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ABSTRACT

This article reports on the relationship between the informal behavior of teachers and the formal organization of the school. A field study was conducted over a six month period at one high school. Research questions focused on patterns of behavior which were created by teachers to sustain individuals on the job and to promote continuation of informal groups called cliques. Participant observation and interview techniques were used for collecting data from the natural history perspective. The results show that the patterns of behavior developed by teachers in their respective cliques promoted clique permanence and were a response to a perceived need among teachers to provide for human interests, which they felt were lacking or insufficiently available within the formal organization of the school. (Author)

TEACHERS AT WORK:

A CASE STUDY OF COLLEGIAL BEHAVIOR IN A HIGH SCHOOL

by

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Teachers at Work:

A Case Study of Collegial Behavior in a High School

On every day between August and June some thirteen million youngsters in this country attend high schools. Going through the doors each day with them are about 970,000 public school teachers. Aside from having a low opinion of the quality of education and a definite aversion to the occupation itself, many adults in the U.S. know little else about the work done by these men and women in the teaching profession. The school is seen principally as a place of learning for young people. But it is also a place of work for adults.

The work of teachers is everyone's concern, according to Ernest Boyer (1983), for "excellence in education is linked to economic recovery and to jobs. We are being told that better schools will move the nation forward in the high-tech race" (p. 5). Because teaching is an occupation that is central to education, we need to see the school as the site for a community of workers and understand how the work experiences of teachers influence the culture of the school and the curriculum.

An interest in the quality of teachers' work experiences presupposes an interest in what the occupation of teaching does to the people who enter it. Like people in other occupations, teachers struggle to get through the tedium of their work day. The list of tedious chores includes: keeping attendance, filing reports, writing lesson plans, disciplining students, developing skills, discussing concepts, monitoring the hallways and bathrooms, serving as study hall proctor, grading papers, correcting exams. A feature common to all is that they are done over and over again in the same way, with the same students. Tedium arises out of routine and has ramifications for all involved. The perceptions we hold in common about the teacher's work are accurate, but detailed study of collegial relations among teachers is still lacking.

What many people may not know is that isolation is a particular feature of teaching, given the predominant work structure defined for teachers (Lortie, 1975). A high school teacher, for example, experiences isolation of a physical and cultural sort, because work in school means instructing adolescents in some subject matter specialty according to a strictly observed schedule every day of the school year. There is very little time during the work day for a teacher to interact with peers. The cellular arrangement of classrooms, scheduling of classes, and assignment of teachers to a specific room for the year all contribute to a teacher's physical and cultural isolation from colleagues.

However, students and teachers are dependent to some extent upon peer groups for suggestions and reinforcements of ways to cope with others, most notably, superordinates. The routine ways of behaving, which are worked out little by little by different members of these small, informal groups, influence in important ways the climate of the school. Recent investigations of schooling help to explain how attention to informal group behavior among students and teachers interprets what Willard Waller (1932) identified as the "tangled web of interrelationships" specific to the "social world of the school" (e.g. Metz, 1984 and 1978; Cusick, 1983 and 1973; Wehlage, Stone, and Kliebard, 1980; and McPherson, 1972).

Currently, educators are giving emphasis in their research to study of the dialectic between subordinate and superordinate groups. Harry

Wolcott (1977) argued that the anthropological concept of moiety is useful for explaining relations between people with careers in education. Briefly speaking, moiety refers to the presence in a society of two mutually exclusive groups. Wolcott's thesis was that within moiety subgroups two divergent ideational subsystems are created and maintained. According to Wolcott, "it is apparent that if members of each moiety perform certain critical tasks, then each must be represented in order for the society to function" (p. 131). Implied is the idea that moiety-like social organizations have the potential for generating mutually beneficial relations. Although he was intrigued by the idea, Wolcott did not address this concern with process.

A moiety-like social organization in the school may contribute to the schoolteacher's lack of familiarity with what Andy Hargreaves (1984) calls the "administrative zone." Over the years teachers become preoccupied with classroom affairs and show a tendency to enter a self-perpetuating loop that prompts a demand for increasing concentration on the instructional aspects of work. As a result, the faculty subculture acquires less and less knowledge and understanding of schoolwide decision making.

The failure of school administrators to achieve reform in the schools is attributed by some researchers to subtle, covert forms of resistance from the faculty subculture (e.g., Metz 1984). Henry Giroux (1983) recognizes power to control in the forms of resistance to authority exercised by workers (teachers in particular) who are dominated. Arguing from a radical perspective, Giroux explained: "The notion of resistance points to the need to understand more thoroughly the complex ways in which people mediate and respond to the connection between their own experiences and structures of domination and constraint" (p. 290). From this view point attention is given to recognizing in the acts of individuals forms of resistance which indicate an intention to struggle against domination and submission for the purpose of achieving social and self-emancipation.

Of particular interest for this report is the idea that workers create culture continuously through informal group activity that sustains individuals while on the job (Becker, 1982). The patterns of behavior spontaneously evolved by the groups not only tell whether or not workers enjoy what they are doing, but also indicate what kind of work structures are more likely to create high levels of job satisfaction. Culture is an anthropological concept used to explain what an individual has in mind as personal, internal knowledge that makes it possible for that person to participate sensibly in the social setting. The situation which I describe is unlike that in organizations which promote particular kinds of belief systems among workers (e.g. Deal and Kennedy, 1982).

An increasing number of reports suggest that workers in various careers are aware at least vaguely of the discrepancy between what is expected of them on the job and what they are capable of doing (See, for example, Lortie, 1975; Kanter, 1977; Schrank, 1978; Cusick, 1983; and Terkel, 1974 and 1981). As a result, people are frustrated by their jobs. From this view point the formal organization of work can promote frustration among workers, frustration that finds outlet and relief through mechanisms created by workers in their informal systems. Two themes which run throughout this literature are that the spontaneously developed routines of workers make their jobs more meaningful and provide amenities that make time spent at work satisfying. In many instances these benefits are not sanctioned by the management.

An important point is that studies of small, informal groups existing in the school community are critical in educational research. Investigating the functions of faculty subcultures can provide constructs useful for explaining issues and problems relevant to the occupation of teaching. How do high school teachers cope with isolation? What mechanisms help teachers alleviate tedium? To what extent do they rely upon informal organizations for mitigating effects of teaching which are attributable to the structure of work? What values are assigned to patterns of behavior created and maintained by informal groups of teachers? How does this affect the culture of the school? And the curriculum? This is a report of a field study whose purpose is to contribute to the understanding of teaching in the secondary school by addressing these and other questions. Thus far relatively little research has examined informal group behavior among teachers in secondary schools. It is plausible to assume that these voluntary associations serve some purpose within the larger and more formal organizational structure of the school.

This report of research relies upon and extends a number of themes from the anthropological and sociological literatures just discussed. As such, the work of schoolteachers about which I report can be seen as an instance of a more general occurence. First, the formal organizational structure of the high school is complemented by informal organizational structures, such as cliques, which influence the work behavior of teachers. Second, as with other careers, structural and situational aspects of the occupation put limits on the behaviors people can engage in while at work. Third, these aspects of work influence the life of the teacher on the job and in general. More specifically, in response to the definition of work from superordinates, teachers at one high school created and maintained routines of behavior, such as huddling and pimping, which were meaningful and satisfying. Some served the educational interests of high school students; others served peculiar interests of teachers. All routines of behavior helped to define the culture of the school where the teachers worked.

The Method

The natural history approach was chosen because it allows one to conduct a field study responsibly and yet modify the interest in generalization common to social science research. The natural history approach consists of direct observation of events based upon some conception of human behavior. One begins by observing and analyzing events as they unfold in a social situation, using techniques which bring the researcher into close association with a subject's view of reality. The object of this research method is to make explicit what is implicit or tacit regarding the problem identified for study.

The chief limitations of this approach to research are that it is difficult to replicate the study and difficult to gain sufficient consistency among findings so that statistical significance can be demonstrated. However, the dominant interest in natural history is with validity instead of reliability. I endorse the notion of "vertical" generalization proposed by Stephens (1982), which "applies to those cases where one intends to interpret the events being studied, to relate them to more general patterns of action by means of abstract concepts, and so lead to a broader understanding of school events" (p. 81). In brief, one conducts the field study mindful of a theoretical framework which

provides working hypotheses for orientation. These hypotheses are changed and developed as a result of the evolving complex of events documented by the researcher working in the field study are . In the end interpretive generalization is developed which joins the rationality and consistency of a theoretical framework with the nuances of a field situation.

The method which became known in the field was unfolding and was always affected by personal sensitivity and the diverse situations encountered. Rather than a structured, logical process, the method of inquiry was instead a convoluted outflow of energy, organized and directed toward addressing Abraham Kaplan's (1963) basic scientific question: "What the devil is going on around here?" (p. 85). At all times standard ethnographic techniques were used to gather data which would help answer the questions centering upon informal group behavior of teachers in a secondary school. The description given has a close affinity to the method of inquiry actually undertaken, or in Kaplan's (1963) terms, the "logic-in-use" (p. 8).

Most notable among the techniques used in this study were participant observation and interviewing. The field worker took an active part in events experienced by the high school teachers. Careful attention was given to the selection of events and to the role to play as a participant, providing greater assurance that, as George Spindler (1982) suggests, the ethnography makes "explicit what is implicit and vaguely understood by participants in the social setting being studied" (p. 7). A variety of settings were studied so as to learn how teachers behaved in their work community. There was attendance at classroom lectures, lunch, faculty lounge discussions, department meetings, and commuting trips to and from work.

Participation is intimately related to observation. The combination, as LeMasters (1975, p. 3) notes, makes it possible for the researcher to view the social world of subjects from the inside. Most of the time spent in the field was devoted to the careful observation of teachers as they interacted with one another. For example, when a teacher had to attend a department meeting, observations were made concerning how and why he interacted with certain of his colleagues there. The point is, at all times there was a search for data which would help explain the faculty culture of secondary school teachers.

Informal interviews and observations occurred, some of which were planned and some spontaneous. Interviews were held with people in the following positions: district superintendent and assistants, school board members, high school principal, teachers, students, parents, wives and children of teachers, friends, university personnel, and other people with whom teachers had significant encounters during the field study. In most instances interviews and observations were on a one-to-one basis. There was a general interest in mind and it was pursued in an open-ended manner with an interviewee so as to obtain eventually a detailed personal account of some aspect of the faculty culture relevant to informal group behavior. For example, the researcher became curious about a tendency among teachers to engage in activities unrelated to their work. When one of the teachers confided that he and another teacher went swimming during the lunch period, it was important to interview the participants while swimming. As a result, data were gathered which supported the hypothesis that teachers engaged in secret escapes. In another circumstance, it was important to obtain an autobiographical account from an informant. The

latter was necessary to arrive at an understanding of social interaction patterns of the two main informants, Mr. Abraham and Mr. Zack.

Spontaneous interviews took place at times in the field situation when there was need for an immediate explanation from a member of the work community about what was taking place. These interviews were usually of short duration and quite specific. For instance, when a teacher in the Rebel clique mentioned that he was "sending a girl down with a book during class change time" and the title of the book didn't matter, there was need of an immediate explanation. The information obtained at this point (it might not have been proffered later) helped explain how teachers in the Rebel clique found relief within the institutional complex by playing the game.

The Setting

The teachers who became a part of this study worked at Roosevelt Senior High School, located in Elmwood, USA. Elmood is not the real name of the city, but it stands for a real place. The city had about 25,000 residents and was located in a midwestern state. The school district of Elmwood was one of 20 in the state which had an enrollment of 5,000 to 9,000 students. The study was conducted over a seven month period in the 1980-81 school year, during which time the researcher held a part-time teaching position in the Elmwood school district. At the time of the field study, the student enrollment at Roosevelt Senior High School was near 2,000. The number of full-time faculty was 100. There was one principal and two assistants.

For purposes of this investigation it was important to gain partial membership in the informal teacher groups of a content area department and use participant observation techniques to study the behavior. Entre was gained when a member of the social studies department willingly gave consent to the researcher to conduct the study. Primary groups existing among the social studies teachers were found to be both formal and informal in nature. The department consisted of fourteen men who joined the faculty over a thirty year period and constituted a principal element in the formal organization. Reduced to its simplest form, being hired to teach social studies at Roosevelt meant that one was an involuntary member of the department. However, the social studies teachers expressed a distinct preference during department meetings and at other times for collegial relations which were informal and voluntary.

Since teachers, administrators, students, and parents referred to the two groups of teachers in the social studies department as 'cliques," the word "clique" was a suitable descriptor for the informal organizations. Within their cliques teachers found some opportunity for participating in meaningful and satisfying relations with other adults and found therein a quality of human interaction denied them by the formal organization of the school. Membership in one of the two cliques was sought by recently hired teachers and was sustained by teachers with more tenure at Roosevelt. The one clique was known as the "Rebels;" the other was known as the "Guards."

The Cliques

The cliques were similar in that both functioned to help teachers mitigate conditions in the school which were established by school authorities. They were different in regard to particular patterns of

behavior which different individuals created in cooperation with other members of their informal group. Ross Abraham and Gary Zack were the primary informants for this case study of high school teachers. To some extent they have become abstract characters that are representative of those who belonged to the two cliques. First names of teachers were chosen to help distinguish clique membership.

Contrasts of "decoration and ornamentation" (Wolcott, 1977, p. 183) helped to distinguish members of one informal group within the teacher moiety from the other. A Guard would carry a basketball, whistle, clipboard, or duffle bag while moving from one territory in school to another. A Rebel, by contrast, would carry a copy of Mother Jones, Johnny Got His Gun, Capital, or the Zapruder film.

These objects or ornaments were important keys to understanding the ethos of each clique. For instance, Guards gained prestige when they proved that they could "take the boys to state." Possession of sports paraphernalia in the classroom or hallways identified one with this endeavor and its rewards. But the administration hired these men to teach and gave them a separate contract to coach. These teachers were aware that "going to state" involved more than success in athletic competition. They evolved patterns of behavior which demonstrated effectively in the classroom and on the field their endorsement and commitment to Elmwood's values. This, in turn, helped make it possible for them to work as teachers.

The prestige-carrying image of Rebels was that of scholar with a penchant for criticism of culture and society. Books, magazines, films, and other instructional materials addressing controversial topics were their badges of identification. These men were hired to teach social studies and, despite administrator preferences for teachers to become involved with extra curricular activities, had no intention of diverting their attention to programs which, like athletics, they held in low esteem.

The primary concern of teachers in the Rebel clique was teaching college prep courses. Although most students disliked these teachers because they represented a set of values foreign to the blue-collar culture of Elmwood, these same students nonetheless revered them. In the face of such opposition, Rebels created and maintained patterns of behavior which enhanced their chances of working in the high school and made the job more bearable.

The existence of a clique assumes some type of social structure. Roy Finley's position, as indicated in Figure 1, was analogous to that of the Corner boy in Whyte's (1943) study. The Corner Boy was a leader: "the man who acts when the situation requires action" (Whyte, 1943, p. 259). Like Doc of the Norton Street Gang, Finley was a man who was resourceful, independent in judgment, and, at least in the opinion of his followers, was "right."

Figure 1
The Rebel Clique

Roger Ashley--		*Ross Abraham
Roland Wilkes--	Roy Finley	*Robert Silvius
Ralph Gaines--		*Ron Heidman
Randy Schumacher--		

Note. Sustained membership is indicated by (*) and seeking membership is indicated by (-).

As shown in Figure 1, status was an important aspect of clique membership. Ashley, Wilkes, Gaines, and Schumacher were known by the group as members who were seeking full acceptance in the informal group. Abraham, Silvius, and Heidman were sustained members.

Status as a sustained member in the clique was earned over the years through acceptance of Mr. Finley's authority and consistent participation in activities which contributed to the clique's function. The words and actions of seeking and sustained members alike demonstrated frequently that they thought Mr. Finley was "right" about subject matter, methods, administrators. etc.

Figure 2 illustrates the social structure that had evolved among those in the Guard clique. Once again, the person occupying the central position, in this case Gary Zack, was at the top of the authority structure.

Figure 2
The Guard Clique

Gabe Samuels--		*Guy Harris
Garfield Stevens--	Gary Zack	*Gerald Miller
		*Greg Chapman

Note. Sustained membership is indicated by (*) and seeking membership is indicated by (-).

There were six social studies teachers in the Guard clique. As Figure 2 demonstrates these men were either seeking status as sustained members or they held this status at the time of the fieldwork. The leader, Mr. Zack, was the person who Samuels, Stevens, Harris, Miller, and Chapman went to for advice and encouragement.

Mr. Zack knew more about what was going on in the Guard clique than anybody else. When a teacher had a problem with his students, he sought help from Gary Zack. At the lunch table in the teacher's lounge, Mr. Zack was at the center of attention. When he was absent from a department meeting, arguments presented by Samuels, Stevens, and others in the clique were ineffective against arguments from sustained members of the Rebel clique.

What accounted for the fact that Roy Finley and Gary Zack occupied Corner Boy posiitons in the diagrams of the Rebel and Guard clique memberships? To a great extent it was intellectual removal for Roy Finley and intellectual rigor for Gary Zack. In all of the department meetings (over 15 hours) Lee Finley said only two words and they were in answer to the question: "Where are we headed and why?" Finley's answer: "It's K-12." Members of his clique believed others "feared him" because he was "very intelligent, dynamic . . . a commanding presence." The intellectual removal or aloofness which Roy Finley maintained while attending meetings was a pattern of behavior Rebels used to advantage with students, faculty, and administrators. It was part of the Rebel's repertoire of supportive routines.

Gary Zack was an outspoken man and was described as "running roughshod" over the teachers of low level sophomores. When present in department meetings, he usually led the argument for curriculum development from the standpoint of Guards. He believed strongly that teachers had an obligation to be involved in extra curricular activities, for it was through these that students came to know and respect their teachers. This belief and the patterns of behavior which supported it

were important to the work of Guards. In sum, the behaviors of Roy Finley and Gary Zack became models for those who were sustained as well as those who were seeking membership in either clique.

To sum up, each clique had evolved a social structure having one person who was both at the center of the clique's activity and at the top with respect to authority. One of the primary informants, Mr. Abraham, was a well respected, sustained member of the Rebel clique. Characteristic of Rebels, he was selective about whom he associated with and made a policy of avoiding anyone who belonged to the Guard clique. The other primary informant, Mr. Zack, was in the central position of the Guard clique. His daily interactions at the school were with a wide variety of people, including the Athletic Director and other coaches.

The activities teachers created and maintained supported belief structures consistent with the ethos of the Rebel and Guard cliques. Rebels believed that subject matter specialization and a critical attitude toward community and school values were important. Guards believed that coaching was one with teaching and the school was responsible for promoting community values (cf. Cusick, 1983, pp. 92-93). They described their department meetings as "the closest thing to war in the state." Why were these teachers fighting for competing definitions of the situation?

As is common in other high schools, the administration was responsible for maintaining a system which upheld the interests of the educators and the local community. According to the superintendent, it was important "to maintain both the academic and the co-curricular program." During school board meetings the administration argued that determination of just where the emphasis would lie on a given concern was "a judgment of what is in the best interest of the school district: what is the more valuable for the overall good of the school." With a nod of assent from the Elmwood School Board, the superintendent said: "I reserve the right to argue that issue." In other words, decision making in this school system followed the top-down pattern common to other schools and prevalent in business and industry.

It was difficult for teachers, whether in the Rebel or Guard clique, to think of themselves as partners with the administration in the decision making process. A belief commonly held among social studies teachers was that teachers were workers and administrators were managers. That teachers saw themselves in this light, was manifested in statements they made in reference to administrators like the following: "They hired Vincent Holmes as the Assistant Principal last year. He was a business man before he came into education and likes to talk about his work at the company. They hired a buddy." That this conception of the school as a company with workers and managers was not popular to all was evident in the formal address given by the principal of Roosevelt when the 1980-81 school year began:

> It is my hope that all of us could work together in an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding that would allow all of us to continue Roosevelt's reputation as being one of the finest schools in the state. Together we face the challenges of a new school year, with all of us making every effort to talk <u>with</u> each other instead of <u>at</u> each other and to listen and trust one another. This is your school. Be proud of it.

Despite its appeal for cooperation, this address by the principal indicates that there was divisiveness in the school. It was expressed covertly not only across traditional categories, for example, teachers

and students, but also within categories. To sustain identification as "one of the finest schools in the state," Roosevelt's teachers had to press students for excellence in the classroom and on the field.

This dual role for teachers split Roosevelt's social studies department into two camps: Rebels and Guards. The system had no mechanism for resolving this issue or relieving teachers of their frustrations about the discontinuities in perceived role-expectations. Although Cusick (1983) reports that "one cannot dichotomize the staff of that or any other high school into 'academically minded' and 'activity minded' teachers" (p. 94), teachers in the social studies department at Roosevelt divided themselves along just such lines and believed that the administration wanted teachers to be both. The structure of work in the school intensified the problem. Those in positions of authority had little contact with students. Teachers were involved directly and continuously with educating students, but had little opportunity to enter the "administrative zone." In short, the hierarchical work structure prevented collaborative planning between teachers and administrators and supported inequitable distribution of power.

Permanence of the Cliques

The two cliques had evolved certain patterns of behavior specific to each, conducted more or less secretively by the teachers, and often done for amusement and diversion. Involvement in this process was critical to teachers, for, as one of the informants explained: "It is the only thing that has enabled me to survive as a teacher in this high school; without that I would have been gone long ago." Many teachers saw their informal group behavior as a response to urgent needs both in the strict sense of their holding on to their jobs and in the looser sense of their ability to make it through the day. Teachers provided for their need for association with other adults while on the job through a variety of mechanisms. Due to limitations of space I will present the analysis only of routines which provided for permanence of the cliques. The teachers' deviations--from norms established and maintained by the authorities for the school--suggested that the routines of activity functioned to relieve teachers of the tedium, cynicism, even hostility which they felt were byproducts of the job.

Wolcott's (1977, p. 198) model of the ways teachers cope with change which is imposed by an external authority helps explain perceptions the cliques had of the administration and of one another. The Rebels thought of themselves as resisting policies from superordinates such as co-curricular assignments; policies which Rebels believed were detrimental to teachers. They also believed that Guards were compliant; acceptance of co-curricular assignments meant Guards were uncritical of school policies. But this perception of Guards overlooked the administration's resolve to emphasize both academic programs and co-curricular activities.

The policy which accounted for the dual role expectancy of teachers was in conflict with the interests of all of the social studies teachers. Consequently, both Rebel and Guard cliques created and maintained patterns of behavior which were subtle forms of resistance to the structure of work. In some cases the behavior seemed to take a serious turn and may have indicated a hostile attitude on the part of teachers toward superordinates. In other cases it was more likely playful and suggested that the informal system's latent purpose was simply to make an

onerous job more bearable. Regarding the latter, the same schmooze element which made plumbers in Schrank's (1979) study set an apprentice up for "The Old Faithful Shit Shower" (p. 18) made teachers "Pimp" and "Play the Game." These mechanisms provided workers with comic relief while on the job. The following key patterns of behavior were observed as imbedded in clique membership and helped sustain the Guard clique: playing ball, huddling, taking the shit detail. Among those in the Rebel clique it was: black humor, playing the game, and pimping.

Playing Ball

The Guards regularly signed on to coach baseball, basketball, footbal1, track, and so on. As might be expected, each of these teachers had considerable skill with organized games provided for athletic activity and competitive sport. More importantly, coaching gave Guards the opportunity to remain active and skilled in a sport they enjoyed playing. Also, since all of the Guards lived in or very near the town of Elmwood, commuting to and from school did not take up much time. When their team's practice was over, it was only a short drive or walk to their homes.

Involvement with athletics also influenced what Guards did in their classrooms. Like the teachers in Cusick's (1983) study, the Rightwingers' approach to teaching extended from particular elements of their lives, some of which had nothing to do with social studies. When the season was in full swing, the coach's attention was fixed largely on developing strategies demanded by competition with other teams. Between classes, during lunch, and after school a Guard who was coaching would be concentrating on game plans. Sometimes he was alone; at other times he consulted with colleagues.

This concentration on athletic competition often conflicted with time needed for preparation to teach. One solution to the problem was extensive use of audio visual materials. Another solution was to give highlights of the latest fight to students during class time. Given the Guard's support of co-curricular activities, the latter was one example of how they demonstrated an approach to teaching which represented congruity between interests of the community and those of educators (See also Peshkin, 1978, pp. 196-199).

However, the hiring process which created the social studies department at Roosevelt did not result in a homogeneous group of teachers. In a show of resistance to the emphasis on co-curricular activities, Rebels pimped the "coach" for offering poor lectures during the season. For example, a Rebel once took bets with his class about when the Guard's class (in the neighboring room) would stop watching video tapes--at the end of the season, before, or after? The teacher was betting on the day after the end of the season. He won. According to this teacher when the clock marked time for the class to begin and they heard no video from the Guard's room, the class "roared."

While administrators did not fully approve of these practices included under playing the game, they accepted them, for it was "hard to get good coaches" and the people of Elmwood wanted to "see their team fighting." The administrators' policy of looking the other way in such instances emphasized the point that, for Guards, the activity of playing ball extended beyond ordinary fields and courts. During the season the Guard's lecture had to include the game. This was as far as Roosevel 's administrators would go to reward teachers through the organization of

work for their co-curricular role (cf. Cusick, 1983, pp. 92-93). This pattern of behavior served members of the Guard clique in that the pressure to make the "boys go to state" was relieved to the extent that they could bring events on the basketball court into the social studies lecture.

Huddling

Playing ball as an informal group activity provided relief to teachers. While studying this process a related pattern of behavior emerged which may be called huddling. Men and women from a wide variety of content areas, but especially physical education, were involved with extra curricular activities at Roosevelt. The Guards and these other teachers belonged to various loosely formed cliques.

The schmooze element was at work here as it was for Schrank (1979) in his job directing youth and social workers in New York City Schrank (1979) noted that when the work of his counselors was threatened by his case workers, the former would "huddle and announce that 'we are trained to do case work' and the tribe would call up its sacred bundles, the literature that would establish territoriality" (p. 171). An important purpose for the huddle was to help the counselors develop a strategy to solve their problem. It was noticed during this study that certain teachers frequently came together in small informal groups to discuss issues and problems such as roughhousing students, teaching a required subject, physical recreation for teachers, and so on. Huddling was an appropriate term for the behavior.

During breaks from teaching, such as the lunch period, Guards were often joined by these other teachers who were involved with athletic activities. Sitting around tables in groups of four to six, they discussed news of sports activities at the local, regional, state, and national levels. They also argued the pros and cons of equipment, sports records, and strategies for their teams and argued the effectiveness of one or another proposed strategy. On one day they talked about which sporting goods store in Elmwood was the best stocked and most cooperative for them and their students. Occasionally they discussed problems related to teaching, such as student discipline.

When huddling, it often happened that someone would recall that a precedent for solution to the problem had been set by another coach--one more experienced and respected. This person's decision was recalled in the huddle for discussion of its implications in the existing situation. During a huddle Gary Zack demonstrated facility with the latter process in response to a question about conflict between cliques:

> I view it like one of my heroes, Gus Taggert (a retired veteran of 35 years). He believed that in the classroom as in the field, you gain in confidence in yourself through the mistakes you make. I have yet to make some, but I'll work out an answer like Red did when I do.

In addition to explaining what occurred during a huddle, the above excerpt reminds us that playing ball to Guards was all the same on the field and in the classroom.

For the Guards problems that developed in the classroom could be resolved through a process similar to that used on the field--huddling. They met with others during lunch periods, between classes, and after school to discuss accomplishments or mistakes they made and to "work out an answer." The problems encountered in both areas--classroom and court--were serious for the teachers. Arriving at solutions through

huddling was critical to the Rightwingers' work at Roosevelt, because it provided a mechanism for coping with the demands of teaching specific to those who taught social studies and coached in the co-curricular activities. Concerning the dual role-expectancy for teachers, authorities for the school expressed a willingness to "look the other way" when the team was playing, but did not restructure the teacher's work to provide relief.

Taking the Shit Detail

It was commonly agreed by Guards that those in the Rebel clique were good teachers--they were steeped in economic, political, and social theory and could teach well. This belief helped explain why only certain Rebels taught such courses to seniors and persistence of this pattern operationally explained authority structure in the Rebel clique. In the opinion of Rebels, a teacher's assignment to a low level social studies course, on the other hand, indicated that he or she was a "rotten teacher." In part this meant that the teacher had a low level of competence with subject matter. Assignment to teach low level sophomores was known as being given the shit detail.

While most of those in the Guard clique were assigned low level sophomore courses to teach, not all who had the assignment were ineffective teachers. Given the circumstances, Guards had evolved their own definition of the situation. Those who were assigned to teach such courses were aware of the stereotype, yet took the matter seriously and assumed a protectionist point of view. One of the Guards explained what he did for a low level. It was representative of what others did.

> I got a guy in my class this year who had three independent studies last year, because nobody wanted him. I have teachers come up to me and say: "You mean you have _____ in your class? How do you put up with him?" There are teachers who do not want him. I am able to handle it because I have been down that road before. And my communication with his parents was important. I pointed out to them that he could do C level work or better. Right now he's really working and his parents are impressed.

The Rightwingers' reason for taking the shit detail was to protect students from "dropping out of school and getting into trouble with the law." It was their belief that if they did not show some concern for these students, then nobody would. As Guy Harris explained: "Some of these kids come from bad family situations. They need somebody to show them a different way of living." Unlike Rebels who placed a high value on scholarly study, Guards gave emphasis to knowing the student.

What Guards did in the name of taking the shit detail was similar to what Cusick (1983) reports about teachers in Factory High: "Not only does the teacher have to maintain the framework of decent personal relations, he or she has to pull the deviating students into some cohesiveness and at the same time keep articulating the experience" (p. 66). Social studies teachers at Roosevelt who had low level students in their classes developed an approach to instruction that gave emphasis to the personal interests of individuals and the social interests of high school students in general. Guy Harris summed it up with: "We are concerned with kids." Their concern was manifested openly to parents in their coaching of teams on the court and playing field; it was also evident in their instruction of low levels in their classrooms.

Gary Zack, at the top of the authority structure within the Guard clique, explained his philosophy of teaching with:

> I want to know how we can tune more of these kids into this thing called Roosevelt Senior High School or Elmwood. I look upon teachers as leaders in the community. Our number one concern is kids. That's why I'm in it. In one case baseball, in another history. I think kids have a higher respect for you if they know you are a person who has a concern for them that isn't just in the classroom

Mr. Zack strongly believed that all students, but especially sophomores, needed: constant exposure to proper adult role models, careful guidance in making decisions, and "consistency" in their academic and social life. In his opinion, the high incidence of divorce in the area, absence of parents in the homes due to the family's need for a double income, and availability and widespread use of drugs in the high school and community set adolescents up for easy slippage into "a losing situation." The subject matter he (and the others) presented in the classroom and his involvement with extra curricular activities reflected this concern. For example, he would take time out during class to talk about problems for adolescents: drug abuse, alcoholism, theft, etc. When a guest speaker addressing these problems was added hastily one day to the schedule, he canceled his class and required that his students attend.

For teachers like Mr. Zack, redefining the situation known as taking the shit detail contributed in significant ways to their work as teachers in the high school. To do so meant that one would put emphasis upon affecting good behavior among students, present structured subject matter and carefully planned lessons, and resist uncompromising attempts by Rebels to change the social studies curriculum.

Black Humor

Black humor is the tendency to regard as humorous what most people would perceive to be morbid or sad. A number of contemporary American novelists write in this genre. Two of the more well known are Joseph Heller (Catch-22) and Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. (Slaughterhouse Five). Members of the Rebel clique were prone to respond to situations with black humor, and sometimes it did not matter to them who was in their audience. Why did teachers engage in black humor?

In Blue-Collar Aristocrats LeMasters (1977) notes that construction workers pull "practical jokes" on their fellow workers. The men have fun with one another by hiding lunch buckets, tools, and coffee cups to prevent their buddies from starting work on time. In reference to this behavior LeMasters (1977) writes: "The male peer life of the skilled blue-collar worker appears to be very rich and meaningful" (p. 22). However, in Ten Thousand Working Days Schrank (1979) reports that, in comparison to blue-collar workers, "managers were a deadhead lot" who traded the humor and sensuality typical of many blue-collar work communities for a "highly competitive, individualistic, non-group life" (p. 144). In the opinion of both LeMasters (1977) and Schrank (1979) the playful antics of blue-collar workers were demonstrations of how people can express autonomy and creativity while on the job.

Similarly, teachers, like their blue-collar cousins, know how to have fun on the job. Black humor, playing the game, and pimping were mechanisms developed by men in the Rebel clique, which helped them cope with the bureaucratic structure of the school. This was "horse play" for teachers. In spite of frustrations associated with the structure of work

at Roosevelt, these schoolteachers knew the value of expressing autonomy and creativity in the work place.

The following examples are representative of this behavior among Rebels.

> At 3:30 P.M. on March 30, 1981 one of the teachers walked into a classroom and said: "Boy am I having a hard time keeping from laughing. At one point in the hallway I couldn't control it any longer and I busted out laughing in front of some students. I just had to tell them. They wanted to know what I thought was so funny. So I did. I said: "The assassination of President Reagan."

The second example is drawn from data gathered as the social studies department members were waiting to begin one of their department meetings. The brief situation unfolded as follows:

> One of the Rebels told the group of teachers gathered in the classroom that the way to get rid of slums is to kill the Pope. A teacher who was seeking membership in the Rebel clique made an obvious nod of assent. At the same time, a teacher in the Guard clique said to the one who had spoken: "If you did as much for the world as the Pope, it would be a better place to live."

As the above quote indicates, those who were not Rebels sometimes took offense at what others considered humorous. Use of black humor by Rebels was both a distinguishing characteristic and a feature which, like the others, enhanced clique solidarity by allowing maintenance of a monopoly over certain benefits. In this instance it was a good laugh.

On the face of it, the various ways in which the Rebels engaged in black humor may seem absurd. However, this study was not undertaken to evaluate teachers. Black humor provided teachers in the Rebel clique with a form of comic relief found to be satisfying. Provision of comic relief was one of the reasons why men in the Rebel clique stayed on at Roosevelt.

Playing the Game

In its simplest sense a game is an activity engaged in for diversion or amusement. The ethos of the Rebel clique included games which gave the players immediate satisfaction and others which had as their long range objective to secure strategic control over the social studies department.

One of the games played for immediate satisfaction involved a play on the names of administrators. By way of example, if one of the teachers was reprimanded for improper conduct by the assistant principal whose name was Vincent Holmes, when explaining the incident to another member of the clique, the teacher would say he had been "Vinced." The same expression was used whenever one of the teachers in the Rebel clique was being observed by a principal for evaluation of teaching performance. "Ron is being Vinced today," one of the teachers said during class change time. The game relieved teachers of the tension and frustration associated with an evaluation process which they believed was inappropriate. In their opinion, what one did in the room when being evaluated by an administrator had less to do with the marks he gave than the number of years one had taught in the district.

The emphatic "put down" was a variety of this game. It was common for these teachers to put down administrators in front of students. In

one instance two teachers were discussing Vincent Holmes in a classroom while a student was sitting not four feet away. During their conversation, one of the teachers said loudly: "Holmes is a dumb shit."

Generally speaking, Rebels had little appreciation for administrators, resented being supervised, and believed that they could conduct themselves responsibly throughout the year without principals. When interacting with administrators on an informal or a formal basis, Rebels played the game silently. One of the teachers explained this behavior thusly:

> We were waiting for a ride in the lobby. I didn't recognize him (Vincent Holmes) there; he's kind of like a wall flower. He saw us and we saw him. It was 3:30 P.M. He looked at his watch and said: "You can go now." We said: "Thanks." His was in jest, not pricky. But we were pricky. We said: "Thanks a lot (you son-of-a-bitch)." He was trying to make peace with that statement and I didn't want to come across like him. He usually treats teachers like an SOB would.

The game was a means of entertainment while attending some event which was disliked by the teachers. This manner of gaining relief was almost always resorted to during meetings with administrators. It was a feature of the informal system developed by teachers that assured members of mutual support and a spirit of togetherness.

I noticed this spirit of togetherness periodically while participating in clique activities. When somebody told of a secret escape, a joke on an administrator, or roughhousing a student, my informant would remind the others that I was an outsider and say to them: "You better be careful what you say, because he's (nodding to me) writing all of this down."

Mutually supportive behavior is common in many work places. Schrank (1979), for example, reports about the spirit of togetherness among furniture factory workers. One of the workers in the factory inducted Schrank into the informal group with: "Look kid, the boss always wants more and he doesn't give a shit if we die giving it to him, so we agree on how much we are going to give to him--no more, no less" (p. 8). In other words, the worker should do what benefits other workers and not simply please the boss. Schrank's point is that norms which are important to a worker on the job are generated by the informal system.

The teachers in this study looked upon school administrators in much the same way that Schrank's (1979) furniture factory workers looked upon the boss. According to Roger Ashley: "The administrators don't trust teachers to do academic type things." In his opinion, to function efficiently, the administration needed teachers who were willing followers. If you wanted to please the boss, sign up for co-curricular activities and "pull guard duty" in the hallways. These were things that Guards did.

Teachers in the Rebel clique undercut the aims of their managers by creating and maintaining subtle forms of resistance to followership. Metz (1983) reports similar results from her study of teachers in a middle school. The faculty subculture at Horace Mann Middle School grew critical of the administrators and resisted suggestions and directives for improving the curriculum. The administrators' reliance on "a more hierarchical and coercive style" (p. 20) tended to increase the teachers' resistance. Both Metz (1983) and Wolcott (1977) conducted studies of relations between administrators and teachers at times when major changes were being implemented by administrators. Although the situation at

Roosevelt was more stable at the time of this study, the practical jokes teachers engaged in suggested that they were resisting the authorities.

Another game played by teachers for immediate satisfaction involved female high school students. The game was explained as follows:

> A teacher would select the most outstanding girl in class for the day based upon revealing dress, beautiful breasts, general good looks, etc. and give her a book to deliver to one of the others in the clique as a little present. To give the game a new twist, a teacher sent the fattest and ugliest girl he had on the same kind of errand to another as a "little present."

To explain further, having a "sexy girl" suddenly show up at the door before class subverted the administration's desire to manage the work of teachers and provided teachers with an instant of relief from ongoing events planned for the school day as it was conventionally organized.

Schrank's (1979) account of his ouster from farming is pertinent here. Enslaved by the demands of work with the land, he sought relief through sexual involvement with a farmer's daughter. News of his exploit reached him just in time to escape alive. The involvement of these teachers with female students was not of this kind, but the response of Elmwood's citizens might be as strong as the farmer's if they learned of the game. An important point is that the conditions of work for teachers, like those of farm hands, plumbers, and other workers researched by Schrank (1979), somehow precipitated this particular variety of game. The character of an external locus of control may account for some of this behavior.

In the following memo the administration made clear its position regarding management of events in the high school:

> DATE: September 15, 1980
> TO: All Teaching Staff & Hall Aides
> From: Administration
> RE: Assembly Procedure & Assignments
>
> Assembly attendance is required of ALL students and teachers. Some teachers will be assigned as door monitors and others will be assigned to sit among the students. Teachers who are not assigned to specific duties are expected to disperse themselves among the students on the bleachers. Teachers are not to sit in pairs or teacher groups, or stand along the walls or bleachers. Dismissal will be by the P.A. by zones. Attached is a map outlining the zones. When your zone is called over the P.A., you are to direct your students to the field house bleachers. Books go with students to the field house, and students are not to go to their lockers. You are expected to help with the directing of students to the bleachers as you take your seat. Do not permit any students to leave the building unless they have a utility slip from the office. After the students have moved to the gymnasium, Aides and Hall Monitors are to check the rest rooms for stragglers and move them to the field house.

With a little imagination one gets the impression that these are instructions to drovers for driving cattle through a stock yard out on the plains. The instructions are explicit and call for literal interpretation. Teachers in the Rebel clique perceived the message as an insult to their intelligence.

As we were taking our seats during one assembly, the teacher I was observing said of his assignment: "This is an example of the petty and nitpicky things administrators do to teachers." During assemblies one could not sit with a colleague, nor could a group of teachers sit

together. Teachers were assigned seats for the purpose of maintaining order among students. As we left the field house teachers walked alongside the students with whom they had been sitting. If teachers spoke at all, it was idle conversation to students near them. Now and then one would reprimand a student for misbehavior. The whole scene reminded one of a cattle drive.

From the teachers' point of view authorities for the school placed undue emphasis on order and in doing so created policies which denied teachers (adult workers) opportunity to socialize while on the job. The character of this external form of control was interpreted by teachers as indicative of policies which affected their work in school in general. As a result, their needs relative to personal and professional growth were slighted. Their practical jokes on the job explain how they found relief.

Cusick (1983) argues that the high school curriculum is based on maintenance of order. Teachers in the schools he studied had one obligation: "Get along with kids." Good teaching meant keeping students "in a moderate state of order, maintain some cordial relations with them, and not send for administrative assistance" (p. 60). Teachers in the schools Cusick studied developed "ideosyncratic approaches." Frustrated about the isolation from other adults and angry about alleged or perceived insults from administrators, teachers at Roosevelt created mechanisms through informal group activity which helped them cope with disappointing features of the institution. "Playing the game" with female students was but one example of how teachers acted while on the job at Roosevelt.

The social studies teachers sometimes got relief for their frustration at the expense of colleagues. While both teachers groups had established certain subject matter as exclusive preserves, they were striving continuously to gain control of the department. The strategies they used were largely subversive. One aspect of the game played by Rebels was brought to light in a department meeting when Gabe Samuels charged the other side with: "You're not going to weigh all of this and take it back to the (district) committee." Indeed, those in the Rebel clique were not going to do what they said they would. The intent was to get Guards to sign their names to course descriptions that would not be in agreement with the curriculum plans for which Rebels believed they had unequivocal support from central office administrators. At the end of the meeting a teacher demonstrated anticipation of the game's relief with: "I can't wait to see their signatures on those papers."

Finally, in a sporting activity with their students, Rebels ridiculed teachers for whom they had no respect. Guards were usually the objects of their ridicule. Since Guards were involved in extra curricular activities, especially athletics. stereotyping of the athlete as a jock or machismo was done commonly.

The Rebels had two reasons for stereotyping Guards as they did. One reason was to draw attention to differences in techniques of handling behavior problems in school. Rebels tended to rely on logical argument and persuasion while Guards tended to rely more heavily on physical force or the threat of it. Another reason for stereotyping Guards was to gain support from students for the subject matter of the Rebel clique. Implied in this pattern of behavior is the understanding that by playing the game members of the Rebel clique were able to alleviate some of their frustration concerning the system's demand for work in both the academic program and the co-curricular activities. Playing the game was a

mechanism used by Rebels to cope with discontinuities in role-expectations.

Pimping

To set someone up for an unexpected verbal "hit from behind," was a manner of interacting with colleagues that Rebels called "pimping." It was done for fun as a practical joke with friends; for those who were not friends it was done to abuse them. Included among these two classes of people were teachers, administrators, students, and parents. As with playing the game, pimping expressed latently the teachers' frustration with isolation from colleagues. The institution's perceived inattention to the teachers' need for collegiality promoted development of mechanisms which served individual teachers first and education second, if at all. To illustrate, if two teachers who were friends met by chance in the school hallway, the one might greet the other with: "Hi, you son-of-a-bitch." To this the other might respond with: "You prick." Another common way of pimping someone in fun was to flash "the finger." The same gesture might be returned by the other teacher.

An example of the way pimping was used for abuse occurred during a social studies department meeting when a central office administrator was giving a presentation to the teachers. One of those doing the pimping explained the event in the following way:

> During his presentation there were pauses of fifteen to twenty minutes. Can you believe it? He had a bulletin board and he had written drivel on some cards and some posters like: skills, values, content, and concepts. And when he pointed to it, I looked at Ron and laughed like it was something he (Ron) was impressed with. We made fun of his (the administrator's) presentation. It was stupid. I'd have been embarrassed to present it to one of my classes. He was clearly uncomfortable and out of his element.

When animosity characterized the relationship existing between individuals or groups who were meeting, pimping was done to destroy something in the other.

Studies by LeMasters (1977) and Schrank (1979) show that humor and sensuality are common in many work communities. These researchers argue that the structure of work influences the character of informal behavior among workers, that the informal organization of workers is created by individuals in response to the formal organization of work. From this perspective the teachers' display of behavior which lightened things up illustrates how they made their job more bearable. The character of this play helps explain the relationship between the bureaucracy and the hidden curriculum of the school.

Conclusion

To sum up, this study investigated the work of teachers in a single secondary school I pursued this interest with a focus on small group behavior, because at the level of the small group a researcher can grasp the cultural basis of interaction among different participants. The two cliques in the social studies department at Roosevelt developed patterns of behavior which helped relieve members of the tedium, frustration, and cynicism associated with their work. Research reports by Kanter (1977), LeMasters (1975), Schrank (1978), and Terkel (1974 and 1981) indicate that this behavior is characteristic of workers in blue-collar,

pink-collar, and white-collar careers. Aware that they are capable of doing more than what is expected of them, workers create mechanisms which help them cope with what are perceived to be objectionable features of work.

There was an antagonistic relationship between teacher cliques in the social studies department at Roosevelt. This circumstance also supported continuance of the status quo. The relationship could have been complementary: Rebels respecting Guards for their interest in co-curricular activities and low level students and Guards respecting Rebels for their interest in scholarship and college preparation. In other words, since two competing ideological systems were operating in the school, teachers could have recognized that the systems arose out of competing demands from the people who were served, namely, parents and students. From this point of view each half of the moiety is important to the success of the whole organization (Wolcott, 1977, p. 131). Rebels could not expect to have classrooms full of students who showed interest solely in high academic achievement. Guards could not expect all students to savor news of the latest fight on the basketball court. Given the interest of Elmwood's citizens in academics and co-curricular activities, the teachers could have agreed to split in some way the responsibility for these two functions of the school.

The schools in this country are responsible to all of the students. The organization of teachers' work--both formal and informal--needs to respect this fact. If relations between moiety subgroups among teachers are antagonistic, then the most important function of the school (i.e., education) within which the moiety operates may be unrealized.

Opportunities for change lie in examining critically the assumptions implicit in a model of education borrowed from industry that is essentially dualistic: managers make decisions; workers carry out tasks. More specifically, Roosevelt's organizational structure created a work structure for teachers that discounted the human aspects of reality: that which is personal, intentional, and creative. When the explicit school curriculum is characterized by the latter we can expect--among teachers and students alike--to promote critical and creative thought.

Who controls what? is an important prior question in regard to this issue of participation in decision making or general management. School life is a political process unfolding and defining an institution. People who work and play there belong to groups and groups negotiate explicitly and covertly for control over the situation. Teachers, students, administrators, parents, and the school board contribute in diverse ways.

The nature of a subgroup's contribution, though, is a function of its position in the formal organizational structure. If participation in decision making is denied to a group by the formal organization, the group will devise ways at the informal level to exert its influence on the institution. In short, when a subgroup is denied paraticipation, it will create ways to subvert the system. However, even if decision making and control were in the hands of teachers, they would still create ways of making routines bearable and deal with objectionable aspects of the job. All workers do this. The point is that the work community in school will not become humanistic by simply demanding a redistribution of power. To establish a system that creates educational policy through the collaborative efforts of all persons principally involved, demands also a transformation in all individuals who make up the institution.

This study shows that teachers are like other workers in that they evolve an informal system at work which is in response to a formal organizational system. The informal system satisfies in interesting ways the needs of workers. At Roosevelt the Rebel and Guard cliques functioned to support competing definitions of the teacher's work: subject matter specialist or schoolteacher and coach. The categories I use to explain the faculty culture among these social studies teachers are not definitive. They indicate strategies and mechanisms possibly used by high school teachers wherever conflict is preferred to collaboration for handling competing definitions of the teacher's role in the education of youth. The existence of cliques in an organization is not unusual. But not all cliques, or moiety subgroups, sustain harsh adversarial relations with one another. That Roosevelt's social studies department was split in this fashion may be due to pecularities of the particular field situation. A school-by-school study with these understandings tentatively held as explanations would add clarity and depth to the sociology of teaching.

Men and women who are thinking about entering the profession of teaching or who are in some way involved with schooling may find the results of this study illuminating. I hope they will not be disillusioned. Rather than plunge naively into making plans for changing the circumstances of schoolteachers, the prudent thing to do is to become informed about the workplace of teachers. It is my hope that this interpretation of teaching promotes further research and leads eventually to a new and better system of secondary education.

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