

## Reconceptualizing *High School: Curriculum, Film, and Narrative Assemblies*

Because we lack an educational poetry which stirs the imagination and harnesses our power we are forced to push our school images our present school materials and organization to the breaking point, without conviction or results, but with a naïve faith in our past ways. But the past must be rethought, not reused.

(Huebner, 1975a/2000, p. 275)

To be human is to create.

(Phenix, 1975/2000, p. 329)

[K-N-S] During the late 1960s, a group of American curricularists and documentary filmmakers, notably Dwayne Huebner and Frederick Wiseman, worked to provoke the educational and political issues of their time. In turn, these public intellectuals sought to disrupt, among other things, the institutional borders and everyday realities of racialized segregation, infringements against individual rights, economic exploitation and gendered inequities within the institutions of schooling. The educational questions these filmmakers and curriculum theorists posed more than four decades ago continue to speak to things that matter. Many of these curricularists, like Maxine Greene, Michael Apple, Dwayne Huebner, and William F. Pinar to name a few provoked us to question why some administrators, teachers and students (including the authors of this writing) remain couched in our own indifference and accede ourselves to the political, silent extensions of bureaucratic and technocratic discursive arms.

*Yes we speak of things that matter,  
With words that must be said,  
"Can analysis be worthwhile?"  
"Is the theatre really dead?"  
And how the room is softly faded  
And I only kiss your shadow,  
I cannot feel your hand,  
You're a stranger now unto me  
Lost in Dangling Conversation  
And the superficial sighs  
In the borders of our lives*

*(Dangling Conversation, Paul Simon  
and Art Garfunkel)*

Are younger generations of politicians, curriculum scholars, principals, teachers and students taking account of our mediated consumption of things that matter? Are we questioning the underpinning causes and multiple literacies of our current environmental crisis, the ongoing racialized, homophobic, physical, psychical, misogynistic, exploitative and epistemic violence taking place inside and outside schools? Or, are we repeating the political and curricular bandwagon songs of the past? Are Iraq and Afghanistan, once again, yet another symbolic curricular recapitulation of Vietnam? Are schools designed to lead, inform and provoke society? Or, are schools merely created to reflect contemporary society's beliefs, obsessions, preoccupations and frailties? Further, does curriculum mirror school's focus or does curriculum work in opposition to what schools set out to achieve? In response to such pro/vocations we attempt to bridge a complicated conversation between two historical texts hoping, in turn, to relocate and re-enter the present temporal borders of our current lives beyond.... superficial curricular sighs.

With this forewarning in mind we engage an emergent and recursive curriculum theory project, where we study the "verticality" and "horizontal" of the curricular and historical

relationships between the documentary film *High School* and *Curriculum Studies: The Reconceptualization*. In order to survive the disciplinary colonization of curriculum studies within the bureaucratic walls of universities, many curricularists in Pinar's (1975/2000) collection of essays shifted their educational research from developing curriculum and

*Why do we not notice more carefully the direction of technical changes, social changes, and political changes? Why do we not listen more thoughtfully to the songs of the young, the anger of the oppressed, the labored breathing of those dying of overdoses of heroin and methadone [and of complacency], of the painful cry of those bombed at Christmas time, the prideful platitudes of those in power? (Huebner, 1975/2000, p. 271-272)*

implementing evidence-based outcomes toward understanding their respective theoretical underpinnings. As a result, the inter-discipline of curriculum theorizing emerged.

Many of the authors included in this collection of essays worked to shift curricular conversation away from the conceptual and theoretical works associated with, but not limited to, Tyler, Taba, Taylor, Alexander and Smith-Stanley-Shores (Pinar, 1975/2000). Our curricular task here is not to belabour the existing historical debates between the offspring of these differing curriculum camps. Instead, we would like to acknowledge that our situated interpretations (always partial and limited) of this collection and film respond to the historical contexts of specific social, cultural and political issues taking place both inside and outside the larger international field of curriculum studies. Within such curriculum theorizing, one is then "able to think vertically as well as horizontally" (Pinar, 1975c/2000, p. 409). Consequently we take up, as Pinar (1975c/2000) suggests, the spirit of experientialist analysis, where we in turn can provoke narrative enslavements to the realities of our present curricular and pedagogical inhabitations of the public world.

Furthermore, we suggest that the "intellectual labour of understanding – the labour of comprehension, critique and reconceptualization" – represented within this collection of essays and film constitutes a historical disruption within the "verticality" of the ongoing curriculum conversations taking place at that time within an emerging *American field of Curriculum Studies* (Pinar, 2007, xii). Verticality, Pinar (2007) explains, is the intellectual history of a discipline. Whereas, horizontality, he continues, refers to analyses of present circumstances, in terms of internal intellectual trends as well as the external social and political milieus influencing our field. Pinar (2007) further suggests that studying the verticality and horizontality of inter/disciplinary structures affords curriculum scholars opportunities to understand a series of scholarly moves – historical, present and future – within the field of curriculum studies. Curricularists have tended, as Huebner (1975c/2000) reminds us, "to be ahistorical in the awareness of the various forms and institutions that make up their professional gear" (p. 257). Therefore, this curriculum theorizing project is in part an attempt to play rhizosemiotically with inter-textual representations of our situated understandings of *High School* and *Curriculum Studies: The Reconceptualization* (Gough, 2008, 2007a, 2007b, 2006; Hall, 1997). Our hope is that our (dis)positioning as Canadian curriculum scholars affords us the necessary inter-national distance to analyze and synthesize, anew, this specific historical period of the *American field of Curriculum Studies*.

As Canadian curriculum theorists, we might then re-enter the present to question the ways local curriculum policies push schoolteachers to the breaking point with bureaucratic principles of backward design and the rhetoric of accountability here in Canada. All the while...

the culture and economic wars recessively rage on. Our radical hope is that this curriculum theory project might help release collective imaginations, as Greene (1995) suggests, toward an alter/native educational future beyond the rhetorical sirens of bureaucratic accountability.

To remain consciously aware of our immersion within this particular international and historical context, as Huebner (1975c/2000) reminds us, “is to be on top of our past, so we can use it as a base for projection into the future” (p. 257). Therefore, as a next generation of curriculum theorists, in what ways can we (re)conceptualize rather than (re)use the historical narratives we tell ourselves? In response to such recursive nomadic lines of questioning, we suggest that our inter/disciplinary re-reading of this documentary film, with and against this collection of essays, provides a site for (re)conceptualizing our lived experiences inside and outside the international field of curriculum studies. We feel that bridging a complicated conversation between these two texts affords graduate students and curricularists pedagogical opportunities to further contextualize the political, cultural and psychosocial significance of the historical narratives that inform our present intellectual lives within the discursive and material territories we collectively call curriculum studies.

### **Disassembling Hybrid Curricular Spaces as a Narrative Bricolage**

...a teacher whose pedagogy is incongruent with the medium; without a rich authentic relationship with the medium, an appropriate, meaningful pedagogy cannot evolve.

(Shuchat-Shaw, 1975/2000, p. 448)

Research has an inner and an outer drama.

(Mooney, 1975/2000, p. 175)

[K] Bhabha (1994) suggests that film is a hybrid curricular space – re-inscribing historical narratives, taking them apart, *reassembling* them, *disassembling* them and then starting the process again. We (un)consciously chose to *reassemble* and *disassemble* the narrative *assemblages* of this curriculum theory project. As we render these narrative *assemblages*, we create a hybrid curricular space for re-inscribing history while simultaneously taking it apart. Further, we seek to create a narrative liminal place where *assemblages*, *dis-assemblages* and *re-assemblages* co-exist.

Pinar’s (1975/2000) collection of essays and Wiseman’s (1968) film are inter-textual *assemblages*. Much like a Deleuzian and Guattarian rhizome, an *assemblage* is non-objective and relational. “It changes in nature,” Massumi (1987) tells us, “as it expands its connections” (p.8). Such *assemblages* are in constant flux, dwelling within the tensioned spaces of re-inscription and subversion. Therefore, our disassembling and reassembling of these two historical texts is caught betwixt-and-between the margins of a third space where [K-N-S] is a hyph-e-nated liminal third space (see Ng-A-Fook, 2009; Turner 1990). Within the context of rendering this liminal narrative third space, we strive to embody a blurring of inter-textual borders among past, present and future. Thus, we write as [K-N-S] while blurring the borders and surfing the hyphens between self and other. Like Palulis and Low (2001), we strive to de-centre ourselves by creating

a text together that “replaces the oneness of a thinking ‘I’ with a multiplicity of voices” (p. 42). Though we create a framing, the reader always determines the inter-textual boundaries that are established and the respective meanings ascribed to them (Hall, 1997; Harker, 1992).

[S] Most striking, for me, was the act of both witnessing the lives (re)told in this high school and the memory of my own living through a similar time in my youth. Viewing the film *High School* conjured long-forgotten details – acts of curriculum that seemed fairly pervasive in the 1960s to late 1970s. Moving from what has become embodied to what has become revealed through study, my writing will reflect, similarly, a kindred journey – from documentary narratives about high school to the curriculum performances within.

[K] Curriculum theory and filmic texts are inextricably connected to our emotional lives. We use bricolage as an aesthetic way of writing together, where we combine texts in order to create differing understandings of our interconnected relationships to what we already know and how we know it. And we seek to share the multiple interpretive layers we ascribe to our textual meanings. Bricolage, Kincheloe (2005) tells us, is a multi-method mode of research where bricoleurs do not seek to explain fixed interpretations of narrative reality. Therefore, we trouble the idea that our narrative interpretations of material and/or psychic reality, of self and other, can ever be accurately represented (Munro Hendry, 2007). Instead for us, the subject of our narratives remains “a destabilized self, one for whom memory and experience are always separate” (Russell, 1999, p. 312). Assuming *High School* (1968) is a rhizomatic story, an amalgam of nonlinear and (un)knowable story fragments, the individuals filmed are continuously refashioned through multiple narratives, acting as entryways and what Sermijn et al (2008) call “asignifying ruptures” (p. 648). In *High School* Wiseman privileges certain narratives over others and provides multiple edited story lines.

*Since a single curriculum, like a single story, has many designs to be explained and thus many meanings to be disclosed, no single critique is exhaustive. The critic, therefore, must be selective. (Mann, 1975/2000, p. 137)*

This project engages in an emergent and rhizomatic process with the interactive use of a [website](#), images and text. Readers are invited to visit this curriculum theory project [website](#) and experiment with reader response. As you read, please fill in what we left out and what we “could not ‘see’ or ‘hear’ or ‘remember’” (Van Manen, 2002, p. 8). The website provides an interactive space to extend the dialogue beyond this article. Together, these diverse (third) spaces provide rich possibilities for the doubling of the said and unsaid, where the (un)said is a doubling of presence and absence (Aoki, 2003), and hearing the (un)said involves the displacing one’s self and creating anew.

[N] Here is where the work of Mann might help us toward hearing and theorizing curricular discourse anew. Mann opens *Curriculum Criticism* stressing that our curricular discourse within educational research was [and remains] an instrumental language structured around assumed means-ends, cause-effect relations. Although curriculum development is an important dynamic of curricular discourse for curricularists to interpretively consider, as Mann warns us, it is not the only narrative to take up as curriculum theorists. He calls us to critique our historical and present appropriations of curriculum language as an instrumental discourse. Instead, he asks us to consider curriculum as if it were a literary object and concomitantly as a

form of aesthetic production. In this project, our narrative assemblages seek to render curriculum theorizing and digital technologies as an aesthetic form of production in the following ways:

1. Integrating digital media;
2. Critically analyzing the aesthetic production of narrative sequencing of *High School*;
3. Drawing (aesthetically/creatively) primarily (but not limited to) the collection of essays housed within *Curriculum Studies: The Reconceptualization* as a methodological filter for analyzing the film *High School* in order to offer what we might call a form of cultural criticism;
4. Utilizing web-based methodologies such as Google Blogger to collaboratively assemble the initial aesthetic production of this paper; and
5. Engaging a curriculum theory project, which, in turn, attempts to take up Pinar's (2007) call for studying the "verticality" and "horizontality" of curricular concepts and their respective historically situated contexts.

Mann (1975/2000) draws our attention to the potential relationships between curriculum and fiction. It is here where we might further understand the possibilities and limitations of "curriculum" as a "literary project." In order to do so, Mann draws on Mark Schorer's (1950) treatment of story. "And the first point to note," Mann (1975/2000) suggests, "is that in his criticism Schorer focuses neither on the biography of the author nor on the effect of the work on the reader, but firmly on the literary object itself" (p. 134). Could we also consider Wiseman's documentary film, *High School*, to also be a form of literary object, or a filmic object in itself? In our attempts to answer this question we might come close to, touch, or even enter into what Mann (1975/2000) calls the literary object and, in turn, know its meanings well. *These questions regarding the nature of one's inner experience, point to that level of existence known as lebenswelt. Let us study this lebenswelt, the experience of the educational journey; it is the study of curriculum reconceived, that is, currere. (Pinar, 1975/2000, p. 399)* And, yet, I ask myself, to what intellectual ends must we understand a literary object and respective textual meanings well? How can we do so without objectifying and/or reducing alter/native meanings to the "canonical" one?

In *High School*, there is no narrator. Instead, the camera narrates the story. Strategically utilizing the emergent technology of the zoom lens, Wiseman (1968) documents the curricular story of a middle class, suburban high school called North East High. "I would like to propose," Mann (1975a/2000) writes, "that a curriculum can be regarded in the same manner. Like fictions, a curriculum can have a story, a set of facts, which, on the surface, purport to represent life" (p. 134). What, then, is the curriculum – explicit, implicit, and hidden – represented/narrated in *High School*? Can we suggest, to some extent, that the scenes chosen and represented in the film work to subject us to a "dominant fiction" of schooling within that time period. Certainly, Pinar's (1975/2000) collection of essays would help us to support the (de/re)construction of what Kaja Silverman (1992) calls our dominant fictions. "In both cases," as Mann (1975a/2000) makes clear, "the curriculum no less than the story, the network of selections constitutes an assertion of meaning – a symbolic commentary upon life" (p. 134). Wiseman's film, *High School*, is a

symbolic commentary upon life at schools, a school situated in the United States during the *Civil Rights Movement* and *Vietnam War*.

[S] Curriculum: what happens in schools; is prescriptive by nature (so to some degree relies on a sense of ideal); relies to varying degree on (standardized) testing and assessment (invoking “rubrics” supports the prescriptive nature of curriculum); assumes a linear pathway for attaining and retaining information to being able to create one’s own knowledge; is geared toward being productive source of labour as an adult to perpetuate the capitalist system.

*Curriculum* means two things: (i) the range of courses from which students choose what subject matters to study, and (ii) a specific learning program. In the latter case, the curriculum collectively describes the teaching, learning, and assessment materials available for a given course of study.

Core versus open curriculum: Core implies central “must have” courses for all students, while an open curriculum removes any core subjects allowing students to take whatever courses they wish. My high school experience is of the latter. Through the mid to late 1970s our high school was something of an experiment with an open curriculum. I could focus on the subjects of greatest interest, and presumably my greater strengths rather than take courses with which I had very limited facility. As a result, in grades 9 and 10, I dropped physical education, French and math stream – focussing primarily on all English courses, Business, Sciences, Social Sciences, Theatre, Geography and History. I managed to escape from high school before the imposition of graduation pre-requisites in the late 1970s/early 1980s.

*The bureaucratic model, along with its behavioristic and technological refinements, threatens to destroy, in the name of efficiency, the satisfaction one may find in intellectual activity. The sense of delight in intellectual activity is replaced by a sense of urgency. The thrill of the hunt is converted into an efficient kill. The wonder of the journey is superseded by the relentless pursuit of destination. And to condition the victim to enjoy being conditioned is certainly less humane than open coercion or bribery. (Kliebard, 1975/2000, p. 67)*

### **Bricolaging Between the Margins of Narrative Assemblings**

Curriculum designing is thus a form of “utopianism,” a form of political and social philosophizing and theorizing. If we recognize this, it may help us sort out our own thinking and perhaps increase our ability to communicate with one another.

(Macdonald, 1975b/2000, p. 293)

The study of *currere*, as the Latin infinitive suggests, involves the investigation of the nature of the individual experiences of the public: of artefacts, actors, operations, of the educational journey or pilgrimage.

(Pinar, 1975c/2000, p. 400)

[N] Much like the curriculum theorizing represented in the last section of *Curriculum Studies*, *The Reconceptualization* Wiseman’s documentary films are experimental texts. Its curriculum does not follow a linear narrative emplotment. Its scope and editorial sequencings are fragmented. In turn the prescriptive curricular rules of continuity are broken. Wiseman,

Nichols (1978) tells us, “disavows conventional notions of tact, breaking through what would otherwise be ideological constraints of politeness, respect for privacy, queasiness in the face of the grotesque or taboo and the impulse to accentuate the positive” (p. 16). In turn, Wiseman’s ‘tactlessness’ resists succumbing to the institutional rhetoric of bureaucracy. Instead, it helps him, to disclose the gap, as Nichols maintains, between rhetoric and institutional practice (p. 16). Here Wiseman is able to “document” black and white narratives that in turn recapitulate the sanity and madness of the schooling experience for students attending suburban American high schools during the height of the *Cold War*. We are presented with narratives of domination, loss of freedom; where the development of autonomy, as Pinar (1975a/2000) stresses, is arrested.

[K] To represent the gap between rhetoric and practice, Wiseman creates his own rhetoric by employing filmic strategies that encourage the viewer to adopt Wiseman’s preferred rereading of *High School*. Thompson and Bordwell (1994) believe this is achieved through the “shrewd juxtapositions between sequences and by repeating motifs (such as close-ups of hands to signify the controlling hand] across the film. The meaning, [Wiseman] insists is in the whole”(p. 669). Further, Wiseman connects unrelated scenes through montage, directing the viewer to see them as part of a pattern.

[N] Nichols (1978) adds that formal strategies are masked by ‘this lack of tact’ pulling the film “toward the realm of voyeurism and visual pleasure; a very striking aspect of his films on first view” (p. 16). Wiseman’s films, Nichols continues, are documentary, primarily in their cinema vérité approach to recording the pro-filmic event, which, in turn, works to represent recognizable aspects of our social existence within an American form of institutionalized culture. His films focus their attention primarily, but not exclusively, on publicly funded institutions such as the police force, schools, mental institutions and a juvenile court system, for example. As such, Wiseman asks us to challenge our assumptions about the individual as the locus of social interaction in relation to bureaucratic grotesqueness of public governmentality.

*The perspective found in schools leans heavily upon how elements of a society, from the postman and fireman in first grade to the partial institutions of civic course in high school, are linked to each other in a functional relationship, each contributing to the ongoing maintenance of society. Internal dissension and conflict in a society are viewed as inherently antithetical to the smooth functioning of the social order. Consensus is once more a pronounced feature. (Apple, 1975/2000, p. 105)*

### **Disassembling Historical Contexts of *High School* and *American Curriculum Studies***

One of the disturbing characteristics of the curriculum field is its lack of historical perspective.

(Kliebard, 1975c/2000, p. 70)

I am convinced that the study of history—whether educational, psychological, or political—is necessary, if not to help us avoid the errors committed in the past, then definitely to help us understand the present.

(MacDonald, 1975a/2000, p. 15)

[K] *High School and Curriculum Theorizing: The Reconceptualists* emerged against the backdrop of two important historical events: the *Civil Rights Movement* and the *Vietnam War*. *High School* was made in 1968, the same year that segregation was declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court. Of course, this ruling occurred because of a well-organized group of individuals, who courageously took part in non-violent acts of civil disobedience over the span of a couple of decades. The *Vietnam War* ended in 1975, the same year that *Curriculum Theorizing: The Reconceptualists* was first published. But both events – the *Civil Rights Movement* and the *Vietnam War* – proved that political will is more important than material might.

*I made two mistakes in the book. One, I used the word "reconceptualist" for the subtitle rather than "the reconceptualization," an error I am rectifying here. That choice of words allowed some to misconstrue the movement as an ideologically unified set of individual in personal and professional allegiance with each other with a definite and agreed-upon destination in mind. Nothing could be further from the truth, as I well knew. (Pinar, 1975/2000), p. xi)*

[N] In 2000, Pinar revised the title of the book to *Curriculum Studies, The Reconceptualists* to *Curriculum Studies the Reconceptualization* in order to better reflect the ideological diversity within the field. “The book (I hoped) would function, Pinar (1975/2000) explained then, “as a transitional statement from a field in crisis— Schwab had recently termed it “moribund”—to a field restructured and revitalized” (p. x). I reread different essays from within this book with graduate students in a course called *Introduction to Curriculum Studies*. We reread these essays with/against/alongside *High School* to engage a complicated conversation between both texts. My pedagogical hope is that through the study of such historical texts we can begin rethink our present understanding of what we call the basic concepts of the field here in Canada.

*The second mistake was also tactical. In using "critical" and "post-critical," I irritated Marxists in the field. The distinction was accurate, but it did provoke a continuing rift between various figures in the new field. (Pinar, 1975/2000, p. xi)*

[K] One might wonder, as Wiseman does, why the North East High School community shows no interest in the outside community. Apple (1975/2000) maintains that schools are “unresponsive to the needs of the local communities and a changing social order” because they are “overtly insulated from political processes and ideological” debate (p. 96). The example within the textbox, exemplifies a high school at the mercy of social rules, unable to adapt to the changing needs of the students – those who cannot afford the rental of formal attire such as a tuxedo are excluded. Kliebard (1975b/2000) suggests that institutions and organizations control

**School Official:** *We're going to do in the school what the majority wants. It's nice to be individualistic, but ah there's certain places to be individualistic.*

**Student:** *I didn't mean to be individualistic.*

**School Official:** *... I'm saying it's nice to be that way. But there's certain times for it. I think you can be individualistic in your dress.*

**Student:** *I happen to enjoy a short gown. I didn't know that it wouldn't be accepted to the prom. ... formal means dressy. I didn't think that it meant gown.*

**School Official:** *... Formal for the guy means white tie or black tie and for the girl it means floor length gown. If you go to a cocktail party, it doesn't mean a floor length gown; it means a knee-length gown or a formal gown. (High School, 1968)*



people's behaviour in order to create specific outcomes, such as good voter turnout, product purchases and the memorization of the periodic table. Good voter turnout, although desirable in democracies, can be achieved through means other than institutional bureaucratic control. In the film *High School*, the institution's social control – implemented through its explicit and implicit curriculum – shapes various political objectives: boys, for instance, are socially conditioned into soldiers ready to die for their country.

Corporate influence in schools can further erode the potential, mostly unexplored benefits of democratic processes. Ideally, democratic schools are places where “debate and discussion inform decision-making” and students learn a praxis toward becoming “critical citizens” (Shaker & Froese-Germain, 2006, p.81). Today, funding gaps, or the improper allocation of taxpayer funds, make schools and individuals more vulnerable to advertising, private interests, and commercialization. Instead of controlling students, we need to create public spaces for students to develop the necessary educational insights to challenge and negotiate the social forces that influence them. Schools need to teach media literacy, advertising literacy and a literacy that includes the idea of cultural production. This is made difficult by the fact that “the school legitimizes [certain] products, organizations” and their messages, over others (p. 81).



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Consequently, language usage should be challenged. Huebner (1975a/2000) suggests that teachers tend to accept “as given the language which has been passed down to” them (p. 218). Using filmic language, Wiseman attempts to challenge the taken-for-granted nature of curricular language. Because one's use of language reflects one's worldview, this endeavour is as important now as it was then. It's interesting, for instance, that Canadian curriculum documents refer to U.S. involvement in Iraq as “the invasion of Iraq,” whereas American curriculum documents refer to it as “the liberation of Iraq.”

[N] Pinar (1975a/2000) asks us to question the sanity and madness of schooling during the 1960s and 1970s. After Presidents Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon's national educational and global military reforms, university educators were asked, to help “teachers forget their historical calling to practice academic freedom, to be authentic individuals” (Pinar, 1998, p. xiv). In turn professors were asked, Pinar reminds us, “to help them become skilful implementers of others' objective, something like an academic version of the postal service, delivering other people's mail” (p. xiv). Consequently, technocratic and bureaucratic doctrines of the Cold War curricular reform policies confined students to the cold seat of a desk, the bodily and unimaginative claustrophobia of an assembly-line educational system. In turn, students were reduced to the affects of institutional behavioural management, like a Sputnik kid, a hallway child, who has come of age during a time of education taken over by the bureaucratic models of business and technology.

Wiseman's film *High School* asks the audience, the viewers and the reader, to consider the institutional effects of what Pinar (1975a/2000) called the sanity and madness of such bureaucratic institutions. Wiseman conveys how Northeast High School appropriated this technological discourse throughout the film. The space-training scene comes to mind here, as well as the objectification of the female body, in the scenes both with the gynaecologist and nurse. The moment *High School* begins the camera establishes itself as the narrator (Lewis, 1982). The mise-en-scene, editing and cinematography are integral parts of the film. The documented characters repeat educational slogans that mark their apathetic environment – one of discipline and punishment.

[S] The tease of metaxis is evident through what the camera catches and plays within in front of the lens. Within this writing, the Boalian notion of metaxis, “the state of belonging completely and simultaneously to two different autonomous worlds.... The image of the image creates metaxis... the image of reality and the reality of the image” buoys the interplay between what is created by and what exists for the camera (Boal, 1995, p. 43). One has to keep in mind the camera is ever-present and quite noticeable within the various shots taken in by the lens; the people going about their day know the camera is present. So, in many ways, the camera becomes not only something to document the quickly vanishing presence of quotidian school days – but becomes a central role in the creation of those times as well. The people in the schools are playing around, through and with the gaze of the camera. Can the students, administrators and faculty simply exist and behave as they would on any other day when the camera is not present? The camera is the nexus between what is present and what is absent. Curriculum and its embodiedness is the presence that occurs within the school each day; the camera provides the appearance of presence, but is simply the residue of what occurred, marking the absence within its physicality. A comparison, to illustrate, would be comparing the presence of theatre versus the absence marked by filmic portrayals. The presence is the embodied practice and experience of education – the curriculum; the absence is the filmic recording.

[K-N] Pinar (1975a/2000) stresses that students are taught to ignore their inner voices. Statements such as “I don't care what you feel, do it” or “you don't really feel that way” embody the bureaucracy of the institution of schooling, making students “obedient automatons programmed to make the correct computations” (pp. 372-375). Here, both Pinar and Wiseman illustrate how conceptualizing curriculum as a technocratic and bureaucratic endeavour works toward imagining students as a monolithic capitalistic culture, a collective of student bodies, abstracted of their individual singularities. When the school is conceived as a factory attempting to produce/transform “raw products” into compliant soldiers, Pinar's statements becomes a metaphor for the school and not the reality of students. In *High School*, Wiseman illustrates how teachers, much like prison guards, become agents of the institutions. In the film, Wiseman does not give us many clips where teachers are resisting predefined institutional roles. But there are a few examples where students express discontent

*To be aware of our historical nature is to be on top of our past, so we can use it as a base for projection into the future. Another primary task of the curricular theorist, then, is to articulate the history of the various language uses that he has and to search for the origins or sources of his expressions and ways of talking. This is essentially a task of intellectual history, and it requires tracing the evolution of our various ways of talking and writing about curricular phenomena. (Huebner, 1975/2000, p. 257).*

with the public schooling system, such as a student calling the school “garbage,” while another student takes a detention like a man, albeit, under protest.

### **Reconceptualizing Narrative Assemblies of *High School* and *Curriculum Studies***

While teaching about the principles and practices of democratic political rights, schools routinely violate those rights in order to prepare the young to be docile functionaries in a capitalist social system: a system responsible for the perpetuation of inequality between classes, races, and sexes.

(Mann & Molnar, 1975/2000, p. 170)

There has been, so far, little examination of how the treatment of conflict in the school curriculum can lead to political quiescence and the acceptance by students of a perspective on social and intellectual conflict that acts to maintain the existing distribution of power and rationality in a society.

(Apple, 1975/2000, p. 95)

[K-N-S] What follows is a discussion of various scenes from *High School*. In each scene, students are taught to perform institutional identities and respective socio-cultural roles. For example, in the first section, *‘Being a Man’ and the Culture of Power*, we consider the significance of an interaction between a student wrongfully assigned a detention and the dean of discipline. The dean, in response, tells the student to “follow orders like a man.” Here the school authorities enforce rules even when they are unjust. In *Per/for/ming Gender*, we contemplate how heteronormativity is reinforced in the film through the curricular gendering of bodies. Finally, in *A Curricular Assembling of Boys Becoming Soldiers* section, we reread a filmic scene where the teacher rereads a GI’s letter to the students and teachers. Although there are many scenes in *High School*, which we in turn could play with rhizosemiotically, we have chosen these three narratives to read against/with/alongside the collection of essays in order to help us to reconceptualize why students were told to think, speak, move, dress and behave in certain ways within the educational landscape of 1968—not a monolithic landscape to be sure. Indeed, *High School* illustrates, at least for us, a historical forewarning as its camera lens zooms in on a right-wing reactionary politics to the Civil Rights and Anti-War movements of the 1960s. In turn, over the course of the next forty years the United States conservative governments were able to mobilize cultural apathy among the next generation of youth through the extension of its curricular arms, through the machinery of bureaucratic govern-mentality, and its respective ideologies of corporate consumer capitalism.

## “Being a Man” and the Culture of Power

In times of relative social stability power resides mostly in those who say yes to prevailing norms and arrangements. Today in America this power of the yes is related to injustice in economic, social, and racial relationships; it is related to forms of management that are responsible for laying waste vast amounts of material and human resources; it belongs to political power that directly violates the will of the people, it continues to pay lip service to a bankrupt culture while upholding the sanctions of that culture over individual freedom.

(Murphy and Pilder, 1975/2000, p. 342)

If we forget or never knew that schools are a product of men and women who used their power to build or maintain a certain kind of public world, then we easily become bondsmen or those who live only in the routines.

(Huebner, 1975d/2000, p. 272)

[K] Students in *High School* are encouraged to conform and achieve a “collective heartbeat” through participation in common communication strategies, values and ways of understanding and acting (Osborne, 2001, p. 51). Within *High School*, the making of a “collective heartbeat” occurs through discipline and serves to reinforce the status quo.

Apple (1975/2000) maintains that students learn more about political socialization from informal learning than they do from civics classes. *High School* calls attention to the informal learning – the hidden curriculum, if you will – within North East High School where students learn to associate obedience and conformity with “American values.”

The interaction between the student and the dean of discipline (transcribed below) is a perfect example of how students are socially conditioned to comply and appropriate in the culture of power.

*Michael: She calls me up and she starts yelling at me and I say, “It wasn’t me!” and she starts yelling, yelling, wah, wah! So, I figure, Mr. Allen, could you stand here and listen to a lady yell? I figure I’d go and talk to her later when she’s calmed down. And she was pretty worked up. And I went to walk out and she goes, “you don’t leave,” and I go, “I’ll speak to you later at a better time.” And I walked out because –*

*Dr. Allen: First of all Michael, you showed poor judgment. When you’re being addressed by someone older than you are or in a seat of authority, it’s your job to respect and listen... [Later in the scene] We’re out to establish that you can be a man and that you can take orders. We want to prove to them that you can take orders.*

*Michael: But Mr. Allen, you see, it’s against my principles, you have to stand up for something?*

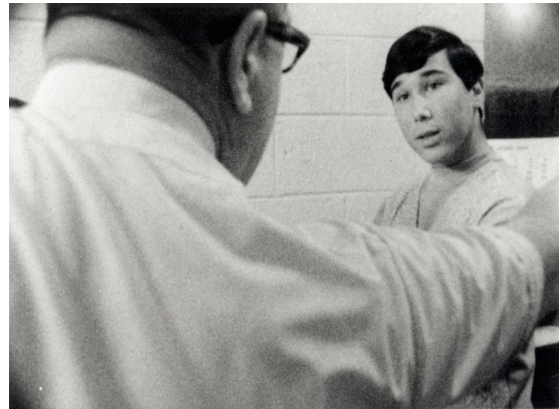
*Dr. Allen states: Yes. But I think your principles aren’t involved here. I think it’s a question now of, a proving yourself to be a man [Camera pans to medium shot close up of the dean with a partly visible American flag on the wall behind him.]. It’s a question here of how,*

*how do we follow rules and regulations. If there is a mistake made, there's an approach to it. [Transcription of the scene by Barry Grant, 2006, p. 58]*

The presence of an American flag and the collective subject 'we' leads the viewer to interpret that the dean of discipline equates following orders with 'being a man' and being an 'American man.' Further, the American flag is part of overt nationalism whereas the use of 'we' is part of 'banal nationalism' – which refers to flags and other everyday representations of patriotism that are used to create a false sense of belonging and imagined community (Billig, 1995).

*High School* nurtures certain identities and silences others, normalizing dominant American values, which may have been intensified by *Civil Rights* disputes and the *Vietnam War*. Wiseman constructs a film where students and teachers never express any interest in the past or in the outside community – an ahistorical environment that Huebner and Kliebard critique in their essays. This disinterest stems from a preoccupation with order and discipline that instills student passivity and precludes any possibility of dialogue, self-exploration and change. Further, it obscures any connection among school, civil unrest, and the Vietnam War.

Here Wiseman's representational framings of North East High School promote the core values of meekness and blind obedience (Atkins, 1974). These values are also embodied in nationalism. In telling the student to take his detention like a man, the dean of discipline suggests that being a man has a simple, rigid meaning. The dean prevents the student from gaining a strong negotiating position by refusing to engage with the student's complaint, leaving him with no other option than to serve the detention under protest. Unjust laws must be broken to be abolished (Apple, 1975/2000). In this vein, important issues of conflict, such as power, race and gender, are often ignored in order to maintain what Westheimer (1999) calls the false appearance of communal contentment. Because social change alters the attitudes and actions of a group that shares common values, conflict is necessary for change to take place.



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### ***Per/for/mance***

Consummating the dispositions associated with the experience of transcendence are the attitudes of wonder, awe, and reverence.

(Phenix, 1975/2000, p. 332)

Drawn as we are to the theoretically creative and scholarly milieus of the educational institution and professions, we have been disillusioned by a reality that undercuts our authentic efforts to combine self-expression as artists with sharing and facilitating teaching.

(Shuchat-Shaw, 1975/2000, p. 449)

[S] Fels (1998, 2003) etymologically pulls apart the word performance or per/for/mance, to arrive at what is at the heart of performative inquiry:

*And the prefix **per***

*suddenly takes on*

*a split-personality*

*...when juxtaposed*

with **form**

meaning “utterly, throughout and through” form

but also

*“to do away, away entirely or to [the]destruction” of form*

Is performance action both, within, through and without form?

*In our reading of **performance***

*we imagine*

*a creative action-interaction*

*a birthing and rebirthing*

*simultaneously within form and the destruction of form*

*and suddenly find ourselves*

*in an unexpected space*

*between structure and chaos [bolding mine] (Fels, 1999, p.48)*

Reviewing the documentary *High School* the superficial innocence portrayed within the vignettes of secondary school life, the camera of Wiseman works away at worming beneath the veneer of civility to trouble

**[Interrupt]**

the ebb and flow of curriculum, to highlight “stopped” moments where gaps of disability, sexuality and even eroticism make glancing acquaintances with the viewer.

### **Per/for/ming Gender**

To get them to desire to be like someone else, children must learn to be dissatisfied with themselves. Dissatisfaction with oneself is almost always the introjected nonacceptance by a significant other.

(Pinar, 1975a/2000, p. 363)

Seen in these terms, curriculum is opened to the nonnormative conception concerned with the quality of experience, and only a small portion of what a student really learns can be considered in the Tyleresque terms of “learning.”

(Willis, 1975/2000, p. 434)

[K] Notions of hegemonic normalcy are reinforced through the gendering of bodies in the film. Butler (1990) argues that the relationship between gender and sexuality is socially constructed through repeated acts, creating the illusion of a fixed gender identity where there is no original. Further, she also asserts that gender can be re-signified. In turn, challenging people to problematize gendered categories of their public performances within the context of public schooling. And following Butler, I contend that heterosexuality is not naturalized in the film, but created through a form of hyper imitation.

Performing ‘gender’ or the ‘gender of the opposite sex,’ causes the students to dress and act in programmed ways. Pinar (1975/2000) suggest that students lose their sense of selves and must imitate each other’s speech, dress and habits in order to feel a sense of connectedness. How is gender performed at North East High School? One example is that women are taught to do individual non-contact exercise in physical education, while men are taught the opposite. The women play [controlled] relaxed individualized sports to the song ‘Simple Simon,’ whereas the men free play more strenuously as teams. Initially, the women’s gym class is viewed through a small window, making the viewer feel as though they are watching the women as the camera objectifies the women’s bodies through the male gaze.

[S] *Gym Class – Hanging from the Rings and counting. Certain numbers indicate levels with rather interesting names.... "5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 40 – oh boy, we’re feminine let’s go. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 tarzan 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, super tarzan, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8."* (High School, 1968)

[S] *High School* is about a compendium of teaching, learning engagement, and practice during 1968 at North East High School somewhere in Philadelphia. Here Bourdieu’s work on power and practice is highly instructive. Bourdieu’s *logic of practice* theorizes the importance of the body and its expression to perform within the everydayness of an individual – or the practices connected to living. The daily practice of most of what an individual does is not highly calculated, but is reliant upon an implicit logic that has been built upon the experiences of a body-in-relation to other bodies. These bodies, Bourdieu theorizes, exist in a variety of social fields, schools being one such social field. In turn, the social field determines and shapes how bodies will interact.

If the overlay of the curriculum, which has been defined as the ‘experience of education,’ is included the essence of Bourdieu’s sense of practice comes into clear view: the logic of bodies in action within a social field. Each of these fields, notably schooling, is built upon its own set of rules, hierarchies of power, protocols, acceptable behaviour, approved identities and so on. The curriculum, then, becomes the ‘playbook’ by which the social field is maintained and how bodies are sorted as belonging or excluded. One’s *habitus* is a system of dispositions (thought, action and perception) that is invoked in direct response to the environment of a particular social field. So, students in a school respond and behave in ways that are both expected of them but also in ways that they will resist. Both of these aspects arise within the documentary *High School*. While *habitus* bespeaks



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of a sense of socialization, the concept is more deeply rooted in embodiment of one's sense of self and of the world: the focus is less on "habit" and more about an unthought or unconscious level of beingness, or the doxa, that is supported by the social field. The body plays a central role.

[K] Wiseman's intent was for the film to be a dialogue. But how can it be an inclusive dialogue if the lived experiences of many individuals are silenced? Lesbians, gays, bisexuals and other groups are not reflected in the film. The film represents a narrow historical range of examples that limit audience identification with individuals in the film and act as a marginalizing tool. Importantly, to counteract the homogeneity of collective memory, we must jettison the assumption that people seek the way of life promoted by a dominant culture (Worrall, 2006, p. vi). In sum, the students in *High School* are indoctrinated into heteronormative matrix, which works to socially shape predetermined gender roles. Wiseman refrains from editorializing and lets the cinema vérité pastiche – a destabilizing technique that problematizes the idea being copied – speak (Hutcheon, 2000).

[S] Although *High School* is racialized white, heterosexist and masculinist in its attention to the multiplicity of sexual codes, it authorizes a queer reading by problematizing the authority of heterosexuality codes. In constructing a film affords opportunities for alter/native narrative rereadings, Frederick Wiseman creates a pedagogical liminal space for viewers to interpret non-normative sexual perspectives that are not articulated by the people in the film.

Related to the erotics of the curriculum is the ways sexuality and gender roles become reinforced – from comportment of women, to taking orders like a man. Nowhere is homosexuality endorsed, supported or even mentioned directly; however, by narrowing policing heterosexual norms, the "outer" limit of traditional manliness is the shadow land called homosexuality. During the late 1960s, within America, was an era when gay teachers and public servants could be fired from their positions under the auspices of being a national security risk. Further, there were "treatments" – aversion therapies – that were imposed upon gay youth and men to "correct" the error that was homosexuality. Five years later *The American Psychiatric Association* eventually reconceptualized its categorization of homosexuality as a mental illness. And this was a time when mental illness itself resulted in systematic warehousing of those deemed "ill." In turn, this is a powerful incentive "to be a man" in more traditional Western senses. Much of these subtle cues can be seen in the scene of *High School* such as the all-boys' assembly is speaking to a male medical person about female genitalia and sexuality. At one point the male medical person is seen laughing after describing probing the nether regions of a woman in his medical

*If adhocracies are to be established on any systemic basis, conflict issues would have to be faced squarely, which necessitates learning a number of new behaviors for persons involved. Dealing within confrontation and conflict on the personal level demands that the effects of one's behavior on others' behaviors on oneself becomes an issue requiring a good deal of personal investment in a situation, if one is not to be simply controlled by others...Women and children would not burn in Vietnam if they had to be faced by those responsible for delivering the napalm. The impersonal bureaucratic decision makes such destruction possible. Making decision more personal may help to decrease the consumption of napalm. At the very least, institutions responsible for education ought to devise decision-making structures more in concert with being a human being in a technocracy. (Murphy & Pilder, 1975/2000, p. 352)*



practice and states, “And I get to do this for a living.” – Like a private (straight) joke shared among (straight) men. Presumably if something intimate has to be shared as part of male on male medical examination, there would be a similar shared private erotic educational moments.

Disability is largely silenced and rendered invisible through *High School*. Nowhere is seen someone using a wheelchair, cane, sign language, etc. However, there are hints as to how someone with an educational impairment may be spoken about. Watching the fashion show rehearsal scene when women are paraded across the stage, using their bodies as lifeless objects to show off garments recently made, there can be heard from the coordinator describing several women with “bad” legs or “thick” legs or legs “needing correction through the right coloured hose.” One woman was described as “having a problem with her weight, but she knows it.” If shape and size can be so openly and freely critiqued, is it a stretch to assume that impairment would as well?

Ivan Illich’s *Deschooling Society*, is published in the contemporary times of *High School* (1968) enumerating the reasons why schools and their attendant curricula need to be rethought as the presence within society. Illich (1973) states that process and product become conflated as the same thing within schools; being “a man” is conflated as exerting authority and the product of that authority – or later on in *High School* where students are told:

*“The mother is designed first of all for taking care of the youngster before it’s able to function on the outside, and then after the child or the offspring is born, she takes care of it. Now, in some cases birds, some of the animals mate for life. Frequently it’s a sort of a seasonal thing. The father is finished his obligations and maybe he protects the female. And they may never see each other. They don’t talk about women much in the bible, in the Old Testament. Moses was the big shot. And various other people that I’m not too well acquainted with. Once in a while a woman gets in just by accident. Now, that’s not true in a modern Jewish family. You know who runs your household, pretty well. Your mother collects the money. She takes care of the bills. Pays them. She does the shopping. She handles all the economical sort of things. Once in a while she’s nice and asks your father if she can look at the new car they’re going to buy. It tends to be that way in a great many of our families. So we go back to the patriarchal system.”*

So, by authorities, teachers, telling students (in this case all young men) the ways of heterosexual families – that all families are comprised and operate in this universal system. The same message, is conveyed to a room full of young women, later on in the documentary... *“If a man and woman live together, does that mean they’re married. I think that’s right. Because society does have a way to take care of regular, responsible single humans.”* And, of course, ‘regular’ and ‘responsible’ is equating with straight people. Anyone falling outside of this narrow norm is described as intolerable. For example, when a teacher in *High School* declares, *“I think promiscuity is what society cannot tolerate.”*

[K-N-S] Yet, young women, in a completely different realm, are told and instructed to do something very different. The aftermath of the prom with the principal describing norms of dress (and presumably image and identity) says this: *“You don’t set your so-called standards on everybody else; you set your standards on what you know. That’s the thing*

to do.” And yet virtually all the actions within the school setting promote the opposite. The curricular process of performing gendered identities often essentializes heterosexuality as the universal norm both inside and outside the context of public schooling. Completely unimagined and ignored are the various other forms and norms of family, sexuality, relating and/or being. Nothing is stated in the curriculum about diversity within the black and white filmic narratives of *High School*. Consequently, there is social and identity erasure within the narrative representations of curriculum put forth by Wiseman. In turn, Illich (1973) suggests that when narrative “truths” such as this are continually constructed, repeated and reinforced, individuals give up their autonomy and confidence. Instead, they are instructed to believe in the bureaucratic ways created by institutions (Pinar, 1975/2000). *A curriculum of transcendence provides a context for engendering, gestating, expecting, and celebrating moments of singular awareness and of inner illuminations when each person comes into the consciousness of his inimitable personal being.* (Phenix, 1975/2000, p. 333) Moreover, rather than fostering “critical thinking,” advocating for student rights, here the institution and curricula foster a manufactured mediated vision of the world. Individual creation is thus silenced. To break through the cocoon of institutional thinking becomes terrifyingly difficult because the discourse of an institutionalized world saturates the lived experiences of every teacher and student now walking the halls performing as programmed automatons.

### **A Curricular Assembling of Boys Becoming Soldiers**

Modern curriculum theory, currently being influenced by systems analysis, tends to regard the child simply as input inserted into one end of a great machine from which he eventually emerges at the other end as output replete with all the behaviours, the “competencies,” and the skills for which he has been programmed.

(Kliebard, 1975b/2000, p. 67)

To prevent students from seeing this reality, the school must make the student desire to be instructed, and eventually, need to be instructed.

(Pinar, 1975a/2000, p. 365)

[K] In the last scene, the principal reads a letter written by an American GI who says, “I’m just a body doing a job,” therefore acknowledging a “mutual understanding between the school’s dogma and his own” (Lewis, 1982, p. 73). This letter represents conformity, which the teachers associate with Americanism. Being a soldier is one role the male students are expected to perform in line with self-effacement and acceptance of “death behind enemy lines” (Atkins, 1974, p. 234).

[S] Another reading is in the Bakhtinian sense, notably in the grotesque and carnivalesque senses. Through the distance of time, reading back from contemporary times to 1968, there is a carnivalesque quality that filters through *High School* in terms of today. Reading backward is a taboo of historical analysis; however, the analysis carried out here is less historical and more based on how practice and power become embodied within curriculum. History is the backdrop.

[K] The statement “I’m just a body doing a job” implies that “the body is not a body all, it’s a tool” (Pinar, 2006, p. 71). Regarding curricular issues in the 1970s, Kliebard (1975c/2000) explains that the Tyler rationale will always be a model for curriculum developers, and to them curriculum is a means of transforming the “raw material” into a “useful product” (p. 81). The student turned soldier represents “raw material” transformed into a desirable member of society. Strategically placing this scene at the end of the film, Wiseman invites the viewer to interpret the GI’s behaviour as the result of social engineering Franklin Bobbit’s social efficiency curricular movement implies producing complacent scientists, astronauts and soldiers couched with indifferences.

[S] Bobbit, writing the first curriculum text, describes the notion of curriculum as an *arena for social engineering*, which is clearly what *High School*, the documentary is all about – based on what we’re viewing through the camera. Further, there are two key underlying assumptions that drive his conception of *curriculum*: Scientific experts are most qualified and best suited for designing curricula (the tasks in his “race course”) based upon their expert knowledge of what qualities are most desirable for adult citizens to have within society and which experiences will, most efficiently, generate those valued qualities and that curriculum is defined as the requisite *deeds-experience* each student should have to become that prescriptively ideal adult citizen in society. While witnessing the documentary *High School*, there are strong resonances with his ideology 50 years after writing his text. Also, what needs to be considered is that Bobbit, in 1909, had written an article entitled, “Practical Eugenics,” which was reviewed in 1910. The latter article states that “...mental ability depends in large measure upon direct inheritance....” (G.M.W., 1910, p. 108). Bobbit directly speaks to his view of society when he writes, “In our present civilization two sinister influences are at work: ‘the upper and better strata of society are continually dying away, and poorer ones are being added at the bottom” (Bobbit, as cited in G.M.W., 1910, p. 109). Further, Bobbit goes on to say that the situation is so bad that “our racial stock is now unweeded” (Bobbit, as cited in G.M.W., 1910, p. 109). So, it seems reasonable to assume that the roots of curriculum are buried in the soil of eugenics and scientific management – and have remained there until curriculum reconceptualists, like Pinar implemented some pruning and weeding of their own.

*The efficiency movement, however, was to affect more than just the administration of schools. Its most profound effect was on curriculum theory itself. Among the early prophets of the new efficiency in school administration was the man who later was to become the preeminent force in curriculum reform, and, indeed, the man who gave shape and direction to the curriculum field, John Franklin Bobbitt. (Kliebard, 1975b/2000, p. 55)*

Bobbit wrote his book during the apex of the Eugenic movement, of which he was a rabid proponent – even going so far as to forcibly remove children from schools who he felt did not belong, instead warehousing these “incapables.” Until the reconceptualization of curriculum came along the current of the mental hygiene movement and eugenic thought continued, though at a gradually diminishing pace until the late 1970s. *High School*, then, is implicated by scientific management and social engineering influences of early curriculum theorists like Bobbit and the respective ideologies that supported their approach to educational experiences. Though the reconceptualists seem to rely, to some degree, upon the prescriptive nature of traditional curriculum, by its nature, continues to rely upon.

[K] Throughout *High School*, students play the role of cooks, fashion models, and astronauts and in turn appear in various costumes. The roles are innocuous, but the attitudes fostered toward them that result in detachment and boredom on the part of the student – the costumes mask the students’ identities (Atkins, 1974). Thus, performing roles to an extreme can be detrimental especially when it can lead to one’s death in Vietnam. In his letter to the school, the soldier uses legitimating language to justify going to Vietnam. Why? One possible reason, proposed by Huebner (1975a/2000), is that individuals use legitimating language to assure themselves that they are aware and justifies in their actions. The soldier describes his family’s concerns about participating in the war, but legitimizes his actions through the slogan “I am only a body doing a job.” Sadly, the more the GI dehumanizes himself, the more legitimate he becomes. Legitimizing language is often used to prove one’s adequacy to those in a position to judge (Huebner, 1975d/2000). For Huebner, showing proficiency in a community’s language and slogans is a means of expressing solidarity with the community to gain acceptance and membership. The Vietnam soldier may be an orphan, but because he speaks the sloganized language of the school he nevertheless is able to gain membership into the community – and the principal utilizing his words in the letter also to legitimize the bureaucratic role of the school that they are doing “good moral work” in nurturing boys to become soldiers.

*If we remember that education is a political activity in which some people influence others, and that the school is one way to organize that power and influence, then perhaps we can try to share control of the school and use it for our political purposes...If we remember this, then we can recognize that the struggle to remake the school is a struggle to make a more just public world. (Huebner, 1975d/2000, pp. 272-273)*

[N] Willis (1975/2000) claims that Tyler’s work from the 50s – which ignores personal experience in favour of control of the thoughts, feelings and behaviours – was still highly influential in the 70s. This may explain the emphasis placed on social conditioning by the teachers in *High School* ... and on the reproduction of a militarist and patriarchal culture (and hence the need for surveillance), using hallway pass for example – where your body does not belong to you, but the institution, which in turn objectifies it.

[K] After reading *Curriculum Studies, The Reconceptualization* I came to adopt Wiseman’s preferred reading of *High School*. The final scene is one, like many others in the film, which provides an illustration of the authoritarian and militaristic ideology of North East High School. Through careful editing, Wiseman convinces the viewer that this is a true historical reflection of an American school. Benson and Anderson (1992) reason that Wiseman combines and de-contextualizes scenes, thus assigning them meaning that differs from what would have emerged had they been viewed in full and at random.

### **Reassembling Inconclusive Narrative Conclusions**

Curricularists have tended to be ahistorical in the awareness of the various forms and institutions that make up their professional gear. Too frequently our tendency has been messianic. The search is often for the new and permanent vehicles of salvation, and thus we fall prey to bandwagons and the bandwagon mentality.

(Huebner, 1975c/2000, p. 257)

Curriculum, from the learner's standpoint, ordinarily represents little more than an arrangement of subjects, a structure of socially prescribed knowledge, or a complex system of meanings which may or may not fall within his [her] grasp. Rarely does it signify possibility for him [or her] as an existing person, mainly concerned within making sense of his own life-world.

(Greene, 1975/2000, p. 299)

[K-N-S] Through assembling, disassembling, and reassembling historical narrative emplotments *High School* and *Curriculum Studies, the Reconceptualization* we have tried to create a hybrid curricular space for re-inscribing curriculum histories while simultaneously taking them apart. We performed the rhizosemiotic aesthetics of *currere* to



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examine the documentary film *High School* as a curricular discursive site of an American collective memory. *High School* gives a glimpse into a world where desires of students and teachers are often repressed. "By the time children reach junior high school," Pinar (1975/2000) tells us, "they have lost touch with themselves and with each other to the point that they must mimic each other's speech, dress, and habits to feel human and close" (p. 373). The mise-en-scene, the cinematography and the editing are part of *High School's* filmic language, which Wiseman utilizes in turn to make visible the hidden curricular language reproduced within

the hallways of North East High School. We can reread the imagery of a student standing in the hallways, lost in a dangling conversation, daydreaming, fantasizing, looking to the sky, wondering of things that matter, with a superficial sigh, asking, can analysis be worthwhile, is the theatre of schooling really dead, what is this bureaucratic stranger that brings the hidden curricular recesses to the borders of our lives. We the audience and readers are privy to the public institutionalization of a school community instructed by administrators and teachers to turn a blind eye/I toward key political issues, civil injustices, the need for enacting local and global social change, and the cold psychic and material effects of the *Vietnam War*. Wiseman creates a complicated conversation, which wrestles with the complexities of experientialist analysis.

In *Curriculum Studies, The Reconceptualization*, authors like Huebner (1975a/2000), provide a language situated within a specific historical context to rhizosemiotically reread the discursive regime represented within and outside the historically situated (con)textual margins of the film. We are aware that our analysis and respective textual assemblages are mediated through our lived experiences and narrative fantasies. Here we might come back to Mann's notion of a literary object to include the context of our viewer identifications in relation to lived experiences. The historical context and its effect on the reader are integral parts of rereading literary and

filmic objects. “As with literary critique, the function of curricular critique,” Mann (1975a/2000) reminds us, “is to disclose its meaning, to illuminate its answers” (p. 136). Yet, our curriculum theory project does not necessarily provide future readers any more illuminating answers, as it does more questions. Furthermore, unlike Mann, we seek to take account of both the role of personal histories and “the effect of the work on the reader” (p. 134). Within this curricular context, the function of the critique is then to disclose (de/re/co/construct) meanings in the object – such as this collection of essays as well as the film.

What speaks to us while viewing the documentary *High School* is the subtle and not-so-subtle ways gender and sexual identity norms are performed through framing the bureaucratic authority of the curriculum onto the collective social body of teachers and students by the serendipitous accentuation and minimization of the camera lens, the narrator zooming erotically, in, and out. The curricular framing of this eroticism is performed through scenes like the assembly of young men lectured to by a male gynaecologist. During this filmic moment, he describes intimate exploits of examining female bodies, objectifying them, prodding them, to the bawdy laughter and smiles of young men. “And I get to do this for a living,” he punctuates with a misogynistic smile and his finger. The institution, its coldness, responds to the objectification of a woman’s absent body, its naked vulnerability, with an increased laughter. This brief discursive exchange accentuates the male medical gaze – upon a woman’s body – and the hidden curriculum of eroticism, taking place inside and outside the public institution of schooling. This ‘public secret,’ this “knowing wink” among boys and men, accentuates how the heterosexual matrix and its respective homo-social curriculum is inculcated onto the collective of bodies within *High School*.

[K] Re-making meaning is a hopeful act. Here, remaking meaning is a means “of querying the (im)possibilities of being-at-home in a text” (Morawski & Palulis, 2009, p. 12). I seek understanding(s) of how we are implicated in the discursive govern-mental regimes that we seek to challenge. In working with/through the dangling conversation, through these two texts, I feel a sense of hope. “[W]e need,” Morawski and Palulis (2009) tell us, “to unlearn as to relearn” (p. 12). The historical crossroads between my studies in film and education shaped my analytical experimentations with narrative assemblages during my Master of Arts in Education thesis project. During this curriculum theory project, I combine flasks of written text, bricolaging rhizomatic narrative representations of love, loss and learning within psychic dynamics of a family curriculum. Through the narrative framing of this curricular lens, like Wiseman’s documentaries, I leave the viewer with messy understandings. As a text, film affords me the pedagogical space to transpose my experiences as an English teacher in Japan’s public school system and as a video producer at General Motors onto matrices of blurred insight within my present classroom. More recently...I disrupt... disassemble... and reassemble collective memories of learning, unlearning, high school and their textual affective inscriptions. My understandings always remain partial. Nonetheless, like Van Manen (2002) I invite the reader to encounter the present absences, within our educational narratives, affording readers an opportunity to renegotiate their subject formations in relation to re-reading and viewing our narrative dwellings within theoretical, textual and personal domains.

I currently teach a community-based program in Toronto where I mentor students – who had formally left school – using a diversity of educational experiences. To equip them with the

pedagogical tools to access and persist in postsecondary programs, my students are presently engaged in a digital storytelling project where they have a curricular space to speak their inner thoughts. As an educator, researcher and artist based in Toronto, I draw from equity studies, postcolonial theory, curriculum theory, film studies, semiotics and collective memory.

[S] Theoretically, I investigate curriculum theorizing through an interdisciplinary lens of performativity, identity, social marginalization, power and ecological understanding of human interactions. Institutions, like high schools, remain my intellectual curiosity. I started my vertical curricular explorations within the spheres of work and government organizations. Engaging these two texts has afforded me a pedagogical opportunity to study the machinations and constructions of power and authority.... a key aspect of schooling, which is played out in *High School* subtly, relentlessly, habitually, unyieldingly, insidiously, routinely ... within the institutionalization of public rituals. Rather than theorize rituals as sacralized symbols reflective of power; quotidian rituals, as I study them here, are processes and forms of power in and of themselves. In order to assemble the complexity and complicatedness of narrative relationships within institutions, such as schools, the phenomenology of “performance,” or “practice,” is explored in embodied ways in order to uncover individual meanings for the actor(s) directly within social settings. What we do individually matters, not just in terms of the immediate moment of an encounter, but also in the discrete actions that emanate through the complicated reverberations and echoes of teaching and learning within the context of public schooling. *High School* (1968), and schools today, remain reflective of, and ensnared by, contemporary society’s biases, preoccupations and fault lines. As an educator of future teachers, I continually find myself drawn to the following curricular concepts: performativity, non-visible identities, enactivist relationships, rituals of power, and complexity *social collective meaning*.

[N] In this paper we have attempted to assemble, disassemble, and reassemble narrative articulations, a complicated conversation if you will, in relation to the historical and curricular co-textual relationships between *High School* and *Curriculum Studies, The Reconceptualization*. In many ways, the film depicts a crisis of authority experienced in the face of the civic outrage against institutional epistemic and material violence of the 1960s and 1970s (Murphy & Pilder, 1975/2000). When I present these historical texts to graduate students, I ask them how we can pedagogically discuss the camera’s gaze and return our experientialist analyses inward to disrupt our present exterior lives within this continued era of technocratic indulgence and consumption. In doing so, we reconsider our present tasks as Canadian curriculum theorists. This is, Huebner (1975c/2000) remind us, a task of intellectual history. It requires, he continues, “tracing the evolution of our various ways of talking and writing about curricular phenomena” (p. 257). Together with

*The film also shows various classes, including language lessons, typing, history, home economics, physical and sex education, as well as teachers meeting with students regarding discipline and guidance counseling. Despite the school’s middle-class affluence, the film questions the nature of its approach to education. Wiseman has said that his first impression upon seeing the school was that it looked like a factory, a perceptions that informs the structure of the entire film. From the opening sequence, with the camera approaching Northeast’s fences and tall smokestack, to the ending, in which the school principal reads a letter from a former students about to be parachuted into Vietnam, the film suggests that the educational system is like an impersonal assembly line manufacturing consent, more concerned with socialization than knowledge. (Barry Grant, 2006, p. 51)*

students, in graduate courses, like *Introduction to Curriculum Studies, Curriculum, Culture, and Language*, and/or *The Internationalization of Curriculum Studies* within the Faculty of Education here at the University of Ottawa, we continue to trace how the current rhetoric of accountability, its discourse here in Canada, has directed professional language away from our political and curricular convictions. We attempt to narrate our biographical commitments, our alienation as teachers in the face of a discursive administered regime, which in turn continues to fantasize a narrative scene of balancing its fiscal responsibilities, implementing bureaucratic policies of optimization, and standardizing its intuitional literacies in the name of peace keeping our democratic character development in Iraq and Afghanistan, to a superficial sigh, within the borders of our public and private teaching lives.

*The great bane of bureaucracy is uncertainty. (Kliebard, 1975b/2000, p. 58.)*



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