Hutcheon 4). Adaptations “adapt, adjust, alter, or make suitable” or “implies change” (Hutcheon 7) (Seger 2). Thus, there are no literal adaptations. “Adaptation is defined as the ability to make fit or suitable by changing, or adjusting, modifying something to create a change in structure, function, and form” (Field 259). Interestingly, respected screenwriter Paul Lucey advises his pupils to avoid
adaptations because they are incredibly difficult to craft and execute. “Adaptations…tends to be demanding work that can defeat the most experienced writers” (Lucey 12). Similarly, Syd Field noted that adaptations require skill and must rise to the challenge (Field 259). Writers need to be able to conduct extensive research and write compelling dialogue, scenes, and interweave plot points.

Linda Seger believes there are seven key pieces needed to craft a successful real-life story adaptation: central incident, clear climactic event, main characters the audience can sympathize with, a story that occurs within a short period of time, drama between two characters, visual elements, and momentum (Seger 53-54). Every film needs a clear plot, protagonist, and antagonist, a simple story that audiences can follow is key to a successful film. “A screenplay is a story told with pictures, in dialogue and description, and placed within the context of dramatic structure” (Field 2). The beauty of using real life stories for inspiration is that the elements tend to be already in place for writers to draw from. Presently, nearly “eighty-five percent of all Academy-Award winning Best Pictures are adaptations” (Seger xi).

No matter what story is being relayed to an audience, the screenwriter must adhere to the three-act structure: the hero takes on the problem, the protagonist seems defeated, and the main character solves his or her quest (Lucey 71). In regards to Recount, Ron Klain takes over the recount process in Florida, the Supreme Court issued a stay, and the recount ends. Linda Seger noted that “goal-oriented story lines are the easiest to adapt because you can usually find the beginning, middle, and the end of the story line by asking three
questions: “What does the character want?”; “What does the character do to achieve the goal?”; and “When does the want begin?” (Seger 79). *Recount* depicts the 2000 election from Election Day to several days after the Supreme Court’s decision offering a set timeline for the script. Ron Klain’s goal is to get the votes counted and he is met with this challenge in the first few minutes of the film when the Gore campaign realizes there is an issue with the numbers in Florida.ii

Strong was able to account for Seger’s three questions as well as several other key screenwriting elements. Since audiences can only focus on a handful of characters for the length of the film, Strong needed to keep the cast small and ensure that there were not too many people being portrayed. This provides the foundation for Strong to combine roles and duties within the campaigns as well as the other people involved in the election. Similarly, Fields noted that all “good films are always resolved” (Fields 92). While not all viewers may be thrilled with the outcome of the recount that occurred with the 2000 election, the story concluded with Gore’s loss and Bush’s presidential victory.

In the end, “screenwriters are hired to write a movie script, and though they do their best to honor the source material, their obligation is to create an entertaining motion picture story” (Lucey 14).iii Thus, writers are entitled to take creative liberties when adapting source material. In turn, “a theme may be lost in order to make other themes clearer and more accessible” (Seger 9). This may inspire screenwriters to focus on one or two key themes rather than a number of smaller issues. Combining subjects may require alterations to the story, “changes are essential in order to make the transition to another medium”
(Seger 8). Strong focused on the major court cases and political actors, glossing over smaller details that would have made the story too intricate.

Screenwriters are not the only individuals involved with the creation of a movie’s story. Additional writers, script editors, directors, costume designers, production designers, sound mixer, editors, and actors all contribute to the development of a film creating a product from multiple perspectives. Barthes noted that a work is the product of a person’s mind, “The explanation of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the author ‘confiding’ in us” (Barthes 277). A film adaptation’s script is the product of the screenwriter’s mind, but then transcends this single person to incorporate multiple viewpoints including the director’s interpretation of the story. “Film achieves its distinct style through its organizing and editing methods; its particular rhythms, tones, and syntax; and its genre and subject matter” (Cahir 45). The story is not just the screenwriter’s creation. The finished product has undergone numerous revisions in order to create a concise story for audiences to enjoy. Alexandre Astruc, 1948 French film critic, created the phrase camera-stylo “to describe the way a film director uses his or her camera—and count recorders, lighting equipment, and so on—as a sort of writing instrument, a means of self-expression” (Sikov 119). Astruc believed that a film’s director was most successful when he or she took a screenplay and made it their own, viewing the script as a guideline (Sikov 199). In the end, it becomes extraordinarily difficult to write a narrative that is reflective of accurate facts.
Many screenwriters have noted the difficulty in crafting a story. Richard Walter wrote, “To invent a story and characters worth caring about, to assign them action and dialogue that engage and sustain an audience’s interest from eight o’clock until nine forty, is a task that is truly Herculean” (Walter 10). A screenwriter needs to be able to captivate an audience for the entire length of a film. If the viewer ever becomes disinterested, the screenwriter was unsuccessful with their execution.

In regards to crafting a narrative, Danny Strong already had characters and goals in place to draw from. It is a screenwriter’s job to include a backstory of sorts to create multi-dimensional characters. When speaking with Bill O’Reilly, in 2012, Kevin Spacey referred to his work in Recount, “There are circumstances where people make decisions or misjudgments or behave in such a way that you just cannot actually believe it – you could not write this stuff – because it is so outrageous” (Bill O'Reilly Interviews Kevin Spacey). Ron Klain mentioned he thought the Florida recount would be a great “horror movie” (Fitzgerald). The people involved with the recount were well known individuals and the presidential candidates themselves required very little introduction. In general, the story of Recount is rather simple. In essence, Strong needed to write a clear storyline, but the implications of dialogue, representations, and motivations are extraordinarily complex. Recount utilizes momentum to move the story along. With the certification deadline coming up, the characters are constantly considering the time element involved with their quest.
It is difficult to make an accurate and entertaining film. Warren Christopher, former Secretary of State, spoke out against *Recount* claiming, “It’s drama masquerading as history” (Kurtz). His character was portrayed as naïve, particularly when compared to the Republican characters in the film. This is most noticeable in the film when the director, Jay Roach, cuts back and forth between the characters discussing the particular actions that need to be taken to seek a recount. Christopher has been very open about the dialogue spoken by his character as being completely made up. In *The New York Times*, Christopher said the film was “pure fiction” (Deggans). During one of my focus groups, someone said, “James Baker knew immediately what he was doing whereas Christopher had no strategy” demonstrating that the representation did have an impact on this person’s perception of him.

In an interview, Ron Klain noted that there were over one hundred lawyers who worked on Gore’s campaign, but only eight appeared on screen (McQuilken). The balance of fiction and film becomes noticeable in this sense. Someone who watches the movie will only recognize a small number of people, while those who take the extra time to read about the 2000 election will know the full extent of the campaign. The fictionalized elements are compressed to produce a better film, not craft a well-rounded knowledge base. Films undertake a large challenge trying to depict events as well as engage the audience for two hours. Therefore, a writer’s goal is to produce a dramatic story, not necessarily a factual one. In regards to my own study, I found that a movie’s overall theme is crucial to a viewer’s takeaway.
Screenwriter Syd Field identified four essential qualities needed to create a good character: a dramatic need, a unique perspective, embody a persona, and evolve (Field 63). *Recount* follows Ron Klain’s quest to get all the votes counted in Florida. Rather than focus on the 2000 presidential candidates, Ron Klain is the protagonist. “All movies require a protagonist with clear needs, and also hurdles obstructing his efforts to satisfy those needs” (Walter 69). Klain’s perspective and persona is that of a dedicated Al Gore lawyer. Klain seeks justice for his Democratic team. While Klain does not go through a change himself, he learns how flawed the American voting system can be and the repercussions associated with recounts. Also, having Kevin Spacey star as Ron Klain invokes the “star-system of Hollywood” (Downs). Kevin Downs said, “If Tom Cruise is one of the characters, you know to follow him.” Ed Sikov defined a star as “a performer with a national or international reputation who appears in major roles and has great box-office appeal” (Sikov 131). Kevin Spacey is the first actor that is introduced in the film, thus the audience knows to follow him throughout the duration of the story.

Based on my own research, I believe that *Recount* is classified as the impossible quest archetype.

The quest archetype relates to characters who undertake a noble adventure, search, or journey, rather than setting forth to defeat a villain...Stories using the impossible quest archetype often set up an objective and then show how the characters either achieve the goal or fail in their quest. However, done, quest stories use the main characters to demonstrate the nobility and resiliency of the human spirit. (Lucey 26)

Taking into consideration that *Recount* is based on real events, the setting was already determined. Ron Klain faced a number of difficulties, being thwarted at nearly ever turn.
For instance, in the film, no major Florida law firm would represent Al Gore. During the CNN Special Report, *Bush v. Gore: The Endless Election* (2015), Ron Klain explained the reasoning behind this obstacle. “No major law firm in Florida would work for Al Gore…even Democratic oriented law firms because everyone was afraid of antagonizing the Bush family, antagonizing the governor, losing important state business” (*Bush v. Gore: The Endless Election* (2015)). Klain also said, “It was not a fair process. It was not a neutral process. It was a process that was rigged against us” (*Bush v. Gore: The Endless Election* (2015)).

**Film Studies**

In film studies, viewers can assume that all representations in a movie have distinct values and were used with a clear purpose (Sikov 5). “Film studies assumes that everything within the image has expressive meanings” (Sikov 6). All of the items in a shot were placed there by someone involved with the production; including background items, costuming, and lighting. Since everything involved with a scene was meticulously constructed, they have intrinsic value. It is important to note that items will have different values based on the subject matter, themes, dialogue, and more. “Since there is no one model for creating or analyzing an adaptation, there cannot be a particular sample of films that will illustrate how being an adaptation affects our understanding of particular works” (Geraghty 5). Every film is made with a distinctive lens by different individuals. Therefore, one film cannot be representative of a genre; each must be examined individually.
Robert Kolker notes that “in JFK (1991), Oliver Stone is at pains to make sure we understand that seeing is not believing” (Kolker 14). Filmmakers go to great lengths to generate a believable setting that engrosses an audience, this realism is achieved through mise-en-scène. Although filmmakers do not actively use the term, mise-en-scène is a French phrase that references all the various elements of film such as setting, set design, lighting, costume, makeup, and how actors are framed in each shot. A shot “is the basic element of filmmaking, a piece of film runs through the camera, exposed, and developed; an uninterrupted run of the camera” (Sikov 8). Mise-en-scène describes “the arrangement of all the compositional elements within the frame of a single shot” (Cahir 288). According to David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, “Filmmakers can use mise-en-scène to achieve realism, giving settings an authentic look or letting actors perform as naturally as possible” (Bordwell and Thompson 113). For my content analysis of Recount, I analyzed the various mise-en-scène elements such as setting, costumes, actor behavior, and props.

It is also important to note the different film genres. Recount is considered a docudrama, which “blends melodrama and documentaries mostly through the use of fact-based reenactment or dramatization of actual people, places and events” (Porter). In their chapter, Docudrama on American Television, Tom W. Hoffer and Richard Alan Nelson touch on the potential influence of docudramas, “While the docudrama has the potential to educate and enlighten because it involved a recreation of events, the form is also subject to abuse. Many of the contemporary docudramas have drawn at least moderate criticism for alleged inaccuracies” (Hoffer and Nelson 64). Docudramas are not new, they can be traced
back to the 1950s, “The lineaments of the modern American docudrama can be clearly discerned in these early journalistic reshapings of the documentary project” (Paget 152). 

*Recount*’s inclusion of real life news footage is reminiscent of the journalistic undertones that inspired the docudrama genre. Noted film scholar David Edgar wrote, “In drama-documentary, our interest is in the rights and wrongs of what is being represented…or the credibility of the argument…In documentary drama, on the other hand, the doc is merely a means to the the drama” (Paget 133). This implies that docudramas are meant to engage audiences on an emotional level and not necessarily educate viewers for knowledge gain.

Docudramas tend to invoke the phrase “based on a true story,” which became prominent in the 1990s (Leitch 280). “Based on a true story” originates in films such as *Awakenings* (1990) and *GoodFellas* (1990) (Leitch 280). Prior to this point in time, movies based on historical events were not specifically indicated, but generally assumed. Identifying the “true story” is also a separate adaptation task from literary texts, posing different dilemmas and decisions. “Based on a true story indicates a source text that both is and is not a text, one that carries some markers common to most source texts but not others” (Leitch 281).

One thing it (docudramas) does not mean is that the film is an accurate record of historical events. Commentators on documentaries and docudramas have long decreed that historical reenactments in cinema, no matter how carefully researched, are not historical records but fictionalized reenactments of historical events. (Leitch 282)

The word “based” can be difficult to define. It offers an air of authenticity to the people, facts, and issues the film addresses.
Film adaptations have the potential to engage audiences, calling them to participate in activities and understand real life events. Douglas A. Van Belle argues that professors utilize pop culture references, such as films and television programs, to contextualize important issues being discussed in the classroom and that “fiction makes it easier for you to recognize how your conceptual frameworks color your appreciation of the work” (Van Belle 9). When I was conducting my focus groups, I noticed that participants utilized other movie references to contextualize their claims. In this sense, fiction offers a common knowledge foundation for people to pull from when needed. But, even if people have seen the same film, they may not have the same interpretation. When a fact is narrated, it no longer directly reflects reality, but offers a take on the events (Barthes 277). The directing style, actors, setting, and portrayals can be enjoyable for one person and not necessarily the other. While the content of the film remains the same, the experience of the viewer may be quite different.

**Impact of Film**

Robert S. Robins and Jerrold M. Post wrote, “Films are not simply entertainment; they are also cultural, intellectual, and political influences…Films do not create cultural trends, but they do accelerate and reinforce them” (Robins and Post 283). This portion of my research will demonstrate the influence films have had over the years and the many academics who have studied the effects.

Between 1933 and 1935, scholars held thirteen academic investigations under the “Motion Pictures and Youth” series which became known as the Payne Fund Studies
These studies were conducted with the goal of determining the effects of mass media on American youth. Some of the researchers involved were found to have personal biases and committee overlap.\textsuperscript{vi} The lead researcher, William H. Short, “recruited researchers sympathetic to his views, researchers cool to his views and researchers who shares his disappointment at Hollywood’s failure to make movies that were uplifting or educational” (Jowett, Jarvie, and Fuller-Seeley 7). The Payne Fund Studies demonstrate the historical precedents of communication research. This was one of the first studies that addressed film as a new media that deserved academic attention.\textsuperscript{vii} The Payne Fund Studies showed a series of movies to children then asked them years later, as teenagers, if they were influenced by the movies.\textsuperscript{viii} In the end, however, the studies were thought to be unscientific. While this study may not transcend to the present day, in regards to analysis, it demonstrates a long-standing viewpoint that films have power and deserve to be studied.

Another early example of media effects was the Orson Wells radio broadcast, \textit{War of the Worlds}, which took place on October 27, 1938. Wells in corroboration with John Houseman and Howard Koch modified the novel changing the setting to the United States and included fake news interjections (Schwartz 7). Thomas Leitch wrote about the blurred lines between documentary and realism derived from fiction in his piece \textit{Film Adaptation & Its Discontents: From Gone with the Wind to the Passion of the Christ}. Wells’s revised \textit{The War of the Worlds} included news clips, interviews, and music, which caused thousands of listeners to believe that aliens were invading New Jersey (Leitch 283). The people who
tuned in after the initial announcement that the broadcast was fake believed the story to be true. This broadcast made many of the listeners believe that the events being relayed were actually occurring. In 1940, researchers from Princeton University, led by Hadley Cantril, studied the effects of the radio broadcast publishing their findings in *A Study in the Psychology of Panic* (Schwartz 8). Cantril and his researchers oversampled the frightened population ignoring relevant data from people who were unaffected by the broadcast (Schwartz 8). While the number of those affected is still questionable, there were individuals who could not tell the difference between the entertainment broadcast and an important news bulletin about an invasion. This incident demonstrated the impact that media can have on audiences.

The manner in which groups are represented on film can also be influential. In her book *Media & Minorities: The Politics of Race in News and Entertainment*, Stephanie Greco Larson wrote, “By excluding racial minorities or presenting them in stereotypical and limited ways, the dominant culture subordinates and justifies this subordination of racial-minority groups” (Larson 15). In *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), viewers formed racist perspectives based on this film’s portrayals of African Americans. This was a silent film relying primarily on visual representations. Wheeler Winston Dixon and Gwendolyn Audrey Foster believe that *The Birth of a Nation* “reflects a narrow worldview based on the director’s limited social experience” (Dixon and Foster 24). While D. W. Griffith may have been a pioneer in the early days of Hollywood, he was not the most well traveled. With race relations as an undercurrent in society, Griffith may have been influenced by the
world around him. After Woodrow Wilson saw *The Birth of a Nation*, he said, “it is like writing history with lightning, and my one regret is that it is all so terribly true” (Dixon and Foster 24). Several actors who were cast as slaves were white men with their faces painted black, further perpetuating a stereotype. *The Birth of a Nation* is thought by some to have reinvigorated the second coming of Klu Klux Klans in the United States.ix “The African American community responded to the release of the film with urgency, consistency, and organization” (Dixon and Foster 25). In light of *The Birth of a Nation*’s premiere, many groups protested (Dixon and Foster 25). The film was able to invoke an emotional response from viewers and inspire them to become actively involved in society outside of the movie theater’s walls.

Currently, the depictions of foreign agents as villains need to be examined. With growing intolerance towards other ethnicities due to terrorism, many people view Muslims as threats. Having films with Muslim antagonists may be impactful. The psychology of film is a branch within psychology that examines the elements of film such as sequencing, editing, cinematography, and various other cinematic techniques. Evelyn Alsultany’s *The Arabs and Muslims in the Media: Race and Representation after 9/11* addresses the fact that there has been a growing trend to portray Arabs and Muslims negatively in American media since the 1980s (Alsultany 8).\(^x\)

Stories have power and the visual medium of film can have an impact; they can instill a certain emotional impact within viewers. “The emotional experience is the awareness of the situation’s particular meaning in terms of a relevance for a concern, reality and difficulty, and the felt-action tendency” (Wuss 130). In regards to *JFK*’s emotional impact:

A survey and analysis of viewer reaction to *JFK* demonstrates that this film and others like it can produce markedly altered emotional states, belief changes spread across specific political issues, and…an impact on politically relevant behavioral changes…(*JFK* viewers) reported emotional changes, (became) significantly more angry and less hopeful…those who had seen the movie were significantly more likely to believe (the various conspiracies depicted in the film)” (Robins and Post 283).

Audience members’ emotions can reflect the film’s themes and or end message. For instance, after viewing *Recount*, several focus group members said they were “depressed” by the 2000 election circumstances.
In Oliver Stone’s *JFK*, Stephen Rosenfeld noted, “The film does not distinguish between the two (drama and documentary)” (Rosenfeld). At American University’s *JFK: Cinema as History*, Stephen Rosenfeld addressed the infamous operating room scene in *JFK*, is presented in black and white “as though it is a real scene.” The film brings fragments from different realities together with varying film stock, original footage, and varying frame sizes.

The significance of *JFK* was not simply that Stone had brought accusations of conspiracy to a wide audience, however. Just as importantly, it was the skill and artistry with which he presented the story that helped establish *JFK*’s influence. The director masterfully blended original footage with archival footage (including the famous home-movie of the assassination known as Zapruder film) …and faux archival footage. Audiences were thus confronted with a slew of traditionally staged material, actual historical evidence, and fake historical evidence, all mixed together in a compelling story. (Arnold 138)

In *Recount*, Roach included authentic news footage as well as mimicked portrayals in addition to the fictionalized account of the recount process. The amalgam of inauthentic with dramatized footage blurs the lines between fact and fiction. “*JFK*, despite the many documentary elements it contains, belongs to what is certainly the most popular type of film…drama. This sort of film is marked, as cinema scholars have shown, by a number of characteristics, the chief being its desire to make us believe that what we see in the theater is true” (Rosenstone 123). In some senses, *JFK* can be viewed as an interpretation of a true story. It is in fact a generous adaptation.

In regards to television, *The West Wing* has become a pillar in political on-air dramas. There have been a number of academic studies published on the show such as *The West Wing: The American Presidency as Television Drama* by Peter C. Rollins and John
E. Connor, in which Rollins and Connor noted the liberal bias in the programming (Rollins and O’Connor 4). Lisa Brown Buchanan created a study analyzing the influence of *The West Wing* on high school students, demonstrating an increased understanding of politics within participants. *The West Wing* aired after the Clinton administration and attempted to increase morale within viewers, “the series went for nobility and for politics with a purpose” (Bianculli). Janet McCabe noted *The West Wing* as a “landmark” show, which paved the way for other political dramas (McCabe 115).

Alan S. Marcus and Jeremy D. Stoddard noted the value of films in classrooms for student use. Students are able to contextualize historical issues and events in conjunction with film viewings (Marcus and Stoddard 305). Teachers have easy access to televisions allowing them to integrate films into their class discussions and syllabi. Marcus and Stoddard dutifully cited the fact that teachers should not rely entirely on films to educate young minds, but “draw on film to assist students in the act of creating and exploring history” (Marcus and Stoddard 318).

According to Michael Suk-Young Chwe, “Public rituals can be understood as social practices that generate common knowledge” (Chwe 3). Going to the theater or sitting down in front of one’s couch for movie night can be ritualistic. For instance, couples may make every Friday night movie night incorporating it into their weekly schedule. Movies and television shows are all around, making them easily accessible. One does not need to spend vast amounts of money to enjoy a film, allowing individuals from all classes, ages, genders, and orientations to take part in the movie-going experience.
What makes *Recount* different from other films is that it did not inspire people to go to a movie theater due to the movie being aired on HBO, a television channel. People tuned into the film in a similar fashion to turning on the television to watch the news. A person’s home does not offer the same sense of disbelief that a movie theater inspires; the viewing experience will be different based on the location. When people go to a movie theater, they suspend their disbelief at the door, while televisions do not instill that same sense of wonder. Therefore, the integration of authentic news footage in conjunction with dramatized portrayals could make it more difficult for the viewer to differentiate the true facts from the falsehoods. Similarly, people watch the news with the intention to learn, while going to a movie theater, they wish to simply be entertained. Watching *Recount* in the home could have inspired more learning to occur within the viewers.
CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

For my study, I conducted an analysis of the film *Recount* (2008) in order to determine how the information was presented to the audience and what it symbolizes. *Recount* depicts the 2000 election issues including the butterfly ballot and possible undervotes in Florida as well as the lead up to the Supreme Court case *Bush v. Gore*. I watched the film closely to mark the production’s use of authentic news footage, mimicked news footage, and mise-en-scène elements. I interviewed four film and media scholars and individuals involved in the entertainment industry; Kevin Downs (Georgetown University School of Continuing Studies Screenwriting Professor), Brian Hochman (Georgetown University English Assistant Professor), Michael Shull (George Washington University Film Studies Professional Lecturer), and Kyle Brannon (Assistant Professor of Film and Media Arts at American University). I also interviewed Ron Klain (the protagonist inspiration for *Recount*) twice at his office in Washington, D.C. Ron Klain was a law clerk for Supreme Court Justice Byron White, assisted with Bill Clinton’s presidential campaign, was Al Gore’s Chief of Staff, and Joe Biden’s Chief of Staff. Recently, Klain was in the press for being President Obama’s Ebola Czar, coordinating the efforts to appease public fears and ensure citizens health. Lastly, in order to include an audience analysis, I held focus groups to collect original data. I employed both qualitative and quantitative techniques to analyze the potential knowledge gained from *Recount*. 
Analysis of Recount

To offer insight into Recount, I conducted an analysis of the film taking the dialogue, directing style, and mise-en-scène components into account. My analysis was conducted scene-by-scene and noted all the wardrobe selections, scene settings, character dynamics, authentic news footage, and gender representations. I analyzed the integrated news footage, and I noted the actor portrayals of real life press conferences and news recordings, I categorized the authentic news footage based on their viewers (Bush campaign workers or Gore campaign aides), and news logos (both genuine and created for the film). I also timed how long each of the main characters, Ron Klain, Michael Whouley, James Baker, Warren Christopher, David Boies, Katherine Harris, Benjamin Ginsberg, and Mac Stipanovich were on screen. I used my cellphone to time the duration of each character portrayal.

Interviews

To seek additional information in regards to media studies and the film Recount, I met with several professors; Kevin Downs (Georgetown University), Brian Hochman (Georgetown University), and Michael Shull (George Washington University). During our conversations, the professors answered several questions pertaining to the influence of film and the difficulty in crafting an adaptation. Professor Downs mentioned the star influence and star-theory in film, influencing me to cite how often the main characters were on film. During my interview with Professor Hochman, he cited the influence of film throughout history such as World War One propaganda, which inspired me to conduct a more
extensive literature review of the subject matter. Professor Shull cited films “manipulate feelings” and the importance of a film’s medium.

My most important interview was with Ron Klain, whom Kevin Spacey portrays in *Recount*. He ran the day to day operations in Florida during the recount process and oversaw the other lawyers and Al Gore aides. In the film, he is depicted as leading the fight for a hand recount. The other characters in *Recount* report to him and are constantly asking for his advice. In my interview, Klain spoke frankly about the 2000 election, the truths and exaggerations in the film, and what he thought the important takeaways of the film were. Our conversation inspired me to look at the movie as a whole. Klain noted that the key themes of voter issues pertaining to the butterfly ballot, the recount process, and the Democratic fight on Gore’s behalf made him view the production as a success.

My interviews with Professor Downs, Professor Hochman, and Mr. Klain, took place in person and were recorded for accuracy. I used the “recorder” application on my cellphone and iPad, then transcribed the entirety of the conversations to ensure accuracy. Professor Hochman’s interview was around thirty minutes, Kevin Downs spoke with me for about forty-five minutes, and Ron Klain spent an hour of his time with me. My interview with Professor Schull occurred via phone. I recorded the conversation, which lasted forty-five minutes, on my iPad using the recording function.

**Focus Groups**

In order to test my hypotheses that *Recount* educates viewers, I decided to hold focus groups, which included surveys for pre-film and post-film to test knowledge and
perception. The respondent’s questionnaire results would indicate their level of knowledge pre-film and post-film. My sample was limited to the Georgetown campus. Respondents were asked to participate due to their Georgetown extra-curricular activities, Georgetown Democrat Club, Georgetown Republican Club, Georgetown Television Club, registration as a Film and Media Studies student, registration in the American Studies department, or being a Communication, Culture, and Technology (CCT) graduate student. I sought volunteers via email, social media, by posting flyers, and seeking academic support by word of mouth advertising. I asked all of the Georgetown Communication, Culture, and Technology professors who taught classes in the fall 2015 semester to announce my focus groups in their courses to ensure the CCT students were aware of the viewings. I created flyers for them to distribute to interested students. The Georgetown Republican Club posted the viewing as a Facebook event and the Georgetown Democrat Club emailed their list of members. Additionally, the Film and Media studies program and the American Studies department emailed their students. The Georgetown HerCampus club as well as the Georgetown Television club also sent out emails to their members regarding the viewings.

Participants were not paid to take part in my study. I provided complimentary food and drinks and offered a comfortable viewing environment for the film. They were told they could move about during the film and that they should feel at ease; for instance, be able to leave to use the restroom or walk around the room to take more food back to their seat.
Viewers completed pre-film and post-film questionnaires and participated in brief discussions of *Recount* in small groups in order to test the knowledge they gained from watching the film (Appendix A and Appendix B). I stressed that if they did not know an answer to a question, they were not to guess. Due to the nature of the study, each participant’s questionnaire was anonymous, further allowing them to feel comfortable marking answers as “don’t know.” To ensure confidentiality and accuracy on the surveys, each participant was given a randomized number between one and one hundred that was pre-written on a flashcard, and was instructed to label their pre-test and post-test with the number at the top of the page, allowing me to compare the two surveys. If someone left early only completing a pre-test or came late answering just the post-test, I did not include their responses with the data. This decreased my number of participants from thirty-eight to thirty-one. My sample size can be reflected in my data analysis. Some of my statistic figures are not significant due to the small size. If I had more participants, my significance levels may have been higher.

I input the survey questions into SPSS as variables and I assigned a randomized number to each participant. If the person answered a question correctly, their response was given a score of one. If they were incorrect or left the answer blank, I gave them a score of zero. Due to the smaller sample size, it was beneficial to collapse the incorrect answers and unknown answers into one category.
CHAPTER THREE

ANALYSIS OF RECOUNT

In order to analyze the themes, emotional impact, knowledge gained, and influence, I conducted a scene-by-scene analysis and marked relevant information such as the use of authentic news footage, camera angle, mise-en-scène elements, and characterizations of the film Recount (2008). A content analysis of Recount was warranted to determine how the 2000 election was presented in the film. Recount depicts the 2000 election recount process as well as the issues both the Republicans and Democrats faced during the proceedings.

The movie Recount was predominantly filmed in Jacksonville, Florida, and employed thousands of workers (Reuters). Similar to the films Glory, Braveheart, Titanic, and other productions based on true events, the audience is already aware of the ending. Viewers know that George W. Bush became the forty-third president of the United States. Thus, the protagonist, Ron Klain, and the dramatized events keep the audience engrossed over the course of the entire film.

The Opening Scene

The first visual element of the film is the infamous Palm Beach County butterfly ballot. The ballot shows the different Republican and Democratic names as well as the date at the top, November 7, 2000. If a viewer is not overly familiar with the 2000 election, they may be unaware of the fact that the ballot was a source of great discrepancy in Florida during the election. However, this information will become clearer later on. By opening
with the butterfly ballot, the viewer understands that the film will be of a political nature and address topics pertaining to the election.

The director scanned the individual names, dates, and locations on the ballot before pulling the camera back to show the ballot as a single item. This directing style allows the viewer to briefly see the parties and names that will be referenced later on throughout the duration of the film. While this creates a knowledge base, the directing style also makes note of the fact that society can view the 2000 election issues in regards to a single candidate and or party affiliation or as a whole entity. The shot sets up the mentality that the ballot can cause conflict between parties, yet everyone was affected by the ballot’s design. Hence, the director, Jay Roach, pulled the camera back to show the ballot as one cohesive problem for all of the political actors involved. Similarly, the audience can appreciate the singular elements or consider the issue in a general sense.

Once the viewer sees the ballot on screen standing by itself, the director immediately cuts to a scene in which an elderly woman goes to vote. The woman is not introduced nor is she given a name later in the film. She is meant to portray elderly voters as a singular example. The woman has difficulty determining which name aligns with the boxes, pausing for several seconds before pressing her vote through. Once her vote has been cast, the ballot dimples, not going through the paper entirely. This particular scene presents the 2000 election issue without going into great detail.

Also, it is worth noting that the sample voter whom the director selected is an elderly woman. This casting decision is part of an ongoing theme with Florida, many
elderly individuals reside in the state. There are several jokes and references that pertain to age throughout the film such as “the land of the living bubies” and “you’re eighty something years old, you’re arthritic, and you’re blind as a f***ing bat. Unfortunately, for us, blind f***ing bats tend to vote Democratic.” The use of this elderly woman as an unnamed example voter creates a precedent for future remarks and characters. The audience witnessed an elderly voter taking time out of her day to be a part of the democratic system, yet her vote may or may not have been counted.

Additionally, the elderly woman has veins running along her hands, glasses, white hair, and a gold Star of David necklace. There is no question as to her age, she is obviously an older individual. Her necklace implies that she is Jewish. In politics, people of the Jewish faith tend to be members of the Democratic party. When Whouley finds information pertaining to Texas voting laws, he hands the envelope to Ron Klain and says, “An early Hanukkah gift.” While stereotyping is not always accurate in politics, certain references tend to be indicative of generalizations.

When the woman presses the push-pin through the ballot to vote for Al Gore, the director pulls the camera back to reveal her standing in front of the butterfly ballot, in a voting booth with the word vote lined up perfectly behind her, in all capital red letters. The woman stands in the center of the screen, while on the left-hand side, the word vote is vertical next to her. Roach pulls the camera back and shows different shots of individuals voting such as an elderly African-American man and an older Caucasian man. The audience sees the African-American man holding his voting-tabulation key above the ballot
for several seconds, pausing before casting his vote. Roach immediately goes back to the elderly woman to instill in the viewer that she is not the only person having a moment of pause with the butterfly ballot. The film does not dive directly into the 2000 election issue in this moment, but offers an example scene of everyday citizens experiencing issues with the ballot.

**Democratic Campaign Headquarters**

Immediately after the elderly woman pauses over her ballot and takes a deep breath in and out, the viewer is transported to the Gore headquarters. Inside the office is a large sign that says, “Nashville is Gore Country” with people moving around sporadically in the forefront. On the sign, the G and the O have a blue background with white stars, while the R and E are red and white stripes. Gore’s logo is patriotic in nature. Interestingly, George W. Bush won Tennessee, not Al Gore. If Gore had won Tennessee, he would have received enough Electoral College votes to become president. Gore lost Tennessee by three percent (Perez-Pena). The film does not discuss this fact, focusing entirely on Florida. No other state is analyzed or addressed in regards to the 2000 election. By not mentioning the other states, such as Tennessee, Florida appears to be the only issue for Gore’s campaign, which is not true. If the viewer is unaware of the other state losses, Florida would give the illusion of being the only influential vote.

It is worth noting that the Gore campaign did not appear to be expensive. For instance, in the upper right-hand corner of the screen was a poster “Days Until Election.” The sign was handwritten with big black letters and a red-boxed line drawn over the
countdown. The red box implies that it is still election day. Rather than spend money on an official sign, banner, or electronic countdown, the campaign workers used something one could easily make at home. Similarly, in the left-hand corner is another note reading, “Target District.” There are several numbers that are very difficult for the viewer to read.

There are no computers anywhere on the floor for the campaign volunteers. They have landline phones, paper files everywhere, and limited technology. Gore campaign workers, both men and woman, talk on the phone discussing poll numbers and the need to try to get undecided voters before the camera pans showing an American flag.

Roach made the conscious decision to have the camera look at Ron Klain through a window that has white shades running across the glass for his first scene. The viewer watches him enter, having a voyeuristic tone or a documentary style. The lines make it more difficult to see all of the elements in the background except for his office. Klain is introduced to the audience in the context of the election. There is a great deal of paperwork taped to the walls in his office, an oversized map of the United States broken down to demonstrate districts, stacks of files around him, post-it notes on his lap top, a low-set lamp, and a general style of disorganization. In a subtle gesture, Kevin Spacey as Ron Klain sits down, leans back in his chair, picks up the phone, and tosses a pencil in the air as he answers a journalist’s question about democracy and voting as if he had said it quite a few times before being prepared for the inquiry. He then picks up a Newsweek magazine and skims the pages as another journalist asks him questions. Klain looks disinterested in the
conversation because everything has either been asked before or he has mixed feelings about the election due to his own personal experiences with Gore.

When he receives a third phone call from a reporter, he replies, “I know the question and I know the answer” implying a great deal of journalists have been asking the same questions over and over again throughout the election cycle. While he is on the phone, a reporter who is not shown but his voice is heard, says, “Al Gore is going to win the popular vote but lose the electorate” introducing one of the main issues for the election. Ron Klain concludes his statement saying, “Every vote counts.” Klain made his remark to a journalist before he needed to go to Florida to fight for all the votes. This line sets up the issue through the dialogue in the first few minutes. Screenwriter Danny Strong masterfully interweaves the electoral issues early on, allowing viewers to become more aware as the film progresses. The audience gains a strong understanding of the Gore campaign and who the main representative will be for the team, Ron Klain.

**Republican Campaign Headquarters**

Unlike the Democratic office, the Republican headquarters is much more organized and lavish. The desks are a dark mahogany wood that shines under the lights, rather than metal like the Gore campaign. The rooms are spacious, aside from one stack of well organized folders, there is very little paper to catch a viewer’s attention, giving the Republican campaign an expensive appearance.

In the scene, red, white, and blue balloons are carried by a worker in a polo shirt including patriotic imagery. The famous Republican logo, an elephant with red legs, snout,
and tusks is visible in the background. All of the workers are dressed professionally in business attire. Dissimilar to the Democratic office which housed people moving about, the Republican campaign has quite a few people standing together discussing the election. The Democrats were seeking to sway undetermined voters, while the Republicans seem to be at peace with the election day process. Later on election night, the Bush campaign workers view the announcement on television watching an unidentified piece of news footage in which there are people in the streets clapping and cheering for Bush’s victory. Their celebration is short lived when Joe Allbaugh enters the room and cites the issue in Florida. The different settings and worker mentalities strengthen the party affiliations.

When the Republicans are in Florida working on the recount, their central office is luxurious. The conference room they work from houses a mahogany desk paired with fine black leather seats, where all of the workers can sit, and shelving along walls with volumes of leather bound books. In this sense, the Republican Party is associated with wealth. They can afford lavish office space and appear to run a well thought out campaign. Throughout the film, the background colors and scenery reinforce the characters’ political ideology. For instance, later in the film, when Tom Feeney, Speaker of the House in Florida, holds a press conference, the building behind him has red and white awnings signifying a Republican moment in a Republican scene. He stands behind the podium with the Republican colors behind him, instilling in the viewer that he is a Republican and his announcement will pertain to their viewpoints and goals.
Republicans v. Democrats

When asked by *New York Magazine*, “Who does it (the film) play better to, Democrats or Republicans?” Jay Roach, replied, “I hope that it plays well to both. I think the Republicans enjoyed it because they won. I think the Democrats, in some ways, are more riled up by it because they lost” (*NYMag.com: The Premiere of HBO's Recount*). The parties are portrayed differently in regards to mentality, motivations, and tone. Viewers will be drawn to the Democrats due to Ron Klain, an Al Gore attorney, being portrayed as the protagonist.

In the film, each party is acting on their own accord not differentiating themselves from one another aside from supporting different candidates. As Douglas A. Van Belle noted, a collective action is a “coordinated group activity designed to achieve a common goal that individuals acting on their own could not otherwise attain” (Van Belle 44). *Recount* depicts both the Republican and Democratic parties gathering their forces to achieve a common goal, the Republicans wish to see George W. Bush as president, while the Democrats want to see Al Gore win. *Recount* does not define the Republican and Democratic ideologies. The viewer understands that they are opposing groups, but the reason for their beliefs is not addressed. Similarly, the film does not define the roles of each institution of the American government, but cites the Judicial, Supreme Court and lower courts, as well as the executive, the president. The Republican and Democratic definitions are assumed to some degree; this may be permissible due to the R rating of *Recount*. If a
viewer is eighteen years or older, they should have some foundational knowledge of the American political system.

The contrast between the Republican and Democratic characters is made clear when James Baker and Warren Christopher are addressing their tactics for the recount and the director, Roach, goes back and forth between each meeting. James Baker says, “It is a street fight for the presidency and it’s not going to get more political than this” only to have Warren Christopher in the other camp say, “This is not a political street fight…America is the last great democracy and the Democrats need to uphold a certain amount of respect when trying to get all the votes counted.” Each time one man says something they believe, the other contradicts him.

When Ginsberg adds that it is doubtful the court would even hear a case, James Baker smiles. He mentions he is friends with the former Governor of Florida, Lorraine Charles, implying he has people on the inside who can help him and the Republican cause, who can be of assistance to get George W. Bush elected. From personal experience, he knows the party affiliation and beliefs of the Florida Justices. Baker knows that they will support Gore, thus the Republicans need to be on track for the Supreme Court, while “The Supreme Court might be a long shot. But, the Florida Supreme Court is a no shot.”

The two men, Baker and Christopher, have vastly different perspectives. Warren Christopher wants to be proper and straight forward and avoid unnecessary tactics. As Baker states he wants court cases, Warren Christopher tells the Democratic workers that he wants to avoid lawsuits commenting that “Al Gore doesn’t want to sue to be president.”
Further demonstrating a difference between the two parties, James Baker says he does not want to see a copy of *The New York Times* unless it is “to wrap garbage.” Seconds after he vocalizes his thoughts about the newspaper, Warren Christopher holds up a copy of *The New York Times*. Depending on the viewer, he or she may not be aware of the fact that *The New York Times* is a liberal news outlet and would lean towards the Democratic viewpoint. *The New York Times* would be an ally for the Democrats, but not for the Republicans, further separating the allegiances of the parties. They will need different methods to get their candidate in the Oval Office.

I also noted that the actor portrayals of authentic news footage was featured on television sets with one of two logos. In *Recount*, the Republican actors all watch Live 16 WPN for breaking news, while the Democrats watch Live 26 WLRS for live results. These are not real news outlets, but categorized to further demonstrate the differences among the parties. Live 16 WPN may have been in reference to Republicans preferring Fox News over other outlets.

**Katherine Harris**

Immediately after the black screen appears on election night, Roach jumps to Katherine Harris who is in her bed. While every other character is running around in their campaign headquarters, watching the news, talking to their fellow workers, and dealing with the repercussions, Katherine Harris is sound asleep; thus, demonstrating that she is not invested in politics to the same degree that the other characters are. While Ron Klain, Michael Whouley, Jeb Bush, and Joe Allbaugh are all standing around awaiting results,
Katherine Harris is asleep in her bed. The phone wakes her, signifying it was a sound sleep; she was not tossing and turning in her bed.

Katherine Harris answers her phone and sleepily responds, unaware of the current circumstances. Unlike all the other characters, who have been following the minute-by-minute election night coverage, she has been asleep. Harris is uninformed of Florida’s importance in the election. Jeb Bush frantically calls her asking for the numbers. Harris does not know them. The juxtaposition of being disengaged and an active political participant is clearly shown in this particular scene. This is also the viewer’s first impression of Harris. Unlike the other workers who are invested in their candidates, she could be getting her “beauty rest” only thinking of her needs. The general mentality that she is not like the other characters in *Recount* is first introduced in this scene because they would not have missed the election results.

When Katherine Harris enters her office, she is greeted with dozens of journalists who have cameras and microphones ready to thrust in her face. Harris is unable to answer any of their questions because she does not know what has been going on throughout the evening or early morning, forcing her to stand, smile, and walk passed them. Katherine Harris did not take the time to call her colleagues or research the night’s events. Her character appears unknowledgeable and awkward in this shot. Seconds after the journalists failed to gather new information from Harris, Clay Roberts, Director of Elections, is introduced. Roberts informs the Florida election committee of the numbers: Bush received 2,909,135 votes and Gore received 2,907,351 votes. Katherine Harris asks, “What’s the
difference, Clay?” not being able to do the simple subtraction; the difference between the two candidates was 1,784.

Later, in the film, when Roberts enters Harris’s office, there are three pictures of horses, each image housed in golden frames as well as a large mural of horses. Additionally, the phrase, “In God We Trust” is framed on the back wall. Horseback riding is an expensive hobby to have, reinforcing the mentality that the Republican Party is more luxurious. Harris’s office has dark mahogany wood doors and book shelves, all with red undertones, symbolizing her Republican beliefs. The setting is similar to the lavish Republican offices.

The religious imagery persists throughout the film being tied to Harris. Later, Katherine Harris refers to herself as “a woman of action like Queen Esther.” Harris elaborates on having been reading her Bible more often, feeling “a strong kinship” with Queen Esther. Similarly, while David Boies is on television, he is being viewed by the Republican committee. Harris stands next to Clay Roberts and Mac Stipanovich in her office near a pair of ceramic hands coming together to signify prayer.

In the corner of one of her bookcases is the scales of justice. The scales are in a corner by themselves potentially representing the fact that she is less concerned with justice and more concerned with her own personal interests. The scales are shown as Katherine Harris is in the bathroom doing her hair and makeup with the water running, when Roberts attempts to inform her about the fact that not all of the counties had re-tabulated their ballots in the proper manner. Harris emerges from her bathroom with dark blue eye shadow,
overly done mascara, far too much blush, and dark red lips, appearing as though she was a little girl who found her mother’s makeup bag and did not quite know how to use any of the products. Her makeup is not skillfully executed, looking rather clownish. While Roberts is coping with real issues, Harris is concentrating on perfecting her appearance. The concept of justice or fairness should be questioned in this instance.

At the press conference, Harris speaks in a rather dimwitted tone. At one point, a reporter shakes her head in disagreement with Harris. Michael Whouley watches the press conference and comments about Harris’s makeup being a “hurricane.” Harris’s makeup became known as Mascaragate (Talbot). People in the media mocked her mercilessly. Jay Leno of *The Tonight Show* said, “Boy, it's getting cold. It's even cold in Florida. In fact, it's so cold in Florida, you know that Katherine Harris? She wore a third layer of makeup today” (Talbot). Harris’s character is given the demeanor of someone unknowledgeable and easily manipulated. During my focus group with the Young Republican Club, the members found her humorous wanting to “laugh at her.” One participant referred to her as “a crazy person” believing her to come across as deranged. Other first reactions included, “evil,” “horrible,” “bimbo,” “idiot,” and “awful.”

After she made the public announcement that neither party would be able to penetrate the fire wall placed around her office, Mac Stipanovich, a Republican lobbyist, sits across from her. When speaking with Stipanovich, Harris wears a very tight white skirt, a white blazer, two-strands of pearls, while pearl earrings, and overly done makeup. From this point on, it appears as if Stipanovich manipulates Harris, thus she is depicted in
white being victimized in some sense. As the recount progresses, Harris looks out her office window and sees Florida citizens and voters holding up poster boards with her name on it. There are numerous signs saying, “Katherine the Terrible” and things of that nature. All of the posters are handwritten with markers. There is a CNN van parked near the citizens with posters along with dozens of reporters. To further draw the viewer’s attention to her emotions, the slow melancholy-inspired music plays when she looks out her office window implying that she is a part of this sad system in some manner. Even though Harris is on the Republican side and, at times, a hindrance to the Democratic campaign, she is still someone who believes in her party and wants justice to prevail.

Harris was victimized by certain representations people thrust upon her. *Saturday Night Live* included numerous parodies of Harris including one with Val Kilmer as Jeb Bush, insinuating they had a torrid affair, and another in which her ultimate goal is to become an ambassador to a well endowed country. The film did not incorporate any of the skits that they did of Harris. This may have been due to time or not wanting to humanize her, fostering feelings of empathy for someone who was problematic for the Democrats. Harris mentions “it is going to take a lot more than David Letterman making fun of my hair and makeup to knock me down” in passing, not appearing to be upset about the reference. But, in reality, there were quite a few people who made unflattering comments about Harris and her appearance. If the film had cited this, she would have been more likeable and sympathetic.
Creating Likeable Characters

Due to the nature of *Recount*, there are many characters; thus, there is very little
time to introduce each person individually. In order to create a likeable character, David
Boies is introduced watching a small television screen in his kitchen while trying to scoop
Baskin Robbins ice cream onto a cone. The ice cream drops onto the counter in a messy
fashion. Later, in the film, in response to Marc Racicot’s press conference, David Boies
sits in a nearby plush park with an ice cream cone in his left hand.\textsuperscript{xv} He holds the ice cream
in one hand as he sits on a park bench answering questions by dozens of reporters. Boies’s
ice cream is a prop. The frozen treat makes Boies likeable because he enjoys something
sweet and simple. Not only does he have dyslexia, as the audience learns through dialogue,
but he has inexpensive tastes. Rather than have him appear to be a stoic black-tied lawyer,
the audience is shown a warm character.

In the scene Mark Herron joined the Al Gore team, he was introduced as having
been fired due to joining the recount. Klain said, “Mark’s law firm has fired him for coming
on board with us,” to which another lawyer added, “on his birthday.” Instantly, the viewer
feels badly for him. Herron was willing to lose his job to fight for something he believed
in. Carol Roberts, one of the Palm Beach Canvassing Board Members, said, “I represent
the people of Palm Beach County and I believe hand recounting our ballots is the only way
to find out who won this election…What happens, do we go to jail? Because I am willing
to go to jail.” Roberts stood up to one of Bush’s lawyers who stated that Katherine Harris
would not accept ballots after the deadline. The crowd cheers for her, in turn, the viewer likes her demeanor, too.

When *Recount* was first aired on HBO, Harris considered legal action. In an interview with Alan Colmes and Sean Hannity, she said that there were nine other members of her team who helped her reach certain decisions and Mac Stiponovich was not a part of her advising committee (*Katherine Harris Unhappy with ‘Recount’*). Harris’s lawyer, Joe Klock mentioned that Harris has several advisors who were Democrats and that there was some upset by Republicans with this inclusion (*Katherine Harris Unhappy with ‘Recount’*). In the interview, Harris mentioned that she and her team attempted to conduct a state wide recount, but the Democrats intervened only wanting their carefully selected four counties (all of which were liberal) (*Katherine Harris Unhappy with ‘Recount’*).xvi Based on the information Harris cited, the film does not depict her entire story, selecting basic information to convey the general themes of the recount process.

**Gender Roles**

Upon viewing *Recount*, it is immensely clear that there is a gender discrepancy in film. All of the main characters are men with the exception of Katherine Harris, who is portrayed as dimwitted and easily manipulated. Additional female workers are in the background of the film, but they are not the ones making the important political decisions. When I spoke with Ron Klain, he noted that Krista Roseborough, who argued two of the most important cases, never appeared in *Recount*. Additional women were involved with the legal proceedings, but were not depicted due to time constraints.
In *Too Close to Call*, Jeffrey Toobin noted Jill Alper advised Bill Daley on how to proceed with the recount in the beginning stages (Toobin 29). Alper recommended that the Democrats utilize Joe Lieberman’s campaign plane and send people to Florida right away, not wasting a moment (Toobin 29). Since *Recount* did not cite the plane from Tennessee to Florida, Alper’s role was additionally cut. Similarly, Erin Brockovich offered to assist the Democrats in their endeavors, but her name was never mentioned in *Recount* (Toobin 54). Also, Jane Carroll, the Supervisor of Elections, was close to retirement when the process began (Tapper 90). It may have been interesting to include her potential lack of passion for getting the ballots counted. Carroll had previously noted issues that may occur with the punch card ballots.

One of the lesser known female characters in the film was Margaret Tutwiler, James Baker’s aide. She is introduced in the Republican conference room in Florida, being the only woman sitting across from five men. In the Democratic Party, in most instances, there are just men in the room. For example, when the major court decisions were being yielded on television, it was just Ron Klain, David Boies, and two other male attorneys. Furthermore, when Ron Klain and his team members go to protest the presidency of the United States, it is him and four other men. There were female lawyers who took part in the Al Gore campaign, but due to the nature of combining characters, they were not each portrayed. In an interview, Ron Klain noted that there were over one hundred lawyers who worked on Gore’s campaign and the recount process, but only eight appeared on screen (McQuilken). For instance, Donna Brazile, the Gore Campaign Manager, was involved
with seeking four counties to be recounted, but she was not portrayed in the film (Bush v. Gore: The Endless Election (2015)). On election night, Jenny Backus called the networks to inquire the actual numbers reported (Tapper 35). The desire to have four counties recounted was vocalized by Ron Klain. It would have been nice to include a prominent female lawyer on each side. The lack of women gives the viewer the impression that there were not any women involved in the election.

The End Shot

“A film that begins with a long establishing shot, often a stock shot, will often end with a much closer shot of a private symbol, one it has required the whole film to enable us to read properly, because it has taken the whole film to accrue the significance the closing shot accords it” (Fried 302). Recount ends with a shot of a vacant warehouse with hundreds of boxes housing ballots. It leaves the viewer wondering if there were not time constraints and issues all around them, could all of the votes been counted? The scene gives the impression that the answers were right there to be found, but there were other problems in the recount process causing the solutions to be lost.

Recount opened with a close-up of the butterfly ballot and ended a long shot of an unknown warehouse. “In a Hollywood narrative a long shot that might begin any film often yields at last to a close-up that could end only this film” (Fried 302). The ballot that was prominently on display to grasp the audience’s attention is what the boxes house, reinforcing the ballot’s importance from the beginning of the film to the end. The shot set
a precedent for the rest of the film, reinforcing the notion that one ballot design set off a series of events in Florida during the 2000 election.

During one of my focus groups, someone said, “I thought it was interesting how they ended with like the Raiders of the Lost Ark travel passes – because it implies that there’s ‘justice undone’ – like their justice was incomplete.” Someone else said:

It’s like Raiders of the Lost Ark. At the very end, Indiana Jones says something about, ‘this Ark has a lot of power, so you need to be careful with it’ and they say, ‘oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, we’re going to study it’ and they put it in a big box and put it in a warehouse with thousands of other boxes; and there’s that same sense of: ‘your vote matters where everyone of these is powerful’ and now we’re just going to throw them all into this warehouse.

The imagery of the last shot instilled a sense of melancholy and defeat in the audience. Many of my focus group participants referred to it as “depressing.” The end scene leaves the viewer curious and questioning. The sense of cynicism may help ensure or inspire people to keep in mind that something like the butterfly ballot and voter tabulation issues do not and should not occur again.

**Masterful Writing**

At the beginning of the film, Ron Klain informs Michael Whouley that some older voters think they accidentally voted for Pat Buchanan instead of Al Gore. The dialogue sets up the Palm Beach County ballot issue without stating that this will be the main source of discrepancy for these two characters later on. Michael Whouley rolls his eyes and tells an aide, Jeremy, to get someone on the phone for him. Paul Lucey wrote, “Movie dialogue simulates real speech by assuming a conversational tone…as a general rule, dialogue should be grammatically correct…their words are sparse and carefully chosen” (Lucey
167). When the issue is first mentioned, they do not view it as too large of a problem. The dialogue between Ron Klain and Michael Whouley is key to the introduction of the issue for the rest of the film. Ron Klain says to Michael Whouley, “You always said it would come down to Florida.” Whouley refers to the election as “a squeaker” implying the campaign workers are aware that it will be a close election.

Another example of informative dialogue was spoken by Ben Ginsberg. A female aide with a pink sweater and pearls asks, “Mr. Ginsberg, will we win this?” His response, “The stains of Bill Clinton will be washed away by tomorrow morning,” signifies that he and his team expect a victory. This dialogue occurs directly after Michael Whouley states that Gore will win, but it will be “a squeaker.” Both parties believe that they not only deserve to win, but will win. The dialogue provides the foundation for issues to come.

Similarly, the dialogue between the Palm Beach Canvassing Board members educates the audience on the butterfly ballot. For instance, one woman says, “Judge Burton, I’ve already received phone calls about this.” In response, he replies, “Is this what all the fuss is about?” holding up the butterfly ballot. He acts rather flippant, not understanding the real issue. Thus, he is prompted to ask Theresa LePore, “Why did you make the ballot in this manner?” The audience learns about the thought process behind the butterfly ballot creation in this scene. Theresa’s response pertains to the need for a smaller font in order to fit all of the names on the ballot. The dialogue is explanatory allowing the audience to formulate their own thoughts and opinions about the election. The viewers learn the same as Judge Burton. This is masterful screenwriting because the characters are
not out rightly telling the audience what to think or why something occurred. Strong did not write a basic definition, but incorporated the meaning into the dialogue allowing the scene to move forward at the appropriate pace, while introducing the key words and phrases that a viewer needs to understand in order to follow the rest of the plot.

It is important to note that Strong only included the relevant definitions. For instance, the sunshine standard is not discussed. “If sunlight could be seen through the bulge in the chad-the little piece of paper that is supposed to be punched out by the voter’s stylus-then the vote was counted” (Toobin 86). Chads were also referred to as “bulging” or “pregnant” during the recount process, but not in the film *Recount* (Toobin 86). Throughout *Recount*, characters say the word “chad” or “chads” a total of thirty-six times as well as saying “dimple” twenty-nine times. By the characters using these terms so frequently, viewers would develop an understanding and become familiar with their definitions.

The dialogue in *Recount* not only introduces definitions and concepts, but individuals to familiarize the audience with names early on. One of the rarer times that Ron Klain’s wife graces the screen is when she enters their hotel room and finishes the Windsor knot on her husband’s tie. She mentions Warren Christopher and says that he expects to see her husband in the office by noon the next day if Gore loses or he can have a week off if Gore wins. This is a remark made in passing, but introduces the name Warren Christopher to the audience in a positive manner. He is someone who is important to the Klains, has a sense of humor, and is in a position of power.
Additionally, the dialogue is also a source to move the plot forward. For example, Ron Klain receives a phone call asking, “Why Gore conceded...The Associated Press has different numbers” on election night. Thus, he is prompted to follow up with the numbers and the other workers. The phone call acted as a catalyst for Ron Klain to call the office and seek another opinion. Similarly, Katherine Harris received a call from Jeb Bush the day after the election results aired. xx Thus, she became a pivotal person involved in the election.

It is a general screenwriting rule to avoid utilizing phone calls. If a screenwriter includes a conversation via phones, writers need to “make the call worth the interruption” in a scene to account for its inclusion (Lucey 185). Phone calls tend to be lackluster since films are moving images and phone calls tend to lack drama. Strong used phone calls to move the story along and provide an opportunity to increase the drama. Whouley needed to contact Bill Daley and other Gore workers to stop Gore from conceding on election night. Whouley had his phone pressed to his ear in the hopes that someone would answer his plea.

After Warren Christopher left Florida, all the senior Gore campaign officials were absent from Florida with the exception of Ron Klain, who had the most seniority due to his tenure status having been a part of Gore’s office beforehand. xxx When James Baker meets with his committee, Ron Klain’s name comes up, and he has no idea who Ron Klain is. Ginsberg introduces him as “Gore’s former Chief of Staff” confusing James Baker. He asks, “Former? Can somebody explain this to me?” He then speaks to Ron Klain on the
phone. When he answers the phone, the pair engage in a spirited conversation about the outcome of the upcoming court case. James Baker establishes his character as well-versed and confident. He is older and a high ranking Republican operative. This juxtaposition further elaborates upon the Republican and Democratic allegiances as well as the antagonistic elements that are between the two.

Throughout Recount, Al Gore and George W. Bush are not seen as active participants in the recount process. The only time they have dialogue in the film is when they are on the phone speaking to one another on election night after Gore calls to retract his earlier concession. This phone call reinvigorates the Gore staff to keep their election alive and go after all the votes. On the other hand, the Republicans believe that the Democrats are prolonging the inevitable, keeping their candidate from being considered the winner. The brief conversation ignites a spark that lasts for the duration of the film.

The Gore and Bush families were also removed from the script. Jeb Bush was briefly featured in two scenes, but not portrayed as a major actor in the recount process. When the Democrats first arrived in Florida and deboarded their plane, they saw the Bush family. While it would have been intriguing to write a scene in which the two parties see one another as the recount process began, it would have involved several explanatory moments to set up the drama as well as a shot of the Bush family. By not including this scene, Strong kept the script to the bare essentials.

At the end of the movie, Ron Klain asks James Baker if the best man won to which Baker responds, “You bet!” Ron Klain asks him, “Are you sure about that?” to clarify.
James Baker’s response of, “Just as sure you are of your man” makes one wonder about the true meaning behind that line of dialogue. Earlier in the film, Ron Klain vocalized that he was not even sure if he “likes Al Gore.” He might think Al Gore should have won because of the votes, but that is not solely what drove him to pursue the recount. Klain wanted to get all the votes counted, not just get someone elected. By referencing the fact that being “sure” implies a greater issue at hand. Was Ron Klain sure? In the film, he appears to care more about the need to get votes counted than of Al Gore.

**The Wardrobe**

Wardrobe is a large component of mise-en-scène, due to the fact that the production team chooses each costume. The characters are all dressed with intent, thus the wardrobe selections need to be examined. At the beginning of the film, characters are not dressed in their ideological colors; i.e., Republicans wearing red and Democrats wearing blue. However, by the end of the movie, a majority of the Republicans wear red ties and a great deal of the Democrats wear blue ties. For instance, when Ben Ginsberg, Chief Counsel, was introduced, his shirt has a golden silver tie and light blue and grey dress shirt. In his last scene, he is wearing a red tie.

The wardrobe selections are indicative of several elements such as political parties, beliefs, and patriotism. When Warren Christopher is introduced, he wears a blue suit, white shirt, and red tie signifying the American colors being patriotic in appearance. In this scene, Christopher is not going to fight for the votes in the same manner as the Republicans. The red in his appearance can be attributed to his mentality, wishing the best for the entire
American public, Republicans included. Later that week, Warren Christopher says to Ron Klain that, “There is no shame in placing country above party.” Christopher’s patriotic viewpoint is reflected in his wardrobe of red, white, and blue where Klain is talking primarily about the Democratic party wearing all blue. Their thoughts on how best to proceed are depicted in their clothing choices.

Near the beginning of the film, after the camera pans the entire room of women and men in the Gore campaign for the first time, the viewer sees business suits, ties, and appropriate garb for an office. Then, Kevin Spacey comes into view as Ron Klain. He walks in wearing an oversized sweatshirt, appearing plain and casual. Klain holds a cup of coffee and looks rather tired, not blending in with the rest of the campaign surroundings. Klain has a grey sweatshirt, while all of the other workers in the office are seen in blue, black, and white. When he enters the scene, he walks by two well dressed men with phones to their ears. The juxtaposition of Klain amongst the rest of the characters appears very startling to the viewer, thus separating him from the people in the background. Later, when he walks into Michael Whouley’s office, Whouley turns to him and says, “Ron, you look like a f***ing Bolshevik,” further drawing the viewer’s attention to his wardrobe. Ron Klain’s appearance may be reflective of a disinterest in the campaign or casual nature. His character may also be more approachable in that manner. Rather than wear a suit, he dresses plainly drawing the viewer in to make them more comfortable with his character.

Another important wardrobe decision occurred after the discussion between Ron Klain and Michael Whouley in the alley behind their office. The pair discussed hanging
chads, dimples, and the need to fight for the election. Whouley inspires Klain to become more active and fight, demonstrating his worth.

Whouley said “Listen, everybody feels the same way about what happened to you with the campaign, okay? But Gore went with Coelho because he knew Tony was a fighter. And Tony proved it when he pushed you out…Now, it’s time to prove to Al Gore who the real f***ing Ron Klain is. It’s time to show Al Gore that Ron Klain is a f***ing brawler and that he’s not going to back down from this particular fight.”

After this conversation, Klain wears a dark blue tie and a dark suit, embodying the colors of his party. This wardrobe selection may be representative of the fact that he has a newfound dedication to the party, ensuring votes for the Democratic presidential candidate.

Later in the film, when Ron Klain delivers his noteworthy quote of, “Every vote from every citizen deserves to be counted,” he wears a purple tie, symbolizing the coming together of the red and the blue parties, the Republicans and Democrats. He cares about all votes from every citizen.

Additionally, when the movie begins, Clay Roberts was typically depicted in his red tie with red imagery. By the hour and twenty-minute mark, he is in a dark grey suit, white shirt, and a grayish-bluish tinted tie. Roberts no longer wears his traditional Republican red. When Katherine Harris speaks to him and Mac Stipanovich, he advocates democracy in a greater sense, more than just the Republican Party. Roberts is depicted in wanting all votes to be counted, no matter what the outcome. The grey symbolizes a disillusionment with his party and the current circumstances.

In regards to the wardrobe, Ron Klain said that “there are outfits in the wardrobe that are super-hyper accurate” (Klain). For instance, “the tie that Kevin Spacey wears when
he goes to the Florida Supreme Court is actually a tie of mine…there is a scene in a headquarters where people are wearing these white long-sleeved t-shirts with this, like, slogan on it, “Count All the Votes.” Those are actual t-shirts our team wore in Florida; we gave the actors some of them to wear.” (Klain). The department integrated these pieces into the film with ease, giving the movie a timely impression.

The American Public

Recount was filmed in Jackson, Florida, and attempted to capture the essence of the 2000 election. The film utilizes real life news footage to set the tone of the narrative and instill a sense of authenticity in the viewer. The press coverage and breaking news announcements makes the election feel timely. The use of extras as protestors sets a certain tone for Recount. Immediately after Benjamin Ginsberg is informed, “there is a problem with the numbers in Florida,” the audience is transitioned to view the outside of a voting precinct. People hold up signs chanting “revote” over and over again. The use of people waiting outside of the court houses or protesting in the streets imparts to the audience that while the characters are acting on behalf of the candidates, there are genuine people involved, i.e., the American citizens. A total of seven minutes and thirty seconds of Recount footage features protesters, dedicating a great deal of time to their inclusion in the film. Roach did not just have people appear in a handful of scenes. He had them included regularly to instill the sense that the American public were the ones who needed the recount and learn who truly won the election. In Recount, the Democrats are fighting to get every vote counted, thus the people rallying outside of the main locations represent that interest.
When James Baker announces this to his campaign workers and aides, that it is time for their supporters to invoke their First Amendment rights, the next scene is full of people holding signs, taking part in chants, telling “George W. Bush to put the world back in order for me,” and more. Above the Florida Supreme Court House is a plane with the “surrender Gorethy” motto and a symbol of the wicked witch from The Wizard of Oz. Not only are people standing there with posters that they could make for a dollar or so by purchasing a poster board, but additional funds were spent on lavish costumes and extreme advertising. Thus, the Republican supporters are viewed as wealthier and more extravagant.

The Republican Party has a trailer near the court house giving their conservative supporters costumes to wear in the crowd. One man, in particular, is wearing a Grinch suit. He has the complete Christmas Grinch outfit with the mask on, body suit, and a sign “How the Gore-inch stole the election” instead of “How the Grinch stole Christmas.” Another man comes out of the trailer dressed as a fortuneteller. He holds up a ballot and says, “I call this one for Gore” implying there is a lot of speculation involved in the electoral process. The Republican Party condones these actions; not only are they allowing it to happen, but they are encouraging it. Even though these citizens are acting perfectly legal, the Republicans are taking their opposition one step further than the Democrats, being willing to act improperly in regards to tact and morals. The Democrats do not take similar measures.

One of the more disturbing images occurs outside of the Florida Supreme Court House in which dozens of African-American men and women stand in a group with tape
over their mouths, signifying they had no voice in the election. This scene references the voter purge list that was discussed by Jeremy and the other Democrats. Jeremy spoke with Pastor Willie Whiting, an African-American man who was turned away from voting due to having a name similar to a convict. The citizens are only pictured in the scene for a few seconds, but this imagery reinforces that there are other issues that took place during the 2000 election. The film can only discuss so many details, without distracting the audience, yet the citizens standing there in protest can reiterate this theme.

**The American Flag**

The American flag is seen in *Recount* a great deal, blowing in the wind or hanging in the background reinforcing the patriotic imagery of the election and the American way. Including the background images as well as the American flag’s inclusion in the forefront of scenes, the image graces the screen a total of one hundred and fifty-three times in *Recount*. For instance, when some of the Republican representatives gather at a large mansion to discuss Florida’s electoral votes, there is an American flag dangling in the front of the garage door. Additionally, when James Baker stands at a podium to deliver news about the election, the American flag is prominently displayed next to him. At times, workers will also be dressed with navy blue suits, white shirts, and red ties. *Recount* is of an important political event in American history, the flag reiterates that the winning candidate will not represent a party, but the American public as a whole.

**White Wording**

*Recount* has several locations and many characters. In order to allow the audience to understand the narrative and learn the characters’ names as well as locations, writing is
placed at the bottom of the screen in white wording. If someone is integral to the plot, their political party and or job title will be included next to or beneath their names, allowing the viewers to follow the story with general ease. For instance, when the Gore campaign graces the screen, the caption reads, “Gore Campaign Headquarters, Nashville, Tennessee.”

Similarly, as he is answering the question holding the Newsweek magazine, the tagline, “RON KLAIN” with the subtitle, “Former Chief of Staff to Vice President Al Gore” appears at the bottom of the screen. The “Former Chief of Staff” reference should immediately trigger some sort of question within the viewer. If they do not catch that line, it will come up later in dialogue. Additionally, Michael Whouley’s name appears on the screen with the title “Chief Field Operative” underneath it.
Table 3.1: People and their Parties

I compiled a list of individuals introduced with their party identifications. Roach had their name and title included as a part of their introduction to the audience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gore Campaign Democrats</th>
<th>Bush Campaign Republicans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RON KLAINE, FORMER CHIEF OF STAFF TO VICE PRESIDENT AL GORE</td>
<td>JOE ALLBAUGH, CAMPAIGN MANAGER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MICHAEL WHOULEY, CHIEF FIELD OPERATIVE</td>
<td>BEN GINSBERG, CHIEF COUNSEL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BILL DALEY, GORE CAMPAIGN CHAIRMAN</td>
<td>KATHERINE HARRIS, FLORIDA SECRETARY OF STATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JACK YOUNG, RECOUNT LAWYER</td>
<td>CLAY ROBERTS, DIRECTOR OF ELECTIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WARREN CHRISTOPHER, FORMER SECRETARY OF STATE</td>
<td>JAMES BAKER, FORMER U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOB BUTTERWORTH, FLORIDA ATTORNEY GENERAL CHAIRMAN OF GORE’S FLORIDA CAMPAIGN</td>
<td>BOB ZOELLICK, DEPUTY TO JAMES BAKER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEN KUEHNE, GORE ATTORNEY</td>
<td>MAC STIPANOVIչ (Mac-the-knife), REPUBLICAN LOBBYIST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAVID BOIES, ATTORNEY</td>
<td>MARK WALLACE, BUSH ATTORNEY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOE GELLER, DEMOCRATIC PARTY CHAIR FOR MIAMI DADE COUNTY</td>
<td>GEORGE TERWILLIGER, ATTORNEY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAVID MOREHOUSE, AL GORE AIDE</td>
<td>TOM FEENEY, FLORIDA SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.2: Additional Names Featured in *Recount* with Captions

These names are lesser known characters who do not appear throughout the duration of the film.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Names Displayed on the Screen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KEREY CARPENTER, xxiv ATTORNEY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MICHAEL CARVIN, xxv APPELLATE ATTORNEY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TED OLSON, xxvi CONSTITUTIONAL ATTORNEY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUDGE BURTON, PALM BEACH CANVASSING BOARD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3: Locations that Were Identified and Appeared on the Screen

*Recount* was set primarily in Florida, but due to the multiple people involved, Roach introduced new locations at the bottom of the screen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locations Displayed During the Film</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GORE CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUSH CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PALM BEACH COUNTY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE CANVASSING BOARD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.4: The Supreme Court Case Bush v. Gore

During the Supreme Court Case, the Justice Names appeared at the bottom of the screen as they spoke as well as the names of the Presidents who appointed them to their position of the bench. If audiences remembered the political affiliations of the Presidents, then they could infer the ideological beliefs of the Supreme Court Justices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supreme Court Justices Listed During the Trial and Their Respective Presidential Appointees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. SUPREME COURT JUSTICE, JOHN PAUL STEVENS APPointed BY GERALD R. FORD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. SUPREME COURT JUSTICE, ANTONIN SCALIA APPointed BY RONALD REAGAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUSTICE STEPHEN BREYER APPointed BY BILL CLINTON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUSTICE SANDRA DAY O’CONNOR APPointed BY RONALD REAGAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUSTICE ANTHONY KENNEDY APPointed BY RONALD REAGAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUSTICE DAVID SOUTER APPointed BY GEORGE H. W. BUSH</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The white subtitles also list dates, times, and the running countdown to the recount certification deadline. Since there is quite a bit of information given to the audience, the
lines at the bottom of the screen offer some insight and the ability to follow the storyline more easily.

**Real Life News Footage Election Night**

The film uses twenty-four pieces of real life news footage from anchors and commentators discussing the election night coverage during the results segment of the film. *Recount* features CBS’s Dan Rather and ABC’s Brian Williams (prior to his public scandal in 2015). These anchors had an air of prestige and authenticity to them, being known for reporting the truth and important stories.

At 7:29 PM EST, five separate news pieces are used to introduced the issue of Florida and the election being too close to call. The film used three pieces of real life news footage to introduce the issue of the election being “very, very, close.” Later, at 7:49 PM EST four additional pieces of real life news footage are used to introduce the fact that ‘the networks are calling Florida for Gore.’ CNN has three correspondents sitting behind the news desk discussing the election, “They are calling Florida for Gore.” The clips include footage from CNN, ABC, and CBS.

Immediately after those four pieces of real life news footage, a black screen reemerges with a new time, 9:51 PM EST. NBC is the opening news footage for the removal of Florida from Gore’s column. This news announcement is explained with six distinct pieces of footage taking Florida out of Gore’s column with a male reporter saying, “It is now up for grabs, once again.” The journalists reiterate Florida is pivotal to the election.
At 2:16 AM EST, nine more news pieces are shown. The election is too close to call for several clips, but a male reporter then announces that the networks are calling a Bush victory. Thus, prompting Gore to announce his concession. Interestingly, each black screen had a specific time followed promptly by the introduction of a legitimate news outlet; CNN, CBS, NBC, and ABC. The film not only used real footage, but reports from respected outlets. Each network is well known and well respected in the media industry.

The director then shifts to a new location at the Governor’s mansion in which George Bush and his committee, and campaign members, are waiting for Gore’s concession speech. While in the mansion, there’s real life news footage going on on the TV from CNN. The director utilizes this technique throughout the rest of the film, having real life news footage play as the characters move about. This blurs the lines of fiction and reality. While certain scenes are dramatized and sensationalized, they may also house real life news footage. The inclusion of authentic reports may give the audience an impression of legitimacy.

Real Life News Footage Throughout Recount

The real life news footage can make it feel as though a viewer is watching a documentary and not just a fictitious film on HBO. The title of the film, Recount, is first said by people in the real life news footage, making it more difficult to distinguish the facts versus the fiction. Factually, people on the streets were yelling for a recount, but the performances that occur within the film might not be representative of all of the recordings
gathered. One of my focus group members said, “using the exact words (that) the media said, you get some bit of an accurate portrayal of what the country was seeing at this time.”

Once inside the Democratic office in Palm Beach, the television is on in the background as Ron Klain is on the phone with Michael Whouley. Pat Buchanan comes on in a real news footage interview and cites the fact that he believes voters cast their vote for him accidentally instead of Gore. Buchanan acknowledges the fact that he received more votes than anticipated and there could have been an issue in Florida, prompting his success. This footage inspires Ron Klain to place a phone call and refer to Buchanan’s statement as a talking point. The footage of Buchanan has a CHANNEL 40 news logo in the lower right hand corner on the television signifying exactly where that archival footage originates from. After Pat Buchanan’s interview is shown on the television, Jesse Jackson is depicted in a group of people wanting a recount. The footage makes the situation in Florida feel timely to the audience as if everything is happening in that moment.

As Michael Whouley and Ron Klain have a conversation at a local Florida bar, a Republican representative comes on the news to discuss Ron Klain’s response to the Miami Dade incident, in which there were violent protestors seeking to stop the recount. Interestingly, the Republican representative who was featured on television was speaking to the real life Ron Klain, not Kevin Spacey’s portrayal. The footage was not a product of the film, but a person speaking to Al Gore’s campaign workers during the 2000 election.

This incorporation of authentic news footage combating Ron Klain’s statement about the Miami Dade recount, authenticates Kevin Spacey as Ron Klain, offering his
character legitimacy that he may not have had otherwise. At this point in time, the audience knows his importance from what is represented on film as well as responses to him from other characters or, in this case, reporters.

While Recount utilizes footage from various networks, they use CNN footage the most. After the two lawyers and the Canvassing Committee, after they have their decision of two to one of suspending the recount, the film utilizes actual coverage from CNN, and it says CNN in the right-hand lower corner. Additionally, as a female reporter interviews Bob Dole, the CNN logo is clear in the lower right-hand corner signifying that this is a real interview and this is CNN’s original footage. After Theresa, a member of the Palm Beach Canvassing Board, received a death threat, the audience witnesses her (the actress) get into her car with police protection. The next scene has an intense musical interlude with CNN news coverage. Similarly, in disgust of viewing Katherine Harris, Democratic aide, Jeremy, changes the television channel to CNN, in which people are in the streets in response to the Harris’s Bush victory announcement. The Democrats are watching actual footage in this scene.

When Ron Klain sits at a bar in Florida, speaking to his wife on the phone, he looks up at the television. Tina Fey and Jimmy Fallon are discussing the 2000 election on Saturday Night Live. Authentic Saturday Night Live footage was incorporated into this scene. Ron Klain even tells his wife to tune into Saturday Night Live to see Jimmy Fallon deliver his commentary about Jeb Bush throwing out votes and confusing the old Jewish
voters, drawing the viewer’s attention to the clip being aired. The clip Saturday Night Live was exactly fourteen seconds.

At the end of the film, when Ron Klain and James Baker part ways on the tarmac, George W. Bush begins his acceptance speech. Bush is heard via a voiceover offering his own thanks to the American public, and accepting his new role of President. George W. Bush’s speech touches on the notion that he represents the entire American public not just Republicans; both men end their speeches saying, “Thank you. Good night and God bless America.” Bush and Gore footage at the end are both shown as the full screen, used on televisions, and utilized as voice overs. Voice overs is “commentary by an unseen character or narrator” (Cahir 296).

Interestingly, George W. Bush and Al Gore are not depicted in the film. The audience only sees the back of their heads in two separate scenes. The first and only instance of seeing the distinguished men is when the viewing audience sees them deliver their end speeches: Gore’s concession speech and Bush’s victory speech. While these have already been pre-recorded during the election, they were incorporated into the film making the viewer feel as if they just heard the results. Due to their minimal inclusion, the audience knows they are not the protagonist and antagonist. The recount may have involved them, but it was not about Bush or Gore. While Bush may have been victorious, there is more to the story than just a Republican winning the presidency.

In order to demonstrate the importance of authentic news coverage, I timed the duration of clips throughout Recount.
Table 3.5: Authentic Film Footage in *Recount*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Length of Time Featured in <em>Recount</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authentic TV News Coverage of George W. Bush</td>
<td>09:21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic TV News Coverage of Al Gore</td>
<td>05:17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV News Coverage of George W. Bush At the End of the Film</td>
<td>0:16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV News Coverage of Al Gore At the End of the Film</td>
<td>0:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic TV News Coverage</td>
<td>05:33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actor Portrayal - TV News Coverage</td>
<td>02:35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV News Coverage - going on in the background</td>
<td>0:25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The end credits show almost all of the real life individuals portrayed in the film and their interviews as well as footage gathered from the actual events. James Baker, Warren Christopher, Ron Klain, William Daley, Katherine Harris’s press conference, Jessie Jackson, the Palm Beach Canvassing Committee, Craig Waters, Davis Boies, Jeb Bush, Florida Supreme Court Justices, the hand recount, Reverend Willie Whiting, Miami-Dade, Katherine Harris riding a horse, and citizens voting are all depicted. Most people do not watch the end credits, turning their televisions off or leave the movie theater at their appearance. Unless someone watches all of the credits, they will not see the depictions that inspired the film.
News Footage & Televisions

There is not nearly the same amount of footage shown, in regards to the Bush campaign and the Republican supporters, using a television as there is of the Democrats. For the Republicans, the characters watched five television announcements. There were also four televisions that aired in the background. In regards to announcements, there were two clips from CNN aired in the Governor’s mansion post-election, the workers watched CNN in Bush headquarters and boardroom, as well as the Supreme Court announcement. In regards to footage being shown in the backdrop, there was a clip aired in the campaign center on election day, KTML 3 counting ballots, running in the boardroom, and James Baker’s office had a television airing on two occasions. There is also a voice over narration during the Supreme Court ruling waiting period.

The Democrats watch television footage of Gore voting on election day, the announcement on election night that George W. Bush won (the Gore staff watching the results), three instances of Ron Klain and his wife in bed watching WLTR 11 and CNN, three scenes in which Whouley watches election night news including clips from CNN, WLTR, WBKC 32, Klain watching Pat Buchanan on News 40, the Gore campaign workers watch the announcement of votes on CNN (the camera then zooms in on the news footage making it take up the entire screen), Klain watching Saturday Night Live, David Boies watching CNN in his kitchen, channel WLPN 26 airing the Palm Beach announcement to reject dimpled ballots, Marc Racicot announcing the potential issues with recount on WPN 16, NBC’s Meet the Press featuring Joe Lieberman discuss counting military ballots, Klain
at the bar watches CNN (Fred Bartlit discusses him), Katherine Harris on CNN certify Bush the winner, three scenes watching the Florida Supreme Court’s ruling on CNN, CNN issuing a stay in the recount, Klain and Boies watch protestors on their way to the Supreme Court, and the Supreme Court announcement on CNN. In regards to televisions going in the background, there were ten distinct instances. xxvii

If the footage is an indication of the protagonists, the Democrats became the clear focus of the film needing to be constantly informed about the recount process. The Republicans may not have needed to watch announcements in the same manner due to prior knowledge. For instance, James Baker may have been very well connected and not need to receive news at the same time as everyone else. The Democrats are constantly awaiting results hoping to have the process turn in their favor. The Republicans may not have had that same need or, taking into consideration the allegiances, the Democrats were the ones who were at a disadvantage thus the news mattered more to their campaign. The footage reinforces the fact that the Democrats are the ones needing advancements in the recount and maintain the audience’s focus.

Inauthentic News Coverage

The fictionalized news mimics the real life footage that the creators of Recount were able to gather. This, in turn, makes it difficult to determine what is truly accurate and what is dramatized. While the film incorporates real life news coverage, it also includes mimicked and or adapted footage. Over the course of the recount, many of the political representatives went on television. In order to maintain the illusion that the actors are the
people involved, they filmed the same segments with the actors portraying the individuals. For instance, Katherine Harris, James Baker, David Boies, and Ron Klain were all interviewed at numerous points in time.

Table 3.6: Re-Enacted News Footage with Subtitles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>News Channel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Katherine Harris</td>
<td>Secretary of State</td>
<td>LIVE Channel 16 NEWS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Daley</td>
<td>Live News 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breaking News</td>
<td>Election 2000</td>
<td>UPN 16 NEWS Live</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Florida Recount</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Palm Beach Co.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suspends Manual Recount</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marc Racicot</td>
<td>Montana Governor R</td>
<td>WPN 16 NEWS Breaking News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Election 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Florida Recount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CNN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election 2000</td>
<td>Florida Recount</td>
<td>CNN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>LIVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>26 WPLS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CRAIG WATERS – SPOKESPERSON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>FLORIDA SUPREME COURT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush wins Florida</td>
<td>by 537 votes</td>
<td>Channel 26 NEWS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Baker</td>
<td>Advisor to Bush Campaign</td>
<td>WPN 16 NEWS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When Ben Ginsberg is getting ready for the day, he has a small television on airing Live News 6. The actor, Mitch Pileggi, who portrays Will Daley, is giving an interview discussing Warren Christopher’s involvement in the upcoming recount. After this introduction, a picture of the actor, John Hurt, who plays Warren Christopher is viewed in the news box. This is the first depiction of *Recount* reenacting news footage.

On the certification deadline, Katherine Harris makes the announcement that votes will not be counted after the certification deadline, the Democrats are seen sitting around the table watching her on television incorporating that element of actor reminiscent of real life footage. The viewer sees Laura Dern as Katherine Harris speaking behind the podium being viewed on their television as if she were the actual Katherine Harris. This is reminiscent of the actual press conference held by Katherine Harris but, yet, the actor is the one delivering the news that is aired on their television and with the 16 UPN NEWS logo in the lower right-hand corner making it appear more legitimate.

Similar to the James Baker and Katherine Harris press conferences, David Boies holds his own dated November 14, 2000. The Republicans watch the actor portrayal of David Boies on their television with the WPN 16 news logo in the lower right-hand corner with the caption LIVE, David Boies, Gore Attorney, at the bottom. This is another incorporation of an actor portrayal being reminiscent of the news footage that occurred during the 2000 election. Also, by Boies being on television, the Republicans have reason to discuss his character, and the audience in turn learns more about him as a person through their dialogue, such as his dyslexia and his 20-hour Bill Gates’ deposition.
On November 26, 2000, Palm Beach County announced that with five hours to go, they would not be able to complete the hand recount due to Katherine Harris’s restrictions. This announcement by the Palm Beach Canvassing Committee is delivered via a television announcement. Laura Dern as Katherine Harris watches the Judge Burton actor deliver his lines as if it were a real news feed in her office. The television even featured a WPN Channel 16 NEWS logo as though it is authenticating the footage.

In the film, the first Florida Supreme Court decision yielded on November 21, 2000, was announced by Craig Waters to the public. Similar to the actors being portrayed in the press conferences, Craig Waters appears on the Democrats’ television reading the opinion so that the audience sees the actor’s portrayal of the real life individual on a television set inside the Democratic headquarters. The actor who plays Craig Waters was taped prior to the scene in which the Democrats are watching the decision, so that the production could use the footage that they gathered and incorporate it into the film giving them another dimension. Additionally, the last Florida Supreme Court decision was delivered by Craig Waters. The film employed the actor to deliver the lines versus airing the authentic footage. Similar to the other actor portrayals during press conferences, the Republican and Democrat headquarters both watch him deliver the Supreme Court’s decision on television. This allows the director, writer, and editors, to ensure that Waters only gives the most important information, cutting his dialogue to the essentials. These reenactments make it difficult for the audience to know what is authentic and what is fictionalized.
At the end of *Recount*’s credits, the production cites ABC News, ABC News Video Source, Armando Solares, Silver Image, Wide World Photos, CBS News, CNN, Corbis, ITN Archive, NBC News Archives, News Channel 5, Robert stock, Classic stock, Sarasota Herald-Tribune, Saturday Night Live, and Unprecedented: The 2000 Presidential Election by Public Interest Pictures. *Recount* does not mention the additional logos they created or differentiate from the dramatized portrayals, thus the viewer needs to watch all of the credits mindfully to learn what footage was actually gathered from outside sources. Since most audience members will not take the time to learn what was added, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to know what logos and channels *Recount* created specifically for the film and what footage was authentic.

The two parties are receiving their news from different outlets; this is reminiscent of Republicans watching Fox News, while Democrats tune into CBS or MSNBC. The Democrats watch Live 26 WLRS, while the Republicans watch Live WPN 16. For instance, when the Miami-Dade Canvassing Board held a press conference, the Democrats watched the footage on Live 26 WLRS and the Republicans watched Live WPN 16.

**Historical Newspaper Inclusions**

The director, Roach, incorporated an actual newspaper from the time period to provide another source of legitimacy for the film. The third woman on the Florida Canvassing Committee, Carol, sits in the Palm Beach Canvassing back room reading a *USA Today* from the 2000 election, with a person holding up a ballot and a magnifying glass examining the potential of a dimple or hanging chad. Similarly, the morning of the
Florida Supreme Court case, Ron Klain opens his hotel door to see the Tallahassee Voice with the title “Fourth Down and Long for Gore.” This was a newspaper from that specific day, yet again, incorporating a tangible piece of historical documentation that revolved around the 2000 election.

**Voice Overs and Imagery**

*Recount* uses voice overs to explain the recount process to viewers. In order to follow the story, the audience needs to know certain key facts. Voice overs allow the audience to see the topic being discussed as well as learn important information. For instance, Jack Young is the first person to use the word ‘chad’ in the film. He holds up a sample ballot and asks, “Has anybody ever heard of a chad?” Klain and the other Democratic representatives look around the room to see if anybody raises their hand or nods. They all blankly look up at Jack Young holding the ballot, not understanding what a chad is. The scene following Jack Young’s introduction depicts an old fashion voter machine recounting ballots. The audience saw Young hold up a single ballot, while the machine processes hundreds. This is promptly followed by four separate instances of real life news footage of people recounting ballots during the 2000 election and Ginsberg is in his hotel with the television going with the real life news footage being played on his TV watching people feed ballots through machines, once again.

One of the most prominent scenes invoking imagery and definitions occurs when Denis Leary as Michael Whouley is delivering his lines about voter tabulation. He informs Ron Klain that there are one thousand and seventy-five hundred votes that were discarded.
Baffled by the news, Klain and Whouley dive into the issues that will plague them for the rest of the film. Whouley raises the fact that there are chads, dimples, and discarded votes to Klain and, in turn, the audience. He informs the audience that “punch card ballots are primitive,” thus subject to discrepancies. In order to explain the reasoning behind the discarded votes, Whouley defines what chads and dimples are and says, “Sometimes, even if they get punched, they don’t leave the card.” While Whouley delivers his dialogue, Roach cuts to a different scene in which a man holds up a ballot. The visual element complements his dialogue, providing a point of reference for the audience.

As Whouley speaks to Klain about a chad hanging from a ballot, the movie shows a simulated voter tabulation machine having a ballot with the hanging chad go through. The vote is pushed back in before the red light reads it as a non-vote. Whouley describes this occurrence and offers a definition of a hanging chad, the viewer sees the process of a chad being pushed back in to be a discarded vote. This visual representation helps the viewer understand what a hanging chad is and how this can be a factor in the election.

To continue offering definitions, Whouley elaborates on what a dimple is on a ballot. Similar to the hanging chad visual representation, the voter tabulation machine is shown once again and a dimpled ballot goes through. The viewer can see clear indentations on the ballot, signifying a vote the red light goes over the dimples, and cites it as a non-vote. Perplexed Klain wants to know more information about dimples, prompting Whouley to elaborate. Being an intelligent man, Klain would have known the definitions of hanging chads and dimples, but by having Whouley explain the terms to Klain, the audience learns
as well. Klain may have asked Whouley to explain himself further, but this would have been done on behalf of the viewing audience. Thus, Whouley provided the audience with the opportunity to learn that ballots are not always aligned properly, older individuals may have issues such as arthritis, and the machines are older and tend to malfunction in poor neighborhoods. Whouley notes that poor neighborhoods tend to vote for Democrats invoking a common trait of liberal supporters. After Whouley defines the key terms that a viewer needs to know in order to follow the recount, he informs Klain that there needs to be a hand recount with people to view the ballots. Only individuals can determine if there was an intent to vote, while a machine cannot. This scene offers the viewer a clear definition and a working knowledge base to draw from in the upcoming scenes.

The Music

For *Recount* Ben Schor was the Music Editor, Ray Espinola Jr. was the Associate Music Supervisor, Don Murray recorded and mixed the music, and Chris Papastephanou provided additional recordings. The composer, Dave Grusin, was able to instill an emotional response in *Recount* viewers in the hopes of engaging the audience. The film opens with a musical score that has an underlying tone of melancholy. The score begins with a slow paced tempo that immediately grabs the viewer’s attention, while setting a precedent for the audience’s emotions. For instance, when Ginsberg proudly announces that Bush will be victorious and Allbaugh enlightens him about the issue Palm Beach County, the music reflects the sudden change, signifying that Ginsberg might have spoken too quickly. Throughout the duration of the film, the music provides an emotional point of
reference. The pace gains momentum when the scene is building drama or has prevalent news or slows tempo to reinforce a sad tone. The score to Recount offers a slow and steady rhythm, much like the worth ethic of the characters depicted.

Additionally, when Democratic aide, Jeremy, vocalizes that nearly twenty thousand people were turned away from voting, Ron and the other Democratic members look defeated. Klain dips his head forward into his hands, saddened by the news. The music reflects the character’s downhearted tone. Similarly, while the Democrats sit speechless in regards to Katherine Harris certifying Bush’s victory, a sad slow tempo emerges. The music adds an emotional element to the scene causing the viewer to feel badly for the Democrats; the music symbolizes that this is probably one of the more difficult hurdles that they will be faced with.

Lastly, the end credits grace the screen with the song “I Won’t Back Down” by Tom Petty and Jeff Lynne. In this sense, the Democrats are the ones who will not back down and need to fight for their beliefs; they stand up to the powerful people involved with politics. This is the first and only song in the film that uses lyrics. The lines reinforce the notion that this is an underdog tale with the Democrats fighting an uphill battle. There is a theme of righteousness to the Democrats quest; they were thwarted at every turn and, yet, kept continuing on their journey to get votes counted, which is the heart of the story.

The Directing Style

The directing style throughout Recount is unique, as it is reminiscent of a documentary rather than a dramatic narrative. Documentaries are defined as “a film that
attempts to convey the reality of actual people, places, and events, and focuses on the facts instead of a fictional account of the subject” (Cahir 285). Recount offers the impression that it is accurately portraying real life events. According to Seger, the style of a film “must be integrated and continue to move through the whole movie” (Seger 170). Each scene has a similar tone, instilling a sense of urgency and a fast pace nature. Taking into account that the recount process was timely and needed to be executed quickly, the directing style reflects these concepts.

When Ron Klain is on the phone, in his first scene, there is a great deal of movement around him. The camera moves about in the docudrama-style fashion, not as if it is on a tripod standing still, but rather a hand held motion. There are ups and downs and side-to-side movements, providing a voyeuristic element to the scene. The audience looks at him through a window and a woman’s body is outlined on the glass due to her working nearby sorting through a filing cabinet. There are a lot of moving elements within the campaign headquarters. This may be an attempt by the production team to demonstrate that there are more people involved with the Gore campaign than just Ron Klain or the top aides.

Also, when Ron Klain and Warren Christopher exit their first meeting with the Republican committee, they walk down the hallway and have a conversation while keeping pace. This action is reminiscent of the famous sequences that would regularly occur on The West Wing, a political television drama. Characters would walk and discuss matters while moving about because they were too busy to sit and have a meeting. This “walk and talk” sequence became rather famous and was included in nearly every episode.
Throughout the entire film, *Recount* utilizes eye-level shots which place the camera at the character’s height, making the actors and viewers equal (Sikov 13). Taking into account the theme of every person’s vote matters, it is a logical decision to have the viewers and characters be on the same level; everyone’s vote should be counted exactly the same. The manner in which a director uses the camera is of the utmost importance in a film. “Camera movement is an especially significant aspect of mise-en-scène,” it has the potential to express emotions (Sikov 25). The underlying goal of equality can be demonstrated by the eye-level shots. Additionally, in the shots, Roach has the characters move with purpose. “Motivated camera movements are those that are prompted by the characters and events in the film” (Sikov 28). The characters are always seeking to attain their goal, the Republicans wish to ensure a Bush victory, while the Democrats hope to assist Gore in winning. Due to the camera placement, the viewer is able to feel connected to the characters and their ambitions.

Roach also included moments in which characters break the fourth wall. Michael Mangan defined the fourth was as “the invisible wall which is imagined to exist across the front of the stage in proscenium-arch staging, which separated the audience from the actors and through which the audience can see but the actors cannot” (Mangan 172). The fourth wall acts as an official block between the audiences and the actors (Mangan 172). Jean-Pierre Geuens believes that the fourth wall allows viewers to feel involved with the events, rather than watch “the events from a safe distance, beholders are now invited to jump into the fray. They are thus made to experience situations with the same intensity as the

**Adding Drama to the Film**

Taking into consideration that the film was produced eight years after the 2000 election, Danny Strong and Jay Roach needed to incorporate drama and suspense for viewers. On election night, Gore is going to concede and the Democratic characters need to stop him. Earlier in the film, David Morehouse was introduced to the audience limping from the entrance of a hotel to a nearby car. He retorts to Klain that he injured his knee while getting off Air Force Two. To add more anticipation to the scene, Morehouse is icing his knee with an old-fashioned ice pack moaning in pain and agony on his way to the concession speech. This is the person who the characters contacted to run after Gore. The viewer is left wondering, “Will he catch Al Gore before he goes on stage?”

When Morehouse jumps out of the motorcar to go after Gore, the music is much more immediate, intense, and rises signifying the current state of influx going on with the Democrat campaign. Morehouse is stopped by the security team and falls over running after Gore, creating two hurdles for him prior to reaching Gore. Even then, Morehouse shouts after Gore several times and cannot be heard over the noise. Seconds before Gore
goes to give his speech, Morehouse stops him. The audience is left in anticipation. If someone did not recall the exact timeline of the election, they may have not remembered when Gore conceded making this an intriguing moment for them.

David Morehouse says the dramatic line, “There is a problem with the numbers in Florida,” to instill a sense of suspense and curiosity in the viewer. Florida became the pivotal state in the election, but Gore lost Pennsylvania and Michigan on election night (Gillman 17). There were other states that posed issues for Gore that technically cost him the election. While Florida was the source of controversy, if Gore had won another state, he could have become president. *Recount* addresses the potential and or “what ifs” at the end of the film, but does not account for these facts earlier in the film because it would have taken away from the entertainment and or theatrical elements of the film.

An additional example of adding drama occurred while Michael Whouley watched a television in his office announcing The Miami-Dade Canvassing Committee was abandoning the recount. Whouley picks up a chair and tosses it against the wall, shattering it into many pieces. The committee’s announcement warranted a physical and emotional reaction from Whouley. His dramatic response instills a sense of understanding in the viewer, helping them to comprehend how upsetting the committee’s decision is. Without the recount results, the Gore campaign will not be able to gain votes.

The film also states the deadlines that the Democrats need to adhere to. For instance, when campaign workers are getting the tabulation machines ready, in white lettering it said, “Certification Deadline in 5 Days.” Thus, signifying it is a race against the
clock and there is tension building on both sides. Similarly, when Jeremy walks in a suburban neighborhood investigating the voter purge list, the date November 22 appears at the bottom of the screen with the caption, “New Deadline in 4 Days.” The audience knows that it is a race against the clock. Thus, each moment matters, keeping them intrigued.

Based on my focus group responses, the film was able to capture the drama and suspense of the recount process. One respondent said, “I think that really kept you on your heels.” Someone else added, “There was never really a break. There were small moments of comic relief, with Katherine Harris, but, beyond that it was basically ‘here is an issue, and we are going talk about that for awhile.’ Both campaigns are trying to do something to fix it, then the film jumps right into the next thing.” Generally speaking, my focus group participants cited that they were intrigued throughout the entire process.

An Underdog Story

The film industry has produced a number of movies that depict underdog stories, whether it be in politics or sports. Audiences sympathize and root for the protagonists in these films to overcome significant challenges to order to attain their goals. On election night Jeb Bush leans over to Joe Allbaugh and says, “We don’t have the same numbers,” to which Allbaugh responds, “Neither do we.” The Republicans know that there is an issue with the numbers in Florida, but they are not going to help Al Gore or the Democrats. Bush accepted Gore’s concession on the phone and his team is simply waiting for him to make the announcement public. The Republicans acknowledge they are aware of this issue, thus coming across as manipulative or dishonest. One focus group participant used the word
“sleazy,” while another called them “power hungry” and “vicious.” While it is not their duty to interject and inform Gore of the numbers, the viewer knows that they are conscious of the problems, yet refuse to act on them.

For the rest of the film, the Democrats appear to be at a disadvantage. One campaign worker refers to Florida’s election laws as being “ass-backwards,” due to their outdated nature. In the heat of the moment, Bill Daley bursts out saying, “The entire legislature is Republican, the Governor is Bush’s brother, and Katherine Harris was co-chair of his Florida campaign” signifying everything around them in Florida is Republican. These individuals are going to be actively rooting for the Republicans to win, thus the Democrats are at a distinct disadvantage being outnumbered. One focus group member from the Young Republican Club said, “It definitely seemed like there was a bit of a bias towards the underdog(s) in that sense…it definitely seemed that the campaign working for Gore addressed that they were working for a good cause.”

During the CNN Special Report, Bush v. Gore: The Endless Election (2015), Ron Klain explained the reasoning behind the lack of legal representation, “No major law firm in Florida would work for Al Gore…even Democratic oriented law firms because everyone was afraid of antagonizing the Bush family, antagonizing the governor, losing important state business” (Bush v. Gore: The Endless Election (2015)).xxxiv According to Toobin’s research, Klain had a phone call scheduled with lawyers from Holland & Knight. They canceled their meeting with Klain stating that it would be “a conflict of interest” for them to represent Al Gore (Toobin 33). Klain had to find lawyers to piece together his own team,
taking an immense amount of time. The dilemma of finding lawyers is cited at the beginning of the recount process in Florida when the Democrats are discussing their options as well as the conversation hiring David Boies.

When a hand recount is undertaken, James Baker poses the notion of “What would happen if they don’t finish the recount in five days?” As soon as he vocalizes this thought, the slow-paced music of manipulation starts to play because the audience knows the Republicans are going to be deliberately delaying the proceedings to ensure that the hand recount does not reach completion within the five-day period. In this moment, all the Republicans volunteering their time to participate in the recount are supposed to be “eating the chad” to ensure the votes remain uncounted.

The Democrats do not utilize their First Amendment right in the manner the Republicans do, handing out costumes, signs, and posters. “Because Gore could win if recounts were allowed, the Republican strategy from the beginning has been to stop any effort at recounts, first by turning to the federal courts in the hopes that they would find a legal reason to stop this practice and then by calling on a political ally in Florida” (Gillman 50). The Republicans needed to be thoughtful in how they proceeded during the recount because they wanted to ensure a victory. Recount gives the impression that the Bush workers would go to any lengths to ensure his future presidency.

The Democrats were searching for undervotes, ensuring that those individuals who intended to vote were heard. “Undervotes referred to ballots in which a machine did not register a vote for any candidate for a particular office” (Gillman 25). The Gore campaign
would look like the righteous ones due to their quest to “get all the votes counted.” Interestingly, they would not have benefited from court cases, thus seeking votes was the most beneficial strategy. The film does not touch on this strategic element, rather the characters all appear to be motivated for the overall good of the recount.

In total *Recount* featured the Democrats in scenes for a total of forty-six minutes and thirty seconds, while Republican scenes accounted for twelve minutes of the film. The two parties were featured together in scenes for one minute and fifty-four seconds.

**Table 3.7: Characters in *Recount* & Length of Time on Screen**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Length of Time on Screen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ron Klain</td>
<td>49:28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katherine Harris</td>
<td>14:32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Baker</td>
<td>13:23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Whouley</td>
<td>12:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Boies</td>
<td>06:32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremy Bash</td>
<td>06:13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin Ginsberg</td>
<td>06:31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mac Stipanovich</td>
<td>04:03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren Christopher</td>
<td>03:01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to demonstrate the potential bias of the film, I timed each character’s inclusion in *Recount*. Ron Klain, being the protagonist, was understandably featured for the longest
amount of time. Harris’s time in Recount is fourteen minutes and thirty-two seconds, as the second most featured character in the film. Klain is on-air thirty-five more minutes than Harris. Not only did the Democrats have more scenes, but they were featured far longer than the Republicans. The amount of time each character was featured demonstrates that there is a potential bias. On the other hand, one could argue, that the film is meant to be following the Democrats and their quest to count the undervotes, thus their time on screen is understandable.

**Emotional Appeal**

In order for audiences to feel invested in a story, the writers, producers, and directors, need to create an emotional storyline. Rachel Ballon wrote, ”Emotions are the lifeblood of characters and of stories. Without emotional characters, you are just writing events, but you're not drawing your audience into your story” (Ballon). The film begins with the protagonist, Ron Klain, saying, “I cannot accept his eight-year demotion at this time.” He was demoted and cast aside by the Gore team, losing a position he earned. When Mrs. Klain asks her husband if he plans on joining the Gore Administration, he shakes his head sadly. The viewing audience might feel an emotional connection to him due to the fact he was overlooked for a position, feeling empathy or sympathy for him, in turn, making Klain likeable to the audience.

At the local bar in Florida, Klain and Whouley discuss the recount. Whouley says, “I may owe you an apology” commenting on the fact that he does not want Ron to be remembered as the man who lost Al Gore the presidency. Ron’s response of, “You know
it’s funny, I’m not even sure if I like Al Gore” demonstrates that he does not care about necessarily winning an election but making sure all the votes are counted. Klain seeks a greater justice than a political candidate’s singular victory, he wants the votes to be counted. The fact that he might not like Al Gore signifies that he is going above and beyond because it is simply the right thing to do.

As Paul Luvey wrote, “Successful stories are dramatic because of the protagonist’s ordeal. The writer must create this supreme life test” (Lucey 49). Ron Klain is met with many obstacles and issues in the recount. He continually fights the system to try and have the recount properly done. Klain’s portrayal by a two-time Academy Award winning actor, Kevin Spacey, catches the audience’s attention. By placing an actor of Spacey’s caliber in the role, the viewers understand he is the one to watch. Through the use of dialogue, setting, and characterizations, Klain quickly becomes the protagonist and the character the audience is rooting for. Recount’s protagonist is a Democrat, therefore, it can be inferred that the antagonists are the Republicans, led by James Baker.

Conclusions

The characters say “Florida” a total of one hundred and twelve times in Recount. They also say “recount” ninety times, “Palm Beach” (County) fifty-four times, “chad(s)” thirty-six times, “dimples” twenty-nine times, “Miami-Dade” (County) twenty-six times, “Broward” (County) ten times, “Volusia” (County) nine times, and “hanging chad” six times. After hearing these key locations and terms reiterated throughout the film, viewers would become familiar with their usage and implications. Taking into account that I tested
respondents’ knowledge on these areas, I wanted to make note of their inclusions in the film. *Recount* included real life news footage offering a timely quality and a documentary style feel as well as captions at the bottom of the screen to introduce characters. Roach’s directing and creative decisions may allow viewers to absorb more information based on how it is presented to the audience. *Recount* depicts the Democrats more favorably than the Republicans, following their heroic journey to have all the undervotes counted. The Democratic and Republican characters were presented differently to audiences using mise-en-scène, dialogue, and setting further demonstrating their differences.
CHAPTER FOUR

RECOUNT FACT VERSUS FICTION

This portion of my analysis examines how accurate the film *Recount* (2008) is to the historical events that transpired during the 2000 election recount process, *Bush v. Gore*. Near the end of the credits, *Recount* cites “This film is dramatized based on certain facts. Some of the names have been changed, and some of the events and characters have been fictionalized for dramatic purposes.” Mac Stipanovich, Katherine Harris’s former advisor said, “It is unsettling; maybe, it was a little bit like somebody who was at Pearl Harbor watching a movie about Pearl Harbor,” while Mark Herron, an attorney who assisted Gore’s legal staff, said, “They caught the concepts and they caught the sense of it, but again, they just kind of, for the purposes of the drama, put some things together that just did not happen that way” (*Does 'Recount' Need a Rewrite?*). The balance of fiction or dramatizations within film becomes more noticeable in this sense.

Someone who watches the movie may only recognize a small number of individuals, while those who take the extra time to conduct additional research on the 2000 election will know the full extent of the campaign, the recount process, and the workers involved with both sides. The fictionalized elements are compressed to produce a better film, not craft a well-rounded knowledge base of the recount. It is difficult to determine what was really said and by whom as well as the true motivations of each character. In this chapter, I seek to differentiate the facts from the fictionalized elements. *Recount* attempts to depict the thirty-six day recount process, while entertaining the audience.
After watching *Recount*, Warren Christopher, former Secretary of State, spoke out against the film claiming, “It’s drama masquerading as history” (Kurtz). Christopher’s character is portrayed as naïve, particularly when compared to the Republican characters in the film, namely James Baker, former White House Chief of Staff. Christopher’s disposition is most noticeable in the film when the director, Jay Roach, cuts back and forth between Baker and Christopher discussing the particular actions that need to be taken during the recount. Christopher was very open about disliking the dialogue, claiming it was fictitious (Kurtz). In a *New York Times* interview, Christopher said the film was “pure fiction” (Deggans). During one of my focus groups, a participant said, “James Baker knew immediately what he was doing whereas Christopher had no strategy” demonstrating that his representation did have an impact on this person’s perception of Christopher.

When I spoke with Ron Klain, he said, “A lot of these exchanges between myself and Warren Christopher made me really uncomfortable because they just did not happen that way and Chris was a mentor of mine and a very good friend, and the idea, he and I were in some battle was just ridiculous. I was very uncomfortable with that.”

**Timeline**

**Tuesday, November 7, 2000 & Wednesday, November 8, 2000**

On November 7, 2000, eligible citizens cast their votes for president. *Recount* utilized an example voter and dialogue to make this date apparent. To offer more context, the production incorporated network footage stating that Gore won Florida, retracted this win, and later announced a Bush victory. While *Recount* showed an example voter, they
did not address issues with the butterfly ballot. According to Jake Tapper, the Palm Beach Canvassing Committee was made aware of the potential confusion by mid-morning (Tapper 9). However, the committee did not have any means to rectify the problem at that point in time. The Palm Beach Canvassing Committee needed to wait and see what transpired.

*Recount* mentioned a potential problem in Palm Beach County through dialogue with Ron Klain and Michael Whouley, but did not make it appear urgent. After Democrats and Republicans both mentioned potential issues in Florida, the Palm Beach County Canvassing Board, Theresa LePore, Judge Charles Burton, and Carol Roberts, were seen discussing the butterfly ballot. Palm Beach was established as a source of controversy by the afternoon, yet the news footage included in *Recount* did not cite this location as source of discrepancy nor did the networks elaborate on why Florida was so important. In light of the voters’ anxiety and the press coverage in Palm Beach, Florida, the networks should have been more mindful in declaring a winner early on.

The first news announcement on election day stated Gore received more votes in Florida, meaning he would be granted the Electoral College votes and become the next president. The Electoral College was not discussed, but assumed. Promptly after this, the news organizations retracted this statement. The election was too close to call at that particular point on election night. The networks projected Gore as the winner on misinformation. The networks did not elaborate on the reasoning behind the false announcement nor did the characters explain the misunderstandings in *Recount*. In actuality, this was due to flawed exit polls. Throughout election day, both parties reached
out to their media contacts for the results, wanting information as soon as humanly possible (Toobin 17). Reporters reached conclusions before enough data was gathered. *Recount* accepts the information was incorrect, but does not elaborate on why there was confusion with journalists.

Also, in the film, the Associated Press (AP) does not call the election for Bush, prompting Ron Klain to call headquarters and verify the numbers. In reality, the Associated Press did call the election for Bush on election night. However, in *Recount*, Ron Klain needed a reason to become involved in the election night events. Thus, the writer, Danny Strong, had an AP reporter call him. Based on my research, Klain is not a part of the team that reaches out to David Morehouse to stop Gore from giving his concession speech. When I spoke with Ron Klain, he said that he was on the phone with Nick Baltic in Florida. Due to the fact that Klain is *Recount’s* protagonist, his character needed to be involved in this pivotal moment. In *The Votes That Counted: How the Court Decided the 2000 Presidential Election*, Howard Gillman reported that Michael Whouley was monitoring the online results and noticed the issue (Gillman 19). Unlike the film, in which Whouley contacted Ron Klain immediately after finding the issues, Gillman noted that Whouley called Michael Feldman, who in turn reached out to William M. Daley (Gillman 19). In order to keep Ron Klain involved in the action, *Recount* changed this point of contact. In actuality, Feldman then contacted David Morehouse.

On, November 8, 2000, in the early hours of the morning, at two forty a.m., the networks declared Bush won Florida, prompting Al Gore to call George W. Bush and
concede (Tapper 33). The phone call between Gore and Bush is not included in the film or discussed. According to Bill Daley, Gore Campaign Chairman, their conversation lasted about ten seconds (*Bush v. Gore: The Endless Election* (2015)). To keep the story fast paced, this was edited out. At Republican headquarters, Joe Allbaugh victoriously announced Gore called Bush and conceded. His one sentence pronouncement accounted for an entire scene.

Similarly, in the early hours of the morning, around four a.m., Bill Daley was given the unprecedented task of informing the crowd that Al Gore was not conceding (*Bush v. Gore: The Endless Election* (2015)). This dramatic moment was not depicted in *Recount* to keep focus on Ron Klain and the quest to get the undervotes counted (*Bush v. Gore: The Endless Election* (2015)). While it would have been interesting to see Daley be given this assignment, it did not add to the overall story.

On election night, Bill Daley also misadvised Al Gore recommending that he concede (Tapper 37). Daley prompted Gore to phone Bush and give his speech without contacting Gore aides or requesting another opinion. By announcing his concession before the proper numbers were reported, Daley set the precedent for Gore as the defeated party in the 2000 election. Before reaching a decision of this magnitude, Daley should have called the “boiler room” where Michael Whouley could have advised him to wait (Tapper 36). *Recount* does not dive into the issues Daley created and fostered during the 2000 election night nor did the screenwriter, Danny Strong, include a segment on Daley’s recount pessimism. Daley viewed the Florida recount as a nightmare public relations issue.
and was not thrilled to be a part of the process (Tapper 55). Over the course of Recount, Daley’s involvement dwindled, but his reasons for becoming less involved in the recount were not discussed.

In regards to dramatizations, Morehouse did run after Al Gore who was walking quickly down a long hallway, but he did not have a knee injury. Morehouse’s ailment was included to offer an added obstacle. Additionally, Al Gore and his family were already present at the location to give the concession speech; Gore was there preparing to go on stage at the War Memorial Plaza in Nashville, Tennessee. In the film, he arrives in a motorcade moments before Morehouse exits his vehicle. While Morehouse admits to chasing Gore down a long hallway, they did not arrive seconds apart as Recount depicts. When Morehouse caught up to Gore, in the film, he said, “Mr. Vice President, there is a problem with the numbers in Florida,” which could easily give a viewer chills. In reality, Morehouse said, “Sir, we need to go to hold” (Toobin 24). In Bush v. Gore: The Endless Election (2015) CNN’s documentary, David Morehouse discussed the election night and said, “I stood in front of the stairs and said Mr. Vice President we have to go to hold” and he said, “This better be good” (Bush v. Gore: The Endless Election (2015)). Audience members may not know what a hold is or what it implies; however, they would understand that there was an issue with the Florida vote tally based on the information provided in the previous scenes. Recount edited the conversation for dramatic purposes.

Later that morning, Gore called Bush and retracted his concession. Based on my research, the conversation that Recount included was similar to the one that actually
occurred. Joseph Lieberman remembered Gore said, “I don’t care what your little brother is saying. The networks are all saying, now, it is too close to call” (Bush v. Gore: The Endless Election (2015)). In the film, Lieberman is not present for the phone call or if there was an actor portrayal, it was not included in the end cut. According to the Gore team members, the phrase “little brother” was said by George W. Bush, then used by Al Gore in his response (Bush v. Gore: The Endless Election (2015)). Danny Strong accurately included this line of dialogue in Recount.

In the Republican camp, Benjamin Ginsberg and Don Evans met in the Bush headquarters to discuss the ramifications and the potential for a recount (Tapper 38). Evans said, “Better start getting people to fly” (Tapper 38). The Democrats were also preparing to send representations to Florida. On November 8, 2000, the Gore team aides needed to reach out to the news outlets in the hopes to clarify any misinformation. Daley called CBS and Feldman phoned ABC (Tapper 39). At four in the morning, CNN uncalled Florida for Bush (Tapper 39). None of these actions are depicted in Recount, eliminating the news organizations being corrected by Democratic staff members and parties prepared for the recount.

Once it was determined that the recount would proceed, the Gore team needed to involve someone with experience, who could also lead the Democratic side throughout the process. Warren Christopher was introduced to the Recount viewing audience when Benjamin Ginsberg saw Daley announce his involvement on the television. In actuality, Daley called Christopher at three-thirty in the morning on Wednesday (Tapper 42). Warren
Christopher was seventy-five years old when the 2000 election occurred (Tapper 45). Recounts involve long hours, sleep deprived nights, and a great deal of stress paired with anxiety. His age is never discussed in the film, but in almost all of the pieces I consulted for information, Christopher’s age is cited as a potential issue for the Gore campaign. James Baker was seventy years old at the time, but he was constantly involved with high stake political problems, he may have been in a better state of mind or had experience (Tapper 49). Recount did edit the Democrats seeking outside assistance and included their public announcement, rather than depict the behind the scene decisions that led to Christopher’s involvement in the recount. Also, in Recount, Daley mentions he asked Christopher to become involved. Christopher was Ron Klain’s mentor and employer. It is far more likely that Klain sought his assistance. Daley may have phoned Christopher, but I believe Klain put his name forward. In this sense, Daley is taking credit for Klain’s idea and or closeness with Christopher.

On Wednesday evening, John Giesser, the Democratic National Committee deputy, was eating dinner with Michael Whouley, a Gore Chief Strategist, when Drew Schiff, Al Gore’s son-in-law interrupted them (Tapper 56). Gore personally asked Whouley to go to Florida to be a part of the recount process. Taking into account that Gore is not depicted in the film as a character, this moment was not included. Conversations such as this would give the impression that Gore was much more involved with the recount and the selection of Democratic representatives in Florida. In Recount, he appears to be removed from the process.
Thursday, November 9, 2000

In his piece, *The Votes That Counted: How the Court Decided the 2000 Presidential Election*, Howard Gillman wrote that Gore sent over seventy lawyers and representatives to Florida (Gillman 21). The film barely depicts a dozen Gore workers. In regards to their roles, Gillman wrote, “Gore lawyer Ron Klain oversaw the legal team, and overseeing the entire effort was another former secretary of state, Warren Christopher” (Gillman 21). *Recount* correctly depicts Christopher as the Gore leader and Ron Klain as his second in command, but the number of people who reported to them was understated. While this can be due to the number of potential characters for the film, I also wanted to note that it makes the Democrats appear more sympathetic. By having a few dedicated workers, the Gore side appears relatable and hard working.

On the Republican side, they appeared far more aggressive and organized. James Baker, Bush’s recount Chief Strategist, and Joe Allbaugh, Bush Campaign Manager, boarded a small plane for Florida. On the way, Allbaugh debriefed Baker. At the end of their conversation, Baker said “we are headed for the Supreme Court…it is the only way this can end” (*Bush v. Gore: The Endless Election* (2015)). In *Recount*, Baker says, “The U.S. Supreme Court may be a long shot, but the Florida Supreme Court is a no shot.” My research depicts Baker of being much more certain of the Supreme Court’s eventual involvement, as though he knew that they would intervene in the process. *Recount* does not offer this impression. When the Supreme Court does become involved, it was presented as a surprise.
While Baker and Allbaugh conversed, the Democrats held a meeting at a local Lowes Hotel (Tapper 53). In *Recount*, the Gore team meet in a vacant mall store. During their meeting, Warren Christopher said, “I think we should be aggressive in asserting our position, but we’ve got to temper what we do with the realization that the nation is focused on us and is expecting us to act responsibly” (Tapper 53). *Recount* depicted Christopher as meeker. According to Tapper, Christopher wanted to be assertive in his approach. The Gore team decided to seek recounts in Miami-Dade, Palm Beach, Volusia, and Broward Counties. In *Recount*, the Gore aides originally only requested two counties be recounted, eventually asking for four. Historically, they wanted four from the get go.

Also, Baker managed to anger Christopher early on in the recount process. On Wednesday, Baker informed reporters that he tried to contact Warren Christopher, but was unable to reach him (Tapper 83). When Christopher and Baker finally connected via phone, their conversation did not last long. In *Recount*, when the two men speak it is face to face across a conference table. Baker and Christopher are polite, but there is not an overt animosity between them. *Recount* may have wanted Christopher to appear moral or open minded. In reality, the two men were not friendly with one another in any way.

On Thursday, November 9, 2000, *McDermott v. Harris* was filed in an attempt to prevent Katherine Harris from casting aside votes. This particular case is not addressed in *Recount*. None of the smaller court cases were depicted in the film, maximizing the amount of time the production had to tell a story. Additionally, on November 9th, Harry Jacobs lied to MSNBC’s *Hardball* host Chris Matthews claiming he had been in contact with either
party, namely the Gore campaign (Tapper 87). Jacobs, a Democratic lawyer, sued Seminole and Martin Counties for their “mishandling of votes” (Berke). The truth of this statement was later revealed and Jacobs’s involvement in the recount became more minimal. *Recount* did not include this incident either due to the fact that the absentee ballot issues in Seminole and Martin were not addressed in the film.

**Friday, November 10, 2000**

On Friday, November 10, 2000, both the Republicans and Democrats crafted their strategies. The Associated Press stated that Bush was only ahead of Gore by two hundred and twenty-nine votes at this point in time. Also, Volusia and Palm Beach Counties “agreed to start their one percent test recounts” (Gillman 34). These individual counties are not mentioned as beginning their recounts in the film. *Recount* included a scene where Clay Roberts mentions districts were checking the memory cards and re-tabulating ballots, but he does not mention any counties undertaking recounts on their own. In order to keep focus on Palm Beach County and the butterfly ballot, *Recount* may have excluded these two locations.

Also, *Recount* did not depict the issue with Duval County’s ballot. According to Jeffrey Toobin, the ballot design cost Gore an estimated two thousand votes, which would have helped his cause in Florida (Toobin 173). In Florida, the Democrats did not ask for a recount in Duval Country. Looking back, it would have been wise to include this particular district in the hand recount process.
Saturday, November 11, 2000

Bush lawyers filed an injunction stating that the recount violated the equal protection and due process clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment (Gillman 35). This lawsuit set the foundation for Siegel v. LePore, which was brought before Judge Donald M. Middlebrooks (Gillman 35). Also, the Volusia County Canvassing board filed a complaint against Katherine Harris, which set the precedent for Touchstone v. McDermott (Gillman 35). In dialogue, Ron Klain touches on the fact that there are lawsuits, but the actors do not elaborate on the cases. This day’s events were excluded from the film.

Sunday, November 12, 2000

Around two in the morning, the Palm Beach Canvassing Board declared that they found an additional thirty-five votes for Gore based on their test recount (Gillman 37). The Palm Beach Canvassing Board was the first to vote in favor of a manual recount. None of these facts were mentioned in Recount. If writer Danny Strong cited the Democrats gained votes, they may not have appeared to be at such a disadvantage throughout the recount process.

Monday, November 13, 2000

On Monday, November 13, 2000, Katherine Harris announced the following day, November 14, 2000, at five o’clock, was the deadline for certification (Toobin 101). Laura Dern portrayed Harris in a reenactment of her press conference. In her announcement, Harris stated that manual recounts are not allowed. The Broward County Canvassing Board
struck down a manual recount in light of her statements. *Recount* did not cite the Broward County Canvassing Board’s decision.

**Tuesday, November 14, 2000**

Judge Lewis ruled that Katherine Harris could reject late returns (Toobin 109). This decision set the groundwork for David Boies to become involved in the Democratic recount process. The Democrats knew they would take this case to the Florida Supreme Court because Lewis’s ruling went against their quest to have undervotes counted. While *Recount* follows the general timeline, basic details such as these as well as their causes and effects are glazed over to allow a more generalized understanding.

**Wednesday, November 15, 2000**

In light of Lewis’s ruling, Katherine Harris held a press conference, which was depicted in *Recount*. Al Gore also gave a speech from the Naval Observatory to respond to Harris’s announcement (Toobin 118). Due to Gore’s limited portrayal, his press conference was not included. It may have been interesting to include his response to Harris’s broadcast providing a juxtaposition of parties.

**Thursday, November 16, 2000 & Friday, November 17, 2000**

Katherine Harris petitioned the Florida Supreme Court to “order a halt to all manual recounts and to take control over the election process by consolidating all election lawsuits into one state circuit court” (Gillman 43). A hearing with Judge Lewis was held to determine if Harris could reject votes. Prior to the hearing, the parties could not find a court reporter, postponing the case for forty-five minutes (Toobin 121). The entire process was
rather difficult. On Friday, November 17, 2000, Judge Terry Lewis approved and upheld Katherine Harris’s decision, ruling against the Democrats. Also, November 17, 2000, was the date that the absentee ballots were going to be counted (Toobin 93). The trial and decision rendered was not depicted in *Recount*.

**Saturday, November 18, 2000 & Sunday, November 19, 2000**

Democrats who were friendly with Republicans leaked a Gore memo that addressed military ballots potentially not being counted in Florida (Toobin 130). By the time the memo circulated, all of the overseas votes had already been counted (Toobin 131). In response to the growing public relations issue, Mark Herron wrote a detailed memo describing the process to count military ballots. Interestingly, his description was not entirely accurate. While ballots could be counted with a postmark, they could also have been signed and dated in order to be processed. The misinformation Herron cited was used in many news discussions which was a political public relations issue. *Recount* included this public debacle, but switched the dates. The film made it appear as if the memo was written prior to the overseas votes being counted. Also, on Sunday, November 19, 2000, the political parties prepared for court the following day.

**Monday, November 20, 2000**

Republican and Democratic lawyers argued in front of the Florida Supreme Court. Jeffrey Toobin noted that in the court room Warren Christopher and James Baker sat as far away from one another as possible (Toobin 133). The court scene was not depicted in *Recount*, thus the viewing audience would not know the extent of these two men’s emotions.
towards one another. As I cited earlier, these two men did not get along, yet the film did not depict these feelings.

Before the trial began, Benjamin Ginsberg was informed by a Florida law clerk that there was a draft decision being circulated stating the Supreme Court’s decision before the trial even began. The clerk came across a draft, which is legal for judges to write prior to hearing cases, but was highly discouraging for the Republicans. According to Toobin, Ginsberg and Baker struggled with telling their lead lawyer, Michael Carvin, about the decision (Toobin 134). After discussing the matter, the pair showed the note to him. During the trial, Carvin was subjected to numerous interjections by judges. If *Recount* had shown this, the Republicans would have been viewed as more sympathetic. This issue would have demonstrated that there were biased individuals on both sides more so than alluding to it in dialogue on two occasions.

**Tuesday, November 21, 2000**

The Florida Supreme Court announced that the counties had five more days to conduct their recounts. The timeline was not subjective, but given a great deal of thought by the justices. Katherine Harris’s false reasoning cost the counties five days based on their logic, thus the Florida Supreme Court decided to give those days back to the counties (Toobin 136). *Recount* did not elaborate on the court’s reasoning. The characters were simply overjoyed with more time to count undervotes. On the Democratic side, Ron Klain uttered for the first time that “Al Gore was going to win this election” (Toobin 138). There was a new sense of hope for the Gore team due to the announcement.
Also, *Recount* did not show the informal vigil that occurred on November 21, 2000, while citizens were awaiting the Supreme Court’s decision. In light of the Florida Supreme Court decision, James Baker said:

> Two weeks after the election, that court has changed the rules and has invented a new system for counting the election results…All this is unfair and unacceptable…it is simply not fair, ladies and gentlemen, to change the rules, either in the middle of the game, or after the game has been played. (Toobin 137)

Baker’s dialogue is not included in the film. Early on in *Recount*, when Baker first arrives at the Republican headquarters in Florida, he mentions the Florida Supreme Court is liberal in nature. Later, he cited that they were “the most liberal individuals” in Florida. Strong may have included the second piece of dialogue to condense the longer quote Baker gave to the press.

**Wednesday, November 22, 2000**

David Leahy, who was the head of the Miami-Dade Canvassing Board, dismissed twenty-five counters due to the decrease in the number of ballots needing to be counted (Toobin 154). He was very optimistic and open about his perspective on the recount. When the board came across a ballot with more punches then allotted, they were unsure how to proceed and asked for Joe Geller’s opinion, a Democratic Party chair (Toobin 155). Upon arriving, he formulated a theory about the punch card alignment and sought an example ballot to demonstrate how the issue may have occurred. As soon as Geller was handed a sample ballot, a group surrounded him and refused to let him pass. *Recount* did not refer to the group as “the Brooks Brothers mob,” yet that became the official phrase used by the media in regards to the people who actively harassed him (Toobin 156). That morning,
Leahy referred to counting ten thousand seven hundred and fifty-ballots as “doable,” by the afternoon he was unsure if it was possible (Toobin 156). Miami-Dade abandoned the recount in light of the mob. *Recount* gave a generalized overview of the events.

**Thursday, November 23, 2000**

George W. Bush held a press conference addressing the fact that Dick Cheney had his fourth heart attack. *Recount* did not portray this in the film.

**Friday, November 24, 2000**

The Republicans held a dinner for volunteers and workers to thank them for their tireless effort. Some of the members from the mob on November 22, 2000, retold their tales. *Recount* did not include these conversations or events.

**Saturday, November 25, 2000 & Sunday, November 26, 2000**

Katherine Harris’s official deadline for the final returns: five p.m. Sunday, November 26, 2000 (Toobin 185). Clay Roberts argued against Katherine Harris and Mac Stipanovich to allow partial recounts. Roberts believed if the counties could not complete the entire recount in their district, the ballots counted should be allowed. Stipanovich, however, would not hear of this perspective, stating that either all of the ballots in that area were included or the county numbers would revert to their original numbers (Toobin 187). In *Too Close to Call* Toobin wrote that Roberts and Stipanovich engaged in a screaming contest (Toobin 187). I asked Stipanovich about this disagreement, during our interview, and he said it was a “heated discussion” (Stipanovich). There was no clear animosity between these two characters in *Recount* nor any yelling between them. Near the end of
Recount, Roberts appeared disenchanted with the recount process and frustrated with Harris, but he never vocalized discontent to the point nor did he scream at anyone.

Around the time of the deadline, Theresa LePore faxed the partial numbers from Palm Beach County to Harris’s office. Harris did not allow these figures into the recount. Roberts was overruled and Stipanovich was proven to be victorious. Recount did not include the characters yelling at one another nor did the production cite Harris overruling the partial recount. If the film mentioned Harris dismissing votes, she would have come across as much more aggressive and in control than she did.

When I spoke with John “Mac” Stipanovich, we discussed the fact that partial recounts were not allowed in the recount process. He was angered by the fact that the Democrats were trying to maneuver around the recount laws. In order to follow the proper procedures put in place by Florida law, the counties could only submit full recounts. Stipanovich noted that partial recounts were not rejected arbitrarily, but in accordance with Florida law. By Recount not including the reasoning behind full recounts being necessary, the production is portraying their protagonists, the Democrats, in a more favorable light.

**Monday, November 27, 2000**

David Boies and Dexter Douglass presented their case to Judge Sauls, while the rest of the Gore team went to contest the election. The lawyers, Boies and Douglass, attempted to invoke a good cop bad cop routine in the courtroom (Toobin 204). The court case was cited, but not depicted in the film; thus, a portrayal of Douglass was not needed.
Tuesday, November 28, 2000

This date offered a key moment for the Democrats that was not depicted in the film. In Seminole and Martin counties, an absentee-ballot issue arose; the ballots did not include voter-identification numbers (Toobin 197-198). Republican volunteers were allowed to adjust the ballots in order to ensure their inclusion in the 2000 election results. The Democrats were made aware of this fact and had to decide if they wanted to object to these votes. After pursuing the goal of getting every vote counted, did they want to have votes omitted? Gore asked Klain to examine the notion of a partial revote, but, given the time constraints, it would not have been possible. Other Democrats filed lawsuits against Seminole and Martin, allowing Gore to remain out of the official legal proceedings (Toobin 200).

The Democrats hired additional lawyers Kendall Coffey, Stephan Zack, E. C. Deeno Kitchen, and Jeffrey Robinson to work on the Sauls court case (Toobin 210-211). Boies decided that the best approach was to “lose quickly,” knowing that they could not win in Sauls’s court. This would allow the Gore team to argue before the Florida Supreme Court. On Tuesday, Judge Sauls rejected the Gore team’s request to have recounts in Miami-Dade and Palm Beach. In light of this decision, Gore gave a speech at the Naval Observatory addressing his reason for continuing the recount process (Toobin 205). Due to the location, the camera flashes rendered the speech impossible to watch (Toobin 205). Similar to November 15, 2000, Gore’s speech was not included due to him not being portrayed in the film.
**Wednesday, November 29, 2000**

Theresa LePore finished the retabulation of votes in Palm Beach County (Toobin 188). Her numbers were not included in the recount.

**Saturday, December 2, 2000 & Sunday, December 3, 2000**

Over the course of two days, both the Republicans and Democrats argued before Judge Sauls. Mitchell Berger advised that Gore not include any witnesses (Toobin 216). But, Boies decided that the Democrats would include minimal people. In *Recount* it would have been interesting to see the lawyers discuss the best tactics to utilize in court. But, none of this trial was shown in the film. Also, Berger is not depicted in *Recount*, thus Boies appears to be the one making all of the legal decisions for the Gore team. In order to show this scene accurately, additional characters would have needed to be introduced. In regards to screenwriting, this was a logical compression of scenes and characters.

According to Jeffrey Toobin, Justice Sauls opened the court promptly in anticipation of the contested trial (Toobin 217). “Sauls allowed opening statements not only from Boies, Barry Richar, and Joe Klock, but also a host of eccentric interveners and publicity seekers who had attached themselves to the case. It was mid-morning before the Gore side turned to the evidence” (Toobin 217). Sauls wanted to allow ample time for press coverage. The longer the trial went on, the more air time he received. Sauls’s vanity may have been an interesting inclusion in *Recount* to not only demonstrate bias towards the Republicans, but his own ambitions, too.
During the trial, Gore lawyers called Kimball Brace, President of Election Data Systems, to demonstrate that the punch-card system was flawed (Toobin 217 and Tapper 368). Brace’s testimony was decimated by the Republican side. Brace did not know whether rubber became harder or softer with repeated use or how many citizens utilized the voting machines (Toobin 217). The Democrats appeared very foolish and one of their key witnesses proved useless. Similarly, Nicolas Hengartner, a Statistics professor at Yale, was supposed to help the Gore team (Toobin 218). When Bartlit Beck, a Republican lawyer, asked Hengartner, “You’ve never inspected the ballot that was used in 1998 in Palm Beach County, closely or otherwise, have you?” Beck was able to show that Hengartner had drawn incorrect conclusions (Toobin 221). He was able to make the Democratic party appear unprepared for the second time that day. After he left the court, Hengartner cried (Toobin 220). The Republican side did quite well in court.

When the Republicans called their own statistician, Laurentius Marais, he proved very useful to their argument, demonstrating that there was no mathematical method to determine the amount of votes may have been for Gore (Toobin 221). In the end, the trial demonstrated that the Democrats could not prove who the votes may have been cast for nor could they offer a mathematical standard to try and estimate the amount of votes lost. *Recount* did not mention this case. Due to the Democrat’s poor witness selections and testimony, they would have come across as ill prepared. In turn, the Republicans would be viewed as victorious and potentially more deserving.
Monday, December 4, 2000

At eleven thirty in the morning the United States Supreme Court yielded their historic decision, while Sauls rendered his decision at four thirty in the afternoon (Toobin 227-228). In *Recount*, the Democratic party awaited the Supreme Court decision in their offices and made no reference to the case involving Sauls. Once the Supreme Court’s decision was discussed by the Gore lawyers, the characters appeared defeated. There was no reason to include another case that would have further demonstrated their loss.

As shown in the film, Ron Klain was still hopeful. Even after these two devastating losses, he phoned lawyer Larry Tribe and told him to prepare a case (Toobin 229). In *Recount*, the Gore team cared more about the Supreme Court than Judge Sauls, who was not mentioned at this point in time. Strong and Roach may have decided that the Sauls case offered little impact or drama to the narrative.

Tuesday, December 5, 2000 & Wednesday, December 6, 2000

The trials of Seminole and Martin occurred. The Gore team did not want to argue that votes should be removed from the electoral process after fighting for their inclusions throughout the recount process. On December 8, 2000, Judge Nikki Clark and Judge Lewis refused to remove twenty-five thousand ballots from the election count. With this verdict, the Republicans were victorious. Strong may have excluded this case due to the outcome. The Democrats lost the Supreme Court and the Seminole and Martin cases. *Recount* may have only needed to show one loss to tell their story.
Monday, December 11, 2000

On both sides, the lawyers had barely two days to prepare for the Supreme Court cases. They may have felt rushed or underprepared based on the circumstances, but *Recount* never touched on this potential issue.

Warren Christopher argued a case before the Supreme Court in 1957 (Toobin 214). When the Gore case made its way to the Supreme Court, Christopher took a moment to cherish his presence there once again (Toobin 214). In *Recount*, David Boies and Ron Klain are the only Democrats at the trial. Also, in the courtroom, a dozen or so senators sat in or near the front with Al Gore’s children (Toobin 214). Justice Thurgood Marshall’s son, Goody Marshall, sat near the Gores (Toobin 214). *Recount* condensed the Supreme Court case significantly to reflect the main points of the film, every vote should be counted and a voter’s intent matters.

Tuesday, December 12, 2000

The Supreme Court rendered their decision that there was an equal protection violation as well as not enough time to complete a recount. Klain and his close allies sat around a table waiting for the news. The Supreme Court also noted that their decision should not be used again in the future as precedent. It would have been interesting to see Boies’s reaction as the lawyer who argued before the justices.

In his interview with me, Klain mentioned that he received the decision via fax from someone he knew, having worked as a clerk for Justice White years prior. In *Recount*, Klain and his team have the documents in front of them, but make no mention of how they
came to have the printed decision. Interestingly, the press misrepresented this moment. Klain walked over to his bookcase and showed me a picture of him with two men hovering over a stack of paper. He had a phone to his ear and looked engaged. *The New Republic* reported that Klain and a dozen other Gore workers hovered around the phone, when in actuality there were three men. When even the proper channels misreport information, it becomes increasingly difficult to know the true facts.

**Republicans v. Democrats**

Al Gore and George W. Bush are not portrayed by actors in *Recount* aside from four profile shots. The film assumes viewer knowledge and does not feel compelled to offer insights into their personas. In regards to the recount process, their backgrounds were influential. Al Gore lived his life around columnists, opinion makers, and intellectuals, differentiating him from the common man (Toobin 7). Gore’s general disposition was that of a scholar, not someone willing to do whatever it takes to get the job done. Toobin noted that Gore never cultivated passionate volunteers in the same manner that Bush did (Toobin 7). Toobin said, “The recount required sacrifice, devotion, even a measure of fanaticism from those on the ground. At best, Gore inspired only a distant admiration from his supporters, and he paid the price in Florida” (Toobin 7). After Warren Christopher and Bill Daley left the Florida recount, Ron Klain ran the operations. At this point in time, all of the Democratic workers were near strangers to Al Gore. According to Toobin, “The members of the Gore team had almost no personal affection for or connection to the candidate” (Toobin 99). *Recount* included the fact that Klain was demoted early on, but the lack of
other people associated with Gore is never addressed. If he had other officials who knew him, would the recount have gone differently? Mark Fabiani, Gore’s communication director, created a memo stating that none of Gore’s top workers should be involved with the recount (Tapper 54). Fabiani noted that if a recount or post-election issue occurred, the Gore team was not well equipped to manage a problem. Fabiani did not want to be involved with the recount himself, so he sent his deputy, Douglas Hattaway, instead (Tapper 54-55). In this sense, the Gore team was at a constant disadvantage. They needed to find workers rather than have qualified individuals volunteering or already in place to pull from.

While the Gore supporters were working diligently, Bush’s aides invested their hearts and souls. “His (Bush) supporters were willing to take risks, bet their careers, and bear almost any burden for a Republican victory. One candidate had supporters in the streets of Florida, and it wasn’t Al Gore” (Toobin 8). While Recount portrays the political actors differently, the mentality and devotion of the workers is never addressed in this manner. Rather than come across as passionate, the Republicans could be interpreted as aggressive.

According to James Baker, Bush granted him the responsibility and authority to himself (Bush v. Gore: The Endless Election (2015)). In regards to the Republican management in Florida, James Baker was left in charge of all the operations. Bush did not interfere, trusting Baker entirely, letting him dictate the terms of the recount process (Toobin 94). Baker also brought in a team of qualified Republican lawyers and strategists to assist him: Tucker Eskew, Scott McClellan, Ken Lisaius, and Mindy Tucker (Tapper
Baker’s general goal was to send the message that the election was over and that the recounts “were an attempt to undermine the system” (Toobin 48). On the other hand, the CNN documentary *Bush v. Gore: The Endless Election* (2015) noted Gore “managed every detail of the fight” (*Bush v. Gore: The Endless Election* (2015)). In *Recount*, he is not seen as very involved. If Gore was micromanaging his team in the film, he may have come across negatively to the viewer.

**Racism**

The discrimination depicted in *Recount* may have been slightly exaggerated. “There was no credible evidence of an organized attempt to discourage African-Americans from going to the polls” (Toobin 169). The party was not actively trying to seek voter suppression. Any issues that occurred would have been by mistake. The project Database Technologies conducted became known as a failure to both parties. “Because the Database Technologies list of ‘felons’ included a misappropriate number of blacks, the mistakes had a great impact on African-American voters” (Toobin 169). The list was not made with the intent to harm any African-American voters or stop them from partaking in the electoral process.

While the voter purge list may not have been accurately represented, Jeb Bush did launch a program “One Florida” removing affirmative action in the state of Florida. The creators of *Recount* may have been trying to hint at a larger issue in Florida without diving into the specifics. Bush’s anti-affirmative action campaign would have actively affected minorities.
Bill Clinton

Bill Clinton was cited once in *Recount* near the very end of the film when Michael Whouley summarized the other options the Democrats could have utilized during the recount proceedings. During the recount process, Bill Clinton made minimal remarks that reinforced the fact “that the United States had both a sitting president and an orderly process for a constitutional transition of power” (Toobin 193). Interestingly, Clinton disagreed with Gore’s recount tactics. While Gore believed that the recount could be handled legally, Clinton regarded the process as a political jungle that needed to be fought fiercely (Toobin 193). Based on my research, it appeared that Clinton lost some respect for Gore when he conceded on election night. Clinton claimed, “I never would have conceded to Bush” (Toobin 193).

In *Recount*, James Baker says that “it is time for our supporters to invoke their First Amendment rights.” The next scene depicts hundreds of Republican citizens protesting holding signs, chanting, wearing costumes, and more. Bill Clinton wanted the Democrats to utilize voters in a similar manner (Toobin 193). Al Gore did not want to have demonstrators in the streets, but Clinton thought it would be helpful (Toobin 193). Toobin wrote that Jesse Jackson contacted Clinton in the hopes of rejoining the recount in Florida, providing a name and a face for the underrepresented African-American voters (Toobin 194). Clinton wanted Gore to invoke every option possible, but Gore did not want to utilize this approach. Since Gore was not depicted in the film, Clinton could not be included.
Clinton would have offered a different Democratic portrayal compared to Gore and his team.

**Seminole and Martin**

Rather than worry about a few dozen votes, Baker needed to cope with the potential loss of thousands votes cast for Bush. He hired another dozen lawyers to assist with the Seminole and Martin court case. As I cited before, this issue is not addressed in *Recount*. Before the trial, the Republicans asked Judge Nikki Ann Clark to remove herself from the case due to her Democratic allegiances and Jeb Bush’s decision not to appoint her to the district court of appeals (Toobin 208). The reasoning behind this request was Clark’s ethnicity, she was African-American. “The Bush campaign simply believed that no black judge could preside over a case that might decide the presidency” (Toobin 209). This was a real issue of racism that was not addressed in *Recount*. In the end, she ruled to include the votes.

**Press Coverage**

The media was both an ally and an adversary for both parties. David Boies’s location was almost always known. He would hold spontaneous press conferences on sidewalks or have a camera nearby on every occasion (Toobin 210). To prepare for the trial with Judge Sauls, Baker brought in a team of highly trained and qualified attorneys who had not been involved with the recount prior to the court case. This allowed them to operate without the press interfering. Baker knew the impact of media, “Throughout the litigation and politics of the Florida recount, Baker had stuck with a pattern: unlimited resources,
unparalleled talent, tightly coordinated legal and media messages, and advocacy in streets as well as courtrooms” (Toobin 207). The parties needed to be mindful that the American public was watching and their actions could be scrutinized. The press contributed to misinformation on election night, calling it for Gore, retracting their statement, then declaring Bush victorious, before retracting their second statement.

While conducting my research, I came across numerous statements that addressed Al Gore’s constant need for press coverage. Toobin referred to it as “almost compulsive” (Toobin 224). At one point during the recount, Joe Lieberman said no to appearing on morning programs claiming he was “overexposed” (Toobin 226). For the first time in the history of the Supreme Court, Justice Rehnquist allowed an audiotape of the court case to be released (Toobin 215). This decision may have been made due to the public’s vested interest in the outcome of the case.

My Exclusive Interview with Ron Klain

On January 7, 2016, I sat down with Ron Klain at his office, in Washington D.C., to discuss Recount. He mentioned that he was not a consultant and was not involved with writing the script, but screenwriter Danny Strong did spend approximately twenty hours speaking with him about the recount process. Klain said, “it’s not the story, the way I would have told it,” but that he was satisfied with the overall message of the film.

It conveys the sense that we were fighting to count votes…the sense that we kept on ‘rolling the boulder up the hill’ and then it kept on rolling back down on us. It conveys the urgency and the importance of struggle but, overall, most importantly, conveys the vast injustice of so many voters not having their votes counted and so many voters being turned away at the polls. And so if you leave the film with that outrage about that, then the film has done its job.
As I mentioned before in my content analysis, *Recount* needed to consolidate facts and the general timeline of the recount in order to tell a narrative. Klain cited this fact during our conversation, “Obviously, they took thirty-six days that were twenty-hour days compressed it to a hundred minutes. And so in that compression, inevitably, there are things that are left out, things that are oversimplified, things that are inaccurate, and things that are dramatized.”

During our conversation, Klain mentioned that Michael Whouley was never once in Tallahassee during the recount process. The scenes in which Dennis Leary as Michael Whouley converse in person with Kevin Spacey as Ron Klain were completely fictitious. He did not ask Klain to step outside to explain the potential with undervotes or hand him the Florida statute Bush signed into law stating that hand recounts were preferred. Klain mentioned that the pair talked on the phone everyday, but that element would not have been as pleasurable for viewers. It is far easier to watch two people speak directly to one another than via phone. *Recount* already utilized phone conversations and screenwriter, Danny Strong, may not have wanted to have too many scenes that were conducted exclusively over the phone. Taking this adaptation element into consideration, Whouley’s character acted as a means to move the story along.

In regards to factual dialogue versus fictionalized lines, Ron Klain was able to clarify a few key quotes. He never said, “stuck in the night of the living bubbies,” nor did he ask James Baker, “Did the best man win?” Klain added that line of dialogue never happened nor would it have happened, “I would not have said that because I had no doubt
that the best man had not won.” Ron Klain did say, “Every vote from every citizen deserves to be counted,” “The foundation of our democracy is based on a citizen’s right to vote; it is our duty as Americans to fulfill this responsibility,” and “Even after all the mistakes and all the corrections, we still had about a half a day where the entire state was counting.”

Interestingly, in regards to wardrobe, Klain mentioned that there were a few outfits in the film that were very accurate. For instance, “the tie that Kevin Spacey wears when he goes to the Florida Supreme Court is actually a tie of mine.” Klain lent a tie he wore during the recount process to Spacey to use in Recount. According to Klain, the long-sleeve shirts volunteers and protesters were wearing “actual t-shirts our team wore in Florida.”

During our meeting, I was touched by Klain’s honesty. He addressed the fact that Strong included his previous history with Al Gore, being overlooked and under utilized.

I had gone through this very complicated situation with Gore. The film captures that, it is honest about that, but I like Al Gore. I have always liked Al Gore and the idea I said that I did not like Al Gore is not true. I think what they were trying to dramatize is that – which I think is fair – is that most of the people on our team were fighting for a principle that was bigger than just making Al Gore president. I was divorced in some sense, not completely, but to some extent, from our partisan’s support for Al Gore. I think the point that the film’s trying to get across with those scenes is the process was not just about Al Gore…it was about trying to get the votes counted and trying to get justice for our voters in Florida. I think they took a dramatic-license to portray that, but I think that is the idea that is trying to be conveyed there.

I found it interesting that Klain interpreted the line, “I’m not even sure I like Al Gore,” as an attempt to inform the viewer that the Democrats are fighting for justice on a larger scale. As the protagonist of the film, Klain’s motivations are important for the viewers to know.
One area of the film Klain was unsatisfied with was the portrayal of his relationship with Warren Christopher.

The extent to which the film portrays the first half— all the tension between Warren Christopher and myself, and how it’s portrayed, is hard to fight—and, also, that’s way over sensationalized, way overdramatized.” Chris is portrayed far more cautious than he was and he had no illusions like ‘this was all going to be some kind of wonderfully, you know, negotiated solution’ he knew we were in a fight, also.

As I previously addressed in Chapter Three, Christopher did not appreciate the meek nature of his character. Also in Recount, Klain and Christopher appear to be at odds with one another over how to proceed with the recount process. Klain wanted to fight for the votes, while Christopher was depicted as wishing to negotiate with the Republicans.

At the end of our meeting, I asked Ron Klain on his thoughts about the film and the fact that it depicts a very specific moment in time. He added, “It is a time capsule in a lot of ways.” Not only does Recount demonstrate the issues Klain and the Gore team faced during the recount process, but it demonstrates the limited technology available to them. At the end of the film, Gore’s lawyers read faxed documents due to the fact that email was not an option. Recount was able to tell an entertaining narrative with both dramatized and historical facts.

My Exclusive Interview with John “Mac” Stipanovich

On March 29, 2016, I spoke with John “Mac” Stipanovich via phone for nearly an hour discussing his 2000 recount experience. Stipanovich said he was flattered to be portrayed in the film. He noted that Bruce McGill is shorter than him and Laura Dern is much taller than Katherine Harris, but aside from those physical traits, nothing stood out
to him in regards to their portrayals. Stipanovich met with several screenwriters and producers who asked him to talk to the events. “They didn’t just ask me, “Here, we wrote this. Is this accurate?” They asked me to tell them a story and then they went away and wrote one” (Stipanovich).

In regards to compressing dialogue, characters, and events, Stipanovich noted that “there were amalgamations of events” (Stipanovich). He cited one scene in which Bruce McGill, as himself, was sitting across from Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives, Tom Fenney, being “a distillation of several different events or meetings” (Stipanovich). Stipanovich never met with Speaker Fenney, himself; but, several of his staff members. Recount may have wanted to give the impression that all of the important Republican figures were working together to blockade the Democrats from getting the undervotes counted. The meeting and conversation also appeared more official coming from two prominent Republicans.

Additionally, in the film, Stipanovich told Katherine Harris to “bring this in for a landing, with George W. Bush in the cockpit.” Stipanovich actually told this to Katherine Harris in real life. Recount was able to utilize one of his actual quotes in the film. Stipanovich said, “The movie was essentially accurate but was only essentially accurate because the limitations of their narrative and the time they had in the complexity of the issue presented it from being totally accurate” (Stipanovich).

By speaking with Mr. Stipanovich, I was able to determine that Recount did not dive into additional complex issues faced by the Republican side or explain the recount
process fully. Stipanovich’s comments on partial recounts could have created an entirely different conversation in the film. The Democrats were portrayed as seeking justice, trying to have as many votes counted as possible. In actuality, partial recounts were not allowed. Recount did not explain Florida law or why the Republicans were so insistent on this matter. This was something that Stipanovich believed to be biased in favor of the Democrats.

Conclusion

Recount consolidated and edited dialogue, characters, and scenes. Danny Strong did not include several important moments from the 2000 election recount process. In this sense, the film provides an overview, but does not offer specific retellings of every event and trial. For instance, by not mentioning Seminole and Martin Counties, Strong focused on the larger loss Democrats faced, the Supreme Court. Similarly, Republicans were made to appear less sympathetic by not including their struggles with Seminole and Martin Counties, the Florida Supreme Court biases, and courtroom victories. Recount’s portrayal of characters limited female representations and additional workers who were involved with the proceedings. Based on my research, Recount demonstrates the important themes that both parties faced during the election, but lacks an in-depth analysis and details.
CHAPTER FIVE

IMPACT OF RECOUNT

Movies are not necessarily meant to educate viewers, but engage and entice audiences in the hopes of generating money. Any knowledge gained from watching a film is a secondary consequence to entertainment. “Knowledge plays a central role in the formation of opinion, yet this is often ignored or dealt with in a cursory way” (Dahlgren 76). However, films, including docudramas, have the potential to impact knowledge. To test knowledge gained, I held focus groups. Participants were given a pre-test, watched Recount, given a post-test, then discussed the film. At the end of my study, I had thirty-one participants. In this chapter, I analyze the pre-test and post-test results as well as feedback from participants said during our post-film discussion.

Knowledge Gained from the Film

In general, most viewers already had a fair knowledge base of the 2000 election. I wanted to note that my sample may have been skewed due to the fact that my participants were Georgetown students. These individuals may be more educated due to their backgrounds and interests. For the most part, they discussed the Recount’s expansion of their knowledge or reminding them of facts they forgot. For instance, one person said, “I remembered that election when I was a kid. I didn’t remember the whole thing …I knew that there was huge drama about who won realistically.” This person went on to add that their primary knowledge of the event came from their schooling. Another caveat of my sample is that most of the participants were young during the 2000 election. A majority of
my respondents were undergraduate and master’s students. If my sample was not limited to the Georgetown student population, my results may have been different.

One person in my focus group said, “I feel like I was acquiring a lot of information during the movie.” A common response to “What did the film teach you?,” was chads and dimples. The terminology in conjunction with the historical timeline offered an educational element. In general, viewers claimed to learn about the difficulties the Democrats faced during the recount, the technological difficulties that occurred during the 2000 election, and key terminology. One respondent said, “I knew a hanging-chad…but I didn’t know that dimples were as big of a deal as they were. I didn’t know they were counted in some counties and not others, I didn’t know the different methods of counting from the counties.” This response demonstrated that knowing a definition is not enough. In order to grasp the complexity of the problems Democrats faced, it is important to understand what a dimple is as well as the implications that occurred due to their existence in the recount process.

In regards to the voter tabulation issues, one person said, “I learned about how asinine the technology in the systems are and how passions and emotions get in the way of democracy.” The voting tabulation system that was in place during the 2000 election seemed to baffle and annoy a majority of respondents. While many claimed they understood the difficulty of the election prior to the movie, the visual representation added to their emotional stance on the issue. A majority of participants claimed that the characters
should do more than re-tabulate the memory cards and that they could not believe this was how horrible the system was in 2000.

The audience members from one undergraduate focus group claimed that they learned about the steps taken by each party in the recount. One participant said, “I knew that Florida was a big deal and (I) knew that there was a recount, but I didn’t know all the details like this…so it (the movie) was just giving me a lot of background for the general feelings that had been around me as a kid and now I know why.” Someone else said, “I knew there was a recount, that there were several iterations of a recount going back and forth but it was like ‘oh, that’s what happened’ and they asked for recounts from these four counties and then…these were all the multiple court cases that happened.” Another participant cited that they learned about the process, laws, and how a recount can be conducted. Due to the film’s sequential nature, from election night to Gore’s final concession, viewers were able see the historical timeline unfold before them. The natural progression from beginning to end contributed to the viewer’s knowledge of the court cases, conceptualization of definitions, and issues that the parties faced.

During the Democratic Club’s focus group, one member cited the dialogue’s explanatory nature as educational. After the Supreme Court’s decision in regards to Bush v. Gore was announced among the characters, one of the campaign workers asked about the precedent involved. The response, “This has never been done before in the history of the Supreme Court,” elaborates upon the branch’s duties. The respondent mentioned this instance as providing additional information. They mentioned that if they did not know
about the Supreme Court’s involvement, this moment would certainly demonstrate that they “crossed the line.” The nature of *Recount*’s dialogue became an important topic among this focus group. Similar statements from the film that could educate viewers include Michael Whouley’s reference that eighty year-olds and African-Americans tend to vote Democratic.

The Democratic Club focus group members also discussed the voter suppression that occurred during the 2000 election. One participant, in particular, was very upset about the actions some conservatives took.

I believed, coming in, that every vote matters. And I believe that voter suppression is wrong and that just highlights the problem with voter suppression. Twenty-thousand people is a lot of people… I wouldn’t have guessed if you had told me ‘how many votes you think were suppressed in Florida in 2000?’ I would have probably given you something in the lower hundreds or maybe just below 2,000. But I don’t think I would have gone above two thousand votes... I think that (the movie) really highlighted the scale of voter suppression.

For this viewer, the movie educated them on the specifics regarding voter suppression also known as the voter purge list. The Democratic camp did not spend much time discussing or looking into this issue on screen, but the members of Georgetown’s Democrat Club were very taken aback with this depiction. This sparked a long conversation about voter suppression and potential racism that occurred in Florida.

**People and Political Parties**

On my pre-test and post-test, I listed a series of names from the film in which actors portrayed real life individuals. I strategically included: George W. Bush, Al Gore, Dick Cheney, Joseph Lieberman, Katherine Harris, Jeb Bush, Mac Stipanovich, Ron Klain,
James Baker, Michael Whouley, Benjamin Ginsberg, and Warren Christopher. George W. Bush and Al Gore are the candidates being discussed in the film, making them a necessary inclusion. The Democrats were closely associated with Al Gore and the Republicans were linked to George W. Bush. Joseph Lieberman and Dick Cheney were the vice presidential running mates with the two candidates. Jeb Bush was only briefly featured twice on camera and whose name was cited three times. I thought I would include his name just in case there was a difference between the pre-test and post-test, but I did not expect to see a major change. Ron Klain and James Baker ran the recount proceedings in Florida, being pivotal to the plot.

Katherine Harris became a large proponent of the recount process, making her name important to note. Characters who were not on screen as long, but were involved with the recount process include Mac Stipanovich, Michael Whouley, Benjamin Ginsberg, and Warren Christopher. Recount depicts a good number of people, but these last four names were involved in the process and graced the screen often. Their names were not regularly said, but, I wanted to see if a few mentions were enough to impact an audience.

Respondents were asked to indicate if they believed the person was a Republican, Democrat, or “Did Not Know.” As I mentioned before in my methodology section, I tried to make respondents feel comfortable marking “Did Not Know.” In order to have accurate results, I did not want participants guessing.
After running frequencies, I found the most noticeable knowledge gain for Ron Klain, James Baker, Mac Stipanovich, Katherine Harris, Benjamin Ginsberg, and Warren Christopher.

**Table 5.1: Ability to Identify Party Identification of Characters Frequencies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Correct Responses Pre-Survey Results</th>
<th>Correct Responses Post-Survey Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ron Klain</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>80.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Baker</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mac Stipanovich</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>77.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katherine Harris</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>93.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin Ginsberg</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren Christopher</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>61.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Due to the small sample size, the significance levels comparing the pre-test and post-tests are insignificant.*

A majority of study participants could already identify George W. Bush, Al Gore, and Dick Cheney demonstrating no clear difference. The post-test revealed that Ron Klain, James Baker, Mac Stipanovich, Katherine Harris, Benjamin Ginsberg, and Warren Christopher were more easily identified after viewing the film. The frequencies demonstrated that there was knowledge gained about the characters from viewing the film. There was a 64.5% increase in the ability to identify Ron Klain’s political party affiliation, 25.8% rise of participants were able to James Baker’s party affiliation, 64.5% increase in ability to identify Mac Stipanovich’s party affiliation, a 74.1% rise of participants were
able to Katherine Harris’s party affiliation, 45.2% increase in ability to identify Benjamin Ginsberg party affiliation, and a 54.8% increase in participants to identify Warren Christopher’s party affiliation. The changes are large and demonstrate the film had a direct impact on the respondents when it came to identifying political parities of players in the *Recount* drama, at least in true short term, immediately following the viewing.

The survey had several short answer questions where participants were given a brief question and asked to handwrite their responses. The correct response to “Who won the popular vote?” increased 38.7%. The ability to define recount went up 12.9%. Similarly, there was a 41.9% rise of participants who were able to define hanging chad. The ability to define a dimple increased 58.4%. Similar to the post-rest results in regards to characters, the participants were able to define key terms after the viewing more easily.

**Table 5.2: Short Answer Questions Frequencies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Correct Responses Pre-Survey Results</th>
<th>Correct Responses Post-Survey Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who won the popular vote?</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
<td>80.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of recount</td>
<td>87.1%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of hanging chad</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
<td>80.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of a dimple</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>83.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The respondents were asked a series of multiple questions which provided three false answers, one correct answer, and a “Do Not Know” option to indicate their answer.

Table 5.3: Multiple Choice Questions Frequencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Pre-test Correct Responses</th>
<th>Post-test Correct Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presidential elections can be held ___.</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer: One day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The number of districts that Democrats requested hand counting for?</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>83.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer: Four</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is David Boies’s disability?</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>74.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer: Dyslexia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the party affiliation of the Florida Supreme Court justices?</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>58.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer: overwhelmingly Democrats</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The correct answer to “How often presidential elections could be held” rose 29% among participants, a 74.2% increase in the correct answer to “The number of districts that Democrats requested hand counting for,” a 61.3% rise of right responses among participants in identifying David Boies’s disability, and a 48.4% increase of correct answers among survey participants in identifying the party affiliation of the Florida Supreme Court justices. Unlike the previous questions, these were more scene specific. For instance, David Boies’s dyslexia was cited in two separate scenes within a short amount of time.
Another question and answer that I found impactful was the political affiliation of the Florida Supreme Court justices. James Baker referred to them as “liberals” loudly in one particular scene and his prior experience with them in another scene early on in the film. *Recount* depicted their rulings on the Gore and Bush campaigns as well as the requested recount. The justices yielded liberal decisions, so viewers may have picked up on their actions as well as the dialogue, reinforcing the high percentage change from the pre-test and post-test.

I found drastic differences among all of the short answer and fill-in the blank questions. The correct responses among participants increased on all questions. Asking for how often presidential elections can be held, the increased a total of 29%. The question, “The number of districts that Democrats requested hand counting for?” increased 74.2%. After viewing the film, there was an increase of 61.3% of correct responses with participants to identify David Boies’s disability. Lastly, there was an increase of 48.4% being able to correctly identify the Florida Supreme Court’s political affiliations.

**Paired Sample T-Test - Variables Analyzed**

In order to determine the degree of accurate knowledge and the significance level of variables, I performed difference of means tests. The variables labelled Katherine Harris One and Katherine Harris Two, Ron Klain One and Ron Klain Two, Benjamin Ginsberg One and Benjamin Ginsberg Two, Christopher Warren One and Christopher Warren Two, Popular Vote One and Popular Vote Two, Winner of Electoral College One and Winner of Electoral College Two, Hanging Chad One and Hanging Chad Two, Dimple One and
Dimple Two, and Districts Democrats Requested Hand Counts For One and Districts Democrats Requested Hand Counts For Two all yielded a significance level of .000. James Baker One and James Baker Two variables yielded a significance level of .009. The Recount One and Recount Two variables yielded .043. Presidential Elections Can Be Held One and Presidential Elections Can Be Held Two yielded .010 significance. The Political Party Affiliation of Florida Supreme Court Justices One and The Political Party Affiliation of Florida Supreme Court Justices Two yielded a .002 significance level. According to the t-test results, in all three categories, the viewing audiences were able to identify correct information more often. Post-viewing, respondents were able to answer four more questions about people and their political parties correctly than they had on the pretest. Their responses went from 0.7097 to 4.7097, increasing by exactly four questions. This increase is significant at 0.000.

**Crosstabs - Variables Analyzed**

I conducted a crosstab analysis of my pre-test and post-test survey data. Firstly, I ran crosstabs for the political affiliations of all the characters I included on the surveys. Crosstabs allowed me to see the percent of respondents who were incorrect on the pre-test, yet correct on the post-test. Their responses demonstrate the knowledge they gained during the *Recount* screening. For instance, 79.3% of respondents learned Katherine Harris’s party. Prior to the film, 16.1% of the participants could identify Ron Klain’s party affiliation. After the film, 80% learned he was a Democrat. Lastly, Joseph Lieberman’s increase was 50%. His name was only mentioned briefly in a couple of scenes, therefore I
was not anticipating much of an increase in correct responses, but half of the respondents
learned his political party post-viewing.

When analyzing the cross-tab comparisons between the pre-test and post-test, the
only questions that are statistically significant are Jeb Bush at .002 and the definition of
hanging chad was .037.<sup>XL</sup>

**Table 5.4: Short Answers & Multiple Choice Questions Crosstabs**

I also ran crosstabs on the knowledge-based questions to gauge respondent’s post-
test results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Percent Correct on Both the Pre-Test and Post-Test</th>
<th>Percent Incorrect on the Pre-Test Yet Correct on the Post-Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who won the popular vote?</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
<td>80.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who won the Electoral College vote?</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>51.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of hanging chad</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
<td>52.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of a dimple</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controversial State in the Election</td>
<td>83.9%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidential elections can be held ___</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Districts Hand Counted</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>92.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There was a clear increase in correct answers after viewing the film. Prior to viewing *Recount* 41.9% of respondents correctly identified Al Gore as winning the popular vote during the 2000 election. After the film, 80.6% of respondents who did know not prior to the film were able to correctly answer the question. The most drastic rise was 6.5% of respondents knew that four districts were requested by the Democrats to be hand counted prior to the film, yet after *Recount*, 92.3% of participants changed their incorrect or blank answer to four districts. This question demonstrates the knowledge respondents gained post-film.

**Hypotheses Testing**

The post-survey results received far more correct answers than the pre-survey tests. Respondents were able to identify party affiliation, answer multiple choice questions, and short answers more accurately after viewing *Recount* demonstrating that viewers can learn from a political film adaptation.

My first hypothesis, H1: The film *Recount* will educate viewers about the party identification of characters, was demonstrated to be accurate. For instance, before the movie 16.1% of respondents correctly identified Ron Klain as a Democrat. After the film, 80.6% of participants were able to identify him as a Democrat. Similarly, prior to the film, only 19.4% of survey respondents knew Katherine Harris was a Republican. After viewing *Recount*, 93.5% of respondents identified her as a Republican. Aside from Al Gore, George W. Bush, Jeb Bush, and Dick Cheney, who are all well known political actors, all of the other individuals and their political parties were more easily identifiable after the film.
Therefore, I can reject the null hypothesis, \( H_0 \): The film *Recount* will not educate viewers on individual party identification of characters.

The second hypothesis, \( H_2 \): The film *Recount* will educate viewers on definitions and information pertaining to the 2000 election was demonstrated to be true. On the pre-test 25.5\% of respondents were able to define a dimple. On the post-test 83.9\% of survey participants could define dimple. Similarly, after running crosstabs, I found that the amount of people who answered incorrectly on the pre-test, yet correctly on the post-test was 69.2\%. Therefore, I can reject the null hypothesis.

The hypothesis that the film *Recount* will educate viewers on the definition of hanging chads was demonstrated to be accurate. 38.7\% of respondents were able to define a hanging chad before the film, but 80.6\% of participants were correct after viewing the film. The crosstabs demonstrated that 52\% of respondents who were incorrect on the pre-test were correct on the post-test demonstrated that they learned the definition of a hanging chad during the movie. Therefore, I can reject the null hypothesis, \( H_0 \): The film *Recount* will not educate viewers on the definition of hanging chads.

To test additional knowledge about the recount, I included multiple choice questions. My initial knowledge question of identifying the controversial state as Florida proved to be an easy question for participants demonstrating that they had a basic understanding or knowledge base of the 2000 election prior to viewing *Recount*. My additional questions, however, were not as easy. When asked, “Who won the popular vote in the 2000 election?” 41.9\% of participants were correct. After the film, 80.6\% of
respondents knew that Al Gore won the popular vote. The amount of correct responses increased 38.7%. After viewing the film, 58.1% of respondents were able to select that the Florida Supreme Court justices were overwhelmingly Democrats. Prior to the film, 9.7% of respondents knew this answer, increasing 48.4%. Additionally, prior to the film 35.5% knew that presidential elections could only be held one day. 64.5% of respondents were able to identify this as the correct response on the post-test, increasing 29% from the pre-test. 12.9% knew that David Boies was dyslexic prior to viewing the film, but after 74.2% were able to identify his disability, increasing 61.3%. The most dramatic increase was answering, “The number of districts that Democrats requested hand counting for?” 9.7% of participants were correct on the pre-test, while 83.9% were correct on the post-test, dramatically going up 74.2%. Therefore, I can reject the null hypothesis, $H_0$: The film *Recount* will not educate viewers on the 2000.

**Conclusions**

After viewing *Recount*, respondents demonstrated an increased understanding and ability to identify information pertaining to the 2000 election. Additionally, participants were able to define the 2000 election terms more often. Their responses went from 3.2581 to 6.7742, which is significant at 0.000. Due to my sample pool and study restraints, I was unfortunately not able to follow up with participants after my focus groups. It would have been interesting to demonstrate if participants retained information past viewing night, such as several weeks or months later. In the future, it may be worth adding additional questions pertaining to authentic and inauthentic footage. It would be interesting to study
if viewers noticed the difference or were mindful of *Recount*’s inclusion of authentic new pieces. Also, to test participants after some time has passed to see if knowledge gain was lasting.
CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

In order to test potential knowledge gained from political film adaptations, I utilized the film *Recount* as my case study. *Recount* depicts the 2000 election *Bush v. Gore* and the issues that arose with the undervotes in Florida. The film is a complex narrative that includes representations of both Republicans and Democrats, following the events that occurred from the misinformation aired on election night to the days after the Supreme Court reached their decision on *Bush v. Gore*. My study addressed how information was presented, what the dramatized elements were, and what knowledge could be attained from viewing *Recount*.

2000 v. 2008

Jacob Soboroff of *Why Tuesday?* sat down with Ari Shapiro, host of NPR News, to talk about *Recount* (2008), which they believe raised questions about the state of America’s voting system. Soboroff said, “I think a large part of this movie and the promotion of this movie is about a re-examination today, years down the line, of the state of the voting system in the United States” (“Sneak Preview of HBO’s *Recount*”). The men make note of the fact that voting is still imperfect in today’s society. There are voter restriction laws that require identification from every citizen and a lack of interest in a majority of the public. *Recount* aired on HBO in 2008, eight years after the events of *Bush v. Gore*. The film’s themes may have been referencing ongoing issues with voter registration laws and other issues facing the American public.
In an interview with CBS, Jay Roach, *Recount* director, discussed *Game Change* (2012), which depicts the 2008 election focusing on the McCain campaign. He said, “It is an incredibly well researched film…We (him and Danny Strong) learned to go to the sources directly…I think it is a true story. I think it is a dramatization, but it is really compelling. I think it raises all the questions that need to be raised about our political system” (*Game Change* Director Talks Palin, McCain). I wanted to discuss his response due to the fact that something cannot be true and a dramatization. By adding sensational elements or compressing facts to increase the entertainment value, in essence, creates a different story. It is also worth noting that *Recount* did not garner the same upset that *Game Change* provoked.\(^{XLI}\) Based on my research, I believe this can be attributed to how *Recount* portrayed the strategists, while *Game Change* focuses on the candidates. People know the real individuals portrayed, thus there is more interest in the fiction and truths involved.

**2000 v. 2016**

Unfortunately, there are still issues with voting today. In 2013, the Supreme Court ruled against *Shelby County v. Holder*. In their ruling the Supreme Court Justices decided, “states with histories of voting-related racial discrimination no longer had to "pre-clear" changes to their voting laws with the federal government” (Brandeisky, Chen, and Tigas). Now, the burden of proof is on the citizens not the state to demonstrate citizenship and eligibility to vote. According to the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law, seventeen states introduced voting restrictions for the 2016 presidential election; the states include: Alabama, Arizona,
Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Hampshire, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin (New Voting Restrictions in Place for 2016 Presidential Election). The laws include needing voting identification issues by a government agency, voters needing to register in advance, and cutting early voting (Berman).

Currently, American citizens who were convicted of a felony are not eligible to vote while in prison or on parole (Voting as an Ex-Offender). South Dakota, Iowa, and Florida have made it significantly more difficult for prior criminals to have their voting rights restored (Brandeisky, Chen, and Tigas). In *Voter Suppression: How Bad? (Pretty Bad)*, Weiser wrote, “Nationally, 5.85 million Americans who have done their time have lost the right to vote; 1.5 million are in Florida. Overall, 7.7 percent of African Americans have lost their right, compared to 1.8 percent of whites” (Weiser).

There are many issues American voters still face today. The 2000 recount process demonstrated a historic problem with ballot configuration in Florida. The film *Recount* acts as a time capsule, depicting the events that transpired due to the ballot’s design as well as cites the voter purge list that was circulated prior to Election Day. As of 2016, *Recount* is widely available. Viewers can access the film on numerous platforms such as On Demand and Amazon Prime or purchase a DVD copy. *Recount* can act as a warning for the future and or help ensure the 2000 election is not forgotten and the same mistakes do not happen again.
Respondent Knowledge

As I addressed in Chapter Six, after viewing *Recount*, respondents demonstrated an increased understanding and ability to identify information pertaining to the 2000 election. Post-viewing, respondents were able to answer four more questions about people and their political parties correctly as well as three more questions pertaining to definitions, which were both significant increases at 0.000. The post-test revealed that Ron Klain, James Baker, Mac Stipanovich, Katherine Harris, Benjamin Ginsberg, and Warren Christopher were more easily identified after viewing *Recount*. The correct response to “Who won the popular vote?” increased 38.7%. Similarly, there was a 41.9% rise of participants who were able to define hanging chad. The ability to define a dimple increased 58.4%. *Recount* was able to clarify terms and inform respondents about the 2000 election.

Focus Group Discussions

During our post-film discussion, viewers confidently discussed the events and informed me of their perspectives. Taking into account their education levels, their knowledge and ability to speak well was not surprising, but the content of our conversations was enlightening. Most of the viewers felt as if the film depicted the events accurately and reminded them of information that they may have forgotten. Depending on the particular focus group, the conversations branched in different directions. One focus group discussed the voter purge list for quite some time, while another group fixated on the Supreme Court interfering. No matter what the topic, *Recount* touched on something that viewers felt was important.
**Future Questions to Analyze and or Explore**

What additional online platforms are people utilizing to discuss *Recount*? Is there a difference in conversation on Facebook versus blogs? How do people perceive *Recount* juxtaposed against a documentary on the 2000 election? Does *Recount* instill a different emotional impact than other political film adaptations (based on historical events)? How did *Recount* airing in 2008 influence the political environment or adaption? Also, I would like to have more participants of varying ages and backgrounds involved in my study. Georgetown students tend to be well educated, therefore, their answers pertaining to the 2000 election may be different compared to students at other schools or those who choose not to attend higher education. By having a limited sample, my results may be different than if I had more participants. If I conduct a similar study in the future, I would like to test my analysis with a larger sample pool.

Focus group participants had a tendency to contextualize *Recount* using other pop culture references. One reoccurring image that seemed to resonate with the audience was the end shot of *Recount*. There are hundreds of cardboard boxes in a warehouse under the American flag. The camera pulls backwards showing the scale of mystery involved with the votes. *Raiders of the Lost Ark* is a famous film that many people have seen. The end image may have been an inspiration for *Recount* director, Jay Roach; but, it also serves as a point of reference for audience members to draw from. An additional reference that came up several times was the show *How I Met Your Mother*. On the program, the protagonist, Ted, wears a hanging chad Halloween costume every year. Three out of the seven focus
groups had someone cite this program. Upon further analysis, it would be interesting to analyze if having another television show or movie in mind in conjunction with the current film would allow greater retention. In the future, it would be interesting to integrate a research proponent that would directly reflect prior knowledge gained from films.
ENDNOTES

1 I am using Douglas A. Van Belle’s definition of politics which “consists of individual or combined actions of individuals, governments, and/or groups aimed at getting what they want accomplished when those actions have public consequence” (Van Belle 30). Van Belle notes the “tension between the real and the ideal is prominent both in theory and in practice. Virtually all who engage in politics must balance the dreams of what they would like to accomplish against real-world limitations” (Van Belle 4). This practice of balancing ideals should be translated into films, in addition to being implemented in real life.

2 On February 6, 2016, I spoke with screenwriter Kevin Downs who said, “screenwriting is a very complex medium, there is a standard plot line: a character who wants something and achieves it” (Downs). Ron Klain’s goal was to get all the ballots counted. The end of the film occurs when he could not achieve this task.

3 The writer “constructs a detailed story, maps out a scene-by-scene blueprint of the film’s plot, and writes dialogue that may or may not sound like everyday life, but that nonetheless fits the tone and style of the particular film” (Sikov 103). The script offers a foundation for all of the other people involved with production. Actors can perform the written lines in a number of ways, giving them a new sense of purpose.

4 In an interview with Andrea Mitchell, Kevin Spacey said, “I actually think the larger message is the one that Ron Klain had during that thirty-six days which was, ‘Do we have an electoral process in this country that is equipped to handle margins of victory so small and margins that are so big?’ and I think what Ron was fighting for, ultimately, was not – yes, of course, particularly, about Al Gore, that was his candidate – but more the process of ‘if a citizen goes out and takes the time to vote, should that vote be counted?’ And I think that was his argument through the entire process and I think it is interesting as I am watching all of this news about Florida and whether the delegates are going to be ceded and, here we are, again, in 2008, facing possibly the same situation… And so I think that if people see this film and realize that it is not as simple as sort of pointing a finger at one thing or one person and saying, ‘well, this is why that whole thing turned out the way it did’ I think that you see it, a confluence of events and personalities, agendas, that really make you realize that if we are going to stand up in the United States and say that ‘we are the best in the democratic and fair process of elections and we want other countries to look at how we do it’ then it is our obligation to try and get it right” (Kevin Spacey on Recount).

5 Mise-en-scène is “comprised of purely cinematic components: the nature of the film stock (its grain, its absence or presence of color), the angles at which the subjects are being shot, and the distance the subjects are from the camera” (Cahir 63). In essence, everything in the scene was placed there with a purpose; therefore, academics can analyze each item and decision.
“Scientific work is currently seen as the servant and not the determinant of policy. Indeed, research is supposed to strive for neutrality on policy issues. This was still a new position at the time the Payne Fund Studies were being made” (Jowett, Jarvie, and Fuller-Seeley 7). The ethics and methods involved with the study do not hold up in today’s world of academia, but the investigation itself demonstrated the influence of film.

In *Children and the Movies: Media Influence and the Payne Fund Controversy* by Garth S. Jowett, Ian C. Jarvie, and Kathryn H. Fuller, they noted, “The motion picture was the first of the major mass media of the twentieth century, setting the scene for what was to come later with radio and television. While many magazines had developed considerable national circulation in the late nineteenth century, their readership was not as widespread throughout all demographic and socioeconomic segments of the population as was movie attendance. Nor did the print media have the enormous inherence appeal of glamour, which almost immediately became associated with the movies” (Jowett, Jarvie, and Fuller-Seeley 22). Films offered a unifying experience for viewers and became quite popular due to their accessibility; it did not cost too much to view a film, thus people from all walks of life could attend a movie theater showing.

“Using this unsystematic approach, he (Herbert Blumer) reported that the teenagers had been greatly influenced by the movies because they said they had been greatly influenced. Blumer’s conclusion and other conclusions of the Payne Fund Studies about the media’s direct one-to-one effect on people were accepted without question, mainly because they were the first major studies of media effects, and the results were widely reported” (Biagi 257). As I addressed before (in footnote VI), the Payne Fund Studies were flawed, but the topic they addressed, films, proved to be an important subject to study. While their results may have been tainted, the time dedicated to film studies and overall impressions subjects offered demonstrates an ongoing interest in the influence of movies on audiences.

In regards to *The Birth of a Nation*, “The stereotype of a hypersexualized black male dehumanizes black men, helping to justify their subordination… In the movies, most black men politically militant or merely politically motivated are simplified by the scenarists into unreasonable, animalistic brutes” (Larson 30). The film perpetuates terrible stereotypes as Larson analyzes. In *The Birth of a Nation*, African American men attempt to rape two white women, making them appear aggressive, thoughtless, and downright evil. The women are rescued by white men, making the white men appear heroic, while the African American men can be considered the villains.

Leni Riefenstahl’s *Triumph of the Will* (1935) was used as Nazi propaganda and incorporated an anti-Semitic perspective to try and garner support for the Germans and Fritz Hippler’s *Der Ewige Jude* (1940) referred to Jews as rats (Dixon and Foster 154 and Dixon and Foster 156). Hippler’s work assisted in setting the foreground for the Holocaust
“suggesting that the cure for the Jewish problem was their elimination” (Dixon and Foster 154). Adolf Hitler personally asked Leni Riefenstahl to film Nuremberg rallies to create *Triumph of the Will*, which managed to make the Third Reich and Hitler appear positively to viewers (Dixon and Foster 156). The film *Jew Suss* (1940) by Veit Harlan portrayed Jews as rapists and manipulative individuals (Dixon and Foster 154). Filmmakers in Germany attempted to sway mass opinion through the use of films. In *Nishizumi senshacho-den* Kozaburo Yoshimura addresses the honor associated with Samurai warriors (Dixon and Wheeler 161). During wartime in the Soviet Union, Boris Shumyatskiy created newsreels supporting the war at Joseph Stalin’s request (Dixon and Wheeler 162).

xi The Council on American-Islamic Relations accused the television show *24* as consistently portraying Muslims as terrorists. “The writers and producers of *24* explained that the show was fictional, that it was not intended as a documentary or military manual” (Alsultany 19). The issue remains that images have power. While the television program is not meant to represent real life, the images perpetuate a certain mentality.

xii He is trying to bring light to this issue and wears dark black pants and a jacket with a blue shirt and gold tie. Even though he is a Republican, he is trying to ensure democracy occurs in the most ethical legal way possible, and since he is acting in a manner that would benefit the Democrats to some degree, acknowledging the fact that there are votes not being counted in this manner, he has a blue shirt on. The blue shirt is indicative of him not wanting this issue to be glazed over.

xiii Mac Stipanovich advised Katherine Harris to “bring this election in for a landing” on several occasions (Toobin 69). *Recount* included this line during Stipanovich and Harris’s conversation when Stipanovich was advising Harris in her conference room. It was a known fact that Stipanovich was advising Harris (*Bush v. Gore: The Endless Election* (2015)). In *Recount*, Stipanovich appears to be sneaking around and acting behind closed doors.

xiv Mac Stipanovich served as an advisor to Harris when she ran for secretary of state. Stipanovich knew Harris well enough to “play to Harris’s dramatic sense of herself, insisting that she was the only person in America who could bring order to the growing chaos of the election. She would be the one to vindicate the rule of law. Harris suffered from one of the perils of privileged life: self-confidence unburdened by self-knowledge. So she was primed to hear what Stipanovich had to say. Yes, she agreed with her advisor; it was her duty to bring this election in for a landing” (Toobin 70). Harris may have been manipulated, but it is difficult to prove.

xv David Boies dressed “exclusively in cheap mail-order suits, flat-bottomed knit ties, and black sneakers… He lived on ice cream, sourdough pretzels, Triscuits, and Barq’s Diet Root Beer, except when he was eating steak and drinking expensive red wine” (Toobin}
110). His sweet tooth may have inspired Strong to include these traits in the film. When Boies and Klain are in the back of a limousine discussing the Supreme Court case, Boies eats red M&Ms. The sweet treats adds a layer of realism and likeability to his character. Interestingly, David Boies had a penchant for junk food. According to Jeffrey Toobin, he actually uttered this line (Toobin 195).

xvi In an interview, James Baker noted that the Republicans were given the higher ground in the recount process due to the Democrats selecting four highly liberal counties (Bush v. Gore: The Endless Election (2015)). Recount does not depict their reasoning as manipulative or self-centered.

xvii According to Gillman, W. Dexter Douglass worked alongside David Boies to craft the Democratic brief (Gillman 56). Douglass was removed from the recount process, most likely to streamline character involvement.

xviii Theresa LePore is first introduced when the Palm Beach Canvassing Board discussed the butterfly ballot. Recount did not address the fact that LePore had a history of making mistakes in the electoral process. Earlier in the week, she “had forgotten to mail poll-worker credentials to Democratic headquarters; she had delivered them in person on the Sunday before the vote, but that did not leave enough time for the credentials to be distributed to their intended recipients” (Toobin 17).

xix During one of my focus group discussions, someone said they felt badly for Theresa LePore in the film. “I think one of the reasons they included her is because… if she hadn’t made the butterfly ballots, if she had voted to go ahead on the recount, things may have been different… If she had decided to go ahead and do the recount vote, maybe they could have finished on time, maybe, it could have, she’s a very minor character but she’s very central.”

xx According to Jeffrey Toobin, Katherine Harris received a phone call from Don Evans the day after the election (Toobin 62). In Recount, Jeb Bush frantically phones Harris offering a sense of immediacy and drama to the scene.

xxi In Too Close to Call, Toobin noted that Warren Christopher was seventy-five years old and was not up to the physical and emotional challenge the recount presented (Toobin 97). Bill Daley was not ready to be in the public eye, not wanting to withstand criticism or commentary from the media (Toobin 98). By Warren Christopher and Bill Daley leaving Florida, Ron Klain became the leader of the Democratic side.

xxii There are also dozens of reporters outside of the court house with ABC, CNN, NBC, and other logos signifying their news organizations providing their credentials and authenticity to the scene.
Interestingly, when conducting research, the voter purge list is not always referenced. For instance, the voter suppression element is not cited in the CNN documentary, *Bush V. Gore: The Endless Election* (2015). In *Recount*, it adds another layer of sympathy for the Democrats, thus it enhances the emotional impact of the film.

Kerey Carpenter spoke with Judge Burton about the recount ballot standards in the film. *Recount* did not address the fact that Carpenter was sent specifically to speak with him by Katherine Harris (Toobin 84).

The Bush brief was primarily written by Michael A. Carvin (Gillman 57). He is only in two scenes and does not receive a great deal of dialogue. The Democratic team is the focus of the film in this sense because their lawyers are well known and established throughout the plot.

Ted Olson represented George W. Bush in the Supreme Court case opposing David Boies.

Interestingly, David Boies, one of Al Gore’s Supreme Court Attorneys, said he did see the Supreme Court announcement about issuing a stay via a television set. In an interview with the CNN Special Report journalists for *Bush v. Gore: The Endless Election* (2015), Boies recalled eating lunch in a sports bar when the Supreme Court issued a stay (*Bush v. Gore: The Endless Election* (2015)). In *Recount*, he was not shown. Strong was able to capture the film viewing element that characters need to adhere to in order to stay up to date by the minute to learn about the recount proceedings. He masterfully compressed scenes to utilize the news feature, while not including any nonessential scenes.

Katherine Harris stands behind the podium, on the certification deadline, wearing a purple-inspired outfit, which is the combination of red and blue, signifying both political parties.

Throughout *Recount*, Katherine Harris is featured on television as the focus of the recount. For instance, she walks into her office with cameras all around her on election morning. Harris holds numerous press conferences; an NBC reporter asks her a question about extending the deadline. Whouley watches her announcement in his office on TV WPN 16 News logo as well as the Bush campaign workers in their headquarters.

Katherine Harris also watches Boies on WPN 16 Live.

As the recount is being held in Palm Beach, journalists watch volunteers analyze the ballots being a constant presence at their headquarters.
xxxii Michael Whouley watches this particular announcement on News Live 6. At this point in time, he is not in Florida, but elsewhere working on the recount. This news logo is meant to draw attention to the fact that he needed to be informed via a different outlet due to his location.

xxxiii Roach’s inclusion of authentic news footage was a conscientious decision. The camera is angled perfectly to capture the characters watching the announcements as they occur. He was able to make the 2000 election feel timely years later, capturing the themes and struggles faced by the parties. Creating a film about a historical incident is not an easy undertaking. To ensure his production was successful, Roach added news footage, a timeline, dates, names, political affiliations, imagery, and clear problems that needed to be resolved.

xxxiv Ron Klain also said, “It was not a fair process. It was not a neutral process. It was a process that was rigged against us” (*Bush v. Gore: The Endless Election* (2015)).

xxxv During one of my focus group discussions, someone said, “Something I found was very interesting was that they never really showed Bush or Gore. The only time you saw them were in news footage. I thought it was nice though because the movie wasn’t about ‘who’ would be the better President; it was just about the voting process.” The conscious decision not to include character portrayals was effective for the viewers.

xxxvi Jeb Bush recused himself from the recount proceedings. Bush’s withdrawal was the proper course of action. His decision to remove himself was not addressed in *Recount*.

xxxvii Ron Klain mentioned that Danny Strong, “he took the time to, as I said, not just with me but with a lot of the people, virtually, everyone who’s portrayed in the film, Danny interviewed.”

xxxviii One direct response was, “I learned a lot about chads.”

xxxix One focus group participant referred to the film as a “behind-the-scenes” look at the election.

Xl Warren Christopher was not significant at .368. According to Pearson’s Chi-Square, this is higher than 0.05 making the statistic insignificant. The controversial state in the 2000 election yielded .871, when answering the winner of the popular vote the Pearson Chi-Square was .176, the districts that were requested by Democrats was .422, Florida Supreme Court’s political affiliation (being predominantly Democratic) was 0.64, presidential elections can only be held one day a year was .135, Dimple definition was .198, James Baker was .149, Ron Klain was .313, Benjamin Ginsberg was .484, Michael Whouley was .355, Mac Stipanovich was .598, Katherine Harris was .645, Joseph Lieberman was .358,
Dick Cheney was .112, Al Gore was .935, David Boies was .281, and the length of the recount was .387. None of these values are significant being larger than 0.05.

**Game Change** is a film about the 2008 Republican campaign run by John McCain. The movie is based on the book. A YouTube video published on March 2, 2012, by Harvard University’s Institute of Politics included a discussion of HBO’s *Game Change*. Student Jacob Marlow asked a panel a question about bias against Sarah Palin. Mark Halperin, Harvard Alum 1987, Senior Political Analyst for Time Magazine, MSNBC, and Bloomberg news, and co-author of *Game Change* and *Double Down: Game Change 2012* replied, “There are a lot of ways to answer that. Let me try three that I think are most relevant. Number one: There was not a single discussion that we were involved in in the making of this film and we were involved in plenty where bias or an agenda came up at all, at all. Number two: the people who are saying it, anyone who is saying it is biased and, again, most people have not seen it, I think it will be incumbent upon anyone who thinks that to say, specifically, what they mean; what they think is inaccurate or has some agenda behind it. I do not think they will be able to come up with that because the third thing is: As with the book, this is based on not an opinion or analysis but reported fact. We did a lot of interviews with people who were involved in this directly and we were very careful – I think, John, agrees – that the book and the film are as balanced and accurate and fair portrayals of Sarah Palin during those sixty days as anything that has been done. There is, I think, many favorable things to be said about the job she did and about the difficult challenges she faced and how she met them; and, they are portrayed both in the book and in the movie. So there is a lot of – as Tray suggested – there is a lot about Sarah Palin and the reaction to her that is polarizing and where one side or the other marshals its own set of selected facts or opinion to try to have a biased agenda. In both intent and execution, neither the book nor the movie has that and I would urge everybody who has a feeling that it might be biased to take a look at it and, again, I welcome their specifics and we would look at them. But I do not think anybody is going to be able to do that with any credibility because the things in there that are more favorable and the things in there that are less favorable are based on reported fact with the people who were present in these events” (“Premiere Screening and Discussion of HBO’s *Game Change* – Institute of Politics”). *Game Change* follows the Republican Party more so than *Recount*, but does give the impression that the campaign was dysfunctional and Sarah Palin was a bad selection for a Vice President.

One focus group member said, “I watch a lot of American shows so sometimes I see a reference to like a comedy show like the hanging chad thing – and I don’t get that – but, yeah, sure, it’s funny.”
APPENDIX A

Recount Pre-Survey

Do you enjoy political films?

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

How interested are you in politics?

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

Can you identify the party affiliation with these individuals?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Democrat</th>
<th>Republican</th>
<th>Do Not Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>George Bush</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Al Gore</td>
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<td>Dick Cheney</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joseph Lieberman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Katherine Harris</td>
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<td>Jeb Bush</td>
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<td>James Baker</td>
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<td>Michael Whouley</td>
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<tr>
<td>Benjamin Ginsberg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Warren Christopher</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
What state was the controversial state in the election Gore ran against Bush?

Who won the popular vote in the 2000 election?  

Who won the Electoral College vote in the 2000 election?  

What is a recount?  

What is a dimple? 

What is a hanging chad?  

How many votes separated Bush and Gore in Florida?
A. 590  B. 1,784  C. 5,125  D. More than 10,000  E. Don’t Know

Presidential elections can only legally be held?
A. 1 day  B. at most three days  C. at most five days  D. at most seven days  E. Don’t Know

How many districts were “hand” recounted per the Democrats request?  
A. 1  B. 4  C. 6  D. 10  E. Don’t Know

What is David Boies’s disability?  
A. A.D.D.  B. A.D.H.D.  C. Dyslexia  D. Don’t Know

What was the party affiliation of the Florida Supreme Court Justices?  
A. Republicans  B. Democrats  C. Mixed (Both Republicans and Democrats)  D. Don’t Know

How long did the 2000 election recount last?  
A. one week  B. one month  C. two months  D. almost three months  E. Don’t Know
Did Al Gore concede to George W. Bush on election Night? YES  NO  Don’t Know
Do you believe every vote matters in an election? YES  NO  Don’t Know
Do you know what the Electoral College does? YES  NO  Don’t Know
Do you believe the Electoral College matters? YES  NO  Don’t Know
Do you think there should have been a recount in the 2000 election? YES  NO  Don’t Know
Do you believe that George W. Bush won the 2000 election? YES  NO
Age: ______________
Circle Gender:       Male          Female
Major (and or occupation): ______________________________________________
Political Party:  Democrat   Republican   Independent   Other:__________________
APPENDIX B

Recount Post-Survey

Can you identify the party affiliation with these individuals?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Democrat</th>
<th>Republican</th>
<th>Do Not Know</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Al Gore</td>
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<tr>
<td>Warren Christopher</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Who won the Electoral College vote in the 2000 election? _____________________

Who won the popular vote in the 2000 election? ______________________________

What state was key in the election Gore ran against Bush? _____________________

What is a recount?
________________________________________________________________________
What is a hanging chad?

What is a dimple?

How many votes separated Bush and Gore in Florida?
A. 590  B. 1,784  C. 5,125  D. More than 10,000  E. Don’t Know

Presidential elections can only legally be held __________.
A. 1 day  B. at most three days  C. at most five days  D. at most seven day  E. Don’t Know

How many districts were “hand” recounted per the Democrats request?
A.1  B. 4  C. 6  D. 10  E. Don’t Know

What is David Boies’s disability?
A. A.D.D.  B. A.D.H.D.  C. Dyslexia  D. Don’t Know  E. Don’t Know

What was the party affiliation of the Florida Supreme Court Justices?
A. Majority Republicans  B. Majority of Democrats  C. Mixed (Both Republicans and Democrats)  E. Don’t Know

How long did the 2000 election recount last?
A. one week  B. one month  C. two months  D. almost three months  E. Don’t Know

Did Al Gore concede to George W. Bush on election Night? YES  NO  Don’t Know
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