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GREAT TRADITION, LITTLE TRADITION, AND FORMAL EDUCATION.

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THIS DOCUMENT DISCUSSES THE IMPACT OF TRADITION ON THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE NATURE OF EDUCATIONAL PROCESSES. IT INDICATES RESEARCHES AND ANALYSES IN EDUCATION HAVE ASSUMED THAT IT IS NECESSARY TO STUDY ONLY INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOR IN LEARNING SITUATIONS, THAT ALL EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES AND FORMAL EDUCATION ARE SYNONYMOUS, AND THAT THE TEACHER ALONE EDUCATES THE CHILD. MODERN SCHOOL SYSTEMS FAIL TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL IN SOCIETY AND THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL FACTORS ON INDIVIDUAL LEARNING BEHAVIOR. RESEARCH IN EDUCATION IS TOTALLY INADEQUATE BECAUSE OF THE FAILURE TO INCLUDE INFORMATION ABOUT THE SOCIAL ROLES IN THE SCHOOL SETTING, OF THE TEACHERS, THE PUPILS, AND THE LAY PUBLIC. TRADITION HAS TWO COMPONENTS. "GREAT TRADITION" IS MANIFESTED IN CURRENT EDUCATIONAL THEORY AND PRACTICE. "LITTLE TRADITION" IS THE VALUE SYSTEM OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN EDUCATION HAVE CLASSED EDUCATION AS ONE OF THE GREAT SOCIAL MOVEMENTS. CONSEQUENTLY, CONSIDERABLE TENSION HAS ARISEN BETWEEN THE "GREAT TRADITIONS" OF THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION AND THE "LITTLE TRADITIONS" OF THE COMMUNITY CONCERNING THE PROCESSES OF CHILD REARING. WHILE CONSIDERABLE EMPHASIS IS BEING PLACED ON CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES, LITTLE RECOGNITION IS GIVEN TO SOCIETAL VALUES. (JM)

GREAT TRADITION, LITTLE TRADITION, AND FORMAL EDUCATION

Murray and Rosalie Wax

From a comparative and historical perspective, the vast body of research literature on schools and education appears both psuedo-empirical and psuedo-theoretical. Researchers have been administering hundreds of tests to thousands of pupils. Meantime, intellectual critics have devoted countless pages to the criticism of textbooks and other curricular materials. Yet, the bulk of their efforts contrasts markedly with its quality and its impact, because their vision has been constricted by an interlocking chain of assumptions: that schools are primarily and exclusively agencies of formal education (rather than social beings who participate in the life of peer societies, ethnic groups, and the like); that formal education is synomous with education; and that the principal task of the teacher is to educate. Thus, instead of inquiring what sort of social processes are occurring in -- and in relation to -- the schools, researchers and critics have defined their problem as being one of discovering how to make the schools teach their individual pupils more, better, and faster. Only a few[1] of the many researchers and critics have had the patience, fortified by the faith in ethnographic empiricism, to observe the social processes actually occurring in relation to the schools: among the pupils, among the teachers, within the classrooms, between the pupils and their parental elders, and so on.

Teachers and pupils being docile and available, it has been far easier and far more pretentiously scientific (while less threatening to the local power structure) to administer reams of tests that are then scored mechanically. As a result, the research literature lacks a solid body of data on the ethnography of schools.

Seemingly, the theoretical literature on education would be far superior. The intellectual critics number some of the most formidably trained scholars in the country, as well as some of the most irate journalists and pontifical classicists. Unfortunately, most seem to lack that sense of history and feeling for comparison that the True Curriculum is presumed to produce. As but a small instance, consider that most of the classically trained critics laud the Hellenic system of education and, from that vantage point, denounce as trivial and unworthy of our schools such courses as Driver Training. Yet, it is surely arguable that being able to drive an automobile courteously, deftly, and responsibly, restraining aggressive impulses, and focussing attention upon the task, is a sign of good citizenship and moral excellence. A really good training in driving an automobile would merit as much approbation as the Hellenic cult of body culture. If the invidious slur on Driver Training is typical of the logic of the critics (and we take it to be so) then they are sadly deficient in the perspective and knowledge requisite for evaluating modern schools.

Asking the right questions is the path to acquiring wisdom, but to ask good questions, rather than trivial ones, the investigator has to break out of conventional frameworks. In the early part of this essay we proceed autobiographically, outlining how this happened to us so that we came to perceive freshly some of what is going on in relation to the schools. Later in the essay, we build on these experiences and elaborate a more theoretical argument which, in turn, leads to a series of research questions for the study of the culture of schools.

The School and the Little Community

We begin in traditional anthropological fashion by sketching some of what we learned about the educational problems of the Oglala Sioux on the Pine Ridge Reservation. The patient reader will find that this is not simply an ethnographic excursion but leads to a consideration of the nature of education in a modern industrial society.

Our interest in Indian education developed during the several years in which we directed the Workshops for American Indian College students held during the summer on the campus of the University of Colorado. These workshops had been designed to provide young Indians with a broad perspective about Indian affairs, so that they could serve their communities as advisors and leaders. As we worked with these young people, we were appalled. Supposedly the cream of the Indian population, they were so provincial in the knowledge of the U. S. and so ignorant of Indian history and current affairs as to make us doubt their rank as college students. Yet, at the same time, most of them could be turned, and to an intense glow, by lectures on Indian history, or Indian religious cults or social organization, in which we treated these phenomena as worthy of serious intellectual attention. Judging by their responses, none had ever participated in a discussion that treated Indian religious cults as vital and meaningful (rather than as superstitious, primitive, or archaic). Accordingly, we developed a critical curiosity about the nature of the educational system wherein these students had been schooled, and we deliberately decided to study an Indian population (the Pine Ridge Sioux) that had for some years been subjected to federal programs for education and assimilation.

At the time we designed the study, we envisioned the school as a battleground: on the one had, the educators -- flanked by the Bureau of Indian

Affairs, the mission churches, and kindred agencies -- would be fighting to pull the children out of Indian society, while, on the other hand, the Indian elders would be clinging desperately to their young, trying to hold them within their traditional society. Indeed, this was exactly the picture drawn for us by a high BIA official on our first day on the reservation, except that, instead of the Indian elders, he blamed "grandma", who craftily lured her grandchildren "back to the blanket".

Our hypothesis about battlegrounds was to prove as inaccurate as his about grandmas and blankets. Nevertheless, it turned out to be extremely advantageous, for it predisposed us to approach the Sioux pupils, their teachers, and the administration, as living members of social groups rather than as isolated respondents to questionnaires administered from a distance. Thus, we were obliged to sit for weeks and months in classrooms watching what was going on, and, in like manner, to talk not only to administrators and educational experts but to Indian parents and to the children themselves. In due time we realized that the educators and Indian elders were not locked in battle for the soul of the Indian child, because the Sioux elders, faced with the power of the educational establishment, simply withdrew. In this tactic they were encouraged by the educational administrators who exhorted them: just send your children to school every day and we will educate them. The educators found the absence of the parents convenient and proper, since the parents would have had no background for understanding the operations of the school and could only have interfered. Yet, here, the educators were over-confident, for within the schoolrooms they were confronting children who were alien and who could elude their ministrations. Issuing from small local communities of kith and kin, and sharing a common set of values and understandings, as well as a language (Lakota) that was unknown to most teachers,

the Sioux children could and did create within the formal structure of the educational institution, a highly cohesive society of their own. As the children matured, their society of peers became ever more solidary, and the teacher confronting them was reduced to operating at the level they would permit. While an occasional teacher might gain the approval of the peer society, most of them found themselves talking to a wall of apparent indifference and assumed incompetence. Interestingly, many teachers remarked that after the sixth or seventh grade their pupils became more "withdrawn" or "apathetic" every year, but not one realized that the wall was the outward manifestation of a subtle and highly organized rejection. The withdrawal remained a mystery to the educators.

In another respect, the design of our study differed from the more conventional ethnographic or social anthropological investigations, for we committed ourselves to a study of the Indian children <u>in the schools.</u> This meant that we were obliged to consider and try to understand not only Sioux society or culture, but the reservation system (teachers and administrators), and how the Indians related generally to the agencies of the greater society. This committment helped us to perceive very early that the administrators and most of the teachers looked upon the Sioux children not as members of a different or exotic culture but as members of an ethnic and inferior caste. Their task, as they saw it, was to help their pupils become members of the superior caste.

The status of the Sioux as being lower caste was so conspicuously visible among the educators that we singled out one of its manifestations for analysis under the label of the "The Vacuum Ideology". The reference is to the experiential background of the Sioux child, for the educators, especially the administrators, did not regard this child as participating in a distinctive

culture and society but, instead, as lacking in those preschool experiences which distinguish the desirable kind of pupil. Judging by the experiences that were listed, the ideal pupil would have been of urban middle-class, Protestant (and White) background, and, insofar as the Sioux pupil lacked those particular experiences, it was not that had had others but that he was deficient. Since his parents had not read Peter Rabbit to him, he lacked familiarity with stories; and since they did not sing Anglo-Saxon lullabies to him he lacked familiarity with music. The same ideology is also prevalent among educators confronting children of urban lower-class and ethnic backgrounds.

Subsequent experience has convinced us that many educators are passionately attached to the notion that their disprivileged or poor pupils come to them with empty minds which must be filled before they can compete with youngsters from "the usual middle-class home." Nevertheless, they withdraw in horror from the suggestion that a denial of experience constitutes a denial of socialization or human development. That a litte child might not respond warmly to a teacher who sees him and his folks as empty vessels does not occur to them.

Almost in spite of ourselves, we have been led to the conclusion that some of our most important general educational goals constitute ruthless attacks on the solidarity and self-respect of the ethnic and lower-class communities, and, indeed, on their very existence. The Vacuum Ideology is only one of the more recent tactical offenses. Another is the goal of individualistic achievement.

The modern school system is premised on the notion that its population is an aggregate of social atoms, among whom there are no significant of permanent linkages. In the ideology of the educators, these social atoms

begin at the same starting line and then move onward in haphazard clumps, each atom achieving independently of the others and according to its own inner strengths and motives. What an individual does in school, and later, in his vocation, is an achievement -- his individual achievement -- deriving from his own initiative and effort and of benefit only to himself and his immediate family. Contrary to this ideology is the normative system of a folk community which confronts an alien society. For in this system the individual may excel only when his excellence enhances the position of his brethren. If this achievement were to derogate them before others, then it would be incumbent on him to conceal his talents. Thus, in the schools on Pine Ridge, our staff observed classrooms where, when the teacher called upon a pupil to recite he would become the target for jibes and jokes, whispered in Lakota and unperceived by the teacher, with the result that he would stand or sit paralyzed and unable to respond; meanwhile, the teacher, being oblivious to the secret life of the classroom, would be perplexed and distressed at her inability to secure responses indicating that she had covered the day's lesson. In like manner, there are the observations of Harry Wolcott who, for his doctoral dissertation taught in a one-room school among Indians on an island off the Northwest Coast. Wolcott reports that, although he taught for a full year, living among the community, he was never able to learn just how much or how little most of his pupils knew, because, no matter what the nature of the classwork -- whether test or seatwork or what have you -- no one could be induced to work solely for himself.

The fact that the educators themselves seem unaware that individualistic achievement as they define it is considered grossly immoral behavior by the children they are trying to instruct is an obvious case of selective inattention. But the fact that social researchers are so often indifferent

to this type of conflict and to its implications is more surprising and puzzling. This brings us to the second part of this paper; a consideration of the inadequacy of past and current research on schools and education.

Psuedo-Empirical Research on Education

Because of the fundamental orientation of their research, most investigators have managed to avoid looking at what actually occurs within schools. Since they collect much data, their research appears to be empirical, but in actuality they have been selectively inattentive to important classes of phenomena. Educational psychologists, for example, convert the society of pupils into an aggregate of individual animals, each of whom must be trained to perform certain tasks established by the curriculum. Discovering what the pupils are actually engaged in doing and experiencing is irrelevant to the job which the psychologist has defined for himself, namely structuring the school situation so that each of the human animals is made to learn more and to learn faster. The educational psychologist thus comes to function like the industrial psychologist whose role it is to help increase production. For both, the fundamental tasks are established by the bureaucratically given structure, and the researcher accepts as his goal the devising of ways to accomplish those tasks most expeditiously. Whatever else may be going on within the school, or however else the child may be being educated, becomes relevant for the researcher only insofar as it clearly affects the performance of the curricularly given tasks.

In like manner, structural-functionalists among sociologists have tended to orient themselves by defining their discipline as "the sociology of education" and by assuming that the school is that institution having education as its primary function. In effect, these plausible assumptions

serve to transform the scientific problem of the nature of the school (and its relationship to other social activities) into the problem of evaluating the school in terms of the extent to which it performs a particular educational function (of Brotz, 1961). If further, the sociologist relies principally upon survey procedures, with rigid schedules administered to large numbers of pupils, then he has thoroughly inhibited himself from the observation of the school as a species of social organization. The pupils are perceived as social atoms, differing from each other in terms of their ethnic-religious and social-class backgrounds, but the school is rarely studied as a society or social system which is more than an arena for the movement of these atoms.

Lest we be misunderstood, we should like to emphasize that the issue is not the learning theory of some psychologists nor the structual-functionalism of some sociologists. Either theory and discipline could be utilized in the empirical study of schools, but in fact they seldom have been, and the research which is done has a flavor that is tragi-comic. For example, investigators known to us are now engaged in elaborate investigations involving, on the one hand, the administration of large batteries of tests to hundreds of Indian and White pupils, and, on the other hand, the observation in detail of the relationships between Indian mothers and their children. The hypothesis informing the research is that the progressive "withdrawal" characteristic of Indian pupils in schools is the outcome of a psychic inadequacy related to their upbringing. Were these investigators to perform some elementary ethnography, inquiring as to how the Indians perceive their community situation and the role of the schools, and if they were then to observe classroom interactions, their comprehension of what they presume to be a psychic inadequacy might be thoroughly transformed. But for this to occur, they would have to be prepared to examine

the school as a real institution affecting a real inter-ethnic community of Indians and Whites, instead of reducing the school to an educational function and dissolving the Sioux child out of his community and his lower-caste situation.

On the other hand, research conducted along Community Study lines has often contributed a great deal to the understanding of the schools (whether or not the research has utilized a structural-functionalist or learning theory conceptualization). The major endeavors (Hollingshead, Havighurst, Wylie, etc.) which have had the school as the focus of the community study are well recognized, but it is important to note that almost any thorough study of a geographic community can contribute to our knowledge of the schools. In Whyte's study of Cornerville, it is necessary to read between the lines to learn about the schools, but in Gans' later study of an ethnically similar community, much can be gained from the brief pages on the topic (1965:129-136). Similar value can be found in the pages relating to the schools in the studies by Withers (1945), Vidich and Bensman (1960), the Lynds, Hughes (1863), Waner and associates (1949), et al. Indeed, the fact that these studies are not focussed on the schools has a certain advantage, for the educationally focussed studies allow their research to be oriented overly much by the ideology of the schools, and so they spend too many pages in demonstrating that the schools do not provide equal opportunity for achievement and too few pages to describing what the schools actually are doing.

In contrast to these contemporaneous varieties of social research in education is a study so old as to be dated, having been published over thirty years ago. Yet this study, which, to our knowledge, has had no successor, is the only one which comes close to describing the school as an

institution. We have in mind Waller's The Sociology of Teaching. His research procedures appear to have been informal, and he seems to have relied mainly upon his own experiences and the reports and diaries of teachers who were students of his, yet, nonetheless, he systematically reviewed the major sorts of interactions associated with being a teacher. As compared with the several, methodologically-sophisticated readers in the sociology of education now on the market, his is the only book that discusses such significant topics as elementary forms of collective behavior within the classroom or the role of ceremonies in the life of the schools. In a sense, Waller viewed the school as a community, and its educators and pupils as social being participating in the life of the community, and so he produced a monograph that can serve to suggest directions for research on contemporary schools. Stimulated by his book, we would like here to advance several questions for research on the schools: What kinds of social roles emerge within the schools, among the teachers, the pupils, and the lay public associated with the schools? What social forms emerge within the context of the schools? Are there typical cycles of reform associated with the school system similar, perhaps, to the reforming movements within the Catholic Church, of which some culminated in the foundling of religious orders and others in the rise of new sects? What happens to children within the schools -- how are children transformed into pupils?

A knowledgable and shrewd anthropologist can advance a number of hypotheses in response to the questions we have just raised. He could, for instance, point to the differences between the kind of age-grading that occurs among the children of hunting peoples who roam in small bands and that which occurs within our public schools, where children are associated with a narrow stratum of others of almost exactly the same calendrical age.

From there he could argue about the differences that would develop because the first kind of children would have the opportunity to associate with others much older than themselves and would have also the association with and responsibility for other children much younger than themselves; and, continuing the train of logic, he could argue as to the kinds of differences in personality that might ensue. Yet, much as we welcome such broad speculation, we do wish to insist that there is much about our schools that we don't know for sure because investigators have not been looking -- they have administered tens of thousands of tests and conducted hundreds of interviews, but only a handful have look systematically and diligently and sympathetically at all phases of the school in relationship to pupils, educators, and parents.

Just as we need to know more about how children are transformed into pupils, so we need to know more about how young persons (usually college students) are transformed into teachers. The research here has been limited and is mostly represented by that variety in which tests or other fixed schedules of questions are administered to samples of teacher trainees and veteran teachers (cf. Guba, Jackson, and Bidwell in Charters and Gage 1963; 271-286). In accounting for the attitudes and conduct of veteran teachers, most critics have stressed the relationship between the teacher and the school administration, the latter usually being bureaucratic, conservative, and timorous. However, we would also be inclined to suggest a Goffmanical posture of inquiry that would inquire as to the effects upon a person of having to be on public display before -- and in constant disciplinary control of -- a large audience of alien children for many hours per day. It is not, we would guess, the school administration per se that develops the teacher type, but the administrative requirement of facing and controlling so large a body of youngsters. We are impressed by the fact that the

problem of maintaining discipline in the classroom is foremost among the anxieties of the novice teacher, and also foremost among the demands made upon the teacher by his supervisors, and yet the literature of social research on the issue is so weak and so focussed on individual children as "disciplinary problems." We are also impressed by the fact that most novices do manage to maintain discipline in their classes, and that critical attention is usually directed only to the conspicuous failures of discipline, but that few scholars ask how the stunt is turned. Yet the question of how discipline is maintained throughout a school is, we suggest, a paradigm for the question of how order is maintained in civil society.

The School and the Great Tradition

To propose the foregoing questions -- how do children become pupils? How do young people become teachers? How is discipline maintained within the classroom? -- is to declare that the cross-cultural comparisons that anthropologists have conventionally attempted are limited in their relevance to formal education. By comparing the experiences of the contemporary schoolchild in the Bronx with that of a juvenile in New Guinea thirty years ago, we can say something significant about the personality development of the child, but we are in limbo so far as concerns much that is significant about formal education. As much is evident in terms of the content of the readers and textbooks on anthropology and education produced but a generation ago. The authors are well qualified, their essays are frequently of intrinsic interest, but their pertinence to the contemporary educational drama is negligible. For these anthropologists, trying to be culturally relativistic, defined "educational practices" in broad terms. Viewing cultures as separate and distinct entities that could be compared

as independent individuals, they conceived of each as having its own system of child-rearing and, therefore, of education. Such a procedure did have and still has some uses, but it cannot hope to characterize the contemporary situation where education is of the order of an international mission activity, being exported from the U. S. and other Western societies. Education in this sense is avowedly intended to decrease the isolation of other ("backward") societies and to alter drastically their cultural configurations, and in its aggressive impact, this education is similar to the spread of Christianity, Islam, Communism or capitalistic business practices.

Indeed, the traditional anthropological procedure was not even accurate for the history of Western society or of other civilized societies. For the Western system of formal education is rooted in its Great Tradition (Redfield, 1956: chap. 3; Singer, 1960) and can only be understood on that basis. Great Traditions, it will be recalled, are borne by a literate corps of disciples, and they are in tension with the Little Traditions transmitted informally within the little community. Or, in the pithy language of Bhariati (1963):

> what the missionary in a particular religion wants the less knowledgable votaries to do, defines the "big tradition", and what he wants them to give up and to desist from in the future, defines the "little tradition" in any religious area.

Christianity has epitomized that tension, for on the one hand, there have been its dedicated disciples, oriented toward the millenial creed of its scriptures, while on the other hand, there have been the folk, who have required a religion which, through its values and symbols expressed the unity and morality of the little community. The tension has been clearly visible in the U. S. churches, especially of the contemporary South; for, as its dedicated ministers affirm, the Christian message would require

thorough desegregation, since all men are brothers in Christ; yet, to the members of the local White community, the local church embodies their moral unity and necessarily excludes the Negroes as alien and profane. The school stands in similar situation, for, on the one hand, it too, is a kind of local church, embodying the sacred values of the little community. Yet, on the other hand, the school is connected, organizationally and ideationally, with the greater society and with the Great Traditions of the West.

In their relationship to the contemporary and actual school systems, intellectual critics -- such as ourselves -- play somewhat the role of the fervent religious orders within the medieval church. The critics are painfully conscious of the true message; they are prepared to be tolerant of some of the little traditional beliefs, providing they can be incorporated within the body of dogma; but they are appalled at the heresy and corruption within the institutional church. They debate theories of education with their fellows, as if these were theological creeds, and they are perturbed that the school as a reality bears so little a resemblance to the school as the gateway tosalvation.

If we may be permitted to continue this metaphor, we would suggest that what social scientists, especially anthropologist, could now accomplish in their research upon education is a purification of the dogma. The world of today is in the midst of a vast expansion and elaboration of the system of formal education; more peoples are sending their children to school; and, once in school, more children are spending longer periods of their lives. This tranformation is of such magnitude and abruptness as to deserve the label of <u>revolution</u>, and it appears quite comparable in scope to movements, such as the spread of Christianity in the ancient world, or to the Industrial Revolution. While both of these did become worldwide, in order to do so

each has had to purify itself of much ideological dross. Christianity did not become really effective in northern Europe until its populace had eliminated from the dogma many of the peculiarities distinctive to the Mediterranean world and reformulated it in terms of their own ethnic traditions. The Industrial Revolution did not begin to permeate many areas of the world. until its dogma of Manchester Liberalism was dismembered and replace by local or nativistic creeds disguising themselves behind the flexible vocabularies of nationalism and socialism. Now, we should like to suggest that our U. S. educational system is similarly loaded with ideological irrelevancies that make it unsuited to other countries (cf. Thomas, 1966: 72-74) and have made it clearly unsuited to our own ethnic and lower-class populations. We would hazard that the unsuitability in other countries is, at present disguised by the outpourings of financial and moral assistance from the West coupled with the native willingness to accept our institutional complexes in the dizzy hope of becoming as prosperous and powerful as the U. S. In about a decade, the twin impetus should have given out, and anthropologists may be in a position to observe some interesting attempts to reshape the educational structure. More than this, it should be possible for anthropologists to be of marked assistance in the reshaping and purification of education, providing that they are astute, critical, begin their work in the near future, and discard the restrictive blinders of irrelevant or system-biased research as we noted earlier.

Let us give an example of an ideological tenet that, as we have indicated, hampers the adjustment of some peoples to the Western system of formal education. U. S. and Western schools, generally, have been organized about the notion of individual achievement with the reward of personal advancement and benefit. Looking historically and comparatively, we believe

it can be argued that this tenet may not be essential and may even be somewhat of a hindrance, unless suitably modified. Great Traditions, generally, and Western scholarship, specifically, have been borne by associations of disciples, who have shared common goals and been subject to a common discipline. Anthropologists (or other social-scientists) would not accomplish what they do, wrestling with the hardships they must face, unless sustained by their association of compeers. There is individualistic competition, and it does stimulate to achievement, but is is a competition that is regulated by formal norms against deceit and plagarism and by informal norms of courtesy, fellowship, and comradehood. Whenever previously, the attempt has been made to disseminate widely Great Traditional knowledge throughout a population, it has been associated with a social movement having superpersonal goals. The Jews were among the first to accomplish widespread literacy, and it was strictly in a religious context, in order to bring about the salvation of Israel and the participation of the individual in that joyous event. With Protestantism a similar movement for literacy developed, more individualistic perhaps, but nonethe less set in the context of a social movement and communal aspirations. Today, in the U. S., we seem to be pushing the notion of individualistic competition within the framework of the school to an almost superhuman pitch. Yet, it is striking that real progress toward spreading literacy among lower-class or ethnic groups has so often occurred in the context of social movements: civil rights, the Black Muslims, and, as always, the evangelistic churches.

Another example of an ideological tenet has hampered the adjustment of some peoples to the system of formal education is, we believe, the notion that each child must be identified with a unique nuclear family and that the community encompassing the school is a community of nuclear families.

As anthropologists, we are bound to ask whether as efficient an educational establishment could be fitted into a society with extended families and elaborate systems of kinship? Speaking from our observations among the Sioux (and our readings about other peoples, or even ab out the Hutterites and Amish), this is no idle question. So much of the procedures of the systems of schooling and welfare and public health are geared to the assumption that each child must be part of an intact nuclear family or else he is a neglected child, and the power of the state and the wealth of its agencies is thereby used to disrupt the extended family and cement the nuclear. In the case of the American Indian, it is not yet too late to ask whether we should be doing this, and we may also bear in mind that many more peoples of the world are and will be increasingly involved with this issue.

The School and the Little Tradition

Because researchers have focussed on curricularly given tasks (cf. section 2 above) and critics have focussed on Great Traditional knowledge, no one has been looking systematically at the impact of formal educational institutions on little traditional processes of child rearing. Instead, there has been recourse to the concept of "cultural deprivation", which (like the Vacuum Ideology of Sioux educators) has enabled the theorists and administrators to ignore the culture of the impoverished and ethnic peoples, on the ground that it either scarcely exists or exists in such distorted form as best to be suppressed. Some social-scientists have been arguing as if these peoples are lacking -- linguistically, psychically, and culturally (Roach, 1965 and the retort by Hughes). Surely, here it is necessary to be concrete and ethnographic and to ask in specific detail about the experiences of the child in various contexts. Continuing our usage of the Great/Little Traditional dichotomy and tension, we would suggest that the process of formal schooling

is, to a large degree, the struggle to substitute one kind of tradition (or knowledge) for another within the mind of the child. Where , in a folk society, the child would have to master a great variety of particular bits of knowledge, concerning particular persons, topographic features, rites, skills, and so on, the archetypical urban school is oriented toward instilling a knowledge that is abstract, general, and in some sense, "rational", and, thereby, deracinated. In like manner, where in a folk society there is a great stress on the function of language to promote consensus and maintain the integrity of the community (Wright), in the urban middle-class world and its schools the stress is on language as a vehicle for imparting "rational" knowledge to strangers. Within the hierarchy of schools, it is the elite university with its graduate education that has epitomized this type of knowledge and language dialest, but the demand now is being made that the elementary school system participate even more intimately in this effort.

But knowledge or tradition does not exist in a vacuum; it is borne by individual human beings, and the demand that is being made on the schools to rationalize their curricula even further is, also, a demand that they produce a certain variety of human being -- abstract, theoretical, rational, and, hence, deracinated -- the academic man writ large. But we are sufficiently disenchanted with our colleagues, and with the middle class of the U. S., to ask that researchers and critics examine the issue. In making the school more efficient in its transmission of formal knowledge, to what extent will the reformers be helping to create human beings who are more thoroughly deracinated and dehumanized? Conversely, to what extent are the current, so-called "inefficiencies" and stupidities of the school system really a blessing or a source of hope, because it is in these interstices (and irrationalities) that the child still has some chance of developing

as a human being? We can, here, even ask about the Little Traditions of the school, the lore and experience that is transmitted informally among pupils, between teacher and pupils (and vice versa), within the school system. How much of what it means to be a man does a boy learn from his schoolmates (rather than from the curricular content of the school)? As reforms eat away at irrationalities and inefficiencies of the school, will they likewise reduce even further the opportunity to observe and experience the meaning of manliness? The skeptical reader may counter that we are here indulging in ethnographic nostalgia, and to be frank we are recalling the youthful Sioux, and their fine personal sensibility, the brilliance of their singing, the virility of their dancing, their exuberant vitality. Last summer, we were examining Head Start Programs operated for Indian children, and we vividly recall one occasion in which we stepped from a powwow, that was distinguished by the most exciting singing and dancing, into a classroom where some well-meaning teacher was leading children through the familiar, dreary, off-tune rendition of a nursery song. Later, members of this staff were to talk with us about what they were doing for these "culturally deprived" children.

As we look at the youth of the contemporary U. S., we are not impressed by the success of our system of education and training. So many of our young men can perform well on the national tests of schievement and yet they lack the pride and self-confidence in their manliness. We recognize full well that to an audience of anthropologists and intellectuals, these criticisms may seem overly familiar. Yet, we think someone has to raise these questions, as <u>research</u> questions, and we think that this is part of our task as intellectuals and anthropologists, because otherwise all of us tend to concentrate so exclusively on the issue of educational tasks --

how the schools can teach better, faster, and more: how can kids be taught Russian at three, calculus at four, and nuclear physics at five -- and neglect to ask a far more important question: what is happening to our children as human beings?

Let us summarize by using an economic model. Theoretically, it would be possible to isolate children in an environment free of all stimulation. Such environments, we would surmise, are pretty rare and would exist only in the most misguided and understaffed institutions. Given an actual environment, whether it be Harlem, Pine Ridge, or Summerfield, children will be experiencing and learning. If they are part of the general U. S. middle-class, they will be learning its culture, and, if this latter, they will be better fitted for early achievement in school. For example, the child reared among the middle-class may acquire a larger vocabulary than the child reared in the slum or the reservation. Yet, while the size of vocabulary is predictive of early scholastic achievement, it is not a statement of linguistic or social maturity; for, as but one illustration, consider that some people of a modest vocabulary can be far more eloquent than scholars whose vocabulary is huge. What the child experiences in home and school is but a selection from a vast possible range, so that, in economic terms, if the child is having one kind of experience, then he cannot be having another. If he is learning calculus, then he is not simultaneously learning to dance, powwow style. We are suggesting that most intellectuals, including anthropologists, are so sold on the value of shildren learning calculus, that they have forgotten about the value of dancing, and that they are made so irate by the diction of incompetent educators who prate about the value of learning to play with others, that they have forgotten the intimate relationship between play and freedom.

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NOTES

1. Since we do not have occasion later in our text to refer to some of the outstanding studies of contemporary schools, we would like here to note that Jules Henry (1963) and a number of researchers affiliated with the Bank Street College of Education -- notably, Donald Horten, Sachary Gussow, and Eleanor Leacock -- have been excellent and diligent observers of the school system. We should mention, as well, Edgar Z. Friedenberg (1965), who uses questionnaire schedules to rationalize his studies and essays, but whose shrewd observation of contemporary schools burst through his attempts to perform a mechanical analysis of his formal data.