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ABSTRACT

A number of school divisions have entered year-round education without fully realizing the effects of such a program on the family and the community. Family vacations, child care, and routine living are disrupted by year-round educational programs. Community recreational facilities, church activities, public service programs, police work, and private foundations are required to alter their traditional patterns of operation. The author attempts to underline the complexity of appraising the impact of year-round schools on community life without carefully collected research data, while considering briefly the possible effects of year-round school on family, religion, and delinquency rates. However, he hypothesizes that the community will be affected by a change to a year-round school calendar insofar as such a change requires an adjustment in the precarious routinization of community interest clusters competing for authority and influence on matters related to the child's socialization process. (Author)

PROSPECTS AND PROBLEMS OF THE YEAR-ROUND SCHOOL IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN EDUCATION: A SOCIOLOGICAL EXAMINATION

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This paper will attempt to delineate, in an admittedly sketchy manner, an analysis of a chronic source of school-community conflict. This conflict issue is particularly acute in the interface between the school and the family within the American community, although it intermittently surfaces in other community contexts. Pointedly, what will be suggested here is that there exists a chronic authority crises concerning the locus of legitimate decision-making on matters related to a childs educational experience. Further, the particular issue which results in an authority confrontation between the school and segments of the community often does not reveal the nature of the deeper more basic authority conflict, and, thus, makes resolution of the situational issue difficult if not impossible. In order to demonstrate the potential masking effect that a particular school related issue has on the authority crises, we will focus on the current controversy related to an alteration of the school calendar from a nine-month schedule to a "year-round" schedule.*

Background of the Problem

There are many excellent descriptions of the development of the school in American society and we see no need and no possible way to detail that history here (c.f. Bailyn: 1960, Counts: 1952). The salient message of that history reveals that the public school, as it is now found in the American community is a relatively recent institution, certainly predated

* The term "year-round" school is, in itself, an example of a source of misunderstanding between the professional educator and the layman. To the layman the term may mean that his child will go to school all year, something which few professional educators would propose. That such a misunderstanding exists is evident in a student's letter to the editor of the Flint Michigan Journal, "Many students believe that a nine month period is too tiring without going all year around. I agree with them completely and I hope you will think about it." (Flint Michigan Journal: Dec. 20, 1968).

by the family and, indeed, by the other major community institutions; economic, political, and religious. The functional raison d' état of the public school, preparation of the child for adult life, constitutes a collage of activities formerly conducted within other institutional contexts. Of special significance, the public school engages in socialization activities previously core functions of the family. This fact of modern community life has commonly been described as the family having lost instrumental socialization function, with the public school supplanting the family in this activity (Parsons:1959). While this may constitute an accurate description of an emerging division of labor between the family and the school, it does not necessarily follow that the family has voluntarily surrendered its traditional authority over the child to the educator, even in instrumental learning activities, nor that the educator has gained an uncontested professionally based authority to determine and control these activities. It is much more the case that an uneasy and uncertain authority alliance exists in the typical American community between the family and the school over which has the authority to determine the conditions and content of the child's school experience. This basic underlying authority uncertainty is further confounded by the tendency of the political, economic, and religious sectors of community life to attempt to promote their self-interests within the context of an authority crises (Williams:1964, 309;Hollingshead:1949, 247-248).

The fundamental authority dispute between the family and the school is more complex than simply a matter of who should make decisions related to the child's educational experience, because the basis of authority for the two institutions differs. In the case of the family, authority is based on tradition, while in the case of the school, authority is based on legal-rational considerations (Weber:1947). That is to say, in authority disputes a central question concerns who has "legitimate" authority to decide the particular

issue; i.e. the basis of legitimacy functionally delimites an area of jurisdiction. For Weber, "traditional authority rests on the belief in the sacredness of the social order and its prerogatives as existing of yore. Patriarchal authority represents its pure type. Legal authority rests on enactment:its pure type is best represented by bureaucracy. The basic idea is that laws can be enacted and changed at pleasure by formally correct procedure." (Weber:1947, 325-26)

In school issues, the object for the expression of authority interests is the child. It is precisely the institutional overlap involving the family and the school with the child as object of interest for both institutions, and the differing basis of the legitimacy of authority jurisdiction, that results in an authority crises involving the family and the school. This "conflict of interest" is rendered even more acute by what Martin Trow calls "The Second Transformation of American Secondary Education". Trow declares, "Parents who themselves have been through high school, and many of them through some years of college as well, feel themselves more competent to pass judgment on the secondary education of their children, and are less likely to accept passively and on faith the professional recommendations of school administrators, educators, and counsellors." (Trow:1966, 444). The result, Trow suggests, is that, "Professional educators in America will have to resign themselves to the fact that mass public education, especially at the secondary level, involves conflicts of values and interests which are independent of professional skills and knowledge, and which are increasingly less likely to be left solely to professional decision." (Trow:1966,444). The consequences of this condition are that various attempts to change facets of public education in the American community, including alteration of the traditional school calendar, no matter how professionally sound, are likely to encounter resistance from various segments of the community.

Manifestation of the Problem:The Case of the Year-Round School

A proposed alteration of the school calendar fro the traditional nine-month schedule to some form of a year-round schedule is commonly presaged as a means to militate overcrowded schools and generally rising costs of education within the community. Parents and educators alike deplore overcrowded classrooms and taxpayers oppose constructing new school facilities which would increase what they consider to be an already heavy tax burden. To the extent that year-round schools promise some relief from economic and pedagogical problems resulting from overcrowded school facilities, it would seem a judicious course of action for a community to impliment a year-round schedule, at least on a trial basis. Yet, year-round schedules proposed by school administrators are frequently met by community resistance. The provenance of community resistance to what seems a rational proposal is often difficult for school officials to comprehend. But notice that the year-round schedule is proposed by school officials as a rational means to deal with pedagogical and economic problems consistant with what they feel to be their professional responsibilities, while community response is likely to be largely based on what they consider to be traditional family responsibilities. For example, responding to a proposed year-round calendar one mother remarked, "Just who is going to benefit by having school in session all year around? The teachers are the only ones. Our taxes will be increased to take care of the extra pay for teachers. And, I feel it is too much for the youngsters to take. They need time for relaxation and recreation."(Bay City Michigan Times:1969) Another parent responded, "The only time the parents and children can get together is in summertime. How can the parents plan a vacation with the children in school all year?" (Bay City Michigan Times:1969)

In reviewing community reaction to year-round school proposals, it becomes readily apparent that the verbalized opposition of the community focuses

on a) precieved interference of a year-round program on family activities, especially the annual family summer vacation, and b) a precieved general disruption of the "normal" rhythm of community-school life. This latter focus of resistance is commonly articulated as including interference with such traditional school activities as atheletics, school clubs, band, school "spirit", etc., as well as interference with community recreation programs, use of school facilities by the general community (adult evening classes, use of school atheletic facilities, etc.), summer employment of students, "Tom Sawyer" summer experience, church programs, and many others.

The specification of these points of community resistance, however, is somewhat misleading if they are taken to reflect the exact nature community reaction to a proposed year-round school calendar. It is likely, in fact, that such considerations are only , to employ an apt cliche, 'the exposed tip of the iceberg'.* In some school-community conflicts, the issue of authority becomes the center of controversy. For example, in the movement for decentraliation and local control of schools, authority is commonly the public issue (Reatherstone:1969, Etzioni:1969, Roberts:1969). But more often authority crises are masked in cloaks of many colors. The case of prayer in public schools illustrates a crises of authority in community-school relations which was largely treated as a "freedom of religion" issue, per se.* The matter of compulsory school attendance constitutes another illustrative case, in that the issue of authority over the child's socialization experience lurks behind legal precedent and maneuvering. And certainly, in curriculum matters, such as the controversy over sex-education and vocational training, the cen-

* We do not mean to suggest that these articulated issues of resistance are not important; they certainly must be responded to, in specific fashion, by proponents of a year-round schedule.

* Again, we are not arguing that freedom of religion was not at issue. Only that authority was a central issue: "Do schools have the authority to impose the practice of prayer on students?"

tral issue of who has ligitimate authority to make such decisions is often confounded by the morally couched rhetoric of various interest groups in the community (Cohen:1969, U.S. House Committee on Education and Labor:1968, Lozzaro:1969).

These recurring authority crises in school-community relationships are largely the result of the historical development of public education in American society, and two aspects of that development seem especially germain. First, the concept of community control over public education and second, the concept of in loco parentis. The paradoxical nature of these two perspectives on authority over public education returns to haunt community-school interplay over and over again, so much so that the daily life of the public school administrator revolves around running an educational corporation, with all its complex financial and personal problems and acting as mediator between teachers, parents, and students (Goslin:1965;48), hardly a task for the faint of heart! The school principal must often be more of a politican than an educator, and legitimatization of authority is precisely what politics is all about.

The public school administrator, then, in proposing an alteration of the school calendar to a year-round schedule before his school board (for the most part, laymen representing various community interest groups) and through them to the community, inadvertently reserects the latent issue of legal-rational authority (professional) versus traditional authority (community-family) over public education in the community.

Effect of the Year-Round School on Community

Any systematic attempt to appraise the effects of a year-round school calendar on community and family life is made difficult because of a paucity of emperical longitudinal research into the matter. Yet there is no doubt that there is some urgency in attempting such an appraisal as interest in the

year-round school continues to spread throughout the nation. The remarks that follow here, therefore, are best considered as hypothesized consequences which would, no doubt, vary from community to community. We shall not be directly concerned with the important issues of the economics of year-round education, child development in the year-round school, and professional administration of the year-round school, for these issues will be more competently treated by other specialists who are members of the panel. Our concern here is with the probable effects of the year-round school on community and family life.

We have argued above that the central issue in the controversy surrounding the year-round school is that of the locus of legitimate authority to determine the socialization experiences of the child. A common perspective to employ in the sociology of community life is to treat the community as a system of interdependent and interrelated institutions:political, economic, educational, religious and familial (Warren:1965). But for our purposes, it is perhaps more useful to think of the community as a socialization context in which there are a number of clusters of individuals and groups that have a vested interest in promoting values and behavioral models for the children and youths to emulate (Lippitt:1968,334). These interest clusters including the public school, can be seen as competing for the time, interest and physical presence of children and youth of the community. Such a perspective is, perhaps, more consistent with our concern of the authority conflict related to year-round school proposals, than isthe institutional perspective on community life.

Lippitt characterizes these community interest clusters as follows:

1. The formal education system, public and private.
2. The churches with their programs for children and youth.
3. The leisure-time agencies with their recreational, cultural, and character education programs.

4. The social control and protection agencies such as the police, courts, traffic-safety agents, etc.
5. The therapeutic, special correction, and socialization services such as counselors, remedial clinics, and programs for the handicapped.
6. Employment offices and work supervisors who hire the young and supervise them on their paid jobs.
7. Political leaders who have an interest in involving the young in political activities such as civil rights protests.
8. The subculture of parents.
9. The subculture of like-age and older peers.
10. The mass media; TV, radio, records, newspapers, books, and newsstand materials. (Lippitt:1968, 335)

These interest clusters exist concomitantly within the community and, therefore, the child as the object of these interests is faced with often competing multiple demands on his time and attention. Each interest is perceived by its proponents as being especially worthy and competes vigoriously with other interests for the child's participation. It is a characteristic of most communities to find these various interest activities routinized in such a way that competition for the child's participation does not result in constant overt conflict, although, as might be expected, this routinization is often precarious indeed. Every teacher is aware, for example, that assigning "too much" homework is likely to result in incurring the wrath not only of students, but also of parents, scouting leaders, employers, church program leaders, local businessmen who offer youth-centered recreation services, etc. This precarious balance of competing socialization interest cluster in community affairs is easily upset by alteration of its routinization. Thus, it can be expected that an alteration of the school calendar would result in upsetting the customary interrelationships of various community interest clusters. In some cases, the effect might be as minimal as requiring a rescheduling of meeting time, but in other cases the effect might threaten the existance of the competing interest altogether. In any case, there is likely to be resentment by proponents of affected interest

clusters, resentment against being forced to alter a program, however minimally, in deference to the proclivities of a competing interest cluster, namely the school. Such might be expected to be a general effect of the year-round school on community life.

With an awareness of this general effect constantly before us, understood as involving often competing claims of legitimate authority to determine the socialization experiences of the child in the community, let us now consider selected specific probable effects of the year-round school on the community. Space considerations will not permit a detailed treatment of each of the ten interest clusters Lippitt has identified, therefore we will simply attempt to illustrate the general form effects that the year-round school might manifest within the typical American community.

Of all the considerations regarding the implimentation of a year-round school calendar, the speculated effect such an implimentation might have on the family is at once the most controversial and the most frequently mentioned nexus of dispute. It is doubtful, however, that a year-round schedule would greatly effect typical family routine in the community beyond an occasional rescheduling of the family vacation. The family vacation is considered important in American family life because it represents familism; family togetherness and the sharing of experiences by family members. Thus, the family vacation symbolizes a cultural value of familism and such values become sacred, moral imparitives of social life. Yet, it is difficult to project the year-round school as having a significant effect in the sense of threatening this value.

If we are correct in characterizing the base issue in family-school relationships as that of traditional family authority over the child competing with legal-rational school authority, then there is a need to appraise

the effects of the implimentation of a year-round school calendar on that authority relationship. Unfortunately, there exists no research into the issue which would permit us to draw firm conclusions. Dan W. Dodson, in an address to school superintendents, pointed out that, "The schools do not derive their authority from the consent of the governed minority. Educators have long said that teachers derive their authority from the concept of "in loco parentis" or in place of parents. In the average community, the teacher is not in place of parents either as perceived by the students, the teachers, or the parents. Hence the school does not have legitimacy." (Dodson:1969,285) Dodson's appraisal is, perhaps, an overly harsh one but it is helpful in that it suggests an interesting possible effect of the year-round school on the family, namely that a year-round schedule (i.e. the 45--15 plan) may tend to enhance integration of the family and the school as child socializing agents. Such a possible effect is suggested given that a 45--15 plan, for example, changes the yearly cadence of family and school dominance over the child's socialization experience, and distributes the interaction between the two institutions more evenly throughout the year with the probable result of at least altering "in loco parentis" as a basis of teacher authority (e.g.PTA groups would function year-round also). In other words, where the traditional nine month calendar tends to enhance compartmentalization of family and school as socialization agents, the year-round calendar may enhance integration. We are not so naive as to suggest that a year-round calendar would in itself improve family-school relationships or solve the aforemention authority crises. But "acceptance" of a year-round schedule by parents does indicate their willingness to alter, in a significant fashion, the traditional division of labor within the yearly socialization cycle.

Other issues of particular interest concerning the effect of year-round education on the family, for example the effect on the working mother, await

research evidence before conclusions can be formulated. In considering the various possible effects, both negative and positive, of year-round education on the family, it is well to bear in mind that contrary to popular belief, the nuclear family as a social institution is one of the more adaptive institutions within the community. The family as a rigid social structure is commonly found within the context of an agricultural economy; and American society can no longer be characterized as having a dominant agricultural economy. The industrialized urban family of today's society is an institution of change, change in both form and function. As a dynamic element of community life, the family may well be less of a barrier to the implimentation of a year-round school program than might be expected.

The church, like the family, has a traditional authority base. Unlike the family, however, this traditional base of authority is believed to have been instituted by God and therefore is beyond alteration by man. In other words, the church tends to claim final authority in community issues, including matters involving the public school. While there may be social acceptance of the ideal of the separation of "church and state", of the sacred and the secular, the church as an interest cluster in community life functions to legitimize, evaluate, and support or condemn all facets of community activity. The experienced school administrator and teacher recognizes the significance of the church's role in public education within the community. One superintendent illustrated the church-school interplay in day-to-day community life in saying, "My minister wants all kinds of special favors because I am a member of his church. He expects me to turn over our gym to the church basketball team. He wanted me to support his idea of giving out a Bible to each public school child. He told me that he thought I ought to see that more of 'our people' get jobs in the school. None of these are fair requests. I'm supposed to represent all the people, and I want to use the

criterion of 'what's best for the schools," not 'what's best for my church." (Gross:1968, 9)

In addition to the church's daily involvment in public education, the church also frequently offers an alternative to public education through the parochial school. If the public schools in a given community were to adopt a year-round schedule, there would, no doubt, be a resulting pressure on the community's parochial schools to also impliment a year-round calendar. This would particularly be the case if the year-round school was judged by the community as improving the quality of a child's educational experience, and if that judgment were supported by research evidence.

Because of the church's vested interest in maintaining an authority base in matters related to the child's socialization experience, its officals are keenly interested and involved in community school issues. To the extent that this interest cluster would perceive year-round education as erroding their claims on the child's time and interest, they could be expected to resist the implimentation of year-round schedules in public education, for they perceive their authority as just, correct, and final.

While consideration of the probable effects of year-round education on the family and religious sectors of community life deal with easily identifible institutions, interest has also been manifested in the probable effects of year-round school on other aspects of community life. For example, it is sometimes suggested by the proponents of year-round schools that implimentation would result in lowering the community delinquency rate. Partly this supposed consequence results from the belief that "idle hands and minds quickly turn to evil deeds and thoughts." But in addition and complimentary to the above belief, is the view that schools when in session function as a deterent to delinquency. For example, it was reported by a member of a school board in a large city that 90 porcent of the juvenile crime was committed

by school dropouts and truants. (Bossard and Boll:1966, 451) While the relationship of year-round education to community delinquency rates is an important and interesting research issue, there is little evidence based on our current knowledge and understanding of delinquency that would support the overly optimistic view that factors related to community delinquency rates are so simple as to yeild by a change to year-round schools.

Through our brief consideration of the possible effects of year-round school on family, religion, and delinquency rates we have attempted to underline the complexity of appraising the impact of year-round schools on community life without carefully collected research data. However, this much can be hypothesized with some certainty; the community will be affected by a change to a year-round school calendar in so far as such a change requires an adjustment in the precarious routinization of community interest clusters competing for authority and influence on matters related to the childs socilization experience.

The effects of a year-round school on community life would be manifested in very specific banal ways within the community. Parents might verbalize vacation trips lost, children in school at different times, more tranquil summers; employers might lament the loss of cheaper summer labor; police reports might reveal lower delinquency rates; teachers might delight in increased summer income and deplore the loss of a summer away from it all; etc.

But these expressions of effect, no matter how human and real, must not be grasped as <u>the</u> effect of year-round education on community life; in a sense they are "quantitative" concerns. The basic issue rests with the authority and interest structure of the community. But the promise of the year-round school rests with and the future of year-

round education within the American community rightfully must be considered with a eye on the child and the qualitative goals of education. Within the simplistic quatitative considerations of cost and numbers of students, the year-round school may well be an idea whose time has passed, if we accept the indicators of a declining school population. But if we are to take seriously the goal of a quality educational experience for all of our children, and consider the year-round school program as an innovation toward this goal of enriching the education experience, then our work has just begun.

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