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Socialization and the Symbolic Order of the School¹

Judith L. Kapferer*

Comparatively little research in western education has focused upon the way in which ritual and ceremonial practices achieve their effects in the socialization process. This paper, in analyzing two private secondary school rituals, essays a partial answer to two questions: Why do private schools appear to be so much more successful than state schools in committing their clientele to the advancement of the school project and in socializing students into acceptance of and support for the culture of the school? And what is the socializing role of ritual practice in such schools? SOCIALIZATION, RITUAL, SCHOOL CULTURE, SCHOOL ETHNOGRAPHY, SOCIAL CLASS.

Schools, or, more correctly, the teachers and administrators within them, have educational projects: policies, plans, goals, and organizational means of achieving them. Such projects vary from one society to another and, as I will endeavor to show, within specific societies from one community to another. But within western society at least, it is clear that all schools, with whatever degree of intensity, explicitness, and self-consciousness, engage a project that has three major elements: instruction, selection, and socialization.

This paper focuses upon the socialization project of the school. Like selection, and unlike instruction, socialization is a largely covert operation, dealing with the inculcation of culturally defined ways of perceiving the world and acting within it. It is concerned with the *ideas*, often amorphous and conflicting and rarely critically examined, that make up the world view of a particular social group. As such, it is a process, unlike the straightforwardly instructional, that is little scrutinized or discussed by school practitioners and their clients, and much taken for granted.

The socialization project has two aspects. It is concerned, on the one hand, with the organization of attitudes and behaviors within the cultural milieu of the school: authority relations, the establishment of priorities, degrees of formality, modes of address, rules regarding conduct, the judgment of performance, the ordering of interpersonal relations, and so on. On the other hand, teachers, at the behest of the wider community served by the schools, are involved in the promulgation of a broader set of values and attitudes than those which have relevance only to the bounded everyday life of the school. These include ideas of truth, justice, liberty, the moral and philosophical ideals underpinning the secular state, and the proper mode of

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conduct for its citizens, an area of teaching and learning fraught with conflicts and contradictions, not only between teachers and pupils, but also and more significantly *among* teachers and *among* their clients. This is particularly true of schools that cater to heterogeneous groups, drawing pupils from disparate social backgrounds, and schools where the relation between teachers and clients is characterized by wariness, suspicion, and a lack of shared perceptions and understandings of the intent and purposes of formal education and the wider society in which they participate as citizens.

In the absence of a clearly defined set of socialization goals and techniques for attaining them, resulting from fundamental disagreements among those who constitute the membership of the school, it is not surprising that many teachers eschew the broader socializing role entirely, while others engage in haphazard, uncoordinated, and unfocused efforts to instill (in at least some pupils) their own individual ways of seeing the world outside the classroom.

There are, however, schools in which the socialization project is conceived of as having fundamental import for the overall educational project. These schools serve a clearly delineated client community, a community in which there are basic agreements regarding the nature of society and the place of their members within that society. Ethnic, religious, and social class communities are obvious examples. Having agreed-upon goals for their children's upbringing, such groups are also likely to evolve techniques whereby the goals are to be validated and commitment to them obtained and reinforced. In this paper I examine two examples of one such technique, *ritual and ceremonial practice*, in order to arrive at an assessment of the role of ritual in structuring pupils' (and their parents' and teachers') understandings of the school's educational project.

The ethnographic research on which I draw was conducted in schools in Adelaide, South Australia, in the mid-1970s. Australian primary and secondary education is characterized by a pervasive and powerful bifurcation between state and private schools, the latter being attended by around 20 percent of the country's school-age children. Public schools are supported, controlled, financed, and administered by the state through the agency of highly centralized education departments, the officials of which are all (with the exception of the elected minister) career public servants. There is little tradition of local community participation in the state schools, the administration of which is seen as remote and concerned with statewide policy, rather than with the daily workings of any individual school. (See Sherman 1981:2-6, for a discussion of the differences between Australian and U.S. schools.) In contrast, the community of private-school parents as fee-paying consumers can achieve a far greater measure of control over any one school's policies and programs, particularly in the area of socialization. Such a degree of control is enhanced, and legitimated, by the cooperative, personal nature of relations between parents and teachers in private schools, in stark contrast to the adversarial and bureaucratic relations obtaining between state school teachers and their parental clients. As a group, the latter have no power to make important educational decisions at any level beyond that which pertains to their own individual children. Public education is completely in the

hands of the state, which, for example, has absolute control over the appointment, dismissal, and transfer of teachers, the development of curricula, the provision of textbooks, and so on. Furthermore, as in other countries, the social situation is such as to restrict further the involvement of parents to that minority with the time, energy, motivation, knowledge, and, often, financial wherewithal that enable them to make a contribution, albeit peripheral, to the organization of the individual school and its affairs.

The differences between state and private schools lie at the heart of the analysis presented here: the question is raised as to why it is that ritual and ceremonial practice is relatively highly developed in private schools in Australia and much attenuated in state schools. While I make no claims for the typicality of the particular school whose operations are discussed, I do suggest that in schools characterized by a situation of consumer patronage, many of the same features may be observed, although in different configurations and with differing emphases. One of the most important of these features is the need for private schools to establish and maintain the commitment of the *parental* body to the stated goals of the school.

The absence or existence of ceremonial practice in schools is an important indication of those features of educational ideology considered to be central by the members (practitioners and clients) of the school. As agents of the secular state, public schools, bureaucratically organized and controlled, stress the pragmatic, the instrumental, the universalistic. There is little place here for the development or support of the sacralizing functions of ritual, and this is nowhere more true than in the area of socialization, an area generally seen, by parents and teachers, as beyond the bounds of the school's concerns, as not an important, officially recognized part of the educational project. This is not to suggest that state school teachers do not engage in significant socializing activities, for they do, but rather that such activities are conceived of and discussed as unorganized, peripheral, and minor, at best a means of achieving overt and essentially nonproblematic instructional ends, at worst an illicit interference in individual and private familial concerns.

Nor do I wish to suggest that state school teachers and the parents of children in state schools do not subscribe to educational ideologies of various kinds. On the contrary, state schools are characterized by a multiplicity of views about education, views reflective of the social heterogeneity of their clienteles. Indeed, it is precisely the existence of so many beliefs and values attaching to education and to socialization in particular, beliefs and values often in conflict with each other and those of the schools' bureaucratic overlords and often inadequately formulated and defended, that prevents the formation of a coherent and broadly supported educational ideology in state schools.

This situation contrasts not only with that obtaining in private schools, but also with that obtaining in public schools that are coterminous with community schools. Thus rural schools, for example, dealing with a socially more homogeneous clientele and providing a focal point for community social activities, may well be concerned to elaborate their educational projects beyond the confines of the classroom. By the same token, metropolitan schools serving specific local (and often classbound) communities and

accountable to quite narrowly defined *local* authorities as, for example, in the United States, may do the same. What I am concerned with here is to distinguish the structure of relations characteristic of schools where the state dominates relations among teachers, between teachers and pupils, and teachers and parents, from the structure of relations in schools where teachers are more directly accountable to a *parental* clientele.

That many schools, particularly those in the government sector in Australia, do not incorporate an elaborated ritual and symbolic order is significant, I suggest, for an understanding of some of the ways in which state schools fail to engender a collective commitment of their members and clients to the instructional and socializing goals of the school itself. The import of symbolic modes of representation and ceremony in the organization of school life lies in the way they are capable of eliciting a unity of all those directly connected with the school in its overall educational project, and facilitate a commitment to that project. As Waller commented in 1932, "It should be remarked that school ceremonies mostly have value . . . in the mobilization of individual attitudes to group objectives" (1967:120). In turn, the significance of ritual in mobilizing individual attitudes to group objectives lies in the fact that ritual and ceremonial practice provides a mode of *collective* communication of group objectives, thereby ensuring the transmission and reception of a more concentrated, less ambivalent, and less diffuse message than that which is communicated through the routine activities of the everyday world of the classroom. In ritual, the project of the school is formally spelled out, articulated and elaborated within a bounded, noneveryday context, a "special occasion" constituting a finite province of meaning set apart from the paramount reality of everyday life.

Occasions on which the socialization project of the school is made explicit and brought to the foreground of consciousness may arise regularly at points of transition in school life (such as the beginning and end of the school year) or at moments of crisis and conflict such as, for example, those times at which the project of the school is perceived as being inadequately fulfilled. On such occasions the ideology that underlies the operation of the school is required to be linked, explicitly, to the routine experience of everyday school life. This connection between abstract ideas and concrete action is most often and most powerfully to be made through the channel of collective ritual and ceremonial behavior. It is my intention in this paper to analyze two ritual occasions from this perspective, and to suggest that some schools are so organized, in terms of their *symbolic* order, as to facilitate the commitment of their clientele to their socialization goals, while others, through lack of attention to the symbolic realm, forego an important means whereby such commitment might be achieved.

It is in the former kinds of schools that the socialization project is laid bare and its underlying educational ideology held up for inspection. The study of ritual practice in schools provides a partial answer to "the question of what part ritual plays in the multichartered, multigrouped institutions that educate, socialize and enculturate young people into modern megalopolises" (Burnett 1969:9). More importantly, however, an examination of the symbolic order of the school furnishes valuable insights into the motives and meanings

fundamental to the educational project, and the ways in which private and individual understandings of it can become collective and mutually shared understandings. Thus this paper has a double focus upon, on the one hand, the discovery of the ideological bases of the educational project in a specific school and, on the other hand, the role of ceremonial practice in forwarding the socialization project.

Project and Ritual

What I refer to as the project of the school has two elements: (1) a stated and agreed-upon goal or set of goals, and (2) an organized plan for the achievement of those goals. South Australian state schools issue individual statements of goals that are clearly derived from those laid down by the state-appointed Karmel Committee (1971) and are in line with the state's Education Department directives, but they nowhere publicly detail the means whereby such goals are to be achieved within their particular social contexts. Furthermore, they are written statements only. The dearth of occasions on which they might be objectified, given substance and meaning, fleshed out and concretized in a unified, public context ensures that few of the school's members are enabled to achieve an understanding of, or commitment to, the processes by which the school hopes to achieve its educational project. For the statements are abstractions. It is in ritual and ceremonial practice that they become attached to concrete objects and are thereby endowed with a validity that is, at the same time, buttressed and brought into public focus, securing general agreement as to the correctness and distinctiveness of the school's project.

State schools issue such statements as the following, usually as a short preamble to describing the details of curricular instructional programs within the school:

[The school] aims for open, friendly relationships between staff and students, while recognizing the teacher's position of authority.

[The primary objective of education is the provision] of equal opportunity to each child to obtain an education that will enable him to develop fully abilities and skills which will give him satisfaction in occupying any position commensurate with those abilities and skills.

[The school aims to] help students estimate their own capabilities and set for themselves realistic goals.

While such educational aims are doubtless admirable, their generality, amorphousness, brevity, and taken-for-grantedness raise questions as to the nature of an individual school's commitment to them, while their bureaucratic conception raises other questions as to the viability of specific schools and individual teachers' putting them into practice. Compare the preceding statements with the following, drawn from the prospectuses of three *private* schools:

1. X is a non-denominational, co-educational school, based on Christian principles. It aims to provide an optimum learning environment with the accent

on academic excellence. It is convinced of the value of active participation in extra-curricular activities, and provides a wide variety, with the emphasis on Music and Sport. It is the policy of the School and its well qualified Staff, to be conscious of and, after consideration, adaptable to changing ideas and requirements. The School considers that the following qualities are of paramount importance in the development of a student: (a) The building of character. (b) The development of individual talents and qualities. (c) The encouragement of self-discipline. . . . [Central to the ethos of X is] the recognition of the unique qualities of each individual child and the need to develop these to the fullest extent in all fields—intellectual, cultural, spiritual, and physical. It is then X's aim to create a learning environment which regards every child as an individual within a cohesive school community and that everything should be done to give each child the opportunity to realise his full potential in terms of social adjustment, development of wide-ranging skills and the sheer love of learning, living and sharing.

2. Since education is a God-given right of each individual, Y College aims . . . to help each student to grow in his Christian life, and to develop as fully as possible in all fields as an individual and as a member of church and society. This means that
 - The Word of God is central to all aspects of College life
 - Daily group and private worship and Christian instruction by Lutheran ministers form an important part of the school life
 - Personal responsibility and initiative, and creative thought and action, are encouraged in a context of Christian freedom
 - Stress is placed on wide cultural experience, including art, music, drama, and sport
 - There is a diversity of courses, broad in scope
 - The College is co-educational, thus fostering realistic social development
 - Attention to the individual is fostered within a family atmosphere
3. Since its foundation . . . in 1893, the School has tried to do more than just pass on knowledge to its pupils. Z is concerned with preparing girls for a truly satisfying life and this is apparent from Grade 1 to Matriculation. Added to the Education Department syllabuses . . . are the personal touches of the social graces, moral standards and Christian principles. . . . A girl doesn't just "go to Z"—she belongs to a happy and important community. . . . Teachers at Z are not given to a great deal of "changing schools." This continuity of Teacher service gives a valuable sense of stability and security to the girls and is an important aspect of the student-teacher relationship.

A comparison of the stated aims of public and private schools suggests that not only do the latter provide a complex framework for the socialization of their pupils into what might be called the cultural bourgeoisie, and public schools do not; but also that private schools regard the provision of such a framework as fundamental to the working out of their overall educational project, in which socialization constitutes a recognized element of importance equal to, but not greater than, instruction in academic skills. By the term "cultural bourgeoisie," I refer to the fraction of the ruling group that controls, dominates, and, in an important sense, owns (partly through consumer patronage, but also through public, professional activity) the means of educational production—the dissemination of knowledge, ideas, opinions, and judgments.

The study of the role of ritual in the organization, planning, and execution of the educational project has been long neglected, notwithstanding Waller's early work and the suggestive paper by Bernstein, Elvin, and Peters (1966). The latter and other more recent exercises (e.g., Lutz and Ramsay 1973; Weiss and Weiss 1976), while adumbrating some useful conceptual distinctions between, for example, consensual and differentiating rituals, or suggesting the importance of nondirective cue systems, or rites of intensification, fail in my view to come to terms with the mechanisms whereby rituals achieve their effects. (There are, of course, some exceptions; Burnett's 1969 analysis of high school pep rallies in a small midwestern town in the United States and Fuchs's 1969 discussion of grade-school Christmas parties come to mind.) The present paper constitutes an attempt to analyze at least some of these mechanisms.

My discussion of the place of symbol and ritual activity in school life leans upon some of the more recent anthropological studies of this area of human behavior. By symbols, I refer to forms of representation, both verbal and nonverbal, that carry a meaning-load representative of ideas other than those directly represented in the symbolic form itself. Thus a diagrammatic representation of a tree, while directly representative of that which it depicts, can also carry other meanings, such as knowledge, life, and tradition. Symbols, as Turner (1967) has argued, are multivocal and potentially condense a variety of meanings. *Which* meanings are communicated through them depends upon the context of their use. Rituals constitute complex symbolic arrangements combining actions and ideas into a coherent and overall consistent order that at once relates to and finds its relevance in everyday practices, yet stands above and apart from these practices.

Anthropologists and sociologists often refer to rituals as constituting conventional and stereotyped patterns of action, but these, I consider, are more key devices of them, descriptive rather than definitional. I regard rituals as broadly a complex of symbols and symbolic actions, unquestionable and unquestioning (see Rappaport 1971). Above all, they constitute ideas as being in a dominant relation to action, and also as determinant of action (see Kapferer 1981). Ideas and action organized in ritual form receive a certain "sanctity," and through the course of ritual are endowed with added force in the nonritualized world for which they are understood to have practical relevance. Geertz (1965) has argued that rituals are both "models of" and "models for" society. That is, as Durkheim posited, they are representations or idealizations of the society that produces them and are models or programs for action in the social world.

Furthermore, and this is important for the following discussion, rituals and their symbols hold up ideas and actions as symbolic of ideas up for inspection. Rituals are highly structured occasions, replicable in their form; this is a common observation of most ethnographic descriptions. But not all highly structured occasions of action and those that are replicable as form can be described as rituals, although they might have ritualistic qualities. Rituals are those occasions when ideas are made to dominate and wherein participants are integrated in an unquestioning relation to the ideas that are presented. Critically, they are recognized as not part of the everyday world of practical action, although they are assumed to have, and often directly

communicate, an immediate relevance to that daily life. Thus, what Erving Goffman calls "interaction ritual" I would consider to be "ritualistic" rather than ritual, in that it is set within and dominated by modes of action and discourse constituted in the paramount reality of everyday life and does not constitute a finite province of meaning set apart from this reality. Interaction rituals, for example greetings or intersexual demeanor, receive their significance in the organization of everyday interaction settings.

Many of the behaviors within the organization of schools have ritualistic qualities and might be termed interaction rituals. Thus most secondary schools in Australia have daily formalized class periods that have a routine structure and are related to the general business of the school. The mode of organization within them is so structured as to emphasize the dominant position of the teacher as a person who bears authority in the context of the school. While these occasions might be seen as ritualistic in that they express in a relatively highly structured fashion, for example, ideas relating to the organization of behavior relevant to the school, they are not rituals in the sense of emphasizing ideas and organizing action to them in a manner that is set apart and distinctive from the routine order of everyday school life.

In the following discussion of what I regard as rituals, I concentrate upon occasions that are clearly marked off from the routine activity of school life and to some extent constitute a finite meaning province apart from the paramount reality of everyday school activity. What I propose to do then is to outline some of the ways in which ritual and ceremonial practice serves to unify and commit the members of a school to the advancement of that school's particular educational project. I take as my unit of analysis two ceremonies at a school that I shall call Denbigh, a private, Protestant, coeducational school enrolling about 700 pupils in its secondary section, grades 8 to 12.

Two Rituals

At Denbigh and, I consider, at most private schools, ritual occasions are elaborate and continually display the nature of the school's objectives, operating to delineate the school as a producer of, and its pupils as members and products of, the cultural bourgeoisie. Denbigh has a number of major ritual or ceremonial occasions. I focus my discussion upon two, the ritual that begins the school year and the ceremony that concludes it. Both have the broad character of a *rite de passage*: the former, for example, is an occasion that reestablishes children in or introduces children to their identity as schoolchildren, subject to the ideas and rules governing their membership of the school. This ceremony is conducted in conjunction with the other non-Catholic private schools, and in 1976 Denbigh provided the venue for it, the occasion being performed each year at a different school, with representatives of each of the other schools in attendance. It therefore represents membership of a particular private school in a context of shared aims and objectives. It articulates institutions productive of the cultural bourgeoisie with each other. The second major event was the end-of-year Speech Night in which the completed products, and particularly those best exemplifying the project of

the school, were presented to parents, to younger pupils, and to prominent civic leaders.

I now describe briefly some major features of these two occasions. The year-opening ceremony, called "Service of Worship, celebrating the opening of the school year," was held in the Denbigh chapel.

I will give some examples of sentiments embodied in the service, which received religious validation in the choice of biblical lessons and hymns. The lessons were from Proverbs (3:13–26; 4:7) on the getting of wisdom, and Ephesians (6:1–20) on the duties of fathers and sons, masters and servants. The hymns further reinforced the ideas of the lessons and like the lessons gave the educational project of the school religious legitimacy. They confirmed a major role of the private schools in inculcating a particular religious and social morality. The schools' practice, producing the cultural bourgeoisie as a significant fraction of the ruling group, received religious justification. In a way, the hymns enjoined participants to be grateful for their privileged position within the social world. For example,

Praise Him for his grace and favour
To our fathers in distress;
Praise Him still the same as ever,
Slow to chide and swift to bless. . . .

and

Now thank we all our God
With hearts and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things hath done,
In whom his world rejoices;

Who from our mothers' arms
Hath blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love,
And still is ours today.

Another hymn chosen by the Denbigh chaplain expressed the importance of Christian values as part of education, implying that concern for them would assist pupils into full participation in the privileges of the ruling group:

Hobgoblin nor foul fiend
Can daunt his spirit:
He knows he at the end
Shall life inherit.

It would be farfetched to assume that this ceremony is important in the production of committed and devout Christians. The kind of Protestant Christianity espoused by this school and others like it partakes more of Thomas Arnold's "muscular" variety than it does of spiritual enlightenment and dedication. Church membership and attendance is perceived, by most of the parents with whom I came into contact, as a *social obligation* rather than a centrally important aspect of daily life. What is important, rather, is the moral validation of a specific social grouping and its power and status in the wider community.

Central to this ceremony was "the act of commitment" during which, according to the handsomely printed order of service provided, "We call you now to commit yourselves with us to our responsibilities in the 1976 School Year." The chairman of the Denbigh school council then spoke:

As members of School Councils and Staff we are committed, through training the bodies, minds and senses of our students, to build up their characters, to develop their individual talents and qualities, and to encourage their self-discipline.

Later, the president of the parents and friends' association spoke:

As parents we have given our children to the care of the schools that their horizons may be widened by knowledge, experiences and friendship, and we are committed to support both children and schools during this developing year.

Set within the sacred context of a religious ceremony, the invocations of the chairman of the school council and the president of the parents and friends' association achieved considerable significance. The chairman defined the project of the school and the commitment of the teachers to it. He confirmed a central socializing function of the private school, the development of a socially well-rounded product. The statement of the president of the parents' association constituted the formal issuing of a license to the school to engage in this project: through the ritual, the school and its clients become united in a common endeavor.

The pinpointing of "knowledge, experiences and friendship" as the means by which the school "widens the horizons" of its pupils illuminates a great deal of private school practice in Australia. Friendships in particular are seen by parents as important socializing influences, and in interviews parents reiterate the opinion that their children's association with others from similar social backgrounds constitutes a major consideration in the decision to send their child to a particular school. While it might well be argued that this choice will actually narrow the child's *social* horizons, it is clear that the parents are more greatly concerned with the broadening of *cultural* horizons, the musical, artistic, dramatic, athletic, and literary activities and experiences that constitute an important aspect of the private school program, and a greatly neglected aspect of state school education in Australia. The training of "bodies, minds and senses" through "knowledge, experiences and friendship" has little relevance in state-controlled schools, which emphasize the training of the mind through the acquisition of knowledge within the confines of the classroom, while largely denying their role in nonacademic, extracurricular fields.

Denbigh's annual Speech Night in December is again a highly ceremonial occasion. However, it does not occur within the sanctified context of the chapel, but in the secular context of the Adelaide Town Hall. Hymns, nonetheless, added some religious flavor to the occasion, but the religious validation aspect of it was more subdued. It is, I suggest, significant that the end-of-year ritual should take this form, for it is principally directed to students who are passing out of the "sacred" context of the school, which has to some extent kept them apart from participation as full members of society.

The ritual marks the entry of the senior students into the outside world and thus in its form stresses the secular over the sacred.

The evening began with a rendition of the school hymn (*Ex Unitate Vires*) by all present. This was followed by a brief report from the chairman of the school council, concentrating upon financial matters, and a Christmas song by the school choir. One of the school captains then delivered an address in which he praised the educational practices of the school, concentrating upon the academic rigor of the senior school and the diversity of curricular and extracurricular activities in the middle school. Even in the senior school, he added, it was possible for students to engage in many extracurricular activities: "Those who put in the effort, reap the reward." He ended by wishing the staff "The best of luck with your results" in the matriculation exams. Here we have an exemplar of the school's product representing himself as a finished and "rounded" result of the school's educational processes, a person symbolic of the attainment of the school's project, actively engaged in establishing a process of self-reflection in a public context.

The principal in charge of the middle school, Mr. Ronson, then presented his annual report, followed by the principal in charge of the junior and senior schools, Mrs. Farrell. Prize-giving and "leave-taking" followed, with Mr. Ronson presenting the prizes and Mrs. Farrell calling the roll of those leaving the school. The printed program for the evening stated, "As those leaving have their names called, they will stand. The audience is asked to acclaim them at the end of the roll call." The school-leavers followed this with a valedictory hymn, with the refrain "God be with you till we meet again," and the audience responded with a slightly adapted version of the hymn, "Lead us, Heavenly Father, lead us," substituting "them" for "us," "they" for "we," and "their" for "our." The other school captain delivered a short oration, and the evening ended with the singing of the national anthem.

The greater part of the time was taken up by the principal's presentations of their annual reports, copies of which were distributed to the audience. In these reports the principals documented, in terms of commonsense understandings, some of the fundamental ideas that underlie the ideology and structure of the private school. As public statements they are issued in an overall social and political arena that frequently questions the legitimacy and privilege of private education. It is to be expected therefore that a key element of them is often the concern to address this broader debate. But they do so in a context of ceremony in which the products of the school's practice are held up for inspection and in themselves are taken to legitimate the ideas and methods in terms of which the private school pursues its educational purpose.

I present next two selections from the principals' report. Both imply the freedom of parental choice that characterizes private, fee-charging schools. They explicitly deny elitism and the cultural boundedness of the client population (even while drawing attention to it) and its preadvantaged position as accounting for the success of the school's educational project. Rather, they affirm the significance of the system of education that they practice; in other words, they suspend attention to the fundamental inequalities of society that make their kind of educational practice possible and probable.

The special element which the Independent Schools Board prizes above all others is the independence of our schools—not in an elitist sense at all. On the contrary. It is simply that we believe in being able to manage our schools in the way we would want to, to choose our own staffs, and to be accountable to you, the parents. . . . [Mrs. Farrell]

Sociologists would regard Denbigh as a unique social system bounded by cultural features including class, occupation, religion and locality and composed of those parents, students and teachers, integrated and patterned by an ideology of its own. Unlike a State school it is not a segment of a larger system, which because of its size is impersonal, anonymous and bureaucratic. [Mr. Ronson]

The following two statements fill out both the organizational characteristics of the school and the function of the school in socializing its members into the higher strata of the wider society, and distinguish them from those members of the population lower in status who follow the popular culture, which is becoming “increasingly brutish and vulgar.” In essence these statements emphasize the commitment of the school’s products to the “spirit” of their own community and to the school as an institution for the accumulation of cultural capital and the production of a cultural bourgeoisie.

Students’ reasons for loving their school change with their age and position within the school. By the time students enter their final two years, enjoyment and satisfaction come primarily from the courses they are studying. The fun of extra-curricular involvement, of representing one’s school in sport and other activities, are important, too, of course, but a system of priorities must be developed. Sometimes we are criticized for an apparent lack of school spirit. I do not believe this to be true. I believe students do love their school—the work, the play—and I know they are concerned with its status in the community. “School spirit” for the Senior students is a quiet, continuing thing, not necessarily a frantic, flag-waving ostentatious thing. Sometimes, of course, we can indulge in this—at the inter-school athletics, at the Head of the River, at the cricket and football. . . . [Mrs. Farrell]

We believe that it is essential that we all should be involved in some form of cultural endeavour as one means of softening the harsh outlines of modern society, which, as portrayed through the organs of “popular” culture, seem increasingly brutish and vulgar. Further, we are convinced that involvement is pointless without performance, you must have something to aim at and standards to achieve. In 1976 these standards were high and achieved. . . . [Mr. Ronson]

Ritual, School Spirit, and Solidarity

The rituals I have discussed are principally important because they are occasions wherein the private school presents to itself and outsiders the ideas and values that justify its project and practice. But there is a further dimension to ritual in private schools and its frequency and importance within them, when compared with the practice in state schools. Turner, in his analyses (1957, 1974) of tribal ritual and of ritual in modern society, has made the point that rituals frequently occur at the junctures of society, at the points of division, conflict, and change produced by the principles underlying its formation. In his analysis, rituals gather into their form the potentially divisive

properties of the social world from which they emerge, and either force a resolution or organize ideas and related action into new social directions. Rituals in private schools can be seen to function in a similar way.

In all schools the organization of teaching, the method of instruction that produces a teacher in a superior position to pupils, has within it the grounds for a generalized opposition between staff and students. Also, while private schools in their presentation emphasize communal interests and concerns, and often the social homogeneity of their school populations, there is, nonetheless, social differentiation among their clients. This is also potentially productive of division, although perhaps not so greatly as in state schools. Teachers themselves bring different perspectives on educational practice to the school, and thereby they too are potentially in conflict. The organization of extracurricular activities, for example, allows teachers to compartmentalize their instructional and socializing roles; but on occasion these two roles can be brought into conflict by the way in which the organizational structure, which allows for this compartmentalizing, operates. Thus, for example, a few teachers at Denbigh complained that their pupils' sporting and other extracurricular activities interfered with these pupils' academic learning.

The rituals of the private schools act to resolve potentially conflicting and divisive processes emergent from the organizational structure of the school. Many of the teachers, usually toward the end of the year but sometimes during the course of it, organize class-based functions that involve the suspension of the teacher's superior role position and engage him in companionable social interaction with his charges. The more elaborate ritual occasions I have described counteract divisive tendencies potential of all levels in the school organization. They can do this because they are established in contexts outside the routine everyday order of the school, and thus articulate a variety of perspectives and modes of participation in the concerted action of a ritually organized context that finds its unity in the expression of taken-for-granted and accepted ideas. A major idea expressed in these rituals is the unity of the school and clients in the community of the school. Ritual action, also being a suppression of social differentiation among the population it addresses and organizes, might in itself be seen as productive of a "false consciousness." For example, when I claim that private schools are major institutions for the production and reproduction of the cultural bourgeoisie, I do not wish to imply that this bourgeoisie is in reality a socially and politically unified group. It is, of course, internally differentiated, and its members are often opposed in accordance with the culture of critical discourse that Gouldner (1978) outlines. However, the ideology expressed through private school ritual goes some way toward overcoming some of the divisive tendencies within the community it serves, and unifying it in the context of its opposition to other classes and status groups whose children most frequently attend state schools.

Many of the divisive processes underlying the organization of these schools and the communities they serve also relate to state schools. The question therefore arises as to why more frequent ritual activity of the kind I have described for private schools does not occur within state schools. Indeed, state schools are even more greatly subject to fragmentation and

discord, arising from bureaucratic intervention, from the social and ethnic heterogeneity of their clientele, and from pressures exerted by a wider and more deeply divided community than that with which private schools have to deal. The attendant factionalizing and/or apathy of the school community and that community's lack of commitment to the project of the school would appear to make imperative the institution of solidarity-creating mechanisms, such as those provided in and by ritual and ceremonial occasions, if the educational project is not to be seriously undermined or dissipated in multitudinous, unrelated, and disconnected activity and business.

Schools, in arrogating to themselves, somewhat after the fashion of social workers, functions formerly the province of family, church, neighborhood, or mere chance, have widened the scope of their educational projects to an extent that is often unwieldy and not entirely acceptable to many teachers, nor indeed to many parents. Socialization (frequently referred to, by teachers, as child-minding) has become at least as important a function of the school as intellectual training, and, for many children—the so-called less able—even more important. In the same way, the role of the school in inculcating nineteenth-century, Veblenesque ideals of “industrial discipline” (see Lasch 1979) has been reoriented toward an often overriding concern with manpower planning and industrial gatekeeping processes, formerly the business of industrial or commercial employers.

The problem, for state schools in Australia, lies in combining all these aspects of what we broadly call formal education within a centralized, bureaucratized, publicly controlled system, in which both teachers and clients have little real power to choose, guide, and pace learning processes, and to give them direction and coherence. A major consequence of this, in state schools, is that instructional, socializing, and gatekeeping activities are inextricably mixed (and confused) at the level of the classroom. This is so because state schools, by the very nature of their bureaucratic organization, provide no other occasions or venues for learning.

In private schools, on the other hand, a nonbureaucratic organizational structure and a largely homogeneous and united clientele facilitate a compartmentalizing of the intellectual, socializing, and selection aspects of the educational project. Extracurricular activities, for example, are not permitted to encroach upon the academic arena, parental participation in school affairs is confined to the social arena, social behavior and academic performance are not fused for grading purposes, and so on. But such compartmentalizing, in itself productive of and produced by competitive individualism, and potentially productive of divisiveness and discord, is frequently and effectively dissolved in and subsumed by practices that involve the entire population of the school as a unified group, a rare occurrence in state schools. Because division and conflict centering on the classroom permeate the social order of the state school, both the unifying rituals and the resolution of conflict at higher levels, a resolution promoted through ritual, are seriously impaired. Processes leading to such resolution are continually subverted by the fact that it is the classroom context that is the most relevant at all levels of state school life.

I have argued that symbols and rituals express the awareness that private

school teachers, individually and collectively, in the organization of the school, have of their socializing function. In the private schools symbols and rituals are not simply expressive, but they are, to some extent, engaged actively in the socializing work. They constitute occasions where the ideas of the school relating to what is involved in the social production of its pupils are brought to the awareness of both pupils and others. Couched in ritual, these ideas are empowered with renewed vitality and can be reinserted in the everyday world of action centering on the school, enjoining staff and pupils to cooperate in their realization.

I have also posited that the empowering of symbols and rituals to gather up diverse ideas and to integrate them is, to a degree, dependent upon the nature of the organizational base from which they are emergent. Thus, for example, the situation of consumer patronage, characteristic of private schools, requires the generation of a higher degree of commitment to the elaborate project of the school on the part of teachers, pupils, and patrons. The drawing in of all these parties and the securing of their agreement to shared objectives and common goals are facilitated by the use of a number of strategies, only one of which, ceremonial practice, I have addressed here. Others, such as the promulgation of a full and varied extracurriculum, the institution of positions of leadership and responsibility (student council, prefects, monitors, etc.), the prominent, widespread, and often compulsory use and display of symbols of solidarity (school uniforms, crests and badges, mottoes, songs, etc.), and schoolwide events of importance, such as sporting events or annual dramatic and musical productions, although not unknown in state schools in Australia, and even less in the United States, are generally distinctive features of private schools and much attenuated in the schools of the state.

The foregoing analysis of the strength of ritual and ceremony in private schools and, largely by implication, its weakness in state schools suggests that "school spirit," much attended to by private schools themselves and demonstrated in the persistence of "old boy networks" and "old school tie" contacts among ex-pupils, is inculcated and fortified by an ever-present and earnest concern with the performance of ritual in the schools of the bourgeoisie. I would suggest further that it is just this "school spirit" that is fundamental to the solidarity of the ruling group and particularly the solidarity of the fraction of it that I have called the cultural bourgeoisie.

The intellectual, social, and occupational ambitions of this group and its children are molded within an educational framework that stresses the "wholeness" or roundedness" of a middle-class education, a framework wherein the *habitus* of the bourgeoisie—manners, morals, customs, ways of thinking, perceiving and judging—permeates all activities at both the classroom and school level. Many of the elements of the culture of this group are displayed and validated in its rituals and ceremonies. These include a Christian, in this case specifically Protestant, background; notions of character building and self-discipline; the unity of parents, children, and teachers in pursuing educational and social goals; individual freedom of choice; a constant concern with the attainment and maintenance of high standards of performance and behavior; and so on.

There are, however, no similar mechanisms utilized by Australian state schools in order to draw their clientele into a commitment to the project of the school and to develop "school spirit" and a concomitant class or group solidarity. Rather, the effect of concentrating all educational activity at the level of the classroom, or occasionally at the level of the individual pupil, is that of a centrifuge. Pupils are consistently thrown back upon the often-depleted educational resources of peer group, family, or neighborhood, socializing agencies that may be in conflict with each other and, more importantly for our purposes here, with the school. (In contrast, the symbolic order of the private school, couched as it is in schoolwide terms, has a centripetal effect.)

In this way, the attaining of intersubjective understandings of the nature of school reality on the part of teachers, pupils, and parents in state schools, is greatly hindered; loyalty and commitment to the project of the school, already tenuous for a variety of reasons, are further reduced, and whatever social order may be negotiated at the level of the classroom is continually threatened and subverted at the level of the school. Finally, the dearth of schoolwide concerns and activities, which might otherwise overcome the fragmentation of loyalties of individual members in regard to the nature of the school's project, is continually productive of dissatisfaction with and, in extreme cases, rejection of not only school, but also of the educational process itself. Principally, by denying a basic attachment to academic values, and by failing to hold those values up for collective inspection and validation through the medium of ritual and ceremonial practice, Australian state schools, perhaps despite themselves, act to ensure and legitimate the educational ascendancy of the cultural bourgeoisie.

Endnotes

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