Politics and Reasoning: Through the Eyes of Teachers and Children

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The question of the "hidden curriculum" in the classroom has been the subject of much research. While this research has sometimes focused on the belief systems and value orientations of teachers it has seldom included evaluation of their political and social ideologies. In addition, the research literature has given inadequate attention to black teachers in black classrooms. In this essay Dr. Lightfoot evaluates the relationship between the levels of political consciousness of black teachers and the social and cognitive development in black children including reasoning, reflection, and elaborative thinking. She concludes that differences in political ideology are reflected in differences in educational philosophy and practice, and that both have a profound impact on the development of children.

One of our mythical images of schools is that they are shielded from the negative, destructive influences of partisanship and politics. Schools are supposed to thrive on the spirit of universalism, commonality, and democratic ideals. Since schools have been considered outside the realm of politics, social science researchers have rarely considered the politics of teachers or, more importantly, the potential impact of teachers' social and political beliefs on the educational experience of children.

It seems to me obvious that teachers are political beings. Part of their total self-image is the quality and dynamic of their relatedness to the political and social institutions that surround their lives. The teacher's belief systems and value orienta-

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tions penetrate the classroom environment and are communicated to children through transactional patterns in the classroom (Becher, 1952; Henry, 1957; Eddy, 1967; Leacock, 1969; and Rist, 1970). This paper analyzes the political and social ideologies of two teachers and the relationship between the teachers' ideological orientations and the quality of reasoning, reflection, and elaborative thinking expressed by the children they teach. Thus, this investigation represents an integration of two themes. It seeks to explore the various levels of the teachers' political consciousness which are actualized in the hidden curriculum of classroom events; and on a second level, it analyzes the ability of children to reflect upon their social experiences in the classroom, a combination of the child's discriminating and perceptual abilities, conceptual skills, and verbal expression.

The connection between political involvement and the educational experience has been traced by Stinchcombe in "Political Socialization in the South American Middle Class" (1968). He develops the notion of a multifaceted approach to political identifications, but more importantly, shows that man's educational experience is basic to his conception of the political world as real and manipulable. The general belief that one can interact politically with an understandable and controllable world beyond one's personal experience and immediate environment, has its roots in the educational experience in which children become comfortable with written systems of social interaction. "Political attitudes and cognitions in the modern state depend on the cognitive capacity to deal with such abstract written policies" (Stinchcombe, pp. 506-509). It follows, therefore, that the kinds of critical and elaborative thinking permitted and encouraged by the teacher not only reflect the teacher's political identifications, but also are an integral part of the political socialization of children.

The focus of the study to be reported in this paper encompassed two self-contained, second grade classrooms in a predominantly black, lower income urban school. The sample included black teachers in black classrooms that were heterogeneously grouped in terms of ability levels. Children were reshuffled each year and randomly selected for placement in classrooms. In other words, children were distributed to four second grade classrooms by systematically assigning every fourth child from an alphabetized grade list to one of four teachers. Each classroom had twenty-seven children.

Teachers were selected who reflected divergent belief systems and value orientations—who defined school success differently, who had disparate educational goals for their children, and who expressed diverse identifications with various status groups of the social structure. In addition to differentiating teachers in terms

of expressed beliefs and value, I also wanted to consider the degree to which teachers *experienced* conflict between their educational goals and philosophy and the organizational structure of the school, as a significant reflection of divergent teacher styles. It seemed to me that with the added dimension of *degree of consonance between individual goals of the teacher and the allocative and transitional role of the school,* one could expect richer and more varied data.

I chose to look at black teachers in black classrooms because, for the most part, the literature has not carefully analyzed the quality of interaction between a black teacher and a black child. The unique and universal aspects of this combination have been neglected. In addition, I thought it important that this investigation of a totally black experience be undertaken by a black researcher. The perspective and perceptions of the black social scientist have not been adequately explored in the research literature.

In this era of social and political transformation and emerging black pride, black teachers teaching black children cannot avoid the peculiar political implications of their job. Almost inevitably, they must face a critical choice which goes beyond the strictly educational issue of finding the effective pedagogical approach. The extreme alternatives of that choice include teachers who see their role as militant rebels seeking to prepare children for revolutionary change in the society; and at the other end of the continuum, teachers who take an extreme accommodationist view and hope to mold their children into the image of white middle-class America. The latter teachers' demands on the children to conform to prescribed mainstream standards might be extreme exaggerations of their white counterparts in white classrooms.

In this study, I was interested in observing whether any of the symbols and strategies of black cultural identity were being transmitted and encouraged in the classroom. I wanted to explore what antecedent variables were considered significant to the success of children in the classroom, and whether different patterns of inclusion and exclusion were used by black teachers with divergent social and political identifications. What kinds of demands do black teachers make of their *own* race, and how do they anticipate their future roles in society? I expected that despite the various claims of differential aims, that black teachers would categorize children along the same traditional status dimensions; that it would be a matter of relative conformity to the white middle-class ideal of performance and success; and that any visible divergence from the predominant pattern would reflect differences in the status identifications and political philosophies of teachers.

Of course, with a sample of two and no comparisons with classrooms in which

the race of the teacher or children were different, I did not expect to be able to test any of these predictions. I did anticipate, however, that an analysis of these two classrooms would begin to delineate some of the more significant characteristics of the interactional patterns between black teachers and black children. I did not expect large differences between Teachers A and B or hope to emerge with conclusive evidence of the relationship between teachers' politics and children's reasoning on the basis of the data gathered. It was my intention, however, to explore analytic techniques and research strategies which would give a comprehensive, multifaceted picture of the teachers' conscious political identifications and would document the resultant patterns of reflection and reasoning used by children within these classrooms.

The division of this paper into two parts reflects the two major sources of data collection: The Political Ideology Interview of Teachers (Part I) and the Sociometric Interviews of Individual Children (Part II). Although I will focus on the responses of teachers and children to these two interview instruments, the research project included a series of formal and informal behavioral observations in Classrooms A and B. The observations of teacher-child interactions will not be explicitly referred to in this discussion, but they provided the researcher with a comprehensive and realistic perspective, and they will be introduced in this paper as impressional accounts for purposes of illustration.

The Setting

The modern, streamlined contours of the Blackton School are in striking contrast to the aging, wood-frame houses of the black ghetto that surround it. From the outside, the contrasting architecture makes the school appear affluent, aloof, and impenetrable—closed to the intrusions of neighborhood folk. Although there is a sprinkling of middle-class children, the large majority of children in the Blackton School come from working-class and lower-class families. For the most part, the child population has all the symbols of poverty, of life in a poor black ghetto. Of the 550 children enrolled in the Blackton School during the 1970-71 academic year, 400 children were eligible for the free lunch program on the basis of their parents' income. An estimated 300-350 were the children of welfare recipients. During lunch time, there would be an endless line of children standing against the walls in the darkened halls, waiting to get their food. As one teacher put it, "We're teaching them to wait, 'cause that's what they'll be doing for the rest of their lives." And, in fact, the long, long lines, the enduring, listless faces, the oppressive

silence did seem to resemble the lines of people waiting in outpatient clinics in a city hospital, or people waiting for their unemployment checks.

> For the simple and unfortunate fact of the matter is that our educational institution, as the socializing institution second only to the family, is primarily geared, from a sociological point-of-view, to maintaining and reinforcing the social-economic structure of our society . . . . Thus, true education, particularly at the elementary level, can become in many ways almost irrelevant rather than the main functional aim of school . . . one can document the way in which institutionalized resistance to real educational reform comes from established hierarchies whose primary function is self-perpetuation rather than education. (Leacock, 1969, p. 6)

The staff of the Blackton School consisted of twenty-five teachers, ten teacher aides, a half-time guidance counselor, and a full-time reading consultant. Most of the teachers were new to the school (fourteen out of twenty-five had been there since September), relatively young in age, and there was an even distribution between white and black teachers. In other words, it was an intentional community, strategically organized to have a relatively youthful, flexible, racially balanced staff. The teacher aides tended to be parents and grandparents of children in the school and provided a good source of communication with the surrounding community.

During the 1970-71 school year, the Blackton School was cursed with many of the universal, predictable problems facing urban schools for lower-class black children; but also the school was experiencing a very special, localized deprivation. The school had become one of the battle targets in a political confrontation between the city's School Committee and the State Department of Education, with little hope of resolution in sight. Through the efforts and funds of Model Cities and the School Committee, the Blackton School had been labeled a Resource Center. Such a designation was supposed to indicate a positive change towards making education more abundant, resourceful, and meaningful for poor black children in the Blackton neighborhood. The proposal for the Resource Center included a significant increase in material resources (audio-visual equipment, creative art supplies, reading materials); a hand-picked staff; additional supportive personnel (guidance counselors, curriculum specialists, psychologists); a parent advisory board; an alliance with the Human Relations Department of a local college. In other words, the promises were plentiful, the anticipation overly optimistic as the 1971 school year approached.

Competent, resourceful teachers were attracted to the innovative environment

that would welcome creativity and offer a chance for meaningful educational change. Many of the more conservative teachers left the Blackton School for more peaceful surroundings, to be replaced by the younger, more adventurous types. All hopes were subdued as it quickly became apparent that the funds would not be available as long as the political and educational dispute between the city and state remained unresolved.

During the 1970-71 school year, the children and teachers of the Blackton School experienced the negative repercussions of the unresolved political strife as they continued to be denied most of that which had been promised to them. I entered the school mid-year and the mood was one of disappointment and hopelessness. Expectations had been mercilessly shattered and the teachers and staff became preoccupied with having been *denied.* One of the positive effects of deprivation experienced by the teachers seemed to be a universal kind of unity and comradeship among them. The common feelings of frustration and anger directed at those who had done them wrong (often described as "The System") seemed to create a bond among them and made them less aware of some of their ideological differences. There was an outside enemy that served as a convenient scapegoat and recurred as a common theme of distrust and cynicism during many of their conversations.

Part I: The Teachers

The Selection of Teachers

Teachers A and B were chosen on the basis of their similar backgrounds and experience and divergent political ideologies. Both teachers were considered to be competent by their fellow teachers and administrators. They both had been educated in predominantly black state teachers colleges and received their Masters in teaching at predominantly white Northern schools. They both claimed to be enjoying teaching, but had ambitions of moving into other capacities as educators such as supervisors, curriculum developers, or teacher trainers. Teacher A had been teaching a total of five years and had been in the Blackton School for three years. Teacher B had been teaching a total of nine years and was in the midst of her first year at the Blackton School. She also served in the capacity of vice-principal which meant that she had to take over the everyday administrative functions when the principal was absent.

Both teachers were in their early thirties and were the parents of two children. Both teachers talked about the challenge of combining their professional and domestic functions into a graceful life pattern. Although teaching in the public

school system, both teachers sent their school aged children to private schools and openly spoke of the damaging impact of a public school experience on black children.

My perception of the ideological positions of Teachers A and B was based on a conglomeration of external signs gathered from a variety of circumstances—sharing luncheon sessions with teachers, sitting in on a couple of small-group teacher meetings, and hearing others speak of their professional and political reputations in the school and community. My early records of the selection process included impressional material about Teachers A and B that seemed to be related to their social and political identifications.

Impressions of Teacher A

Teacher A feels that she is a competent and good teacher. She referred several times to the problems "they" (her white counterparts) have with controlling their classes. Sometimes they become so desperate that they call on her for help. She attributes this to the fact that in the beginning of the year, they do not establish basic patterns of behavior. The unsuccessful teachers move too quickly ahead, assuming wrongly that the children will organize themselves; and of course, the children "walk all over them . . ." It is Teacher A's contention that all children can be dealt with and whipped into line . . . that misbehavior and chaos represent the combination of an inadequate teacher and a group of normal children (who will always, as if by nature, seek to disrupt that order).

During lunch time, Teacher A speaks of her children warmly—certainly not as objects to be controlled, but as children with sensitivities. The overriding concern, however, seems to be that they learn their correct place—that of listeners, imitators, obeyers, appreciators; and she has little tolerance for those who resist internalizing that role.

Impressions of Teacher B

Teacher B is patient, enduring, and calm. She is medium brown with a round face surrounded by a generous Afro. She is the only black teacher in the school who wears an Afro, which seems to be more than a stylistic differentiation.

Teacher B speaks in hopeless terms about her children. "They don't stand on their own . . . they have great potential for leadership, but they are so disorganized and directionless." Her discouragement reflects her expectations for the children, her recognition of their potential, and her awareness of their bitter lives. She does not relieve them of their individual responsibilities as human beings, but always sees their problems in the context of the oppressive environment in which they must survive. The school offers the children showers in the morning. Teacher B feels that this represents the ultimate degradation. "The school is taking over all of the family's roles," and refuses to let her children be taken down to the basement for showers. Teacher B interprets this as the "system's attempt to keep black folks

in a dependent, subservient position" in society. "If the school does everything for them, they'll never be able to take care of themselves." (From Impressional Notes on Teachers prior to the selection of participants in the study.)

The above excerpts illustrate divergent themes that relate to how the teacher defines her role in the educational process of children. Those issues that the teacher chooses to define as the significant problems standing in the way of the child's "natural" development certainly reflect one aspect of the teacher's political philosophy. Teacher A voiced her disapproval of those teachers who lack control in their classrooms and permit children to be disruptive and dominating; while Teacher B challenged the idea of a school system that is overly controlling in its expression of paternalistic attitudes towards the children and their families.

The selection of a sample, therefore, was not based on a documented and systematic analysis of the teachers' political ideologies but was a relatively subjective appraisal of a combination of perceptions and interactions with the teachers within the school context.[1] On the basis of this cursory evidence, it was my impression that Teachers A and B had divergent political and social philosophies. It seemed that Teacher B was more highly politicized.

1. She tended to consider the internal struggles of the Blackton School as being a reflection of the basic, structural inequities of the school system and, more broadly, a reflection of the injustices of the American society.
2. She voiced criticism of the irrelevance of traditional public school education for black children, and expressed dismay in relation to her role in perpetuating meaningless education.
3. She spoke of her efforts to organize teachers and parents into a viable political force that would demand changes in the school system.

Teacher A did not seem to conceive of her teaching role as potentially political. Her approach to teaching reflected a rather traditional mode.

1. She stressed the need for "strong" teachers who could control their children and socialize them into the middle-class norms of conduct and decorum;

[1] Of course, the selection of teachers was compromised by the practical realities of the school situation. The range of potential participants was substantially reduced because I only considered those teachers who were judged as competent by colleagues and administrators; those teachers who were black and teaching in predominantly black classrooms; and those teachers who taught the same grade level with heterogeneous groupings of children. After considering the prerequisites for my study which limited the alternatives, the apparent differences between Teachers A and B seemed almost fortuitous, and most certainly, very fortunate.

2. She did not view the within-school problems as being inextricably woven into the structural arrangements of the school system; but she tended to exclude the wider structure of the school system as irrelevant to the solution of internal problems in the school;

3. She believed that the traditional pedagogical form of teaching was appropriate and beneficial to black children.

These external symbols of social and political identification served as a means of differentiation, on the basis of which Teachers A and B were chosen. The external signs of political affiliations are often misleading, inaccurate representations of a person's *actual* socio-political identification. It is possible, therefore, that teachers who initially seem to be politically divergent on the basis of fleeting and cursory rhetoric will emerge as quite similar when their political identities are more thoroughly examined. Teachers A and B were not thought to be extreme prototypes of radical and conservative thought, but subtle combinations of more modified identities.

The Political Ideology Interview

The Political Ideology Interview was written in three parts. It was designed to analyze the teacher's deliberate and comprehensive explications of her political and social philosophy. The interview begins with general questions that refer to the teachers' political orientation and becomes increasingly personalized and individually focused.

Section I refers to the teacher's attitudes towards the social and political structure of society:

—the degree to which the teacher identifies with a middle-class status position and is willing to accommodate to it;
—the degree to which the teacher expresses criticism and resistance against the present status system;
—the saliency of political and social involvement and action to the teacher's life style.

Section II refers to the teacher's definition of her professional role:

—the teacher's attitudes towards the parents and community and how she perceives the role of parents in the educational process;
—the teacher's expectations for parents and how she perceives her status in relation to parents;

—the teacher's perception of the prevailing conflicts within the community concerning curriculum content and pedagogy within the school.

Section III refers to the teacher's expectations and goals for her children:

—how the teacher sees her role as one who prepares children for their future places in society (i.e., is school considered to be a transitional environment where children learn the appropriate roles and status positions that they are to assume in the larger society; or is school considered to be an environment that prepares children to be critical of the social and political system and encourages them to seek ways of changing it?);

—the degree to which the teacher experiences conflict between her educational goals and philosophy and the organizational structure of the school.

The Political Ideology Interview was administered individually to both teachers. The interviews were taped and the entire tape was transcribed. The teacher statements I will refer to in the text are verbatim quotes from transcripts. Although one need not be concerned about the credibility of the chosen quotations, they represent excerpts from a more complete statement, and therefore, to some degree, reflect the researcher's filtering of data. It is important to realize the possible bias one introduces in the process of *selecting* the critical data to be included in the written account. There was no additional material included in the text, but it is always possible that I committed errors of omission, neglecting important aspects of the teacher's political identity.

Another significant issue to consider is the possible bias a researcher introduces into the interaction during the interview-session. The Political Ideology Interviews were administered after all of the other data had been collected. After observing classroom interactions, numerous formal and informal conversations with the teacher, and interviewing children in their classrooms, I had a fairly definite impression of the ideological positions of these two teachers. Although I was conscious of remaining neutral during the interviews and limited my interactions to a set of prescribed questions, I obviously entered the interview with some basic preconceptions about the social and political identities of the teachers; and it is likely that my expectations had an impact on the responses of the teachers.

In *Pygmalion in the Classroom,* Rosenthal (1968) discusses the occurrence of interpersonal, self-fulfilling prophesies in the course of interactions between the investigator and the subject. He claims that it is virtually guaranteed that the researcher will enter the interaction with a prophesy or hypothesis concerning the

subject's attitudes and behavior. He warns of instances when the researcher feels the interaction has been a productive and comfortable session.

> It is interesting to note that though the influence of an experimenter's expectancy is quite unintentional, the characteristics of the more successful influences are very much the same ones associated with more effective influences when the influence is intentional. The more successful agent of social influence may be the same person whether the influence be as overt and intentional as in the case of outright persuasion attempts, or as covert and unintentional as in the case of the experimenter's subtly communicating his expectancy of prophesy to his research subject. (p. 28)

In reflecting on the political profiles of Teachers A and B, therefore, it is important to be conscious of the possible impact of research bias. Also, one must always keep in mind that both of these teachers are complicated, intricately involved human beings who relate to the social and political world in a complex, multifaceted fashion. Neither of them reflect a single stereotypic position. Any simplistic image of their political and professional identities is unrealistic and misleading to the process of understanding them.

Political Profile of Teacher A

The most resounding theme throughout Teacher A's interview was the need for people to return to the traditional, old-fashioned way of doing things.

> I think the reason why we have these problems today is because people have moved away from the old-fashioned way of training children . . . a lot of psychology . . . children get it easy. Now the thing that I dislike about teaching is that there are so many changes in education today.

Part of returning to the traditional includes the sanctity and goodness of hard work and the dedication to move beyond one's humble origins.

> The thing that bothers me is the fact that people are becoming so lazy . . . the kids today are demanding more than what they're really putting into it. You get out of life what you put into it.
>
> We didn't have any modern conveniences like the washing machine. We'd have to wash on the washboard. But I think, even though it seemed awfully hard, I think it gave us a sense of values.

Teacher A described the ideal of traditionalism as including a respect for order, control, and assimilation into the mainstream of society. If people adhere to the

legitimate political and social channels, if people are committed to their education and self-development, they will rise in the world.

You can see some little boy from my class could become the President of the United States or could become anything that he wanted to be if he had the chance. If he had the chance to go to school, I figure he could go all the way.

Those people who would abuse the freedom they have within the democratic society must be watched carefully and prevented from destroying people and property.

I think if the Panthers had too much freedom, they would do whatever they wanted to do. They would go a bit too far. They would set the world on fire, if they had a chance. They could destroy a lot of people.

The process of learning to accommodate and assimilate begins with the rigorous training of children in school.

That's where the teacher has to step in and try to teach them the necessity of getting along, because in order to have friends, you have to be nice.

Teacher A was born, the youngest child of four, on a farm in North Carolina. Each day, the four children would walk the miles along rural roads to arrive at the two-room, local schoolhouse for black children.

My school years were very, very good . . . When I first started out to school, my aunts were teachers. So I really had to buckle down and get my work done, because if I didn't, they would go back and tell my father. . . . It was a very small schoolhouse out in the country, but we had so much fun. We could take anything and have a ball with it. We didn't have a cafeteria and the teachers had to prepare food for us. So it was really good. *It was just like being at home.*

Teacher A moved from the small, rural school to an all-black high school twenty miles away from her home; and then to an all-black teachers' college in her home state. Teaching was in her blood and in the blood of all of her siblings, all of whom became teachers. Surrounded by relatives who were teachers, the profession of teaching was considered to be respectable and acceptable within the dichotomous southern culture, as well as something which inspired warm admiration. "Being a teacher is beautiful. That's what we were taught."

Teacher A's early school years seem to have had an impact on the environment she tried to maintain in her own classroom. As she described it, part of the magic of her early school life was the feeling of family, of home, of togetherness that she

had in school—a place to work hard, to be judged harshly, but also a place of warmth and fellowship, a place to get hot food prepared by loving hands. In the context of the urban public school, the intimacy is gone, replaced by large scale plants with mechanical, impersonal cafeterias; but Teacher A still tried to create a family spirit in her classroom which stressed the child's responsibility for accommodating to the classroom pattern and moving toward a reconciliation of all differences. Teacher A described how she introduced this concept to her children:

> You are part of this circle. And if you're not doing what this circle is doing, then I'll have to put you out. I try to help them understand that this room is a circle and we are all as one, a family. And in order to make this family happy, and each other happy, we all have to participate.

Individuality, therefore, is considered to be counter-productive and in opposition to the prevailing theme of assimilation and sameness. Teacher A's emphasis on cooperation and accommodation remind one of Spindler's (1955, pp. 145-156) thoughts about the shift in values in a transforming American culture. The author claims that in the present social structure, the *traditional values* which founded our society no longer serve and they tend to give way to *emergent values*. Specifically, those values that emphasized the puritan morality, individualism, achievement orientation, work-success ethic, future-time orientation have been replaced by the emergent values of sociability, cooperation with and consideration of others, conformity to the group and a hedonistic present-time orientation.

Although Teacher A stressed assimilation and cooperation (both aspects of the emergent theme), she obviously maintained many of the traditional values in her socialization of children. She emphasized the importance of hard work and superior achievement towards futuristic goals. Her approach, therefore, was a combination of a strong commitment to the traditional values, which had served her so well in her social transition upward, and an emphasis on some of the less conflicting schemes of the emergent value system. In other words, she did not approach the emergent pole on a value orientation continuum, the extreme being a total commitment to the social adjustment movement and laissez-faire attitude towards teaching.

The impact of Teacher A's social and cultural history was also reflected in the people she chose to identify herself with. Although she had inadvertently referred to herself as middle-class earlier in the interview, when asked explicitly about her status, Teacher A described herself as working-class. She professed to caring little for materialistic possessions and talked of cherishing happiness, peace of mind,

and a good life for her children. Her working class identification seemed primarily related to her wish to maintain contact with her origins, her family, and to be able to communicate with the people.

If you get into a higher class, you forget where you came from, you forget where you started from . . . you are not able to communicate with the people . . . so if you are part of the working class, you have a lot of things in common . . . you don't have to put on a front. You just can go on and be yourself.

Identification with the working class, therefore, gives Teacher A a sense of naturalness, unity, and relationship with the common folk from which she came.

Although Teacher A denied the superior status of the middle class, her philosophy and political strategies strike one as being resoundingly middle-class. When asked, for instance, if she felt strongly enough about anything to protest, Teacher A claimed that dissent should only be reflected in making a positive contribution to society; becoming involved rather than standing back and criticizing; "loving one another." Protest is not an effective nor a legitimate method of expressing dissent, and those who protest should be considered deviants in need of rehabilitation.

Her middle-class tendencies were evident when she was asked to describe any recognizable subgroups in her classroom. Teacher A pointed to those children who had not accommodated to the middle-class standards of behavior and who revealed their lower-class origins through their disruptive behavior and stylistic differences.

You'll find that children from the lower class are loud. The vocabulary is different. The type of dialogue that you hear from them. The different experiences that they have, and in the way they do things. You can tell by these things that they are from a certain class.

Even though the status differences were readily identifiable according to Teacher A, she did not condone differences within her class.

You'll find they mix very well. Even though they are from another level, they have a tendency to share each other's experiences.

In the beginning of the school year, she told of spending three solid months socializing children into the appropriate patterns of behavior. This rigorous socialization process tended to erase some of the status differences and create a sameness among the children. The norms, of course, were traditionally middle-class and lower-class children had much further to go in learning to speak softly and correctly, to stay in their seats and raise ther hands.

In Henry's (1957) account of interaction in elementary school classrooms, the significant aspect of teacher-child communications is the transmission of value orientations from teacher to child. The learning of values does not necessarily proceed through didactic teachings but through the systems of reward and punishment. The values that are transmitted depend on the teacher's value orientation, which, in turn, is determined by her social class identification. In simple societies, the educational issue is one of finding the effective pedagogical approach for inducting the children into the dominant values in the society. In complex societies with differentiated subcultures, problems may arise when the teacher and children are located at different points on the continuum of social structures and enter the classroom with conflicting value orientations.

Ray Rist (1970) has reported on an observational study in which he tried to analyze the process through which the school helps to reinforce the class structure of society. He claimed that teachers tend to construct an ideal type of the successful student that reflects their perceptions of certain attributes that make for success. Success is defined by the teacher's perception of the larger society and is based on the "normative reference group" (Merton, 1957) that the teacher identifies as being successful. In his observational study, Rist found that for the teachers, who utilized the well-educated middle-class as their reference group, those attributes most desired by educated members of the middle class became the basis of their evaluation of children. Those who possessed the middle class prerequisites were expected to succeed, while those who did not would not be expected to succeed.

> Highly prized middle-class status for the child in the classroom was attained by demonstrating ease of interaction among adults; high degree of verbalization in Standard English; the ability to become a leader; a neat and clean appearance; coming from a family that is educated, employed, and living together, and interested in the child; and the ability to participate well as a member of a group. (Rist, 1970, p. 422)

Teacher A described the children who "don't get along in school" as being from homes where the parents are careless and unconscientious about their children's upbringing. On the one hand, Teacher A perceived the children as being very mature (adults before their time) because they have had to assume much of the responsibility in raising a large family; while on the other hand, the children have not learned the "appropriate" manners and deportment of everyday living. She saw her teaching role, therefore, as encompassing the learning of those middle-class attributes that the parents were unable to provide at home.

Some parents feel that everyone has just walked over them . . . and if their child is having a problem in school, they come in fighting . . . because they are guilty . . . probably feeling that they didn't do what *they are supposed to do,* and now the child is acting up.

In an early impressional record, I described part of a language lesson in which Teacher A was teaching the children the art of making introductions, an important aspect of social conduct:

Several children wanted to perform a skit that showed their abilities in making introductions. There were two skits. The first, a girl, brings her father to the school and introduces him to Teacher A. The father inquires about his daughter's work and Teacher A says, "I guess she is doing all right. She could be a much better listener." In the second skit, a girl brings her mother to open house at the school and introduces her to Teacher A. The children's voices during these skits are inaudible, so it becomes a conversation among the three people in the front of the room. The class remains quiet, even though they can't hear what is going on.

Once again I was impressed with how the Teacher directs all the child-responses towards her. She has the children act out how they would introduce their parents to *her.* It didn't seem to be important to consider how a child might introduce his parents to another *child,* or how a child might introduce his friend to another child. Before the sketches, she said, 'I will sit at my desk' (another symbol of authority). The child and pretend-parent meekly approached the big desk, stood while the teacher remained seated. The teacher obviously played the role of the one who was in control throughout the interchange and one got the impression of fearful, shy, withdrawn parent and child.

Teacher A's adherence to middle-class standards does not mean that she does not fully recognize the injustices of society; but she adamantly believes in the democratic system as workable. In the Political Interview, Teacher A continued to assert that poor people must work to rise *within the system,* not attempt revolutionary strategies. On the other hand, she recognized the extent of discrimination against black people in the United States.

If you are a black person, there are many things against you . . . unless you are middle-class or unless you are somebody . . . the whites, they have too much power, because in order to have power, you have to have money. And they do have the money.

Teacher A realized that children in ghetto schools are getting an inferior education because they are being deprived of the material resources and cultural activities that enrich a child's education. She took a realistic view of the reasons poor parents are often not able to participate actively in their children's education and empathized with their oppressed condition.

I think especially with the type of parent we're working with, lots of times, they get bogged down with their jobs. They have a lot of children to take care of. And they just don't have the time to come to school; but they do whenever they get the chance.

Related to Teacher A's recognition of the oppressive forces in society against poor black people was her deep loyalty and commitment to her people. She described the powerful impact of her family background and education on her commitment to teaching. Her educational history and cultural heritage has given her a special source of identification with the children in her school.

The historical continuity that Teacher A expresses in her teaching relates to one of the value dimensions outlined by Thomas Green (1969) in his essay, "Schools and Communities: A Look Forward." The author refers to the concept of *traditional education,* the system of education in which the primary function of school is to preserve a capacity for social and historical recollection, a collective memory. Education becomes firmly based in a historical community with no geographic boundaries. Education is not rooted in the contemporary local community or the immediate, concrete experience. The basic goal of education, therefore, is to preserve in the consciousness of the individual a sense of connection to the past. "Every participant in the group derives his value from his position in the enduring life of the community. Here he is related to an actuality that transcends his own, that continues to be, though he ceases to exist" (Niebuhr, 1962, p. 25).

In relating to her children, Teacher A spoke of being able to understand and empathize in a way that teachers from other backgrounds cannot approach. Teacher A said that her training in a black school not only inspired her to work hard, but gave her a greater sense of commitment to the task of teaching black children. As she described her special cultural connections, she obviously enjoyed that sense of continuity and relished her superior knowledge and competence.

It stems from your background, your foundation, and the type of training that you have. Now I feel that I did have a background, as far as my dedication, because I did come from a black school. . . . The motto (of the teacher who was most important in my training) was teach richly every day . . . and I found that by listening to her, working hard, and being dedicated, I came out on top.

Political Profile of Teacher B

During the Political Ideology Interview, Teacher B expressed her thoughts and feelings in an articulate, deliberate fashion that seemed to indicate the saliency of political criticism and action in her life. The questions did not seem to awaken un-

expected issues in her mind, but seemed to be consistent with the kind of inquiries and conflicts that arise within her as she faces the world and her work each day. To a few of the questions, which related to the teacher's commitment to political change (i.e. "Is there any issue that you can think of now which you feel strongly enough about that you might become involved in some kind of demonstration about it in the future?") Teacher B's expression communicated feelings of impatience—the answer should have been obvious to anyone who had experienced even minimal contact with her. She obviously perceives herself as a highly political being who responds critically and realistically to the injustices in society.

Her sense of political realism was inspired by the death of Martin Luther King, whose assassination marked the end of her idealistic hopes for peaceful change, and initiated feelings of urgency and pragmatism in relation to political action.

It opened my eyes. Up until then I had been thinking unrealistically. . . . I had to get myself together in order to help people get themselves together.

Instead of non-violent demonstrations, negotiations, and peaceful pleas, black people had to begin to respond to a violent, oppressive society with militant protest.

The death of Dr. King was seen as a catalyst, a dramatic event in the lives of black people that kindled a fire that had been quietly burning for years. Teacher B claimed that it made people more cognizant of their frustration and powerlessness and forced them to begin to become masters of their own lives. His death brought despair . . . a despair that inspired action, mastery, and unity.

I could see it in my kids at school. Everbody had changed. Everybody was together. It changed me. I knew that I had something more to do.

The new awakening of spirit and action in black folks was described by Teacher B as a class-related phenomenon. The middle-class blacks remained relatively untouched by the new political thrust following Dr. King's death, in their attempts to protect their comfortable status positions. Teacher B claimed that she experienced isolation in the midst of her middle-class friends. She accused them of savoring their lofty position and expressed the belief that middle-class blacks should use their status as positions of leverage and power, not as an excuse to opt out of the political and social struggle.

Teacher B had *chosen* to disengage herself from the overriding middle-class norms that prohibit direct action and she was experiencing a self-determined isolation from the mainstream of society.

I think I overwhelm an awful lot of people by trying to fight the system . . . middle-class people are really happy and satisfied with the position they are in, and they want to remain in that status. They don't want anything to come and disrupt it.

In denying her association with complacency and conformity, when asked to say how she would identify her social status, Teacher B claimed to be working-class Not only did this description of herself serve as a means of dissociating herself from the middle class, it also helped her relate to her own past. To claim a working-class status seemed to be a symbol of historical continuity and cultural identity.

I lived in a real big ghetto, in a housing project. I was not really hungry or anything, but I know what it is to be a welfare recipient . . . and see my mother sneak out to work . . . I think I can identify quite easily with people who are lower-class. People who are really trying. *My family is the working class.*

Teacher B admitted that on the basis of her education and economic status, most of her friends and associates would describe her as middle-class; and that she could play either role successfully, relating to both worlds and identifying with various parts of each. She chose, however, to think of herself as working-class, "I think that's something I decide." The fact that she was able to choose was, in itself, a reflection of her advantageous position.

Part of Teacher B's identification with the lives of the working class was reflected in her attitude towards parent involvement and participation in the educational process of their children. Teaching was not considered to be solely within the lofty province of the professional, learning was not reserved for inside classrooms; the concept of teaching was far-reaching and inclusive and involved the active and critical participation of parents.

No matter what you do as teachers, or what is done as a community, or what is done in a school system, *the parent is the first teacher.* Unless black parents come together, there's not going to be much hope for our children. They've got to reinforce, they've got to motivate, they've got to be concerned.

Teacher B repudiated the prevailing myth that poor black parents do not seem to express an interest in their children's education. Charters, outlining some of the more important differences in ideology between the middle class and the lower class, refers to parental attitudes towards schooling.

School, study, and academic achievement, in the middle class, are viewed as instrumental to the attainment of occupational aspirations and 'success'; in the lower class, they are either irrelevant or only vaguely instrumental, representing primarily a delay in entering the

labor market and in establishing one's status as a nondependent adult. (Charters, 1963, p. 732).

In contrast, Teacher B felt that if parents were questioned about their priorities, education would be the most important issue in terms of their children's lives. For most parents, however, the educational institution has been a threatening monolith, not only in the sense that the power of knowledge makes them feel inadequate because they are uneducated, but because every bit of communication from the school comes as a negative appraisal of their child, a destructive comment about their lives.

> You can't always get them to conferences, but you can understand why. Each time you call them, it's because their child is bad and who wants to hear that, especially if he's got five or six kids.

According to Teacher B, the insensitive, paternalistic policies of the school system encourage parents to develop an unresponsive, apathetic attitude towards participating in the educational process. Those few parents who do become actively involved, Teacher B described as being a conservative force that doesn't recognize its potential power and is willing to accept and accommodate to whatever is offered.

Teacher B's interpretation of the school as a threatening, overwhelming monolith in the face of fearful, timid parents is reminiscent of Merton's (1959) distinction between attitudes of "cosmopolitanisms" and "localisms." The cosmopolitan relates to written systems of social interaction; while the local reacts in terms of interpersonal systems. The cosmopolitan regards the world beyond his immediate experience as understandable while the local perceives it as unpredictable and mysterious. The cosmopolitan can conceive of ways of changing and developing the local system; while the local tends to see the concrete system as inevitable. In Merton's terms, the parents described by Teacher B are limited and inhibited by their attitudes of localism. They feel unfamiliar with concepts of social causation and the manipulation of social institutions; have a tendency not to stray from the immediate and concrete; and feel powerless in terms of effecting change.

According to Teacher B, parents, therefore, need to be welcomed, accepted, and seduced into becoming involved in the school. The burden of proof is on the schools to develop strategies for including parents in a meaningful way. Their role must be seen as an integral and necessary part of their children's education. The teachers must work towards helping parents gain a feeling of importance and competence by providing them with certain skills and knowledge.

In response to the question that asked what three important changes she would make in the school, if she had the power, Teacher B mentioned:

—restructuring the curriculum to make it relevant to black kids;
—involving parents in the educational process;
—providing enough resources and materials to permit the teacher to do a competent job.

All of the changes she mentioned reflected her basic dissatisfaction with teaching. She described the deep pain she experiences when she realizes the integral part she plays in an educational process that is basically oppressive and meaningless to black children. As a teacher within this school, Teacher B felt she was condoning and supporting the injustices the system perpetuates. In *Teaching and Learning in City Schools,* Leacock (1969) claims that: "the teacher reflects the dominant values of society in subtle ways and the teaching and learning in public schools is compounded by stereotyped attitudes towards low-income minority group children" (p. xiv). As she described them, Teacher B's goals did not appear to be mirroring the ideals of middle-class decorum and deportment. She did not appear to be committed to the deliberate socialization of her children into the norms of the middle-class mainstream, but sought to give them a sense of their own competence and individuality.

Teacher B described black children as being far more creative and imaginative than their white suburban counterparts. She mentioned her primary educational goal as being to inspire in children a sense of autonomy, independence, and individuality; and quickly followed that by revealing what she described as her major weakness—the inability to mold independence into constructive, orderly energy.

I want them to be individuals and I want them to think positively of themselves. I've kind of worked from there to bring them out and let each one feel as though they are important . . . . I've never learned how to curtail it, to develop it into something good.[2]

In speaking of the positive aspects of the black revolutionary spirit today,

[2] According to Inkeles (1966), the process of socializing children into socially responsible and socially valued roles does not exclude "the possibility that the most creative way of meeting the demands of a given social institution may be to reject the situation as it presents itself, to insist on a new deal, and to forge new roles and new styles of life" (p. 279). Social obligation may include developing roles that are not commonly assigned by the socio-cultural system.

Teacher B expressed a hope for the future of black children. During her many years of teaching, she had noticed a change in the self-concept of black children.

The difference in the ten years that I've taught is the fact that when I started to teach, the little black child would just kind of hang his head and never get up in front of the room, never get to say anything. I think that through this kind of black revolution, that it has made them feel . . . everyone here is black and beautiful. Not just to say that you are beautiful because you are black, but you're beautiful in other ways, and you can be beautiful by doing certain things.

Teacher B's analysis of the visible change in the self-concept of black children is an indication of the importance of early socialization into a pattern of political and social orientation. In "Patterns of Political Learning," Jennings and Niemi (1968, p. 445) state that "political orientations begin early, develop rapidly although with varying speed, and reach stable, nearly adult levels by the end of elementary school." *Early* socialization tends to be most concerned with the learning of appropriate cultural norms and motivations. The authors claim that the basic commitment and identification with the political and social structure and its dominant values are not only formed in the early years, but for the most part, they are enduring through adult life. (Of course, the political role shifts dramatically when there is a transition from the restricted juvenile status of few political responsibilities to a status defining the normal expectations of adult citizenship.) Teacher B's awareness of the impact of the black revolutionary spirit on the development of the children's political and social identities was probably not overstated. It would seem that the identity of black children (as opposed to adolescents and adults) would be most transformed by the changing political realities.

In Classroom B the emphasis on doing things, learning, and accomplishing was seen as an integral part of the child's self-concept. One could not feel beautiful unless one felt competent. Teacher B stressed the importance of using school as a place of learning and work, a place to gain a sense of competence. Believing that the environment away from school lacks intellectual challenge for ghetto children, Teacher B spoke of the school as a place where children must learn to *work.*

. . . most of the things that I do are geared some ways into the academic aspects because our children lack so much . . . because when they leave me I know that's the end until they come back to me in the morning. *They play at home, but they've got to work here.* I do push them a little hard.

Summary

The political profiles of Teachers A and B sketch images of two women who were aware of their blackness with relation to the pedagogical and social task of preparing children for the outside world. Their perceptions of their behavior within the classroom expressed a profound realization of the positive and negative aspects of the children's lives outside the classroom. Teacher B consciously focused on work and defined the classroom as a place for *intellectual* stimulation and *informational* transactions because she viewed the children's lives as rich in worldly-wise experiences and poor in conceptual inquiry. Teacher B's political and social goals correspondingly underscored the need for children to feel intellectually competent as part of a more general positive identity and as a preparation for responding critically and actively to the injustices of the society.

Throughout the Political Ideology Interview, Teacher A's theme was one of traditionalism, hard work, cooperation, and orderliness; and within the classroom, she emphasized those aspects of the classroom experience which prescribed good deportment, impeccable manners, obedience, and submission to the authority of adults. Her strategies for socializing children into definite, procedural patterns and behavioral styles were consistent with her political belief that lower-class children had to be primed and deliberately prepared for entry into the larger society and that the basis of this preparation was learning to behave in a socially acceptable, law-abiding fashion. Teacher A's judgmental entry into every sphere of the child's life was a deliberate intention to modulate individualism and autonomy and to establish within children a commitment to becoming assimilated into the mainstream of American society.

Part II: The Children

The Interview: An Adult-Child Interaction

Teachers A and B voiced divergent political and social ideologies that were reflected in their interactions with children. It was my expectation that the differences in teacher-child communication patterns would be related to differences in the way children in Classrooms A and B would respond to the Sociometric Interview. Briefly stated, I anticipated that there would be a qualitative and quantitative difference in the ability of children to offer reasons for their sociometric choices; that reasoned responses would be less plentiful and relatively homogene-

ous in Classroom A, and that children would have more individualistic styles of perceiving their environment and a greater eagerness to participate in the interview in Classroom B.

The sociometric interview was administered to each child individually. The children were second graders, most of whom were seven and eight years old. By the time of the interviews, children had grown accustomed to my presence in the classroom, and, for the most part, I was not seen as a strange and threatening intruder, but as a rather familiar, comfortable face. I had the impression that, in some respects, the relationship that children established with me was patterned after the mode of interaction they maintained with their teachers. In other words, in Classroom A, where the teacher maintained a superior, authoritarian attitude towards the children, one could identify a more formal, suspicious approach towards me on the part of the children. In Classroom B, where the teacher tended to encourage a more informal, less inhibited atmosphere, children tended to relate to me as an adult friend, a pleasant distraction, someone to seek attention from.

One is impressed with the saliency of first meetings and their effect on the quality of future interactions. I am certain that the differences in the way children in Classrooms A and B perceived and responded to my presence was directly related to the style and content of the introductions made by the teachers when I entered their classrooms for the first time. I reflected on the first acquaintance with children in Classroom A in an early Impressional Record:

As I entered the classroom, Teacher A introduced me to the children, 'Can you all stand and say hello to Mrs. Lightfoot?' In simultaneous movement and choral speaking, the children rose obediently from their seats and said, 'Hello, Mrs. Lightfoot.' The teacher offered no further explanation of my presence. As I walked to the back of the room, I walked through the traditional rowed-up arrangement of desks. There were five rows of desks and chairs with five children in each row. The children's seats were stationary and boys and girls seemed to be mixed throughout the room. The room was absolutely noiseless. Immobile faces looked up at me as I passed to the back of the room. Some kids swiveled in their seats to check out the new person and a few children fixed long, sustained stares in my direction. But the whole atmosphere, as I immediately perceived it, felt inhibitory and silenced. The children were obviously curious about me, but they didn't express their curiosity fully. There were a few whispers and the kids who left their work to attend to me obviously left their primary task at *their own risk*, . . . During the lesson, Teacher A made intermittent refences to me, most of which began 'Can you show Mrs. Lightfoot how well you can do . . . ' or, in a more threatening tone, 'I don't want Mrs. Lightfoot to see any slouching bodies, sloppy desks . . . ' Children glanced secretly over their shoulders at me—another oppressor. I smiled

to show my good intentions, my friendly nature, but their faces were untrusting, solicitous, and fearful. To them, I was clearly in allianee with the teacher.

My introduction into Classroom B was strikingly different:

I entered Teacher B's classroom right after the children returned from lunch. The transition was lengthy and it took quite a while for the children to take off their coats, get seated, and settle down. Lots of children, all girls, approached me; physically touching and rubbing against me; marvelling at my clothes, my dress, my earrings; and generally trying to get tight with me real quick. The boys surveyed me from a distance in a partially disinterested, partially jealous fashion. One girl, Brenda, having learned my name first, acted as if she owned me, would shove people away when she wanted to come close. The introduction of me to the class was very different from Teacher A's class. 'All right, when you get settled, I want to introduce you to this lady who you have been wondering about . . . This is Mrs. Lightfoot, do you want to welcome her? .. . Would you tell us, Mrs. Lightfoot, why you are here . . . what you are doing.' Caught off guard, I mumbled something about wanting to get to know them, seeing how they are with one another . . . But in retrospect, my reasons for being there must have sounded rather confused and aimless. They accepted my jumbled purpose with silent stares, some approving comments, and almost immediately began approaching me for attention and help.

Although the relationship that children established with me resembled many aspects of the socialized patterns of interaction they maintained with their teachers, in both classrooms children did not see me as the ultimate authority, the powerful figure, but one who was always secondary to the teacher. I was supportive of the teacher, I was an adult, but I was not the boss. My presence did not have the pervasive, awe-inspiring impact of the teacher-presence. In my interactions, children in Classroom A did not seem to wear the same masks of disciplined obedience and submission that one observed when they approached their teacher.

Some of the children can't yet forget me as I sit silently behind them. Some whisper to each other about my every move; Angela can't keep her eyes off of me, just gazing with a fixed stare; some of the boys check me out when they are misbehaving during the T's absence to see if I will allow it; Mabel turns around and flashes me a big smile every now and then. I'm sure that many more would like to establish some form of interaction, but the structure and rules of the classroom will not permit it; and I discourage a real communication between us because I fear it would threaten the established climate of the classroom.

Even though children in Classroom B were initially more comfortable with my presence and felt no reluctance in approaching me, during the course of my observations they got rid of many of the prescribed patterns of interaction that children

often assume with an adult figure who is a teacher, and began to relate to me as an adult-friend.

In both classrooms, therefore, the relationship that children had established with their teacher appeared to be mirrored in their interactions with me. There was a qualitative difference, however, as children took this opportunity to relate to a relatively powerless, non-influential adult with fewer barriers and hesitations. It is my opinion, therefore, that the responses I received during the interviews with children were somewhat inhibited by the mere fact that they represented an adult-child interaction, but that I probably received less cautious, wary responses than a teacher interview might have elicited.

The Sociometric Interview was introduced to the children differently in Classrooms A and B. Teacher A briefly explained to the class that I would be calling individual children to the back of the room, "to ask some questions. . ." while the other children were "to continue with their work." Although I had hoped that Teacher A would continue with the regular schedule of classroom activities, she seemed to take this opportunity to have a relatively uneventful, non-strenuous day. The day proceeded abnormally in the sense that periods of the day were not rigidly defined and Teacher A made little effort to formally teach a lesson. Most of the day, children were instructed to work on their own . . . so that the interviews I was conducting in the back of the room became the focus of much attention, as children strained to hear another child's response or pleaded for the next turn.

Most of the children in Classroom A approached the interview as if it represented the positive aspects of individual attention and the negative aspects of a test. Some seemed relieved and pleased at the end when I offered words of encouragement and praise,—"Thank you very much, Mabel. You did a very fine job and answered all the questions. That was a lot of help to me . . ." I was careful to introduce the interview as a *game,* "We are going to play a Guess Who Game. I'll ask you a question and you can choose anyone you want to in the whole class. You can even choose yourself if you want to"; but, many of the children still perceived it to be a test and inquired about their success on it.

In Classroom B, activities continued as normal. Children clamored for their turn and snooped around to find out their friends' responses. Several times I had to keep children from milling around the desk and listening in. A few times, the child being interviewed was obviously influenced by the social pressure of classmates who wanted their names to be mentioned by the respondent. Everyone wanted to play the *game.* It was seen as fun—a chance to get individual attention, a chance to be an authority on one's own choices, a chance to dominate a social ex-

change with an adult. Because the children perceived the game as such a rare privilege, the teacher was even able to use it as a disciplinary technique. "Those folks who don't sit down and be quiet won't get to play the game."

When one considers the responses given by children, it is important to realize the pervasive influence of the interactional climate surrounding the sociometric interviews. Not only did children in Classrooms A and B perceive of my presence differently, have divergent conceptions of my relationship to authority and power in the classroom; but the interview was awarded a different significance by the teachers as they introduced it into the classroom setting. In Classroom A, I was seen as an extension of teacher authority, administering a relatively informal, pleasant test in a highly irregular, highly positive individual setting. In Classroom B, I was playing a game with high stakes, that provided an opportunity for participation and dominance in an adult-child interaction. For a few moments, the children became the all-knowing authorities, the choosers, the decision-makers. In summary, the established patterns of relating to the teacher, the child's perception of the power and authority of the interviewer as well as his perception of the significance of the interview to his fate in the classroom, all combined to influence the course of the interview—the child's approach to the task, the prevailing ethos during the interview, the discrete responses given to questions, and the process of reasoning used to arrive at his choices.

The Sociometric Interview

The Sociometric Interview (see Table 1) had sixteen questions and was divided into two parts. In Section I, I was interested in finding out how *a child perceives the relative status positions in the classroom.* The questions ask the child to guess which one of his classmates occupies a positive or negative leadership position with regard to a variety of status continuums: achievement, popularity, decorum, personal attributes, and teacher preference.

The *Guess Who* form implies that, in actuality, status positions exist (i.e., there is a *best* reader, a *most* liked child, a *most* trustworthy classmate), and that children are cognizant of and responsive to the hierarchical patterns. In other words, one assumes that there is not an equal distribution of ability and talent throughout the classroom; and these discrepancies among children are accentuated by the teacher's recognition and reinforcement of individual differences. Although this series of questions assumes that a hierarchical pattern exists in the classroom, who or what creates and sustains the pattern remains unclear—teacher preference and reinforcement, a child's superior (and undeniable) personality or intelligence,

unquestioned fatalism. One is asking for the child's discriminative judgments about the status positions that have visibly emerged in the classroom.

In the first section of the Sociometric Interview, therefore, one is asking for a child's observations of an established social structure. Section II asks for the *child's preferences for individual relationships* that express different dimensions of his existence within the classroom. The child is being asked to designate which of his classmates he would choose as companions, friends, playmates, leaders, confidants, and tutors.

In other words, Section II becomes a personal statement about desired relationships—a series of wishes and hopes. Section II says, if you had complete control and power over your existence, who would you choose to surround yourself with? Section I, on the other hand, asks for observations of a reality. Whether or not you are adequately pleased with your status in the classroom, who do you perceive as being at the top of the heap; who can dominate the classroom; who receives the trust of the teacher?

For each of the starred questions in Sections I and II, I asked the child to give the reasons for his choice. These *why* and *how come* questions were included in

TABLE 1
The Sociometric Interview

Section I: The Guess Who Game?
1. Guess who is the best reader in the class?
*2. Guess who the teacher can trust most when she leaves the room?
3. Guess who is the prettiest girl in the class?
4. Guess who is the handsomist boy in the class?
*5. Guess who most of the children like. . . who does everyone like?
6. Guess who has the hardest time staying in his seat?
7. Guess who the teacher usually chooses to do the jobs around the classroom?
8. Guess which child misbehaves when the teacher leaves the room?
*9. Guess who is the best class leader. . . which child can tell other children what to do?
10. Guess who is the smartest child in the class?
Section II: Personal Preference Scale
*11. Tell me the name of the boy or girl who you would like to sit beside you in school.
*12. Who would you choose to help you with your schoolwork?
*13. Who would you choose as president of the class?
*14. Who would you tell a very special secret to?
*15. Who would you choose to play on your team on the playground?
*16. Who is your best friend in the class?

*The asterisks indicate that the interview question was followed by an attempt to find out the child's *reasons* for making the choice.

the interview in order to get some indication of the differences between Classrooms A and B.

1. How many children are able to give reasons for their choices?
2. How do the children generally respond to questions which require that they form their own judgments and then articulate those judgments in a response form?
3. Which choices are children most easily able to support with a reasoned response, and which choices the children seem to have the greatest difficulty in articulating their reasons?
4. What kinds of rationale and what process of reasoning do children use in arriving at their choices?
   a. In Section I, what is the *evidence* they use to support their designation of someone as filling a certain status position?
   b. In Section II, what individual *qualities* of the chosen one are the source of attraction on which the respondent's choice is based?

Part II of this paper will not be concerned with the locus or distribution of status choices made by children. The focus of this inquiry will be concerned with the children's responses to questions which asked them to give a rationale for their status choices. In other words, we will consider the children's ability to discriminate differences among their peers, to isolate reasons why these differences might exist, and to articulate those reasons verbally.

The Classroom Environment: Impact on Perceptions and Expressions of Children

Because the Sociometric Interviews were preceded by several occasions of formal and informal observations, I was conversant with the established patterns of teacher-child interactions in the classroom by the time I interviewed each child individually. I was no longer a naive observer. It was extremely difficult to find fresh and spontaneous ways of perceiving the classroom environment. In a sense, I was encumbered with the knowledge of previous experience.

This knowledge and familiarity became useful, however, when I began to anticipate the process and product of the Sociometric Interview. The interactional patterns that I had observed between teachers and children, and among children, defined a certain set of expectations about the way children might respond to the interview. I approached the interview with several expectations of discrepancies between Classrooms A and B which became the basis of general hypotheses.

I hypothesized that in response to the *why* questions of the interview, children in Classrooms A and B would express themselves very differently. I anticipated

that children in Classroom A would show a reticence in giving evidence for their choices; and that those children who were able to voice the reasons for their preferences, would tend to give superficial, cursory judgments. Two major patterns of teacher-child interactions in Classroom A led to my expectation of homogeneous inhibited child responses.

1. The authoritarian attitude of Teacher A demanded complete conformity and obedience. Within this highly rigid classroom environment, much of the children's energies were directed towards pleasing the teacher. Part of gaining teacher approval and recognition might be supporting teacher choices and succumbing to the status choices she initiates.

2. The lack of mobility in Classroom A offered little chance for social interaction among the children. Within the classroom, therefore, children did not have the opportunity to form strong, self-confirmed opinions about each other, but were forced to rely on minimal evidence of the more obvious human characteristics or rely on the preferences and prejudices of the teacher. One would expect that with few opportunities for unstructured nondirected social exchanges among children, child-child relationships would lack depth and endurance; so that children would be more easily influenced or swayed by the teacher's opinions about which children were deserving of leadership positions.

In *Sociometry in Group Relations,* Helen Jennings (1959) described the sociometric patterns in a classroom where a premium was placed on obedience and keeping quiet; where permission had to be granted for such minor things as sharpening pencils; and where the physical arrangement of desks and permanently assigned seats minimized social interaction.

> The atmosphere may have been so hostile to social contacts that no personalities could make themselves known. Even the usual forms of communication for which children risk penalties appeared to have been inhibited. The picture seems to suggest that when children do not value what the teacher emphasizes and at the same time can not for one reason or another express their predicament, they tend to 'sit out' the regime to which they are subjected. (p. 86)

Although the teacher described by Jennings seems to reflect an extreme, authoritarian position, one recognizes the impact of the classroom environment on the structures of interrelationships among the children.

In Classroom B, it was my expectation that the reasoning, in response to the why questions, would be more varied, individualistic, and elaborate. My hypothesis that pupil choices in Classroom B would show greater diversity and a wider range of re-

sponses was based on my observations of interactional patterns within the classroom.

1. In her classroom, Teacher B was conscious of her attempts to encourage individualism and autonomy among the children. (Teacher B often mentioned that one of her primary educational goals was to instill in her children a sense of self-mastery, individuality, and self-expression. She claimed that her major problem in teaching was finding a technique for funnelling all of this newly-implanted individual energy into productive work—finding a way to both encourage autonomy and initiative, and at the same time, have workable order in the classroom.) Although Teacher B was inconsistent in her support of self-expression and individualism, and had not developed the necessary strategies for combining child-autonomy with functional collectivism in the classroom, the children seemed to be receiving a smattering of encouragement for perceiving of themselves and others as separate, distinct individuals with different needs and talents. It would seem that the encouragement of independent thought and individual expression by the teacher (even with her flagrant inconsistencies and self-contradictions), might increase the likelihood of children becoming acquainted with their own strengths and talents, as well as the special competencies of their classmates. A more intimate knowledge of each others' "specialness" could lead to more individualistic, idiosyncratic responses on the part of children.

2. In Classroom B, the teacher permitted children to circulate and talk to their neighbors. The classroom was always in motion and noise level ranged from audible whispering to deafening roars. I would anticipate that the greater opportunity for social interaction among children would help to create an atmosphere for forming more enduring, perceptive child-child relationships. Because the children in Classroom B would have direct interactions with a greater number of children (as opposed to Classroom A, where social interactions within the classroom existed at a deviant, secretive level and were limited to communications with children sitting close by), they would have more of an opportunity to consider a broader range of pupils from which to make their choices on the sociometric interview.

> When they have been given such freedom of choice, the evidence points to growth in social interaction as well as in personal maturity. Children begin to develop the capacity to see their own and their classmates' qualities in relation to one another. (Jennings, 1959, p. 74)

Briefly stated, I expected that the quality and sensitivity of responsiveness to interview questions would be related to:

—the authority relation between teacher and child;

—the degree of mobility and social interaction permitted and encouraged in the classroom.

I anticipated that in Classroom A, where there tended to be a high degree of autocratic decision making by the teacher and minimal opportunity for social interaction, children's responses would reveal a greater tendency for reasoning to be inhibited and superficial. In Classroom B, I expected that the more democratic authority relation between teacher and child and the high degree of movement and social interaction among children would lead to a higher level of sophistication and individuality of the reasoned responses.

In Response to Why

In the process of interviewing, one could not immediately identify differences in the pattern of choices given by children in Classrooms A and B, but one could characterize differences with regard to the way children approached the task of reasoning:

—the ability or willingness to give reasons for their choices;
—the range and variety of reasons offered for each choice;
—the level of sophistication and discriminating judgments used in the process of reasoning.

In Classroom A, very few children responded to the *why* and *how come* questions. Most of the children tended to respond quickly with the name of someone in the class; but most of the answers seemed stereotyped and thoughtless. If they were asked to give reasons for their choices, most would shrug their shoulders and say, "I don't know." The few reasoning responses that were offered, tended to be unimaginative. "Why would you tell Mabel a very special secret?" almost always brought, "Cause she won't tell nobody" or "Cause she can always keep a secret." When I asked, "Why would you like Claude to sit beside you?" most of the respondents said, "Cause he's my best friend."

Although both of the above responses seem reasonable and sufficient, they were offered by a small minority of the children and they were strikingly uninspired and standard. I was impressed with the lack of struggle or challenge that was evident in the children's approach to the task of giving a rationale for their choice. Sometimes embarrassed and bashful, other times bored and resigned, they would claim immediately that they had no response to offer.

Children in Classroom B responded very differently when they were asked for

the rationale behind their choices. Their interviews seemed to be more spontaneous, more individualized, and more enjoyable. The children seemed to enjoy having the chance to assume the roles of authority and informant. They enthusiastically tackled the *why* questions. Generally, they labored longer in trying to choose a classmate's name; and finally after arriving at a judicious, measured choice, they were ready to give the evidence, the rationale for their decision. I sometimes had the impression that the deliberate, unhurried approach evidenced by many of the children during the interview was a calculated attempt to extend the pleasure of the interview. Some children gave extensive, complicated reasons for their choice; others wanted to give the full story with no omissions.[3]

When one looks at the quantitative difference between Classrooms A and B with regard to the reasons offered for one's choice, it becomes evident that many more children gave a rationale for their choice in Classroom B. Table 2 presents the number of pupils who gave reasons in response to the eight questions that required elaboration of one's rationale. In both classrooms, there were twenty-seven respondents. In most cases more than three-quarters of the children in Classroom B offered reasons for their choices; while in Classroom A in only one instance was more than half of the class able to find reasons for their choice.

TABLE 2
Number and Percentage of Children Giving Reasons for Their Pupil Choices to the Following Questions Sociometric interview

	Classroom A		*Classroom B*	
	Number of Children	*Percent*	*Number of Children*	*Percent*
Questions				
2 Most trustworthy	6	22	23	85
5 Most likeable	3	11	20	80
9 Best leader	3	11	21	78
11 Seating companion	12	44	22	82
12 Tutor	10	37	23	85
13 President	5	18	12	63
14 Confidant	14	52	22	82
15 Playmate	6	22	21	78

[3] In differentiating between the responsiveness of children in Classrooms A and B, once again, I recognize the possible impact of experimenter bias. The Sociometric Interviews were administered after I had spent a great deal of time in both classrooms and I brought to the interview a number of preconceptions and anticipations about how children might respond. When considering the quality of interaction during the interviews, therefore, it is important to remember the researcher as a potential source of biased intervention and interpretation.

It is evident that children in Classroom A experienced the most difficulty in giving evidence for their choices to the "Guess Who" questions in Section I (questions #2, #5, and #9) which required that they articulate their judgments of why particular children are rewarded with a high status position (i.e., why a child might receive the teacher's trust, why a child might be liked by everybody, and why a child might become the class leader). When these children were asked to comment on their reasons for choosing someone as friend, companion, playmate, they were somewhat more successful at providing some measure of justification for their choices. It seems that the children in Classroom A could more easily offer reasons for their personal preferences for individual relationships than give reasons for the hierarchical status patterns that existed in the classroom. It was easier for them to create ideal relationships than make observations about the environment which surrounds them every day.

In distinguishing between Classrooms A and B, it is not only important to recognize the differences in the ability to respond to the reasoning questions; but also to consider the range and variety of reasons. It would seem that a more varied range of responses would indicate a greater degree of individual, critical expression on the part of children—a more differentiated perception of the classroom environment, and more sophisticated reasons for developing relationships with other children. A sameness of reasoning would delineate a uniform, superficial response to the people and environment that surround children in the classroom.

In order to get some indication of the variety of reasons given by the children in both classrooms, I developed twelve categories of reasoning which were designed to encompass the range of response patterns that were evident during the interviewing. It was not assumed that all of the categories would be equally appropriate for each of the questions. Some of the categories of reasoning do not seem to be adequate or realistic responses for certain questions while others appear to be naturally responsive to those questions. It seems to me, however, that the greater the number of categories used in response to a single question and the more varied the range of evidence, the higher the level of discriminatory judgment and individual expression among the children in the classroom. The *Categories of Reasoning* and examples of the children's actual responses recorded during the Sociometric Interview are presented in Table 3.

When categorizing all of the children's reasoning responses in Classrooms A and B, it is possible to compare the range of reasons offered by children in response to a single question. The following table (Table 4) illustrates the fact that the children in Classroom A tended to give more homogeneous responses than the children

TABLE 3
Categories of Reasoning and Examples of Children's Responses

Categories	*Explanatory Sentence**
1. Physical attributes; strength, attractiveness	"Because she is pretty and cute" "Cause he's so short and little and so strong."
2. Special Talents: writing, drawing, dancing.	"Cause he can draw good." "Cause she writes the neatest."
3. Intelligence, academic skills	"Because she do her arithmetic, sentences, and capital letters." "Because he always finish his work fast."
4. Friendship, companionship	"Because she's my best friend." "Cause he always play with me outside."
5. Obedience, socialization to classroom norms	"Cause she always stays in her seat and never talks when the teacher talks." "Cause he always be good in the hallway."
6. Superior personality, traits: leadership, cleverness, bravery, honesty, loyalty . . .	"Because if we would get captured, he would save us." "Because she's friendly and don't play like boys do."
7. Fear, submission to greater power of another	"Cause they know what he'll do to them, he'll paralyze them" "Cause she tells us to stay in our seat before she going to strangle us."
8. Mutual advantage, reciprocity	"He's my friend and we can help each other." "I tell her secrets cause she always tells me some."
9. Advantageous for self, egocentric motivations	"Cause she always brings a lunch of candy to school, and in the afternoon, she passes it out." "Because she share her things with me."
10. Empathy, sympathy, pity	"Everyone likes her cause she been sick. She was in the hospital and had her tonsils out."
11. Family loyalties	"Cause he's my cousin, so he always takes care of me."
12. Special privilege, teacher	"Cause the teacher always picks her to take names." "Cause the teacher trusts her and likes her."

in Classroom B. Of course, part of the reason that one finds a much narrower *range* of reasons in response to a single question in Classroom A is that many fewer children even responded to the *why* questions in that classroom. In response to question 5, for instance, all of the three reasons given by children in Classroom A belonged to a different category of reasoning. For the most part, however, it appeared that the variety of categories used was meagre in Classroom A even when one con-

sidered the fact that fewer children were responding. Only in response to question 2, "Guess who the teacher can trust most when she leaves the room?" did children in Classroom A give a higher proportion of categorically different responses in relation to the number of reasons offered, than the children in Classroom B. The rest of the questions brought a much broader range of responses from children in Classroom B.

TABLE 4
Number of Categories of Reasoning Used in Response to Each Question

Questions	*Classroom A*	*Classroom B*
Section I		
2 Most trustworthy	3	4
5 Most likeable	3	8
9 Best leader	2	5
Section II		
11 Seating companion	4	8
12 Tutor	4	6
13 President	2	7
14 Confidant	3	6
15 Playmate	2	7

In response to Question 5: "Guess who most of the children like?," for instance, the reasoning of children in Classroom B spanned eight categories while only three categories of reasoning were used by children in Classroom A. Table 5 shows the three categories of reasoning used by children in Classroom A and the eight categories used by children in Classroom B in response to Question 5.

The lack of uniformity of response in Classroom B would seem to indicate a more individualistic and singularly characteristic style of perceiving the classroom environment. The combination of a more spontaneous, uninhibited approach to the task of reasoning, a greater proportion of reasoned responses, and a more abundant variety of reasons would seem to reflect a more highly aggressive, autonomous, differentiated attitude toward authority and a more sophisticated, critical approach to the development of individual relationships on the part of children in Classroom B.

It is also interesting to look at the number of reasons that fall into each category in both classrooms. It gives some indication of the relative prominence of these reasoning categories in the observations and judgments of these second graders. In Classroom A, there is a narrow distribution of reasoning with more than seventy percent of the reasoning responses falling into two categories of rea-

TABLE 5
Categories of Reasoning Used and Example Responses by Classrooms to Question 5

Category	*Category Description*	*Examples of Child Response*
Classroom A		
4	Friendship, companionship	Cause they play with her outside.
6	Superior personality traits	Cause she never start trouble with people.
10	Empathy, symphathy, pity	Cause she been sick. She was in the hospital and had to have her tonsils out.
Classroom B		
1	Physical attributes	Because she is pretty and cute
3	Intelligence, academic skills	If they don't know a word, they ask Steve.
4	Friendship, companionship	Cause they be playing with her everyday.
5	Obedience, socialization to classroom norms	Cause she help the teacher and stay in her seat.
6	Superior personality traits	Because she don't fight and she always be good.
7	Fear, submission to greater power of another	Cause, Calvin, he yells at them. He teases.
9	Advantageous for self, egocentric motivations	Cause she always brings a bunch of candy to school.
11	Family loyalties	Cause she's my cousin.

soning: Category 4 (friendship and companionship) and Category 6 (superior personality traits). The rest of the categories of reasoning were given meager attention in Classroom A and some remained totally unused. In Classroom B, the responses were distributed across all of the categories, although some categories were used with more frequency. For the most part, reasoning was not based on a child's special (non-academic) talents (Category 2), on mutual advantage or reciprocity (Category 8), on empathy and pity (Category 10) or on family loyalties[4] (Category 11). (See Table 6.)

The distribution of reasons across categories gains some meaning when comparing the actual responses of children in Classrooms A and B to one of the interview questions. For instance, in response to Question 13: "Who would you choose as president of the class?" there were five reasoning responses from Classroom A that spanned two categories and sixteen reasoning responses from Classroom B that spanned seven categories. (See Table 7.)

[4] This category, although mainly ignored by the children in both classrooms, would have been a realistic, appropriate response. In Classrooms A and B, there were enough sets of cousins and other family relationships to make the inclusion of this category an important alternative to introduce. For the most part, friendship patterns were predominant over familial bonds.

TABLE 6

Number of Children Using Each Category of Reasoning

Categories of Reasoning	*Classroom A*	*Classroom B*
1. Physical attributes	0	6
2. Special talents	1	2
3. Intelligence	3	16
4. Friendship, companionship	18	29
5. Obedience	4	22
6. Superior personality traits	18	25
7. Fear, submission	1	12
8. Reciprocity	1	4
9. Egocentric motivations	0	19
10. Empathy, sympathy	1	1
11. Family loyalties	0	5
12. Special privilege, teacher	3	16

TABLE 7

Reasoning Responses to Question 13.
"Who would you choose as president of the class?"

Classroom A	*Classroom B*
Cause she do good things.	Cause he's so short and little and so strong.
She is the best leader.	He can draw good and he acts like president sometimes.
She leads well.*	He writes the neatest.
Cause she's nice too.	She always stays in her seat and never talks when the teacher talks.
He's quiet.	Because she do her arithmetic, sentences, and capital letters.
	Cause he's the handsomest.
	Me, cause I think I'm great.
	He always finish his work first.
	If we would get captured, he would save us.
	Cause he's the handsomest.
	Because she's my best friend.
	Because people might try to jump us and he might save our lives.
	He minds the teacher.
	Cause when she puts their name on the board, the teacher always listens and they have to write 100 times.
	She's good.
	Cause she's not mean.

*For those children in Classroom A who did not understand the word *president*, I repeated the question "Who would you choose as *leader* of the class?"

In *The Psychological Impact of School Experience,* Minuchin, Biber, Shapiro, and Zimiles (1969) were interested in discovering the children's ideas and feelings about the authority structure of the school. In a relatively open-ended interview, children were given the chance to build fantasies about the way school should be and the content of their responses proved helpful in gaining an understanding about "how much they were concerned about proscriptions on their behavior and what their criteria were for what was acceptable, bearable, desirable, or just inevitable" (p. 265).

The children's responses to five questions that dealt directly with an established regulation or a figure in authority were placed into one of four categories.

1. *Rebellious.* The child reported a pattern or expressed a desire for overt outburst against authority figures or suggested direct flouting of the teacher's decisions or requests.
2. *Resentful.* The child described behavior apparently conforming to the authority of teacher and principal while entertaining feelings of disapproval and desire to rebel.
3. *Conforming.* The child appeared to be uncritically obedient and submissive, without much affect about rules.
4. *Rational.* The child saw the rules as necessary means toward larger ends in school life and assessed rules and controls in terms of their effectiveness in relation to basic goals. (pp. 264-266)

On the basis of my data I was not able to categorize the response of children as rebellious, resentful, conforming, or rational in terms of the criteria used above. My research objective, however, was similar to that of Minuchin *et al.* Both studies sought to analyze children's perceptions of the social realities surrounding their lives in school. It would seem, therefore, that redefinition of the children's relation to authority using Minuchin's categories might prove useful as a means of further characterizing the differences in reasons given by children in Classrooms A and B. In the Sociometric Interview, children were not given the opportunity to explicitly refer to the acceptibility of the demands imposed upon them by the authority structure of the school. The three reasoning questions in Section I asked children to make observations (not to give their judgments) and articulate their perceptions of the existing status structure of the classroom. If one translates the intentions of the Sociometric Interview into the labels of Minuchin *et al.* (i.e., Rebellious, Resentful, Conforming, Rational), it is evident that the categories of con-

forming and rational thinking would have to be redefined in order to have meaning within the context of the Sociometric Interview.

1. A *Conforming Attitude* toward authority might be evidence by the *child's inability to give a rationale for his status choices.* Although the child perceives that someone is occupying a superior status position and recognizes the results of the teacher's discriminating behavior, he remains unaware of the reasons for the hierarchical structure and is accepting of its inevitable conclusions. There is a passive, uncritical acceptance of one's fate.

2. A *Rational Attitude* towards authority might be evidenced by *an awareness and articulation of the authority relation between teacher and children.* What are the classroom rules and regulations? What are the established techniques used by the teacher to maintain order in her absence? What are the reasons that a particular child is chosen to become classroom monitor? What classroom rituals and mechanisms exist that are external to teacher whim, teacher authority?

The following examples of reasoning from interviews in Classroom B illustrate the children's perceptions of the mechanisms used by the teacher to maintain order in her absence, and an awareness of the criteria used by the teacher when awarding the high status position of surrogate teacher to one of the children in the classroom.

"The teacher always leaves her in guard of the classroom when she go somewhere."

"The teacher tell her to put names on the board."

"She always be the goodest one. She take names and don't talk like the other ones."

"He helps the teacher and when the teacher says sit, he does it."

"Cause he always finish his work and does things right."

"Cause Valeria doesn't move out of her seat."

In other words, in my paradigm, the rational approach does not require that children recognize the relationship between strategies of control and ultimate goals (the definition of Minuchin *et al.*); but that they be cognizant of the techniques of persuasion and control used in the classroom and be aware of the relationship between a child's status in the social structure and his behavior in relation to authority—that a child be able to articulate the evidence for status differentiation. In Classroom B, these kinds of perceptions and responses were much more abundant than in Classroom A.

It would seem that the critical reasoning and abundant evidence given by chil-

dren in Classroom B were related to their previous experience in assuming an authority role in the classroom. From their aggressive approach to the interview and the quality of their reasoned response one had the impression that Teacher B had emphasized creativity, autonomy, and *vocal* expression. The children did not shy away in bashful anomie; they seemed eager to be heard, eager to initiate, and eager to exert authority.

Some of their responses revealed the fact that some had experienced the role of teacher in the classroom. In response to Question 12, "Who would you choose to help you with your school work?" two children reasoned:

"Mary, cause she put the numbers on the board and tell me what to do."

"Orville, cause he is one of the teachers and he helps."

In an early Impressional Record, Teacher B expressed pride in the way she was using children as resources for one another and giving them the opportunity to assume knowledgeable, leadership positions:

> At one point during the morning when the class was calm and peaceful with most of the children involved in something constructive, Teacher B pointed to pairs of kids who were working together at the blackboard and explained to the observer: 'Another thing I did was make assistant teachers and the kids love that. . . . Anyway who does his work and gets it right, gets to be an assistant teacher. They do a better job than I do. Somehow they really connect with each other.'
>
> In fact, the pairs of appointed teachers and their students, who were working on subtraction problems at the board, appeared to be listening to each other and very serious about their work. Some, of course, seemed more impressed with the act of writing on the board and playing teacher, than with discovering the math content. Playing the role of an authority figure obviously had an intoxicating appeal to the assistant teachers and was a real reward for knowing how to do something well.

It is no surprise, therefore, that children in Classroom B were more comfortable with the authoritative status they were offered in the interview setting, nor is it surprising that they approached the reasoning process with a sense of responsibility and critical judgment; for many of them had experienced the role before and those children who never had had the opportunity of being assistant teachers, perceived it as an attractive rewarding position and wanted the chance to experience the authority role.

Summary

The children's responses to the Sociometric Interview revealed differences between Classrooms A and B in the authority relation between teacher and child, in

the ability and eagerness of children to give reasons for their status choices, and in the degree of sophistication and individuality of the reasoned responses. In Classroom A, the few reasoning responses that were offered tended to be unimaginative. Children shrank from the task of giving their individual perceptions and responded mechanically and superficially to the interview questions. Children in Classroom B approached the task of reasoning as a positive challenge. They struggled longer in choosing a classmate's name and, after arriving at a judicious, deliberate choice, they were ready to give the evidence for their decision. In response to each of the why questions more than three quarters of the children in Classroom B offered reasoned judgments, while never more than half of the children in Classroom A were able to find evidence for their choices.

Not only was there a large quantitative difference between Classrooms A and B with regard to the reasons offered for one's choice, but there was a large discrepancy between the range and variety of reasons given by the children. In Classroom A, reasoned responses tended to be homogeneous, while children in Classroom B expressed more individualistic styles of perceiving the classroom environment. In other words, children in Classroom B showed a greater degree of individual, critical expression, a more differentiated perception of the classroom environment, and more sophisticated reasons for developing relationships with other children.

Conclusion

The research findings paint a picture of two teachers who had very different approaches to the task of educating children. Teacher A defined her task as one of teaching children the appropriate social conduct and decorum so that they would fit neatly into the system and not ruin their chances for advancement by behaving poorly or acting incorrectly. Teacher A approached her education goals with an unfaltering consistency. Her every communication within the class was directed towards orderliness, decorum, obedience, and cooperation. Her pedagogical techniques gave limited opportunity for exploration, curiosity, and discovery and maximized closure, evaluation, and conformity. The children's responses to the Sociometric Interview reflected the quality of socialization in the classroom. They approached reasoning with trepidation and reticence; they viewed the teacher as the ultimate authority; and they seemed to know very little about their reasons for making choices. Most of the children's energies seemed to be reserved for finding ways of pleasing the teacher.

Teacher B, on the other hand, presented a more ambiguous, shifting image to her children. She strove to create an innovative, challenging classroom environment; but she remained, to a certain extent, locked into the traditional, authoritarian mode of teaching. For instance, she defined the classroom as a place of *work* and attempted to concentrate on the informational, cognitive aspects of schooling; but she had not learned the use of questioning as a tool of intellectual inquiry. Her curriculum content took priority in the classroom, but it tended to be unimaginative and dogmatic. When her attempts at structuring a more permissive, individualistic setting gave way to a raucous, chaotic classroom, she resorted to authoritarian punishing techniques that seemed to contradict her stated goals of collective decision-making and responsibility. One would expect that children in Classroom B experienced an environment full of contradictions. Their responses to the Sociometric Interview, however, revealed that the educational goals of Teacher B had, to some extent, pierced through the ambiguities. Children felt free to express their opinions and feelings; they gave differentiated, critical evidence as basis for their choices of friends, tutors, confidantes, and seatmates; and their status choices seemed to be based on their own perceptions of competency and achievement.

Both teachers were eager to provide an education that would extend the child's world beyond his personal experience and immediate environment, as well as give him more control over his destiny. The teachers' self-conscious attempts to prepare children for meeting an unjust society meant that their communications always had an underlying political interpretation. They both advocated change, but Teacher A condoned an orderly transition upward based on correct deportment, hard work, and a commitment to self-betterment; while Teacher B supported self-knowledge, skills, and information that would give one the strength and insightfulness to critically approach and radically reform the system.

The differences between the educational approaches of Teachers A and B seem to be related to two contradictory attitudes about childhood. One position claims that children enter school as spontaneous, imaginative, creative beings whose goodness and innocence is damaged by the requirements of being socialized into "the system." The other position claims that children enter school as unruly, wild, unsocialized beings whose destructive energies have to be channelled into a civilized structure. Although these represent extreme positions, it would seem that Teacher B expressed the former approach. She wanted to protect the children from the damaging, limiting institutional demands and she saw her classroom as an atmosphere for giving the children a taste of freedom and self-expression.

I think that our black children here are much more creative, much more imaginative. Seems in the suburbs everything is sort of routine blah, every day, day to day, what mother said . . . The only thing I can hope for is that our children will continue to be individuals and say what they believe and speak up . . . I want them to think positively of themselves. (Political Ideology Interview, Teacher B)

Teacher A reflected the latter position which seeks to limit children's openness and mold them into an acceptable, sociable pattern.

I spend almost two months getting the children adjusted to school and the basic things I expect of them. Then they have to do things the way I want them done. (Political Ideology Interview, Teacher A)

The research findings indicate that the approach and responsiveness of children to the Sociometric Interview reflected the educational goals and political philosophies that were consciously and explicitly expressed by their teachers. Teacher A spoke of cooperation, disciplined obedience, and uniformity as being primary goals of the educational process and her children expressed undifferentiated reasons for their status choices. Teacher B claimed that her primary goals for children included an expression of autonomy and self-knowledge; and her children's responses tended to be creative, aggressive, discriminating, and critical.

It would, however, be wrong to conclude from these findings that the relationship between teacher's politics and child reasoning is direct and causal. One must not generalize from this study that radical teachers produce creative, thinking, assertive children; and conservative teachers mold children into submissive, docile human beings. That would be a dangerous misreading of this paper. In an exploratory study of this kind, one's main purpose is not to come up with conclusive, generalizable evidence. The sample of two teachers was an appropriate and realistic focus for a study which sought to develop more comprehensive, analytic techniques to explore the interactions between the political orientations of teachers, the educational process, and the child learnings revealed through the children's discriminating and reasoning abilities.

This analysis permits one to make the following more modest assertions.

1. In order to understand the potential impact of the teacher's political orientation on life in classrooms, researchers must broaden their definition of politics to include various levels of expression and commitment.

2. The political and social ideologies of teachers are inextricably intertwined with their educational philosophies. In the minds and hearts of these two teachers,

educational goals were closely related to their conception of the political process outside the classroom.

3. One evidence of the teacher's political and educational philosophies is the way he or she structures the environment to encourage or discourage cognitive reasoning and elaborative thinking on the part of children.

Each of these assertions gains significance when one recognizes that the child's educational experience is basic to *his* conception of the political world. We come full circle with the recognition that man's mode of political expression and participation in a complex, urbanized environment is largely determined by the quality and character of his educational life.

I believe in the need for diversity and differentiation among teachers. I would not support a policy that advocated a homogeneous population of teachers who would conform willingly to a single internally consistent educational philosophy. It is a valuable educational experience for children to learn to adapt to the changing demands and strategies of individual teachers. I do, however, believe that teachers must be made conscious of their commonalities and attempt to present education as an integrated, continuous experience towards a common goal.

A sense of continuity among heterogeneous teachers requires that the public schools become more self-conscious about their educational goals and political orientations. Within schools, discussions among teachers and administrators are usually limited to the mechanical, functional aspects of running the school; and there is very little talk about educational philosophy. Teachers are left without a superstructure—a context against which they can contrast their individual approaches to education. Educational goals should not exist on a general, philosophical level; teachers and administrators should work towards the creation of explicitly stated, behaviorally expressed goals.

One final word concerning the interpretation of this paper. This investigation is a political document. In this time of social and political transition and increased racial awareness, an analytic, descriptive study that mirrors the actualities of school life for poor minority children can become a propaganda tool. One of the obvious dangers lies in the possibility that the readers will extend my analysis to include *all* black teachers in black classrooms—justifying stereotypes and exaggerating deficiencies. In contrast to the danger of overgeneralizing, readers might isolate the two teachers as targets of glorification or abuse. Depending on the way the information reported in this study is used or misused, the analysis of a totally-black classroom experience might give fuel to the fires of those who support segre-

gated education, integrated education, community-controlled schools, centralized schools, educational reform, and traditional schooling.

I obviously approached the process of inquiry with a profound social commitment. My ideals and biases should be made clear. To the extent that black children and parents are being cheated, I advocate honesty. To the extent that parents are being excluded from the educational process, I advocate open communication between the school and community. To the extent that school is a destructive, limiting environment for the majority of inner-city children, I advocate educational reform. In essence, I advocate an education that is meaningful for poor black children.

In this study, however, it was not my intention to assume an advocacy pose and become part of the passionate, political dialogue. Part of my attempt was to reduce the passion to a level of analytic sensibility—not as a pious anthropologist who builds idealized, cardboard figures, but as one who tries to be realistically perceptive about the challenges and struggles of educating poor black children to enter an exploitative society full of inequalities. I have tried to present two teachers engaged in an educational process—a shifting picture of discouragement, conflict, pain, with moments of hope, promise, and resolve. How do these teachers, both competent, experienced, and dedicated, face the challenges and injustices of an urban school? How do the cognitive and affective communications they offer within the classroom relate to their identifications with the political and social worlds outside the classroom? It is only when researchers begin to unravel the complexities of the educational process in the midst of political and social realities that they will be able to make a valuable contribution to the educational lives of children.

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