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Documentary Film Project

The Impact of Structure in Frederick Wiseman’s *High School*

Introduction

In his documentary film *High School*, Frederick Wiseman presents an array of epistemological problems. However, there are two ways to interpret this statement. First, it implies that there are issues within the film itself that Wiseman brings to surface. Second, it implies that there are issues revolving around Wiseman as a person—that is, as a director—and the strategies that he chooses to employ during his filming process. In this discussion, I will attempt to cover both. I believe, however, that the second type of epistemological issues is somewhat deeper and certainly more useful as a means to analyze documentary films in general.

In particular, Wiseman illustrates the idea that institutions can be controlling by narrowing the scope of knowledge for others. In the case of *High School*, the administration presents to the students various concepts as forms of truth: respect to elders, compliance with authority, and following orders. As a result, the students’ experience of knowledge is extremely inhibited. But with his unique filming techniques, Wiseman presents this argument itself as a truth to the audience. The experience of knowledge about the institution of the school is narrowed, because we are only able to see what Wiseman shows us. The idea that the documentary is based on certain rhetorical strategies rather than reality itself may seem subtle at first; but that is precisely
why I consider the issues revolving around directorial strategies to be more complex than those found in the mere content of the film.

Thus, I will argue that there are distinct parallels that can be drawn between Wiseman’s approach to the film and the institution that he critiques on the account that they both administer certain truths, and that these similarities weaken Wiseman’s overall critique. This connection is useful to examine in the context of any documentary, because each one attempts to provide the audience with a certain truth. But because of the various film strategies involved, it is likely that all they will ever be are attempts—which may or may not involve accuracy.

In approaching this argument, I will first explain in detail the specific filming technique that Wiseman utilizes in *High School* as well as in every other documentary that he has made. Here I will go into characteristics as well as implications. Then, I plan to provide an exposition of how Wiseman formulates his argument with the use of this technique on various levels. Last, I will explore the idea of “the documentary as an institution,” and illustrate some key similarities and differences between the strategies that each of them use in order to administer truths.

Wiseman’s Personal Style: Direct Cinema

Fredrick Wiseman never appears in *High School* or any of his other movies. We never hear his voice, and there are no indications of his presence as the filmmaker whatsoever. This strategy, often used to amplify the realness of the situation being filmed, is commonly known as cinema verite. Almost every commentator seems to
associate Wiseman with this term. However, according to David Barsam’s *Nonfiction Film: A Critical History*, there seems to be a more accurate term that we can use to describe Wiseman’s personal style. Barsam outlines some differences between cinema verite and what he calls “direct cinema.” The filmmakers of cinema verite, he says, “are often participants in, and commentators on, the action they record; direct cinema filmmakers always avoid narration and rarely appear, either inadvertently or as personae, in their films.” Furthermore, although editing is an important element of both methods, “it may be the *most* important single element in direct cinema...the film editor, more than the film editor of any other kind of cinema, produces a model of reality” (304). Wiseman is not a participator of any kind, and he does not comment on the situations in *High School* at any point. He also takes editing to the extreme (this will be explained primarily in the next section).

The logic behind using direct cinema as the film strategy is, as Barsam said, to create a “model of reality.” In *High School*, this is likely part of Wiseman’s intent. He wants to create an effect opposite of that which the students he films experience. The administration is portrayed in a negative light, exercising control over the students and not encouraging (or allowing) their ideas and interpretations to come into play. Direct cinema tends to have an opposite effect on the audience. *High School*, as well as other films of this sort, appears to invite the audiences’ interpretations. The absence of the director seems to imply the absence of an argument, as well. Thus, viewers assume that they aren’t being influenced to think a certain way about whatever they see. Nor do they feel controlled; the rawness of the situation provides them with a first-hand opportunity to make objective and accurate inferences.
But it is important to note Barsam’s phrasing. Direct cinema illustrates a *model* of reality, and not reality itself. He clarifies this common confusion:

Both cinema verite and direct cinema are ways of seeing, of understanding, and of conveying the filmmaker’s perception of the world. Each filmmaker defines the truth according to his or her own convictions, sensibility, and experiences, within a cultural context. In practical terms, more often than not the ‘truth’ is what occurs to filmmakers during the moments of observing, shooting, and editing: not *the* truth, but a filmmaker’s truth (304).

In Wiseman’s films especially, it may be difficult to find support for this idea. His personal “truth” or argument doesn’t seem to be available to us. However, based on his specific (and subtle) filming choices and editing strategies, I believe that there are some distinct ways in which we can point out that he is indeed making an argument, and not depicting reality. As Benson and Anderson remind us, “The film is a rhetorical strategy about a rhetorical strategy...the behaviors we see are contextualized by Wiseman and are out of the context in which they occurred for the participants” (100). So, in order to explain how Wiseman makes his argument, I will divide the discussion into two different categories of filming strategies: visual elements and aural elements. Then, I will explain the way in which these elements are deliberately structured in such a way that the documentary can be compared to the institution.
Visual Elements

I realize that the term “visual elements” is extremely broad, but I do not plan to extract portions of Wiseman’s argument from every single thing that is seen during the film from beginning to end. Instead, I plan to only focus on those elements which I believe provide the most support for the argument. Specifically, I believe Wiseman’s point is made through the visual elements of symbolism, color, and the zoom feature.

During the opening scene of *High School*, the camera seems as though it is situated inside of a vehicle, and the viewer is given a tour of the small town in which the school is located. We are shown backyards (which appear to be lifeless), a glass warehouse, a small diner, and a Sunoco; nothing seems out of the ordinary. When we “arrive” at the school grounds, we are shown the exterior of Northeast High School from the perspective of the parking lot. It is large, plain, and made of brick. The architecture is squarish and rigid, and there are two large pipes ascending into the sky that resemble smokestacks. It is difficult to see the school without thinking that it looks similar to a factory or some other industrial building. This is no coincidence; as the film progresses, it is clear that part of Wiseman’s argument is drawn from an analogy. The school is a factory, which aims to “make” students instead of teach them. Later, Wiseman develops this argument through various scenes of class time and dialogue. Endlessly, students are instructed to both *do* and *become* the same sorts of things. Just as a factory aims to create all of its products to be similar and flawless, Northeast High School aims to create all of its students to be similar and flawless. Basically, it implies that the school dehumanizes students. It may take the viewer a few more scenes to realize the analogy, but there is no
doubt that Wiseman deliberately chose to portray the school in such a light in order to make a point.

I say “deliberately,” because it would have been entirely possible to film the school in such a way that the analogy would be absent. Wiseman filmed the building from a single spot in the parking lot, only allowing us to view the school from one particular angle. Not only this, but the standpoint is situated from fairly far away—at least several hundred feet. This means that the smokestack figures were necessarily included in the picture. Also, if Wiseman would have chosen to film the school from a closer view, or from multiple angles instead of just one, then we might have been able to see more action going on. It is possible to have seen students on their lunch break or conversing in between classes, which would have given the school a livelier feel. Instead, the viewer is confined to the single, distant, and factory-like perspective. The symbolism is strengthened throughout the film, as I have mentioned, and becomes fully apparent towards the end when we are shown a final “product.” But I will save the bulk of this discussion for a bit later.

Another element that Wiseman utilizes for his argument is that of color. One will notice from the very beginning that the entire film is in black and white. Assuming the viewer knows that the movie was made in 1968, this may not seem like anything out of the ordinary. However, after watching the first few scenes, the viewer will begin to notice a certain trend. Nearly every instance of dialogue between a student and a faculty member portrays directly opposing viewpoints. Here are some abbreviated examples: “I can’t take gym” vs. “Yes you can take gym;” “I shouldn’t have to serve the detention” vs. “Yes you should have to serve the detention;” and “I can make a phone call” vs. “No you
can’t make a phone call.” Each instance plays a role in formulating the notion of a direct antagonism between the two parties. This pattern, I believe, is similarly represented by the color spectrum—black and white of course being total opposites. Wiseman may have even had in mind which color belonged to which group. White is commonly associated with purity and innocence, traits which we could easily assign to the students before they have been controlled by the administration and “made” into products. Black has the connotation of more sinister qualities such as corruption and deception; these seem to be related to the administration, as they limit the students’ learning experience in extremely subtle ways.

Although *High School* is decades old, it seems as though Wiseman did have the option to film in color. Looking at a history of documentary film, we are told that “Eastman Kodak had introduced the first practicable 16mm color film for home movie use, Kodachrome, in 1935.” One filmmaker, John Ford, actually won an Academy Award for his documentary *The Battle of Midway*; the film was made in 1942, and it was in color (Ellis & McClane 135). In the sixties, color films may not have been as common as those that were made in black and white. But it seems entirely clear that the option was there, and that Wiseman chose the black and white scheme intentionally in order to represent a theme of opposition throughout the movie. What makes it even more apparent that his choice was deliberate is the fact that the films he made following *High School* were made in black and white as well.

One more visual strategy that Wiseman employs is the “zoom” feature. In other words, there are specific images which we see close-up or in high focus that I believe Wiseman wants the viewer to pay special attention to. Some of these images are
recurring, and others a bit more subtle. For his most recurring close-ups, Wiseman zooms in on individual body parts, namely faces and hands. Although he includes images of students and faculty members, the faculty members seem to be portrayed in an especially negative light. These close-ups appear more frequently, and the camera seems to stay on each face a bit longer than any of the students’ faces (often until the instructor is finished talking). Their features aren’t necessarily pleasant; we see crooked teeth, dark and puffy under-eye circles, large glasses, and blemishes. In his analysis of the film, Barry Grant deems these close-ups as “degrading images” which can be considered Wiseman’s own “heavy-handed manipulation” (51, 52). Also occurring habitually is the specific focus of the camera on the instructors’ mouths. This could be read as Wiseman’s emphasis of the fact that the faculty are constantly dictating to the students; a mouth taking up the entire screen is overpowering, just as the administration overpowers the students.

Another image that Wiseman chooses to focus on is that of the instructors’ hands. Although sometimes the focus is demonstrated through close-ups, other times it is not. For instance, in the scene where one girl’s parents are conferring with a member of the administration—let’s assume he is the principal—the camera places the principal’s hand in the middle of the screen. It appears to be the focal point, since it is the brightest object in the room and it is also the only object in motion. As he is talking, he uses his hand to make authorial gestures. He points and clenches his fist as he explains and justifies the actions of another faculty member. The hand becomes the focal point again several scenes later, when an older female instructor is lecturing girls about being promiscuous. The image is virtually still, with the exception of the teacher’s hand moving vigorously as
she talks, coming down in hard, pointing motions for emphasis. It is clear that Wiseman focuses on the hand as a symbol of the administration’s control and authority, but it becomes even clearer in this scene with another interesting image. As the woman is talking, the camera slowly zooms out until the viewer is shown the full image of the podium behind which she is standing. Though it is difficult to read, engraved on the front of the podium are the words: “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do/ do it with thy might.”

There is another close-up we see that is not quite as recurring as the ones I have just mentioned, but which does play an equally important role in Wiseman’s argument. In the midst of the scene where the vice principal forces a student to take gym class (regardless of his doctor’s note), we are shown a close-up of the principal’s hand which specifically focuses on the image of his class ring. Several scenes later, we see a nearly identical close-up. This time, however, it is the student who is wearing the class ring. Typically, a class ring is worn in order to signify a sense of identity with one’s school (almost like a type of label, if we want to think in terms of the factory analogy). Thus, the image may not be all that surprising when we see the ring being worn by a faculty member. He is part of the school, accepts it, and is proud of it. But seeing the ring being worn by a student is somewhat startling. Hardly anywhere in the film are students portrayed as conceding to school policy or school identity. Most likely, Wiseman chose to include the second close-up in order to emphasize just how powerful of an effect that the administration has on the students. The student has submitted to a specific identity attached to the school, just as the vice principal did years ago. I believe that with this image, Wiseman reiterates his idea that the school “makes” students instead of teaches them.
Like the other visual strategies that Wiseman used, the choice to include these particular close-ups and objects of focus was deliberate. It would have been easier and simpler to film all images in the same perspective of closeness; perhaps if Wiseman wanted to depict the situations more realistically, he wouldn’t have bothered with zooming in or out whatsoever, as no individual has an optical “zoom” feature in real life. But these strategies are used very rhetorically. With symbolism, color, and various points of focus, Wiseman convinces the viewer that the institution of Northeast High is dehumanizing, isolating, and controlling.

Aural Elements

My next focus will be on the aural elements of *High School*, or that which the viewer hears. The sound itself is virtually unaltered; Wiseman keeps the audio raw as a strategy of direct cinema. However, there are a few portions of the film where if one listens closely, it is clear that Wiseman has included several elements of sound which contribute a great deal to his argument. Particularly, I will address the discourse heard during the start menu as well as music.

The start menu for *High School* is a black screen with white writing, which tells of the director, the title, the film company, and the option for “play”—there are no other options which are present in most start menus (scene selection, special features, etc.), and there are no images. (The fact that the viewer is only given one option is probably meant to mirror the idea that students are rarely given options). But another unique aspect of the start menu is that there is no background music playing as there is in most films.
Instead, we hear a sample of dialogue which is approximately thirty seconds long. The sample is taken from a scene in the movie where a faculty member patrols the hallways during lunch time and scolds students for making phone calls and for not being in the lunch room. We hear the following: “What are you doing here?...Go to the lunchroom. Goodbye...Where are you going?...Do you have a pass?...Do you have a pass?...Do you have a pass?...What about you?...Hang up (Pardon me?)...Let’s Go...That’s for emergencies, let’s get on the ball.”

Although the monitor is heard asking questions, he simply seems to be making demands. Throughout the sample, we never hear the students’ voices, with the exception of the barely audible “Pardon me?” after a student is told to hang up the phone. But this student, as well as the others, is never given a chance to respond or explain himself. Of all scenes in the movie, this one best demonstrates the pervasiveness of the faculty’s demanding nature. It was clever of Wiseman to include this as first thing that the viewer hears when they insert the movie, because it gives a strong impression that the students’ ideas are rarely heard or considered. Furthermore, the sample is looped. The same fragments of dialogue start all over again almost immediately after it ends. The repeated sound can be interpreted to signify the repetitive teaching methods that are used throughout the film. Instead of incorporating their own ideas in the classroom, students are often told simply to “repeat;” this is especially evident in the foreign language scenes and the typewriting scene. From Wiseman’s perspective, these are to be viewed as controlling methods which narrow the students’ learning experience. Thus, by listening to the dialogue in the start menu, we can see that Wiseman is alluding to his argument before the film even begins.
The other elements of sound which I take to play the most important role in the argument are the three songs included in the film, which together make up the only music that we hear. Two songs are part of the raw audio, and one has been added intentionally (it is perhaps the only real addition to the film at all). The first song we hear in raw audio is “Simple Simon Says,” which is being played as workout music during the girls’ gym class. Wiseman includes this scene, because if one listens closely enough, an analogy can be drawn between “Simon” and the administration. It is well-known that the song revolves around Simon giving orders, but one set of lyrics in particular illustrates the idea that following the orders will result in positive consequences. This is much like the administration in the sense that they have convinced students that doing what they are told will result in success. The lyrics are: “Simple Simon says/ Do it like Simon says/ Simple Simon says/ And you will never be out.” This takes the form of a scare tactic, since disregarding Simon’s orders will result in being “out.” But similar tactics are used on the students throughout the film. The student who is seen arguing with the principal about detention will lose his privilege to “be a man” if he does not “follow orders.” Wiseman wants viewers to be aware that the faculty uses these oppressive strategies, and incorporating the scene with “Simple Simon Says” is a subtle way to do so.

The second song we hear is one being played by a teacher for her students in English class. It is Simon and Garfunkel’s “The Dangling Conversation.” The inclusion of this song is a bit more difficult to discern, and there are no lyrics which may relate to Wiseman’s argument directly. However, there are certain parts of the second verse which seem to reflect the way students might feel towards the highly organized and methodical teaching methods of the faculty. The lyrics are: “Like a poem poorly written/
We are verses out of rhythm/ Couplets out of rhyme/ In syncopated time.” Here, rhythm, rhyme, and syncopation might be interpreted as exhibiting similar characteristics to the mindset of the administration: organized, strict, and repetition-oriented. If students don’t adhere to this mindset and meet the school standards, they will be like “a poem poorly written.” The lyrics could thus be seen as conveying the isolation that the students feel they may experience if they fail to follow orders. From watching the scene, it is unclear whether or not the students actually feel this way, for most of them seem fairly disinterested in what they are hearing. Likewise, it has been mentioned that “Critics have disagreed about what Wiseman intends with scene 22” (Anderson & Benson 132). However, it seems as though the connection between the standards of a well-written poem and the standards of the administration is hard to bypass. I contend that Wiseman included the song in order to emphasize the students’ unfortunate situation of feeling as though they don’t “fit” if they don’t follow standards.

The final piece of music that I want to mention is actually the first element of sound that we hear during the film (with the exception of the dialogue in the start menu of course). Unlike the other two songs, this one is not part of the raw audio. It is Otis Redding’s “Sitting on the Dock of the Bay,” and it is played during our tour of the town in which the school is located. Even though the song is played at the very beginning of the film, the lyrics seem to exhibit the attitude that some of the students might feel during their time in school (much like the lyrics of “The Dangling Conversation”). The chorus is especially revealing: “I’m sitting on the dock of the bay/ Watching the tide roll away/ I’m sitting on the dock of the bay/ Wasting time.” The idea that the students are “wasting time” seems accurate. They don’t go through high school pursuing what they want;
rather, they have to sit through four years of formal procedures in order to get a standard job like their parents and elders have. Lyrics in verse 3 seem to allude to the monotony and boredom of sitting through this process. It goes, “Looks like nothing’s gonna change/ Everything still remains the same/ I can’t do what ten people tell me to do/ So I guess I’ll remain the same, yes.” The ideas expressed here can be thought of as relating to the pointlessness of trying to be different, or of trying to do something other than what the administration wants out of the students. The last line, “So I guess I’ll remain the same,” parallels the students’ submission and giving in to the administration (think, for example, of the student who ended up talking the detention “under protest”). It is interesting that Wiseman includes this song as the only additive element to the entire film, as well as the fact that he chose to include it at the very beginning (since the viewer does not yet know anything about the attitudes of the students whatsoever). However, it is likely that he did so in order to provoke one to make this connection, and also in order to emphasize one a main aspect of his argument.

Organization, Structure, and the Institutionalization of the Documentary

It is easy to see how Wiseman could have made the film without incorporating the visual and aural elements in the fashion that he did. However, every choice that he made was decided very deliberately and very carefully and organized in such a way to formulate his particular argument. In an interview, Wiseman himself has expressed this very clearly. He claims:
I think all the films have a well-defined point of view. My point of view toward the material is reflected in the structure of the film...I think that there should be enough room in the film for other people to find support for their views while understanding what mine are. Otherwise I'd be in the propaganda business (Anderson & Benson 143).

Although Wiseman admits that the structuring of the elements is a general rhetorical strategy for all of his films, some believe that his claim to calling the films “documentaries” along with his use of direct cinema work together in order to mask this point. In other words, his particular strategy and style can make the film seem wholly accurate and objective to the ordinary viewer—something which has proven to be frustrating for those who know that the situations are depicted otherwise. Take, for instance, the claims made by the department head of foreign languages at Northeast High School after she watched the film in its entirety. In a letter addressed to a student inquiring about the administration’s views almost twenty years later, Miss Sylvia Schenfeld notes:

Mr. Wiseman and his cameraman were everywhere...they were friendly, persevering, and businesslike. When I saw the film that they had edited, however, I had to say that it was not our school that they had filmed. Instead, they had written a scenario of a high school where conformity and dictatorship reign, then proceeded to weed out of thousands of feet of film only those things which would
match their concept of a high school. In other words, they never looked at our school objectively at all (Anderson & Benson 144).

Miss Schenfeld then goes on to explain how some scenes in the film were portrayed in a certain light by Wiseman, but instead actually occurred somewhat differently. In one of her examples, she clarifies, “An English teacher recites ‘Casey at the Bat,’ apparently interminably in the film, because the camera keeps returning to her. In reality, the recitation took a few moments, and then the class discussed the poem” (145). This is an excellent example of how Wiseman’s structuring plays an important role in the formulation of his argument. As Schenfeld points out (and as I have pointed out with various other scenes), Wiseman could have filmed this situation entirely differently. Instead, we are left with the impression that this is what really occurred—yet at the same time, are also left with nothing but “their concept of a high school.”

Another example of how Wiseman’s argument becomes apparent through his organizational techniques involves the factory analogy which I briefly discussed earlier. The image of the school as a factory was present at the very beginning of the film, and the notion of the student as a product of this factory is seen at the very end. In the last scene, the school’s home economics teacher is seen reading a student soldier’s letter out loud to her colleagues. The student thanked his teachers, was grateful for everything that he learned, and then said that if something should happen to him, that she (the teacher reading the letter) should not get upset, because he is “not worth it,” and because he is “only a body doing a job.” Evidently, he views himself merely as a tool, or something to be used for another purpose—just as products are generally used. Wiseman admits that
he placed this scene at the end of the film to reiterate the factory analogy: ‘You begin the film showing a factory process, and you end with a view of the perfect product’ (Anderson & Benson 111). The structure is intricate, yet it mirrors a crucial part of his overall argument.

I will not go into every detail of Wiseman’s organizational techniques (mostly because many of them have already been described in the previous sections), but knowing that the concept of “structure” plays such an important role in his filmmaking process, I will now make some comparisons between Wiseman’s documentary and the institution(s) that he critiques. The two are different in many ways, but perhaps they are not as different as Wiseman wishes they were. When thinking about the structure of a documentary and the structure of an institution, it is important to note that they are similar in many ways. These similarities, I argue, weaken Wiseman’s argument and his critique of the institution in general.

The first similarity is somewhat obvious. Both Wiseman and the administration advocate particular truths. The administration persuades its subjects—the students—that true knowledge is a result of following orders and respecting authority. Likewise, Wiseman convinces his subjects—the viewers—that a form of true knowledge comes from watching the documentary. The difference, of course, lies within the approach to conveying these truths. The administration constructs true knowledge in the form of rules, both official and unofficial. For example, one of the more official rules that we have seen in the film is the fact that girls cannot wear short dresses to the prom. In turn, this rule becomes a piece of knowledge—that it is wrong for one to be individualistic. One example of an unofficial rule might be the administration’s request to “respect
authority,” I say that this is an “unofficial” rule, because it is more like a general guideline; it is not as measurable as the fact that one cannot wear a short dress. But these types of rules, too, become a form of knowledge for the students. They have learned that in order to succeed in life, they must follow these various restrictions.

Wiseman, on the other hand, does not advocate his truth in the form of rules. There are no requirements that the viewer must adhere to when watching the film. As I have mentioned before, the strategy of direct cinema is used to achieve this effect. Wiseman is not present in the film, and so any commentaries which may include such rules are absent as well. He does not dictate to the viewer any facts, nor does he imply any general guidelines that one must follow in order to obtain knowledge. Wiseman’s truth is not obvious and policy-driven like that of the school’s. It is administered through filming strategies, which makes it extremely subtle; but it is there nonetheless.

Another aspect of the documentary that makes Wiseman’s argument more subtle is the fact that it is typically viewed as a result of a conscious and voluntary choice. The exposition of Wiseman’s truth becomes available only when one decides to watch the film (or happens to walk into a room where the film is playing). The students, on the other hand, are subject to the administration’s version of truth on a daily basis, and without much choice.

However, the notion that Wiseman’s truth is less available and the idea that it is not rule-oriented do not undermine one of the most important similarities between his documentary and the institution of the school. Regardless of any differences, both truths are highly organized and structured in a very distinct way. In other words, there are certain standards that both Wiseman and the administration follow in order to convey
their truths and convert them into forms of knowledge. Part of what it means to be an administration involves the aspect of policy-making and rule-asserting, just as part of what it means to be a documentary filmmaker involves the use of organizational strategies; both adhere to a certain structure in order to make a point. Both rule-making and particular scene placement are highly effective in embedding a certain truth into the subjects’ minds. The students are being convinced to accept the knowledge which is instilled by the administration, and the viewers are being convinced to accept that knowledge which is instilled by Wiseman. Both are organizational measures which act to maintain the structures of the institution and the documentary.

Once again, Wiseman encourages his truth more subtly than the administration does. But in many aspects, he is guilty of the same type of “control” that he criticizes so adamantly. As a director, Wiseman carefully structures his film so that viewers will absorb particular knowledge about the administration. Similarly, the administration carefully structures their school policies so that the students will absorb particular knowledge about what it means to lead a successful life. Wiseman’s critique of the high school as an institution is weakened, I think, because of this striking similarity between his argumentative strategy and the teaching strategy of the administration. By the end of High School, Wiseman expresses the tragedy of the students’ submission to the administration and their eventual acceptance of a highly structured institutional system. But with his use of direct cinema, perhaps the viewers of Wiseman’s documentary experience a similar compliance. It is important to remember that in any documentary, the filmmaker is likely using various filming strategies and structural elements not to
depict reality, but rather to make an argument; and Wiseman’s *High School* is just one of many documentary films which, when analyzed, illustrate this trend very clearly.
Bibliography


