

ethnographic descriptions of similar schools in similar communities.

The author also succumbs to the “pygmalion effect” of teacher-student performance expectations, wherein students perform according to “good” or “bad” *a priori* expectations. It is true that this phenomenon has been well documented in the educational literature; it is also true that much of the research design in this area is very weak. Nonetheless, the literature and the profession may be creating a genuine educational myth.

Two features of the research data of particular interest to me are: (1) the notion that teachers and students may independently select their own friends but that both teachers and students are “forced” on each other in a classroom situation; the process of “forced” interaction has never, to my knowledge, been examined in this context; and (2) the attempt to delineate the boundaries of school performance and lifestyles of the students. Any teacher or administrator who has had the

task of evaluation has faced this issue. Few have been satisfied to accept school performance or grades as the sole criterion for evaluation since all recognize the influence of the “total child” in their decisions.

Thus, the external ranking system of society influences the internal ranking system of the school. Perhaps the institutional charter needs to be re-examined to determine whether the school has the right and the obligation to rank students in the same manner that society ranks its members. In itself, ranking is a cultural universal, and few cultures challenge the process. Even though the schools have made this challenge, the implication is more for a change in the content of the process than for the abolition of the process. A democratic political system may define the ranking system differently than other political systems, but it still ranks and segregates its constituents, as do all cultures.

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GENERAL STATUS: SPECIFIC ROLE

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Educational institutions have relatively clear formal boundaries. Within these boundaries there operate a number of persons falling into difference social classifications—student, teacher, administrator, secretary, and the like. The classifications are clearly recognized and unambiguous. Their populations, however, have a continual rate of turnover. For some units this is complete and temporally prescribed; for others, it is partial and irregular. Positions in the formal organizational structure do not completely determine the interaction of the individuals involved. Rather, they leave a considerable amount of room for individual management and the development of informal sub- or cross-cutting categories. This paper is concerned with the interrelationship between the formal structure and the behavior of the continually changing participant constituency.

Role theory as generally developed does not provide an adequate basis for the understanding of social process. This is especially true in situations where primary recognized statuses leave open a very broad range of possible social behavior. These statuses may be termed *general*. If, as has frequently been the case, analysts define role in terms of status, role becomes a very general concept and does little to explicate the behavior of individuals. This paper will argue for a usage of *role* as specific to the individual.

Role is a study of interaction. It may deal either with abstractions from the behavior of a group or category of individuals, or with the actual behavior and experience of a single individual. The former focus has been the more common one in sociological investigations. It is, however, ill-defined and worse used. The confusion between different interpretations of the concept of role can readily be seen. In the first chapter of their prominent reader on role theory, Biddle and Thomas comment:

Sometimes the role analyst focuses on the behavior of a given individual, sometimes on a specific aggregate of individuals, and sometimes he studies particular groupings of individuals who display given behaviors. [1966, p. 3]

Already there is question as to whether one starts one's investigation with a category chosen on some unknown non-role basis, or on the basis of behavior exhibited. In other words, does one study the behavior of the occupants of a particular position, or does one designate categories of people as those who behave in a certain way? Both categorizations can be valid, but they are not

interchangeable and not necessarily equally valuable to role analysis. Status and role have been part of a theory based on a kind of circular reasoning. Each is defined in terms of the other. This problem might be avoided if concepts of role were recognized to be based on behaviors exhibited by particular individuals as conceptually autonomous units, while statuses only exist as structural aspects of interrelations between individuals. Thus, we can make a statement of order: we abstract to the concept of status from role behavior. The two are at different levels of focus. The discussion of individuals in society as acting out “positions” seems a reification of the abstraction. A position exists at a single point in time; role is a continuum of action.

People do have expectations of the actions they themselves and others will take. Further, formal organizations define positions and an accompanying set of expected behaviors. Both the expectations and the requirements of a given position influence what an individual occupying that position will do. They do not, however, determine it, nor do they equal it. Positions do bring about behavior, but not through a direct process. There is an intervening factor—the individual. The individual always has past and concurrent statuses and informal relations. How one chooses to construct any single conceptualization of this *status* becomes a highly arbitrary process. There is a tendency for social scientists to assume the categories which are formally used by the groups or organizations they study. Durkheim warned against this quite some time ago:

Man cannot live in an environment without forming some ideas about it according to which he regulates his behavior. But because these ideas are nearer to us and more within our mental reach than the realities to which they correspond, we tend naturally to substitute them for the latter and to make them the very subject of our speculations. Instead of observing, describing and comparing things, we are content to focus our consciousness upon, to analyze, and to combine our ideas. Instead of a science concerned with realities, we produce no more than an ideological analysis. . . . Such a science therefore proceeds from ideas to things, not from things to ideas. It is clear that this method cannot give objective results.
[1895, pp. 14-15]

Categories with objective components can still be reified. These categories, like all other folk categories, are material to be analyzed, not the tools of analysis. These latter must be developed in scientific investigation of the facts. The behavior expected of occupants of certain social positions may, I think, better be denoted by the phrase *role expectations* than by *role*. Role is actual behavior, with the quality of being in any case either more or less like, but never exactly what is expected.

The argument here is analogous to population vs. typological thinking in biology.

In brief, it is role that includes statuses, not the other way around. Status is not behavior and it is inherently at a higher level of abstraction. For example, a person may hold the formally defined position of being a teacher in a high school. This person may also be a parent, a union organizer, a student, and a voter. All of these other statuses overlap with that of teacher. Not only is there a sum of diverse influences, but there are particular temporal juxtapositions which are relevant. An administrator's insult to a teacher may come immediately on the heels of a union meeting and be taken much the worse for it. Combined with myriad other influences from past and concurrent positions, the interaction of constraints and pressures produced by these positions, and the physical and psychological life of the individual, this combination of positions determines the individual's role. It would be naive to think that all teachers either do the same things or are treated the same way in a school. Nonetheless, this is a basic assumption of the formal charters of most educational institutions. Informally, participants make allowances for, and indeed construct systems to deal with, non-chartered influences and behaviors. These non-chartered occurrences are frequent and often regular.

The salient question for analysis becomes not why do the teachers fail to perform according to the expectations of the charter, but according to what determinants do teachers perform? It should be made clear that failure to perform to the tenets of the charter in no way is simply a negative imputation toward teachers. No one performs directly and completely according to the tenets of the charter simply because those tenets do not encompass the entire sphere of decisions necessary to existence and interaction. Rather, if teachers' performances are seen to be not the simple result of the position *teacher*, and if their variance is not uniform, we must look to construct models of the influences which produce the role of each individual teacher. We must attempt to construct an image of the role of each individual teacher and, of course, for students, administrators, and the rest of the population. With this as the starting point, we can begin to look at the social organization of the school.

Social organization refers to the patterned mediation of interpersonal relations. Barth has referred to “transaction as the analytic isolate in the field of social organization” (1966, p. 5). In this way he is attempting to give voice to the individual as actor, to the continuity of his existence, and to the strategies with which he operates and the decisions he must make. One may thus generate forms and compare them to empirical evidence, and hope to achieve more of the objectivity Durkheim was calling for in 1895. Barth's suggestion is that it is most productive to concentrate on the processual aspect

of social life. In this he follows Radcliffe-Brown, who said:

... the concrete reality with which the social anthropologist is concerned in observation, description, comparison and classification, is not any sort of entity, but a process, the process of social life. ... The process itself consists of an immense multitude of actions and interrelations of human beings, acting as individuals or in combinations or groups. Amidst the diversity of the particular events there are discoverable regularities, so that it is possible to give statements or descriptions of certain general features of the social life of a selected region. [1952, pp. 3-4]

Barth develops Radcliffe-Brown's statement with a discussion of generative models. In particular, he suggests that social anthropologists are of necessity first concerned with describing frequencies. This is not the whole of the process, however, as Barth says:

Explanation is not achieved by a description of the patterns of regularity, no matter how meticulous and adequate, nor by replacing this description by other abstractions congruent with it, but by exhibiting what makes the pattern, i.e. certain processes. [1966, p. 2]

It is Barth's intention to:

... explore the extent to which patterns of social form can be explained if we assume that they are the cumulative result of a number of separate choices and decisions made by people acting vis-a-vis one another. In other words, that the patterns are generated through processes of interaction and in their form reflect the constraints and incentives under which people act. [1966, p. 2]

Important to this position is the notion that:

... this transformation from constraints and incentives to frequentive patterns of behavior in a population is complex but has a structure of its own. [1966, p. 2]

The organization we are concerned with is not the formal organization of the school. It is, rather, the organization of behavior among participants in a social situation. This behavior is interactive in its nature, and is influenced but not determined by the formal organization of the school, just as it is influenced but not fully determined by the extra-institutional norms and goals of the individual participants. These are all *constraints and incentives* and, I should add, sometimes tools, for a

continual process of transaction and negotiation among members of the school population.

In his discussion of inter-hierarchical roles Gluckman (1968) emphasizes the important mediational aspect of the roles of native commissioners and chiefs in south Africa. Prevented by the color bar from crossing into the hierarchical structures of the other group formally and directly, these men developed highly important networks of social relations on the classificatory borders. Gluckman concentrates his analysis on the district commissioners, technical officers, and other relatively low-level officials of the government who identified in many ways with the aspirations and achievements of the tribesmen (in this case Zulu) with whom they worked. In another tribal and temporal context, Vincent (1970) has analyzed the importance of the ability of local "big men" in small towns to mediate dealings with outside hierarchical authorities. These two classifications of roles which work in the mediation of social boundaries are both relevant to the study of American high schools.

In particular, these roles are important in the relations between students and teachers, but they influence the interactions of all categories in the school (see Calhoun and Ianni, in press). Gluckman points out the importance of recognized common interests in achieving consensus and cohesion, and of the role of occupants of interhierarchical positions in producing recognition of common interests. The hierarchical structure of high school organization gives rise to a number of tensions over territoriality (Lopate, 1973; Reynolds, 1973); over grading and other sorting procedures (Varenne, 1973); and in the granting of special privileges (Riffel, 1973). In the interactions between adults and students in the schools, there are a number of persons whose roles bring them into contact with members of other classificatory units in the context of various strategies and goals. A student with a problem with the administration may ask a teacher to intercede on his behalf. The student council may decide to take action to attempt to have a school rule altered. Certain teachers may be allocated the responsibility for seeing that students do not misuse a certain space such as a senior lounge.

Most studies which have been done of American schools have assumed closure at the point of student culture or a teacher's association. This is analogous to the African researchers Gluckman cites which have assumed closure at a level below the influence of the native commissioner and similar officials (1968). This is valid methodology for certain questions and issues. Like Gluckman, however, "I believe we can get some understanding of the local tribal area by looking at the effects of actions emerging from these higher echelons." The converse may also very frequently be true. We can learn something about the higher levels of a hierarchy by studying effects emerging from lower echelons of the

organization in question.

The processual role model sketched out above could provide a sound basis for the undertaking of research into the relations between members of different classificatory units in a social situation, and into the effects of simultaneous membership in multiple classificatory units of the individual and his behavior. The high school is a particularly attractive setting for this kind of research for several reasons. It has a highly developed ideological model of its own organization in which a considerable amount of emotional and bureaucratic weight is invested. Continual observation and evaluation by outsiders is the norm in high schools so that relating to the formal structure of the institution remains a continual practical task for constituents. In addition, the formal structure is a common language for the mediation of interaction between the various sub-groups in the high school. Our research has indicated that virtually no one in the high school really believes that the formal structural model of the school (the charter) actually explains what goes on. It remains a constant which can be differentially invoked to meet the needs of different particular situations.

The statuses which this formal structure allocates to the different individuals in the school situation carry with them a series of formal rules, restrictions, and obligations. These by no means define what the individual in fact will do in that formal status. Rather, they set up the parameters within which he may operate or which he must manipulate. These rules, restrictions, and obligations are the components of what many analysts have previously called role. This, I suggest, is a mistake. These are constraints placed upon the operation of the individuals who occupy a particular formally defined status. Their effect is by no means simple or clear. Goffman (1959, 1961, 1963) has written extensively about the importance of the process of identity management. When he discusses the efforts of an individual with a certain social stigma to manipulate to his advantage or to disguise his stigma, he is discussing the attempt of one person to circumvent normative (and I do not mean "normal") social process. *Mental retardate* is a formally defined status in our society, particularly in the society of the hospital which Goffman studies in *Asylums* (1961). When someone given the status of "mental retardate" attempts to pass as a neurotic or psychotic patient, he is managing that status. In the process of status management he performs his role. His role includes his embellishments and his deceptions. These are not mere aberrations or errors.

In a very similar vein, quite some time before, Homans distinguished between *norms* and *behaviors* (1950). The individual variances in role performance among holders of the same status are no more errors than Schell's "Hamlet" is an error in contrast to Burton's or Olivier's or Gielgud's. In a more modern vein, Gould's "Marlowe" is not an error in contrast to

Bogart's, or even Garner's. Shakespeare did not write all there is to Hamlet, and Chandler did not write all there is to Philip Marlowe. Certainly having seen Bogart as Marlowe we have a role expectation, and Gould is a jolt to many a purist. But did Howard Hawks direct Bogart more truly than Robert Altman did Gould? Does Mr. X in the math department act more like a teacher than Ms. Y in Social Studies? Audiences and critics will eventually decide whether or not they liked Elliott Gould's "Marlowe," and students, administrators, and parents—in short, audiences—will decide whether they like Ms. Y's "teacher." One cannot have a role apart from an actor. Even more, one cannot have a role apart from a performance.

There is a constant process of negotiation taking place in schools. The process takes place on many fronts among all the constituents of the institution, and perhaps even a few who are imagined. Each person performs his role taking note of his numerous and varied statuses, and those of others insofar as he knows them and deems them relevant. He may manipulate his situation to whatever he perceives as advantage. If we may continue Barth's earlier analogy of the theory of games, the rules of the game do not determine the series of moves which any player will make. The rules do not describe the combination of moves he has made. They may describe many of the individual moves, but it is the combination which wins or loses, and it is the combination of actions which constitutes an individual's role.

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COMMENT

If this research project on the social organization of high schools produces more sensitive and versatile conceptualizations of schools and their constituent parts, the enterprise of education will be the better for it. In this regard neither traditional sociological nor anthropological analysis has served us particularly well. The former, with the dominant view of the school as a self-contained organizational unit, has been altogether too narrow. The latter, with its emphasis on the centrality of processes such as socialization, has been so general as to leave many unanswered questions about the dynamics of school life.

Given the diverse research formulations and activities now underway (as reported, for example, in recent issues of the *CAE Quarterly*), this dichotomy is not as pronounced as it once was. When, therefore, Calhoun begins with the proposition that role theory does not provide an adequate basis for understanding social process, and proceeds to look at the "organization of

behavior among participants in a social situation" rather than at the school as a formal organization, he makes, in my view, a salient and appropriate distinction. His contention that the determinants according to which teachers perform is a more important topic for analysis than their failure to meet the expectations of a "charter" points to an area of investigation about which our knowledge is still markedly inadequate.

These and related distinctions and judgments which Calhoun makes would be more instructive had he provided systematic data from the project for our use in testing his positions. Whatever one's disciplinary orientation, the process of theory building in education requires, I believe, constant interaction with the data of school life.

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