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“Welcome to the Jungle” Understanding the Archetypes and Cinematic Techniques of ‘Eddies’

Derisa Grant

What do schools do? How are schools organized? Some educational researchers, when trying to understand the societal functions and organizational structures of schools, might look at schools themselves—observe classrooms, examine test scores, or even interview the students that schools ‘produce.’ However, increasingly educational researchers have turned to films about schools (a genre of films I shall refer to as “eddie”¹) in order to understand how classrooms function, as well as the dominant ideologies within education. Between 1960 and 2010, for example, there have been approximately 45 articles written by educational researchers² about eddies, the majority of which were written after 1993; additionally, over 30 masters theses and doctoral dissertations have been written on eddies.³ However, these analyses, notes Beyerbach (2005), have centered largely around the issue of stereotypes and have examined the extent to which images of educators are “distorted” or maligned (2005, p.268). However, I would also add that most analyses of eddies fall into one of two categories: eddies *create* negative stereotypes that are then realized in the “real world”⁴ (what I shall term the creation thesis), or that eddies reflect and disseminate existing (often deleterious) stereotypes about educators to the real world (what I shall term the reflection thesis).

Notably, both categories—which are appropriations of Harper’s (1996) terms simulacral and mimetic representation, respectively—suggest that perceptions of teaching depend greatly upon eddies; however, both categories propose markedly different relationships between eddies (and the world of representation in which eddies are said to exist) and the real world, and consequently ascribe different types of power to eddies. In the former, eddies are generative: film holds the power to produce new concepts and ideas about teaching and students that might otherwise not exist. In the latter perspective, eddies do not produce content; rather, they exert their power spatially, as they are able to disseminate existing stereotypes of schooling to the far corners of the earth.

Yet, though the reflection and creation frameworks suggest different relationships between the real world and the world of representation, both frameworks, as well as researchers' adherence to the notion of stereotypes, ultimately serve to deny that eddies are films—a medium with specific techniques which may serve to elaborate, enlarge, and potentially challenge schooling archetypes and the relations of power these archetypes embody and normalize. Consequently, by applying these two analytical frameworks to the literature about eddies, we may examine not only the power educational researchers (tacitly and explicitly) attribute to these films, but also the extent to which eddies may (or may not) be used to illuminate schooling. Indeed, I would argue that eddies reveal little, if anything, about schooling; however, they are invaluable in what they show about larger societal discourses and archetypes surrounding schooling.

The Creation Framework

Harper (1996) posits that in simulacral realism, the media “propounds scenarios that might subsequently (and consequently) be realized throughout the larger social field, regardless of whether they actually preexist there” (p. 70). This concept holds that perceptions about social reality originate within the representational realm (i.e., perceptions are created within the film), and that these perceptions are then both realized within and serve to impact social reality.⁵ More concretely, Fahri (1999) argues that *Dead Poets Society* (Haft & Weir, 1989) depicts its protagonist, teacher John Keating, as a “superteacher.” For Farhi, this image of the superteacher, because it is repeated in other eddies, “implies that a teacher has to be unconventional to be qualified, making it difficult, if not impossible for real teachers to measure up” (p. 158). Note that Farhi does not argue that the images presented in *Dead Poets Society* are inaccurate when compared to real world teaching.⁶ Rather, Farhi's contention that expectations of teaching, however unattainable, that are established within the eddie must nevertheless be met by teachers in the real-world is emblematic of a simulacral or creation argument. According to Farhi and others who hold this viewpoint, the film (a product of the representational world) has created and established an expectation of how teachers (in the real world) should behave. Consequently, an inversion occurs: because the teacher persona has emerged in the celluloid world, real world teachers must then strive, usually unsuccessfully, to mimic the eddie. The real-world teacher is transformed into a performer who must enact the behaviors and personae she has witnessed in the eddie.

Yet, if the superteacher does not exist in the real world, from where do the films' writers get the idea? More importantly, why, we must ask, do real teachers attempt to emulate superteachers, given that such an image proves to be unrealistic and unattainable? What is it about the image that allows it to gain dominance over the real world and then effect change in the real world? Farhi, along with others who perceive a creation function of eddies, can neither account for the power of

eddie nor offer a satisfying account of the interplay between eddies and the real world.⁷

Furthermore, researchers who support the creation perspective also deny that the viewer is capable of assessing eddies according to their pre-held beliefs. Though the viewer is, in fact, active in the process of interpreting the images, the creation perspective would render her passive. Smith (1999), for example, argues that, “[Eddies] shape the ways in which we talk about and negotiate school issues” (p. 63). However, the author does not state why films, which are merely images, should serve as a tool of educators who are addressing organizational or pedagogical issues within their schools. Finally, Fahri assumes a uniform interpretation of the film: that all teachers will see Keating as a “superteacher” and aim to emulate him. The image, it appears, is so powerful that real individuals will be stripped of both their agency and their ability to form individual and perhaps differing opinions, about the image. In other words, according to Farhi, all who view *Dead Poets Society* will attempt to become a “superteacher” by enacting the same behaviors as every other person who has seen the eddie. To borrow a phrase of Giroux’s (1983), the creation perspective, I would contend, “leaves no room for moments of self-creation, mediation, [or] resistance” (p. 259). Therefore, this framework is, at best, unsatisfying in the relationship it posits between the world of representation and the real world, and, at worst, is insulting to viewers.

The Reflection Framework

In mimetic realism, Harper argues, a media representation is expected to “‘reflect’ the social reality on which it was implicitly modeled” (1996, p. 70). The images, we may understand, merely serve to first mirror and then literally broadcast or disseminate the social reality. Furthermore, expectations of accuracy and exhaustiveness are placed upon the image: the many facets of one’s lived experience in the real world should be depicted as accurately as possible in the representation. Consequently, this concept allows one to both compare the media representation to the real world, as well as to judge the representation based upon its accuracy. An eddie, within the reflection realism viewpoint, may be judged as having failed if it disseminates an image that is different from social reality. Freedman (1999) notes that though she wanted to be an “inspirational teacher” consistent with the figure depicted in *Stand and Deliver* (Labunka & Menendez, 1998), she eventually finds the film lacking because it is “incomplete, contrary to [her] experience as a woman and an educator” (p. 71). Freedman argues that because films like *Stand and Deliver* (1988) typically feature male teachers in “inner-city” schools, these films “inaccurately reflect the realities existing within school systems” (p. 72) where teachers are primarily women and there are proportionately fewer inner-city schools.

Indeed, when the image diverges from one’s perception of social reality, the image is often said to be a ‘misrepresentation.’ Therefore, within the reflection

framework, two tendencies dominate: metonymy and conflation. First, reviewers suppose that any eddie can, should, and aims to represent all principals, teachers, or students of a particular type within the real world. Within this framework, Joe Clark of *Lean on Me* (Avildsen, 1989), for example, becomes the cinematic inscription of all urban high school principals in the real world, while John Keating of *Dead Poets Society* (Haft & Weir, 1989) becomes the emblematic, real world boarding-school teacher. Consequently, the burden of accuracy these reviewers place upon these characters and films is great. Furthermore, educational reviewers of eddies tend to conflate accuracy with positivity, and those portrayals of educators that are negative are often deemed inaccurate. Glanz (1997), for example, argues that depictions of principals as “insecure autocrats, petty bureaucrats, and classic buffoons,” contradicts the “growing [academic] literature that acknowledges the importance of the principal for achieving an effective school” (p. 298). Thus, Glanz has argued that these fictionalized and individual “buffoons” on the screen were created to mirror the behaviors of all principals. However, Glanz argues, all principals in the real world are not buffoons; in fact, the academic literature he has read would suggest that none are buffoons. Consequently, within the reflection framework, Glanz has used metonymy and conflation to deem eddies inaccurate representations of principals.

Indeed, ‘misrepresentations’ of educators pose a potential threat to the real world of schooling (Breault, 2009). Beyerbach (2005), for example, notes that negative images of teachers in films might give student-teachers the wrong impression about teaching and thus dissuade some students from entering the profession (p. 270). Consequently, those who utilize the reflection framework often advocate interventions by educators into the cinematic world (Smith, 1999). Raimo, Devlin-Scherer, and Zinicola, (2002) argue that “we need” films that depict the real-world impact of welfare reform on education in Minnesota and Wisconsin in order to “send a powerful and important social message” (p. 321). Again, the ideal eddie within the reflection construct serves to disseminate acceptable images of teachers. Therefore, when a film has ‘gotten it right,’ it may function as a pedagogical tool for in-service teachers (Robertson, 1995; Trier, 2001; Trier, 2002; Trier, 2003; Trier, 2005; Freedman, 1999; Beyerbach, 2005), or may allow us to gain insight into how the larger society views everything from teachers to racism, sexism and classism (Giroux, 1997; Beyerbach, 2005). Indeed, acceptable images of the real world may be re-incorporated into the structures and institutions (pre-service classes, classrooms, etc.) of real-world teachers, while unacceptable or inaccurate images must be challenged via the medium of film itself, or within the celluloid world.⁸

Eddies as Films

It is notable that though these perspectives reflect two distinct positions⁹ on the relationship between the ‘real’ world of schooling and the ‘celluloid’ world of eddies, both often fail to treat eddies as what they are: movies. Those authors who

approach eddies using the creation lens, for example, interpret these films largely by the impact they have or could have on the real world. Images, therefore, are not systems of representations that utilize codes specific to their medium; rather, films, like all images, are rendered instrumental, or significant only for the change they might produce in the real world. Rick Altman (1999), however, notes that those who believe film holds an ideological function¹⁰—or that film is primarily used by hegemonic entities such as ‘Hollywood’ or ‘The Government’ to promote perceptions and actions that are beneficial to those entities within the real world—place “greater importance [on] discursive concerns than [on] the visual approach” (p. 27). In other words, such reviewers fail to engage with the visual qualities of the film (qualities, I would contend which are central to any understanding of a visual medium such as film) and instead focus on the changes in the real world that the film is supposedly intended to produce.

Furthermore, authors within this perspective posit eddies as a construct created by a nebulous body named “Hollywood.” Hill (1995), for example, notes that, “Hollywood is of two minds when it comes to schoolteachers” (p. 40).¹¹ (I had not been aware that “Hollywood” had one mind, much less two.) In other words, Hollywood, within the creation perspective, is easily anthropomorphized and becomes both the overlord of the representational world, as well as the originator of representations that will ultimately impact the real world. Yet, Altman (1999) argues that in truth, the circumstances surrounding the production of an image is fraught with contests among writers, producers, critics and studio officials (pp. 44–48). In other words, images are not created by a homogenous group. Granted, representations can serve to normalize relations of power (Gutierrez, 2000); however, the creation thesis oversimplifies the intent and articulation of these images, and obscures the realities of image production within this medium.

As I have previously discussed, those who subscribe to the reflection representation thesis do not view eddies as films, but rather as potential mirrors of social reality. McCarthy (1998) refers to media as performing a “bardic function” of “singing back to society lullabies about what a large cross-section and hegemonic part of it ‘already knows’” (p. 32). Meanwhile, Bulman (2002) and Gale and Densmore (2001) argue that eddies are middle-class suburbanites’ musings on the feared and yet distant urban ghetto. Additionally, in Heilman’s brief review “The Great Teacher Myth” (1991),¹² the author critiques *Dead Poets Society* not only because the protagonist’s interventions in his students’ lives are inappropriate (as compared, presumably, to a real world teacher’s interventions), but also because the movie fails to show Keating as actually teaching his students (p. 418). Indeed, many reviewers of eddies who adopt the *reflection* perspective critique eddies for not featuring more scenes of teachers teaching; these films are consequently viewed as unrealistic because unlike celluloid teachers, teacher in the real world spend the majority of their time with students imparting structured lessons (Farhi, 1999; Raimo, Devlin-Scherer & Zinicola., 2002; Gunderson & Haas, 1987; Swetnam, 1992).

Yet, let us imagine a more ‘realistic’ film: would it be six hours long, like a school day in the real world? Would it show the teacher arriving at school, making photocopies, writing a problem on the board as students enter, breaking from the lesson to permit students to go the bathroom, and performing hall-duty when the bell rings?¹³ In neither a documentary nor fictional film would such a scenario be appealing or possible. Yet, Heilman (1991) and others, are able to demand that eddies show more instances of teaching because they dismiss the fact that eddies are first and foremost films. Glatthorn (1990), for example, begins his analysis by noting that he intends to “put aside the cinematic qualities” of *Dead Poets Society* and “consider the film from a professional perspective” (p.83).¹⁴ Would one cast aside the fictional qualities of a novel? No; however, popular films, because they typically utilize a linear narrative and familiar tropes, and because of the ease with which one may view them at a local theater or at home, appear accessible, or easily understandable.¹⁵ Films appear to warrant no analysis of their form or how that form impacts their content: indeed, only five of articles I found mentioned the cuts and shots utilized within an eddie (Giroux, 1997; Robertson, 1997; Yosso & Garcia, 2008; Smith, 1999). Yet, films are cinematic texts with their own structure and language. Films, by nature edit; they utilize cuts in order to shape narratives, and they compress time and space, omitting the daily lesson planning, student bathroom breaks, and other necessary but nevertheless minute details of real world teaching simply because they are films.

From Stereotype to Archetype

That films have cinematic qualities may appear to be a minor, if not obvious, point; however, I contend that the technical qualities of films are too often ignored by researchers who examine eddies. Yet, it is this acknowledgement of the cinematic language of film that will allow us to begin to move beyond the creation versus reflection debate into a more complex understanding of what eddies, as representations of schooling, are and are not capable of doing.

Let us, for example, look at *Lean On Me* (Avildsen.1998), the dramatization about principal Joe Clark’s turn-around of a Paterson, New Jersey, high school. In the film, the audience is introduced to the Eastside High that Clark will enter when a shot of the clean, orderly hallway of 1968’s Eastside is overlaid with a graffiti- and litter-filled hallway in which Black students loiter. When we, the viewers, are temporally situated with a caption that states “20 years later,” we are alerted that the dissolve¹⁶ has compressed the 20 years in which Eastside has transformed from having a predominantly White to a predominantly Black student-body. The lighting in this new Eastside High is appreciably more low-key¹⁷ than it had been in the Eastside of the 1960’s, suggesting an ominous and dungeon-like quality to the school. Additionally, the medium long shot¹⁸ utilized in the frame allows us to see the totality of the hallway and, by implication, the magnitude of the school’s

decline. Furthermore, Guns and Roses' "Welcome to the Jungle" is a non-diegetic sound¹⁹ that serves as a commentary on the school itself: the song's sirens, juxtaposed with the hallway, suggest that the school itself is a type of jungle. As the opening credits are displayed, students enter the frame; yet, the medium-long shot renders any particular student unidentifiable and unknowable. These students, as a collective, symbolize disorder. By the time Axl Rose sings the first lyrics, "Welcome to the jungle/we've got fun and games," a mass of brown-skinned students are now in the frame. As a Black student wearing a denim jacket reaches the foreground, the camera shifts downward and follows him as he is pushed by another student. The camera follows them as they, and the others who have joined the fight, are swallowed by a mass of students. Individuality is temporary; students are being literally and figuratively ensnared in the pervasive chaos and violence of this school.

Consequently, *Lean On Me*, in these few seconds, has, I would contend, added a distinctly cinematic element to the archetype (not stereotype) of the 'urban school,' as well as to all of the denotations and connotations of that term. Utilizing Lindenfeld's (2009) analysis of Carl Jung's work, we may understand that archetypes are abstract but malleable shared representations that arise from and are specific to a given society's discursive practices. Stereotypes, on the other hand, are "'easily grasped images of... groups'" (Schramm & Roberts, 1971, as quoted in Gunderson & Haas, 1987) that allow us to create consistent patterns out of inconsistent experiences. Stereotypes are utilized in order to obscure difference among individuals based on a perceived shared identity (eg., all [insert group here] people [insert behavior or characteristic here]). Archetypes, however, allow for difference, as they serve as templates that individuals may manipulate and recreate; however, archetypes nevertheless remain recognizable to others. Eddies, I would argue, neither create nor disseminate stereotypes; rather, eddies draw from an available well of archetypes about schooling. These archetypes (unlike stereotypes) may change when appropriated into the medium of film, but are nevertheless identifiable. To that end, I propose we move away from the notion of stereotypes (i.e., do films create or disseminate stereotypes?) and to the idea of archetypes.

Yet, what are the meanings contained within the 'urban school' archetype, for example, and how does an eddie like *Lean On Me* reproduce and further those meanings? Popkewitz (1998) argues that, "discourses of urbanness and ruralness are part of an amalgamation or scaffolding of discourses about teaching, learning, and managing the child" (p. 9). Consequently, a term like 'urban school' is not merely a "geographical concept" (p. 9.). Rather, this archetype serves as a "discursive concept" which contains beliefs and accompanying procedures on how to educate the 'urban' student, and which places the 'urban' student "outside of reason and the standards of the normal" (p. 10). Notably, this archetype is both widely dispersed and widely utilized within our culture. Popkewitz (1998), for example, studied the then-nascent Teach for America organization (<http://www.teachforamerica.org/>), and found that it, even though ostensibly outside the

traditional educational system, nevertheless utilized and reproduced the ‘urban school’ archetype.

This pervasive discourse about archetypes (to answer the seemingly unanswerable question posed by those who subscribe to the creation position about the source of imagery that is supposedly created within the representational world) is the source of material for eddies. The familiar and seemingly omnipresent figures of eddies—the naive but determined teacher, the wayward student who becomes motivated to learn, the stubborn administrator who obstructs students’ free expression, or even the urban school—are archetypes that have emerged through discursive practices surrounding schooling.²⁰ This thesis differs from the reflection viewpoint because eddies do not merely reflect these archetypes. Rather, I contend that eddies, because they are first and foremost films, translate these archetypes into a cinematic language, a language that utilizes visual cues, as well as other techniques specific to film. Furthermore, this language and these techniques of cinema, it must be noted, are distinct from, yet central to, the narrative of the film. Therefore, film techniques and language cannot be “put aside,” and must be understood and analyzed in conjunction with a given film’s narrative.

(Re)producing Archetypes through Film

The techniques of the medium of film—the fade, the caption, the ability to utilize non-diegetic music—have allowed *Lean On Me*, an eddie, to both elaborate and transform the archetype of the urban school. Therefore, *Lean On Me*, we may understand, has neither created this archetype, nor has it simply reflected this archetype: rather, the movie—through techniques that are specific to film—has magnified, shaped, edited, added a visual and aural element. Thus, the movie has transformed this existing and dominant societal archetype.²¹ Yet, the very ability of eddies to transform archetypes, as well as the fact that they draw upon archetypes (rather than stereotypes), is largely missing from most educational researchers’ reviews of these films.

Furthermore, the visual reproduction of the urban school archetype within an eddie like *Lean On Me* is, in fact, an act of production, or of creating a new incarnation of the archetype. This version of the archetype cannot be divorced from the techniques of film, as the archetype has been reshaped in a way that is specific to film, and could not have been produced without the medium. Indeed, the cinematic language of the eddie may serve to propagate the systems of inequality represented by and often hidden within this and similar archetypes about schooling; furthermore, because eddies translate archetypes into the language of the cinema, eddies often reproduce in cinematic language the very inequality represented within and between archetypes created in the “real world.” *Lean on Me*, for example, because it is a film, also produces anew the inequalities of the urban school archetype within the visual realm. Not only are students of the urban school (i.e., Eastside’s students)

subject to the discourse (and consequent practices of) the archetype, but this eddie has rendered these students objects of the gaze. Mulvey (1975) argues that classical Hollywood cinema structures and 'genders' the viewer's gaze by positing within the film an active male hero and a passive female character. While the male hero advances the plot of the film, and thus becomes the character with whom the audience—presumed to be male—should identify, the female character serves as a break in narrative action, a character who is seen, but who serves little narrative function (1975, p. 11). In Mulvey's formulation, women are rendered instruments of the male characters' action and self-realization—these women are not meant to be understood as characters in their own right; rather, they are to be understood by and with reference to the male protagonist.

In eddies about the 'urban school,' such as *Dangerous Minds* (Bruckheimer & Smith, 1995) and *Lean On Me*, Black and Latino students may be equated to the female character of Mulvey's analysis: these students serve to advance the self-understanding of the teacher or principal who is the protagonist of the film. As Giroux (1997) writes of *Dangerous Minds*, "The kids in this movie simply appear as a backdrop for explaining [the teacher] LouAnne's own self-consciousness and self-education... At the center of the film is the embellished 'true story' of LouAnne Johnson" (p. 49). *Dangerous Minds* renders these students objects of the gaze and posits them in a passive role; thus the film has equated LouAnne's students with the devalued reoccurring female character of film. Therefore, not only has this eddie translated and reproduced the 'urban school' archetype into a cinematic language, but it has also legitimated the archetype within the cinematic realm. Both the ability of the archetype to be appropriated, as well as the ability of its figures to be consistent with the oft-prescribed gender types of the cinema (i.e., the active protagonists and the passive 'assistants') signal the archetype's legitimacy within the realm of the cinema. This cinematic legitimization of the archetype thus allows for its further legitimization within the real world: the archetype, though changed into the language of the cinema, is still recognizable and thus appears 'real,' or valid. Consequently, to borrow Gonzalez's (2003) term, we may understand the relationship between the representational realm and the real world to be a "feedback loop" (p. 387). Rather than merely creating or disseminating images to the real world, media technologies in a feedback loop are informed by hegemonic discourses in both their structure and content. These technologies, in turn, "[articulate] and [define]" these discourses (p. 387.).

Furthermore, as a site of legitimization of the archetype, eddies may be more powerful than other discursive arenas because a disproportionate amount of legitimacy is attributed to images. I believe that Gonzalez's claim that, "as a recording device, the medium of photography has always been allied with truth claims," can be applied more broadly to visual representational systems as a whole (2003, p. 379). It is when we assume that images make claims to truth that it becomes common-sensical (though nevertheless inaccurate) to adopt the reflection or creation

perspectives.²² The danger with such positions, however, is that though eddies and other representations do have a relationship to the real world, that relationship is more complex than either the reflection or creation perspective allows. These perspectives are symptomatic of and yet distract from the true danger posed by visual representations: that images can serve to normalize and mask the relations of power within archetypes simply because we (mis) interpret the image as either representing or striving to represent Truth.

Consequently, this shift from archetype to stereotype is not simply one of semantics. Rather, it is a paradigm shift in how we understand eddies. By acknowledging that archetypes can neither be created within nor reflected by eddies, but rather that archetypes depicted within eddies emerge from and are refracted back into the real world, we can then formulate more appropriate and practical interventions to counter problematic images within eddies. Understanding these archetypes allows for interventions in the ‘real world,’ or investigations of the archetypes themselves, rather than interventions in the representational realm, as advocates of both the reflection or creation perspective would attempt. By identifying the archetypes depicted within eddies and understanding the codes utilized within the eddie to (re)construct the archetype, we destabilize the notion that the archetype and its corresponding relations of power are ‘natural’ or ‘inevitable.’ Rather, through the processes of analysis and interpretation, we begin to use the eddie to deconstruct the archetype (Nestler, 2009). The eddie, rather than being an instrument of creation or reflection becomes a tool for interpretation.

Furthermore, our focus moves away from how to change the film towards how to alter the archetypes depicted within the film. Consequently, instead of focusing on a singular truth—either the monolithic truth in the real world that the image should mimic, or the singular and ‘true’ means of enacting the image in real life—we begin to focus on perspective, or whose ‘truth’ has been represented and advanced through this archetype via the eddie. Indeed, because of their understanding of both the lineage of and many contexts in which schooling archetypes are deployed, educational researchers can bring a unique and valuable perspective to the analysis of eddies. Educational researchers, rather than getting mired within the specious and unproductive reflection and creation frameworks, might instead draw upon their knowledge of the archetypes which are used (often *ad nauseum*) within many eddies.

Eddies in (Cinematic) Context

Though I do not believe that an educational researcher who wants to examine eddies should first get a doctoral degree in Film Studies, I do believe that in order to analyze eddies as a genre, one must understand the history and techniques of that genre. As one would gain expertise in a new area of literature, so too should researchers on eddies gain some expertise in the medium of film.²³

I have proposed that by understanding eddies as first and foremost films, rather than mere mirrors of the ‘real world’ or simply as spaces in which images may be created to impact the real world, and by concurrently focusing on archetypes rather than stereotypes, educational researchers might better understand the context in which eddies emerge, and consequently sharpen our analyses of these images. First, we are able to consider the issues of genre and methodology when reviewing eddies. Many reviewers of eddies take for granted that there is a “schooling” genre or “teacher film”; in other words, many reviewers accept and create the category of ‘eddie’ by choosing to analyze particular films which exemplify their tacit claim that reflection or creation representation is at play. It could be said that there are over 150 movies that feature schools, teachers, or students.²⁴ However, the literature analyzing eddies focuses on roughly 35 of those films. Furthermore, the ten most referenced films in articles are not necessarily the ten highest grossing eddies.²⁵

Altman notes that film critics or reviewers often “systematically [disregard] films that fail to exhibit clear generic qualifications....[and] that each major genre has been defined in terms of a nucleus of films...” (1999, p. 17). By studying a limited number of films all of which utilize the same conventions and tropes, eddie reviewers have tacitly defined and have continued to reproduce the eddie genre through a limited set of films. These reviewers often disregard a rigorous sampling methodology and instead perform a type of cutting, editing, and shaping (in ways similar to the films they examine) in order to construct a narrative in which to define the eddie. It might be more interesting, therefore, to study this genre, if one may be said to exist, through films such as *L'enfant Sauvage* (The Wild Child) (Berbert & Truffaut, 1970) or even *Mad TV*'s “Nice White Lady” (Parker, 2007),²⁷—representations that are not traditionally considered eddies, but which may offer a unique perspective on these archetypes (see Bulman, 2002, or Beyerbach, 2005, for additional films).

Furthermore, by understanding eddies as films, we may better situate and understand these films (and this genre) within the context of a cinematic lineage. For example, Giroux refers to Michelle Pfeiffer's character in *Dangerous Minds* as an “innocent border crosser,” or a representative of the middle-class who enters the world of the urban ‘Other’ in order to acculturate ‘the Other’ to the values of the White middle-class (1997, p. 48). Pfeiffer's character, argues Giroux, ultimately serves to uphold a conservative and revisionist agenda that “rewrites[s] the decline of public schooling and ...[attacks] poor Black and Hispanic students as part of a broader project for rearticulating ‘Whiteness as a model of authority’” (p. 51). However, this figure of the border crosser who restores order exists in film genres outside of eddies, and serves a similar function across genres.

Ray (1985) argues that the political polarization within America following the 1960s led to the “‘Left’ and ‘Right’ cycles” within film. While the Left cycle utilizes “outsiders to represent the counterculture's image of itself in flight from a repressive society,” the Right cycle values “a reluctant individual, confronted by

evil, [who] acts on his own to rid society of spoilers” (1985, p. 351). The latter hero is often found in Westerns, but this characterization, I would argue, is befitting of many protagonists within eddies. Consequently, eddies are situated within a larger, political cinematic contest.²⁸ In other words, eddies do not create or disburse stereotypes; rather, they draw upon (often weighty) archetypes about education and also upon cinematic tropes and figures.

Conclusion

So, what do schools do, and how are they organized? And, more importantly for our purposes, what might eddies tell educational researchers about the function and organization of schools? The answer to the latter question, I would argue, is absolutely nothing. Eddies tell us nothing about schooling because eddies neither represent schools nor do they attempt to prescribe what schools should do or how they should be organized. Rather, eddies are one of many arenas in which educational researchers may witness the disbursal and consequences of schooling archetypes. Furthermore, by acknowledging that eddies utilize and transform readily available archetypes about schools, teachers, and students, educational researchers are able to compare eddies to other ‘texts’ that appropriate these same archetypes about education. For example, what truly separates the narrative of *Lean on Me* from that of Paul Willis’ ethnography *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs* (1977)? Both depict working class students and draw upon archetypes in their characterization of these students; both encourage the ‘reader’ to adopt the perspective of the outsider—Principal Clark and Willis, respectively—while implying that the text provides the ‘reader’ access to the lives of working-class students. While *Lean on Me* processes these archetypes through the techniques and language of cinema, *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs* structures its narrative through the techniques and norms of ethnography. Both texts also produce a narrative in which student resistance to adopting mainstream middle-class values is rendered both futile and self-destructive. Finally, though the authority of *Lean on Me* is grounded in its medium (i.e., that it is a visual representation), *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*’ authority is grounded in the academic credentials of its author.

I neither argue that the two texts aim to achieve the same purpose, nor do I argue that these texts ultimately present similar representations of working- and lower-class schools. However, I do contend that both draw from the same Western discourse about schools, and that both transform the similar archetypes which they employ. Therefore, the dichotomous categories of ‘serious’ and ‘popular’ representation which separates *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs* from *Lean on Me*, if not specious, is, at the very least, worthy of further investigation.²⁹ Indeed, by focusing on archetypes educational researchers are better able to analyze, contrast, and compare the myriad of images and practices—eddies,

ethnographies, experiments, etc.—that seek to characterize and represent schooling, students, and educators. Consequently, eddies—though they may not teach us much, if anything, about schooling—might allow us to compare and contrast the many systems in which schools are represented. Furthermore, these films might also allow educational researchers to realize the extent to which we—in our own representational practices—might be utilizing and perpetuating the same archetypes as (the nebulous and ominous) ‘Hollywood.’

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Notes

¹ John Willinsky coined this phrase (February, 2010) to refer to movies that depict teaching, teachers, schools or students at the primary, secondary, or post-secondary level. The term ‘eddies’ should be viewed as flexible, rather than as restrictive, and able to serve as an umbrella term for a wide range of films. In this article, the term does not refer to television shows, but it could conceivably be applied to any representation of schooling in any medium.

² I have examined only articles written by educational researchers in peer-reviewed education related publications. There are, of course, a few exceptions, such as Giroux (1997) who was published in *Cineaste* and Hill (1995), whose article is not peer-reviewed. I will note exceptions as they appear. For our purposes, examining peer-reviewed articles, rather than book chapters or non-peer reviewed articles, serves as a heuristic to ascertaining what the broader scholarly community views as productive analyses of eddies. However, future work should examine other texts in which eddies are reviewed to understand the extent to which the creation and reflection theses dominate scholars’ thinking on eddies.

³ Numbers based on database searches I performed for articles, dissertations, and theses about eddies. These numbers are a conservative estimate, as there might be additional sources not uncovered in my searches.

⁴ I’ll use the terms: ‘celluloid world,’ ‘world of the film,’ ‘representational world,’ and their derivatives interchangeably. I’ll also use the terms ‘real world’ and ‘social world’ interchangeably, and in opposition to the ‘celluloid world’ and its synonyms. I do so in order to highlight the two realms that reviewers of eddies often suppose: one representational, and the other real. For many reviewers, these two worlds are not only unquestionably separate, but films and other images are produced solely in the representational world. Furthermore, within such a schema, social activity (a term which, presumably, excludes the act of producing a film) is said to occur in the real world. The aim of this article is not to debate whether such a distinction is viable; rather, I would contend that such a distinction, when used solely for analytic purposes, might be helpful. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to understand the functions and powers that eddie researchers have ascribed to these films, as well as the relationship they have posited between what viewers see in these films and what they enact in other arenas of life. To that end, I have adopted and utilize the binary that most educational researchers explicitly and tacitly adopt when reviewing eddies.

⁵ Harper builds upon Jean Baudrillard’s (1983) *Simulations*, which Baudrillard begins

with an allegory by Borges in which “cartographers of the Empire draw up a map so detailed that it ends up exactly covering the territory... (1983, p. 1).” Baudrillard argues that today, the territory is not the referent for the map. Rather, the “territory no long precedes the map, nor survives it (1983, p. 2).” Rather, “the map,” (the representation) precedes the territory, or the real world (*Ibid.*). In other words, the image has come to dominate the reality. Furthermore, Baudrillard argues, the distinction between the real and the representation (between the territory and the map) has altogether disappeared. There is, to start an imagined difference between the real and the representation, but this imagined difference “culminates in and is engulfed by” the map (1983, p. 3). Notably, the map does not stand as a mirror to the territory (as it might, say in *mimetic* representation). Rather, in simulacral representation the map allows us to reconstruct the real.

For Harper, *simulacral* realism is “a representation that usurps the supposed primacy of the objectively ‘real’ entity conventionally imagined to serve as its ‘original’ (1996, 216).” In other words, when the image is created, it is viewed as subservient to the “real world”. It is a copy whereas the real world is the original. However, the image takes on a life of its own, and assumes dominance over the real world. Harper, for example, quotes a TV Guide reviewer from the 1960’s who discussed shows like *Julia* (starring Diahann Carroll, which was the first show on television with a black female lead). The reviewer wrote: “If Negroes were seen more frequently on television—and in featured roles comparable to those comparable to those played by white actors—their real-life employment picture might be favorably affected. Television’s power to change mass habits and attitudes appears to be significant (154).” This reviewer’s argument is emblematic of the *simulacral* perspective, in that the reviewer believes that images that are created in the medium of television have the power to change the real world.

⁶ Such an argument would be typical of the *reflection* perspective.

⁷ I do not argue that images lack the potential to impact the real world; rather, I contend that the extent to which eddies and other images are viewed as changing the social world is both overwhelming and unrealistic. The creation perspective constructs the viewer as a blank slate, and denies that the viewer approaches representations, such as eddies, with other pre-existing imagery and beliefs about teaching (Sanders, 2010).

⁸ It must also be noted that those who hold the creation viewpoint may also seek to counter undesirable images (i.e., images that will engender undesired effects and perceptions in the real world) with other images, as well.

⁹ I must note, however, that though I present these perspectives as distinct, many authors often vacillate between the two in their analyses of eddies. Gale & Densmore (2001), for example, utilize both perspectives in their analysis. The authors argue that eddies shape students’ perceptions of themselves (in line with the creation perspective); however, they also attempt to analyze three eddies in order to understand which elements of a real, radical classroom are missing from the fictional classrooms (i.e., the *reflection* thesis) (p. 602). In other words, while the authors argue that students’ self-perception is shaped by eddies, they also suggest that eddies should (and are able to) mirror the ideal real-world classroom. The authors’ shift between perspectives suggests not only the complicated relationship between the representational world and the real world, but also the need to analyze these two frameworks. At what point, we might ask, does the eddie create a perception and at what point does it reflect a perception in reality? These questions are significant because they assume very different functions and powers of eddies. Yet, without a deeper understanding of the *reflection* and creation frameworks and the implications for eddies once these frameworks

are used as analytical lenses through which we view eddies, not only will we continue to use these two perspectives—though sometimes contradictory—without understanding the full implications of their application, but we will be no closer to truly understanding the potential and potential impact of eddies.

¹⁰ Altman's term references the work of Karl Marx and Louis Althusser, and specifically the idea that the image is a product of a superstructure meant to support and further a society's underlying relations of production (p. 27). Though Altman does not use the term '*simulacral*,' I believe his idea is equivalent to Harper's term. Both ideas hold that an image serves an instrumental purpose, one which is realized in the social, not representational world. Similarly, Altman's idea of the "ritual approach," which is based on the work of Marshall Sahlins and contrasts with the ideological function of film, is similar to the mimetic perspective, in that films are, within this viewpoint, seen as a repository for society's fears and ideals (p. 27).

¹¹ Not a peer reviewed article.

¹² Not peer reviewed but typical of many arguments.

¹³ It is notable that *Entre les murs* (*The Class*) (Arnal & Cantet, 2008) dedicates a significant amount of time to the fundamentals of teaching—we see the protagonist, Francois Marin, in the faculty room; we observe students doing group work, reading out loud, and writing verb conjugations on the board. Furthermore, the film strives for realism in other ways: it is based on a semi-autobiographical novel by a former teacher, and the cinematography and camera-work create a documentary-like feel. However, even this film (like *all* films) has cuts and edits, and moves through one complete school year in the course of 128 minutes. It is not real, and though it tries to gesture towards reality, it cannot be viewed as real.

¹⁴ Not peer reviewed, but typical of many arguments.

¹⁵ I am largely describing "classical Hollywood" films, or films that follow the narrative conventions established by American studios from the late 1920's to the late 1960's. Classical Hollywood cinema often provides an objective reality against which a character's subjectivity can be measured, gives the viewer some degree of access that characters do not have, and often provides the viewer with narrative closure at the film's end (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010: 103). This description, would, for example, omit French new wave cinema of the 1950s and '60s, which often focused on making visible the interior states of characters, rather than creating a linear narrative.

¹⁶ A brief superimposition of a new shot upon the end of a preceding shot.

¹⁷ A lighting technique that creates extremely dark and light regions within a frame. It is often used to evoke a sense of mystery or danger (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010: 136).

¹⁸ A camera distance in which figures are prominent in the frame—and are often shown from the knees up—but the background remains visible (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010, p. 195).

¹⁹ A sound whose source does not exist within the narrative of the film.

²⁰ We must understand that these discursive practices are present in many aspects of education research and reform. Metz (1989), for example, argues that educational researchers and reformers tend to work from an ideal (or archetype) of the "American High School," and consequently focus on the similarities of schools (e.g., the structure and procedures of schools), rather than acknowledging the significant differences among these institutions (p. 76). Consequently, schools attempting institutional reform enact features of the ideal "American High School"—such as schedules, text books, and instruction styles—even

though those reforms may be wholly inappropriate for the particular school and its population. Metz notes that these schools in the midst of reform begin to resemble “plays,” and the members of schools became akin to “actors” following preordained “scripts” (*Ibid.*). Yet, what is most notable in Metz’s argument is that the adoption of this “script” is encouraged by community members, and often remains unchallenged by the schools’ teachers and staff (pp. 77-78). In other words, archetypes about schooling are so pervasive that they are enacted (pun intended) in different ways. Films constitute one way, or medium, in which these archetypes are enacted.

²¹ A similar example can be seen in Giroux’s review of *Dangerous Minds*, in which the film is first black and white when depicting the neighborhood in which the students of color live and from which they are picked up by the school bus. However, when the bus reaches the suburb in which the school resides, the film becomes (magically!) colorized, suggesting the gritty reality of students has been assuaged by the suburban landscape of the school. Again, this use of color is a distinctly cinematic technique; however, it draws upon, I would argue, a larger discourse of bussing. The contrast between the black and white film and the color film establishes and magnifies the contrast between urban poverty and middle-class suburbia, and between an undesirable and forgotten pre-modernity and the modern capitalist era. The color of the film (as opposed to the color of the students, who are, of course, in possession of “dangerous” minds and bodies) alerts the viewer to safety; it allows the viewer to know that the students have access to the economic and physical security of the middle-class because they are being schooled outside of the gritty neighborhood and its corresponding pathology of poverty. Indeed, the bus, viewers are meant to understand serves as the students’ passage to safety. Indeed, if viewers did not know about the ideologies surrounding bussing, they will by the 2:23 minute mark of the film. Consequently, it is this technique, rather than (as Giroux argues) LouAnne’s later classroom discussions about choice, that first establishes academic and economic achievement as an individual (rather than systematic) issue. This bus scene removes urban schooling from a context and network of larger social structures. Rather, the students, because they have left their neighborhood, now ostensibly have a choice: they are in the land of metaphorical color, and it is up to them to seize this opportunity and to escape their neighborhood, both physically and ideologically. Furthermore, it is the middle-class (as represented by the suburb) that is being invaded by the urban ‘other.’ Therefore, LouAnne’s mission to acclimate these students into the dominant middle-class culture gains a new sense of urgency. Indeed, this distinctly cinematic technique has established spatial difference (and the accompanying ideological differences those spaces represent), just as a similar technique in *Lean On Me* established a temporal difference.

²² It is this belief in eddies’ aim to make claims to truth that allows educational researchers to compare eddies to the real world, argue that these films can be viewed as unrealistic or untrue if they do not mirror the real world, or argue that what we see in these films will and can be appropriated into the real world.

²³ To study eddies is an interdisciplinary undertaking, one that requires a specific set of tools by educational researchers.

²⁴ Based on a count I’ve begun of films that feature teachers, students, or schooling. The list includes films ranging from *Freedom Writers* (Durning, T. & LaGravenese, R., 2007) to *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* (Fields, F. & Brooks, R., 1977). So far, my list is comprised of 155 films, some of which were referenced in the articles I’ve discussed.

²⁵ I manually counted the films referenced in articles dealing with eddies. I then compared this count to the lifetime domestic gross of films within the “Teacher-Inspirational”

genre on www.boxofficemojo.com (<http://www.boxofficemojo.com/genres/chart/?id=teachers.htm>). In my count, for example, a film like *Mr. Holland's Opus* (Cort & Herek, 1995) is only the 12th most referenced film within the eddie reviews; however, it is the third highest grossing film within this genre according to the website.

²⁶ The sampling methods utilized among eddie reviewers is inconsistent and often lacking systemization. For example, Breault's sample of 15 films that depict "good teaching" was determined by factors such as box office gross as well as availability for home viewing. Bulman (2001) meanwhile performs an informal survey of friends and a local video-store owner (p. 3). Hill watches "a dozen or so" movies on teachers with films, but then relies upon Leonard Maltin's reviews for those films he is not able to see first-hand (1995, p. 41). Granted, reviewers of eddies might not need randomized, representative samples of all movies ever made about schools for their purposes, and the population of movies that may be deemed eddies is subject to debate. However, it is important to understand that eddie reviewers have and continue to construct the genre of 'eddie' by creating a sample through methods that might be judged as unsound if utilized with other texts.

²⁷ A skit parodying many eddies about urban schools.

²⁸ Bulman and Farhi astutely and accurately equate the heroes and plots of many eddies with those of Westerns (2002, p. 256; 1999, p. 157).

²⁹ What, we might ask, archetypes and consequent relations of power, do these texts—wittingly and unwittingly—normalize? How do the histories and techniques of the medium in which the archetype is being appropriated impact how the archetype is transformed and refracted back to the social world? And how, finally, is each medium able to critique these archetypes in a way that the other cannot?

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