MEDIA AND SYMBOLS: THE FORMS OF EXPRESSION, COMMUNICATION, AND EDUCATION

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PART I

By

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CHAPTER XVIII

Teacher Image in Mass Culture: Symbolic Functions of the "Hidden Curriculum"

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"The figure of the schoolteacher," wrote Hofstadter,[1] "may well be taken as a central symbol in any society." But a symbol of what? Searching for an answer is like opening Pandora's box with its host of evils. My examination of the evidence suggests that teachers, schools, and scholars project a synthetic cultural image that helps to explain—and determine—the ambivalent functions and paradoxical fortunes of the educational enterprise in American society. The clues that point to that disquieting conclusion (which also raises questions about anticipated extensions of the present structure of culture-power) have led me to new reflections. These concern the illusions and reality of schooling, the nature of symbolic functions, the lessons of national and cross-cultural research on the teacher-image, and the role of that "hidden curriculum" in social policy.

The basic features of American schools, as of our society, have been fixed for more than a century. Spectacular changes transformed the "quality of life" through unfolding and extending those features into every aspect of existence. Among the most dramatic of the changes has been the rise of institutions of cultural mass production—the mass media—exempt from the laws of public but not of private corporate development and authority. These institutions have taken over many functions performed in the past by the parent, the church, and the school. The media's chief impact stems from their universality as the common bond among *all* groups in our culture. The media manufacture the shared sym-

1. Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), p. 309.

bolic environment, create and cultivate large heterogeneous publics, define the agenda of public discourse, and represent all other institutions in the vivid imagery of fact and fiction designed for mass publics. Teachers and schools no longer enjoy much autonomy, let alone their former monopoly, as the public dispensers of knowledge. The formal educational enterprise exists in a cultural climate largely dominated by the informal "curriculum" of the mass media.

New developments in communication technology may both individualize and globalize the penetration of mass-produced messages into the mainstream of collective consciousness. Before we can consider what that new transformation might portend for our schools (and for our culture), we need to take a fresh and sober look at the omens from the past.

Many of those who would correct the evils of society slowly and painlessly have long argued for educational extension, improvement, and reform. And, for more than a century, schooling has been extended, improved, and reformed. Yet it is still compulsory, unequal, class-biased, racist, and sexist. From the Coleman report[2] of 1966 through the Jencks report[3] of 1972, study after study demonstrates that the schools, even when "equal," tend to justify rather than rectify the child's fate as defined by the culture of the home, the street, and the television.

Eminent public figures declare schools a "disaster area" and "a pathological sector of the economy," meaning that even money cannot cure what ails them (although that remedy has never really been tried on a large national scale). A few call for their abolition. Instead of becoming the social corrective that idealistic reformers sought and democratic rhetoric promised, the more schools change, the more they streamline their induction of young people into their places and roles in the existing social structure. The Mason-Dixon line between the states has been abolished, but its modern equivalent now rings every city and the few bridges busing children across it may be dismantled. Schools still provide custodial drill

2. James S. Coleman et al., *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (Washington: U.S. Office of Education, 1966).

3. Christopher Jencks et al., *Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1972).

for the poor, enrichment for the rich, and equal instruction for those with equal economic or political clout.

We are just beginning to understand that these harsh facts result from no accidental abberation or cultural lag. A new generation of "revisionist" historians has exploded "the great school legend." Greer's book[4] by that title shows how the perennial "crisis" of the schools, like the perpetual "problem" of the slums, is in fact more functional to the existing social order than would be its elimination. Katz's book[5] on class, bureaucracy, and the schools documents the recurring phenomenon of school-reform movements that engage the zeal and energies of those who would attack the inequities of society, only to find that each wave of "reform" harnesses their schools to the dominant interests of the times.

Nearly twenty years after the Supreme Court ordered school desegregation "with all deliberate speed," feeble efforts at enforcement bog down in political controversy reminiscent of the parochial school aid controversy that was used to defeat past proposals for massive federal financing. Busing is claimed to threaten the fiber of society when it brings children of different races and social classes together, but not when used to keep them apart, its traditional use. If "campus unrest" is followed by recession and cutbacks, who is to blame? The schools that should redeem us teeter on the edge of bankruptcy. It seems that when citizens consider what is nearest and dearest to them, e.g., children, they are most vulnerable to the deceptions of their culture.

Symbolic Functions

We are keenly aware that messages intended to persuade usually serve the purposes of those who create and disseminate them. Less obvious but perhaps even more crucial are the purposes served by news, fiction, drama, and other storytelling designed with no other obvious intent than just to inform or to entertain. The social tasks to which presumably objective news, neutral fiction, or nontendentious entertainment lend themselves are what I call sym-

4. Colin Greer, *The Great School Legend: A Revisionist Interpretation of American Public Education* (New York: Basic Books, 1972).

5. Michael B. Katz, *Class, Bureaucracy, and the Schools: The Illusion of Educational Change in America* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971).

bolic functions. They are the consequences inherent in the way things "work" in the symbolic world of storytelling.

These functions usually do not stem from individual communications or campaigns but from the general composition and structure of the bulk of the symbolic environment to which an entire community is exposed. The consequences typically are not those of change but of continuity and resistance to change. Given a stable social order, the functions are usually to selectively cultivate existing tendencies and perhaps to deepen and sharpen them.

Symbolic functions differ from those of nonsymbolic events in the ways in which causal relationships must be traced in the two realms. Physical causation exists outside and independently of consciousness. Trees do not grow and chemicals do not react "on purpose," although human purposes may intervene or cause them to function. When a sequence of physical events is set in motion, we have only partial awareness and little control over the entire chain of its consequences.

The symbolic world, however, is totally invented. Nothing happens in it independently of man's will, although much that happens may again escape individual awareness or scrutiny. The reasons that things exist in the symbolic world, and the ways in which things are related to one another and to their symbolic consequences, as in a play or story, are completely artificial. This does not make their production any more arbitrary or whimsical than the events of the physical world. But it means that the laws of the symbolic world are entirely socially and culturally determined. A character in fiction "dies" not because he has lived but because it serves a purpose to have him die. Intended or not, that purpose is the only reality of the story. The causal link is not between life and death but between a creator's or producing organization's position in life and society and the significance of that death. No TV badman ever dies a natural death, nor can the hero of a western serial be cut down in the prime of life. To be "true to life" in fiction would falsify the deeper truth of cultural and social values served by symbolic functions.

Whatever exists in the symbolic world is there because someone put it there. The reason may be deliberate and planned, or circumstantial such as an "unrelated" marketing or programming

decision, or a vague feeling that it will "improve the story." Having been put there, things not only "stand for" other things as all symbols do, but also *do* something in their symbolic context. The introduction (or elimination) of a character, a scene, an event has functional consequences. It changes other things in the story. It makes the whole work "work" differently. Dynamic symbol systems are not "maps" of some other "real" territory. They are our mythology, our organs of social meaning. They make visible some conceptions of the invisible forces of life and society. We select and shape them to bend otherwise elusive facts to our (not always conscious) purposes. Whether we know it or intend it or not, purposes are inherent in the way things actually work out in the symbolic world. Even when men and institutions lie, they cannot do so without giving off signs of the purposes of their lying, at least in the long run; otherwise, why lie? More problems arise from communicating hidden purposes than from failing to communicate at all.

How things work out in mass-produced symbolic systems, as in all collective myths, celebrations, and rituals, is indicative of institutional interests and pressures. Various power roles within and without the institution enter into the decision-making process that prescribes, selects, and shapes the final product. In the creation of news, facts impose some constraints upon invention; the burden of serving institutional purposes is placed upon selection, treatment, context, and display. Fiction and drama carry no presumption of facticity and thus do not inhibit at all the candid expression of social values. On the contrary, they give free reign to adjusting facts to the truth of institutional purpose. Fiction can thus perform social symbolic functions more directly than can other forms of discourse.

That is why in fiction and drama there is no need to moralize. The moral is usually in the "facts" themselves. For example, if a social inferior (lower class, native, black, etc.) usurps the place of a superior (through marriage, business deal, combat, etc.), he or she can have an "unfortunate accident," thus avoiding overt bias and yet performing the symbolic function of enhancing the superior life chances of "superior" characters. Violence in the mass media—unlike life—is usually among strangers, permitting the les-

sons of social power (what types stand to win or lose in a conflict) to emerge unhindered by close human ties. Fiction can act out purposes by presenting a world in which things seem to work out as they "ought to," regrettable or even terrible as that might be made to appear.

Characters come to life in the symbolic world of mass culture to perform functions of genuine social import. These functions need not be planned or perceived *as such*. They need not even conform to any overt rationalizations or moralizing. The functions are implicit, not in what producers and audiences think they "know," but in what they assimilate of that which the characters of the symbolic world in fact *are* and *do*.

The "Hidden Curriculum" and Its Effects

The "facts of life" in the symbolic world form patterns that I call the "hidden curriculum." It is the framework that makes the notion of "effects" sensible as those changes that can be observed within a stable structure. The *prior* preoccupation with effects is misleading. However, it only betrays greater concern with marketing tactics than with the basic allocation of values in our society. The post-World War II movement within social science reflected more concern with buying or voting behavior than with meanings that govern *all* behavior. Now, social scientists are taking another look at the relationships between social structures and those general frameworks of knowledge and values that, in turn, shape the meanings and the efficacy of particular messages. As humanists have always known, no society designs its religions or its customs or its schools on the basis of a comparative assessment of the effects of various factual or philosophical statements. That would put the cart of tactics before the horse of basic aims and functions. Any assessment of effects must assume the existence of a standard of measurement against which different or changing quantities and qualities can be measured. That standard is implicit in the value structure of a culture. Should that be immune from inquiry? The contention that the existence or meaning of an action or communication should not be assessed until its effects are established is tantamount to the assertion that the structure of a culture should not be investigated; only its tactics are to be subjected to "scientific"

inquiry. Far from being scientific, this is itself a symbolic tactic attempting to define what is "scientifically" reasonable and respectable in a way that serves only the most dominant, pervasive, and taken-for-granted social interests.

The hidden curriculum is a lesson plan that no one teaches but everyone learns. It consists of the symbolic contours of the social order. One cannot sensibly ask what its effects are any more than one can ask about the effects of being born Chinese rather than American. Culture power is the ability to define the rules of the game of life that most members of a society will take for granted. That some will reject and others will come to oppose some of the rules or the game itself is obvious and may on occasion be important. But the most important thing to know is the nature and structure of the representations that most people will assume to be normal and inevitable. Having established some features of the hidden curriculum, one can then ask how its specific lessons are internalized and which of its functions serve what purposes.

Every culture, as any school, will organize knowledge into patterns that cultivate a social order. The fundamental lessons of the curriculum are not just what pupils learn in mathematics, history, physics, etc., but also the fact that *those* are its commonly required subjects and not basketweaving, harmony, or Marxism-Leninism (except where *that* is required). One cannot ask about the effects of that pattern of required learnings except by comparing it with the functional dynamics of other patterns. The structures themselves and most of their symbolic functions are inevitably assimilated if there is to be anything like a relatively stable social order. Culture *is* that system of messages that makes human society possible. After grasping the implicit agenda of discourse, scale of priorities, spectrum of valuations, and clusters of associations that most members of a culture come to assume as the overall framework for most of their thinking and behavior, we can begin to observe the fluctuations and reversals within that structure. Only after that can we ask the "effects" question.

The question of effects, properly phrased, inquires first into individual and group selectivities by dipping into the currents and cross-currents of the cultural stream. Secondly, "effects" research can investigate the contributions that particular types of messages

make to the processing of particular conceptions within given frameworks of values and knowledge. We are a long way from being able to answer the second question. The answer will be of strategic significance once we know more of what the game is about.

The prior need is to examine the framework implicit in the hidden curriculum. We must first go beneath the explicit and fragmented significance of individual images available to casual personal scrutiny and find the symbolic patterns and functions that entertain (in every sense of that word) the collective morality and the dominant sensibilities of the social order.

The image of schools and scholars is that part of the hidden curriculum in which all members of society learn about learning itself. Its symbolic functions relate images of learning (and of the formal institutions of learning) to basic human values and to the locus of power in society. I think that the figure of the school teacher is a central symbol of the uses and control of popular knowledge. Its most telling features touch upon questions of vitality and self-direction, social relations, morality, and power.

Historical Images

When he is not the Ichabod Crane of literature (scared out of town by the virile males of the community, with a pumpkin smashed over his head), the typical teacher in American novels is "stooped, gaunt, and gray with weariness. His suit has the shine of shabby gentility and hangs loose from his undernourished frame."[6] So it is, until class is out and memory rings the school bell when we say a nostalgic "Good Morning, Miss Dove" or bid a tearful "Goodbye, Mr. Chips."

In his study of the college professor in the novel, Belok[7] noted that American fiction uses teaching to "unsex a woman." Even being a teacher's wife may be unenviable. Theodore Dreiser characterized Donald Moranville Strunk, A.B., Ph.D., professor of history, as having had "one of the homeliest women for a wife I ever

6. Arthur Foff, "The Teacher as Hero," in *Readings in Education*, ed. Arthur Foff and Jean D. Grambs (New York: Harper & Bros., 1956).

7. Michael Victor Belok, "The College Professor in the American Novel, 1940-1957" (Doctoral diss., University of Southern California, 1958.)

saw." College students responding to a survey[8] characterized the school teacher as a person "who cannot even command an attractive wife." Love eludes even the attractive, eager "Our Miss Brooks" and the owlish but smart "Mr. Peepers"; sex degrades the neurotic Miss Brodie and destroys Professor Rath of *The Blue Angel.*

For Americans, the prestigious title "professor" resounds with mock deference. *The Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia* for 1899 gave as one definition of professor ". . . any one who publicly teaches or exercises an art or occupation for pay, as dancing-master, phrenologist, balloonist, juggler, acrobat, boxer, etc." From there it was not too far to the piano player in a brothel or, as Henry L. Mencken euphemistically recorded in *The American Language* (Supplement II), "a house musician." In time the usage mellowed to permit any prominent orchestra leader to be called "professor," as those who remember Kay Kyser will recall.[9] Recent media fare is replete with such phenomena as the movie *The Nutty Professor,* TV's "Professor Backward," the cartoon "Professor Wimple's Crossword Zoo," and Pat Paulsen's "Laugh-In" professor.

Belok could find only about two hundred novels since 1900 in which college professors appeared as characters. Major American novelists, wrote Lyons,[10] either have avoided the "academy" or have written novels that are basically anti-intellectual. An English reviewer of the American scene observed, however, that the college novel is now a "cottage industry." "And so it seems," commented Shapiro,[11] noting the entry of writers into the universities, "as book after book assaults us with tales of assorted hypocrisies committed under the name of higher education."

Hofstadter has also observed that the American teacher has not become an important national figure, worthy of emulation. His-

8. Donald D. O'Dowd and David C. Beardslee, *College Student Images of a Selected Group of Professions and Occupations,* Cooperative Research Project No. 562 (8142) (Washington: U.S. Office of Education, April 1960).

9. Robert L. Coard, "In Pursuit of the Word 'Professor'," *Journal of Higher Education* 3 (1959): 237-45.

10. John O. Lyons, *The College Novel in America* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962).

11. Charles Shapiro, "The Poison Ivy League," *Saturday Review* 46 (1963): 37.

torical reasons may partly account for the fact that the scholar, as Wecter also noted in his *The Hero in America*,[12] "has never kindled the American imagination."

Before the industrial and national revolutions and even after the influences of those movements were operating in Europe, teachers were likely to be recruited from among the misfits of society. When the common schools were established in Russia, the theological seminaries dumped their "undesirables" to be the teachers. In the Prussia of Frederick the Great, it was the army that disposed of its invalids by their appointment as schoolmasters. "The low opinion of the rank-and-file schoolmaster in Europe spread to the New World, and a seventeenth-century rector of Annapolis recorded that on the arrival of every ship containing bondservants or convicts, schoolmasters were offered for sale but that they did not fetch as good prices as weavers, tailors, and other tradesmen." [13]

The national revolutions of Europe had a popular cultural character. Many of the leaders were writers and poets rising through the ranks of the intellectuals closest to the people—the teachers. W. G. Cove, the British teacher, strike leader, union president, and member of Parliament, once wrote: "At the head of every continental revolutionary movement, or near the head of it, stands an ex-teacher."

Until perhaps the emergence of the black liberation movement, which for reasons peculiar to American culture seemed to propel clergymen rather than teachers into leadership, there has been no comparable historical force to add a heroic dimension to the traditional image of the American teacher. The forced pace of industrialization in the nineteenth century and the consequent pressure for extending public education created the monitorial schools, according to Wittlin, "to fit the early state of industrial civilization."

"Pupils were cheaply mass produced, down to $1 per year. The scholars, who first learned their lessons from the teacher, conveyed exactly the same lesson to other children, ten to a monitor. . . . In 1916 a book appeared in Boston on *Public School Administration*, by E. P. Cubberley, in which it was stated that ". . . the schools are, in a sense,

12. Dixon Wecter, *The Hero in America* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), p. 478.

13. Alma S. Wittlin, "The Teachers," *Daedalus* 92 (1963): 750.

factories in which the raw materials are to be shaped into products to meet the various demands of life." According to this philosophy the educator was allotted the modest role of the copyist of patterns."[14]

During the ensuing years, the cultural forces that shape the common images of society became largely mechanized, centralized, and commercialized. Teacher-power emerged as an organized force and education became a political battleground. But the social function of the teacher image in the new culture remained the traditional one: to cultivate mistrust of the intellect on the loose.

Teacher and School in U.S. Media

There are 2.5 million teachers in the public schools in the United States. They range from twenty-two to over sixty-five years of age and come from all states, classes, religions, and ethnic groups. Of course, they have some characteristics as a group: they average thirty-nine years of age, twelve years of professional experience, and about nine thousand dollars a year in salary. Two out of every three are women. Teaching is the largest profession; its members run the gamut of human types.

But not in popular fiction and drama. The raw facts of life are not the truth of social and institutional purpose. Frequency of symbolic representation is not the reflection of census figures. The casting of the symbolic world has a message of its own.

Studies of the representation of occupations by mass media characters (see DeFleur,[15] Gerbner[16]), celebrities (Winick,[17] Hazard[18]), and even movie titles[19] agree that teachers, the largest pro-

14. Ibid., p. 751.

15. Melvin L. DeFleur and Lois B. DeFleur, "The Relative Contribution of Television as a Learning Source for Children's Occupational Knowledge," *American Sociological Review* 32 (1967): 777-89.

16. George Gerbner, "The Film Hero: A Cross-Cultural Study," *Journalism Monographs*, no. 13, American Association and Departments of Journalism, 1969.

17. Charles Winick, "Trends in the Occupation of Celebrities: A Study of News-Magazines Profiles and Television Interviews," *Journal of Social Psychology* 60 (1963): 301-10.

18. Patrick D. Hazard, "The Entertainer as Hero: A Problem of the Mass Media," *Journalism Quarterly* 39 (1962): 436-44.

19. James Verb, "An Analysis of Movie Titles with the Intention of Finding the Occupations Which Are Listed in Them and the Words Which Are Most Commonly Associated with Them" (Unpublished class paper, University of Illinois, 1961).

fessional group in life, are among those least represented in the media world. Only about 2 to 3 percent of all identifiable professional references or characterizations go to media teachers. DeFleur's classification of occupational roles found the same number of educators as taxi, truck, and bus drivers in the televised labor force.

Most of the literary studies delineate a teacher image created for elite audiences. Except when mellowed by misty memories of childhood, it is generally cruel and unsympathetic, as if in revenge for the intellectual and social pretensions of the hired hand. Much of that image found its way into the mass media, somewhat relieved by the populist fantasy of the "good" if not too enviable teacher.

Studies of media images were conducted by a group of researchers at the University of Illinois; the work is continuing at the University of Pennsylvania. For a number of years our focus was the portrayal of teachers, students, and schools in the mass media. Some studies dealt with one medium, like Schwartz's study of Hollywood movies[20] and Brown's study of magazine fiction;[21] others ranged more widely. The U.S. Office of Education supported my analysis of over fourteen hundred feature films, television and radio plays, and popular magazine stories featuring twenty-eight hundred leading characters in the mass media of ten countries.[22] The National Science Foundation, UNESCO, and the International Sociological Association jointly sponsored a study that I did of the "film hero" involving one year's feature film production in six countries.[23] I will draw on the summaries of these and other studies to piece together some basis for reflecting upon the symbolic functions and social role of the image of the "teacher" in mass culture.

20. Jack Schwartz, "The Portrayal of Education in American Motion Pictures, 1931-1961" (Doctoral diss., University of Illinois, 1963).

21. Roger L. Brown, "The Fictional Presentation of Education in *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Woman*" (Master's thesis, University of Illinois, 1963).

22. George Gerbner, "Mass Communications and Popular Conceptions of Education: A Cross-Cultural Study," Cooperative Research Project no. 876 (Washington: U.S. Office of Education, 1964); idem, "Images Across Cultures: Teachers in Mass Media Fiction and Drama," *School Review* 74 (1966): 212-29.

23. Gerbner, "The Film Hero," op. cit.

Schwartz's study[24] of Hollywood movies found that the presence of a teacher tips the odds three to one in favor of the movie being a comedy. Mass media teachers, creatures of private industry depicting public agents, suffer from signs of a cultural power conflict in which the media have the upper hand. The study's comprehensive review of research concludes:

> Teachers in books, drama, magazine cartoons, and films were depicted as tyrannical, brutal, pedantic, dull, awkward, queer, and depressed. The few attractive teachers remained in the profession only long enough to find a mate. Teachers had a difficult time getting and staying married. One investigator noted that two-thirds of the teachers were portrayed as emotionally maladjusted. Another writer noted that "to succeed as a teacher one must fail as a man or woman."[25]

LOVE AND THE TEACHER

Love and sex are dramatic symbols of vitality and power. How a profession fares in love in the mass media is a good measure of its symbolic stature.

The mass media teacher pays a price for professional success. The price is impotence, and worse. The "schoolmarm" image hits women especially hard. Love and marriage are women's chief media "specialities" and typical reasons for existing in the stories at all.

Female characters in the world of mass fiction and drama are limited to a narrow range of parts. That is why media males not only dominate media females (except in the home where males *prefer* to be incompetent) but also vastly outnumber them. The average ratio is four men for every woman. But the proportion varies by theme. Love, marriage, and bringing up children are themes that utilize women characters in parts that do not require special explanation.

Studies of school-related stories in all media[26] found both women teachers and love playing prominent parts—but rarely together. Almost half of all media teachers are women; this is a high female ratio for the media, but still lower than the two-thirds of

24. Schwartz, op. cit.

25. Ibid., p. 4.

26. Gerbner, "Mass Communications and Popular Conceptions," op. cit.

all real-life teachers who are women. The school stories are more likely to feature romance than are stories in general. But the romance rarely involves the teacher—and least of all the woman teacher. Typical is Miss Dove, who is so devoted, so selfless, so excruciatingly *good*, that she passes up her opportunity to marry in order to pay back $11, 430 her dead father has "borrowed" from the bank where he worked.

Nearly half of all media adults but only 26 percent of male teachers and no more than 18 percent of female teachers are married. Despite all the romance and happy endings in the stories, teachers rarely inspire love or fall in love, especially with each other. The most common condition of love is that the teacher find a partner outside of education. The typical pattern has her quitting a New England high school and a biology teacher fiancé to "find herself" and a *man* in New York. Or it has him leaving a dull musical chair at a western college and a straitlaced professor girl friend, to be taught something about music and love in Tin Pan Alley.

Failure in love and defeat in life permit most media teachers to be fully dedicated to the profession. The media teacher leaving for another specific occupation knows the road to success in the media world. Five times out of six the road leads to show business.

POVERTY OF THE SCHOOLS

In the film study, 25 of the 470 movies portraying some aspect of education show the financial plight of the schools. The deficiencies are usually in extracurricular activities such as entertainment and sports. There is never a need for more teachers or laboratories or classrooms. Profits from sports events and successful musical shows and unexpected bequests of the rich are the usual solutions to academic poverty. Only two films show schools to be public responsibilities, publicly financed. One deals with support for West Point and the other depicts the building of a school in a remote New Zealand village.

Only one film shows the financial problem as one of low salaries for teachers. A wealthy Texas rancher is shocked to find his son trying to raise a family on the meager salary of an instructor. He secretly negotiates with a local butcher to sell his son meat at

half price. He also tries to prevent his son's promotion, confident that if not promoted he would return to the ranch. When he does not, the father solves the problem by donating enough money to the school to provide a pay increase for all teachers.[27]

An analysis of teacher characters in *Saturday Evening Post* fiction found them in more frequent financial "pickle." This was usually explained by showing that they strive less than the other characters. About one-third of the magazine's teachers solve their financial problems by quitting the profession. No teacher is ever given a salary raise. No student is supported on a public scholarship. No community takes the initiative to raise taxes or to build or improve the schools. When there is a suggestion of improvement in the finances of the schools, it is likely to be a private solution such as finding a rich donor or holding a fantastically successful show or sports event.[28]

THE SCHOOL SPORTS STORY

School sports is an arena of "early male socialization."[29] Extensive friendship ties are linked to participation in games. The winning team is also a symbol of an institution's ability to attract talent and display power. Winning scores have been found to relate to legislative appropriations and certainly to alumni giving. An article in the *Philadelphia Magazine* (May 1972) quotes the head of the alumni society as saying that "the Alumnus in Oregon or Texas is going to read about Penn's basketball team in his hometown paper, not some professor's finding old ruins in England."

There is no doubt that the most frequent appearance of schools and colleges in the American press is on the sports page. The magic words of American higher education are Ivy League and Big Ten. *Saturday Evening Post* readers loved the stories of George Fitch. The first of these, published in 1908, began:

> Yes, sir, it's been seven years now since old Siwash College has been beaten in football. . . . We've shut out Hopkinsville seven times—pushed them off the field, off the earth, into the hospitals and into the discard. We've beaten six State universities by an average of seven touchdowns,

27. Schwartz, op. cit., pp. 49-50.

28. Brown, op. cit.

29. Alan Booth, "Sex and Social Participation," *American Sociological Review* 37 (1972): 183-92.

two goal kicks, a rib, three jawbones and four new kinds of yells. We put such a crimp into old Muggledorfer that her Faculty suddenly decided that football developed the toes and teeth at the expense of the intellect and they took up intercollegiate beanbags instead. And in all those seven years we've never really been scared but once. . . .

The school sports story, with its violent terminology, strong group spirit, and concern over the rules of the game, is the most likely vehicle for community enthusiasm, teamwork, and the mixing of different classes and races in a common cause. It generally demonstrates the ethics of skill and power among those who achieve equal status. (This can be contrasted with the symbolic functions of the crime or spy story displaying the game of power among those of unequal status or those who do not play by the same rules.)

A sketch of boys' sports fiction[30] describes its symbolic functions as integration into the virtues of unquestioning participation, hero worship, inviolable hierarchy, sorting winners from losers, and a sharp sense of authority, belonging, and superiority. The school becomes society and the game the system at its dramatic best. As the English novel of life at Rugby, *Tom Brown's School Days*,[31] which introduced the genre to American boys in 1870, pointed out quite explicitly: "Perhaps ours is the only little corner in the British Empire which is thoroughly, wisely, and strongly ruled just now." A hundred years and several new media later, the functions are the same, even though the tactics are a bit more sophisticated.

The film study shows sports to be the central theme in twice as many movies as those that deal with study, science, or research, and to depict virtues never seen in a portrayal of scholarly activity. The school sports story serves its symbolic functions in three ways: (a) as the means by which youths from different walks of life find acceptance in the group; (b) as the chief symbolic unifier of students, faculty, parents, and alumni; and (c) as teaching the importance of passing a realistic test of social and ethical "maturity."

30. Walter Evans, "The All-American Boys: A Study of Boys' Sports Fiction," *Journal of Popular Culture* 6 (Summer 1972): 104-21.

31. Thomas Hughes, *Tom Brown's School Days* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1870).

The largest single group of stories concentrates on the third, the socioethical lesson. The films warn that romantic illusions lead to cynicism and despair. They counsel realism and vigilance lest "alien" ideologies take advantage of and subvert "our" flexible rules for "their" purposes.

Of the portrayal of sports in education by motion pictures, Schwartz reported:

> The most common presentation of sports was that it was a much less glamorous and honest activity than student-players were at first led to believe. . . . For the sake of victory, schools were shown to sacrifice their honor by depending upon extra-collegiate sources for both personnel and financial support. This dependence upon outside sources was not portrayed as unethical in all films dealing with sports—in fact, several films portrayed this dependence in a vein of lighthearted comedy which, if not condoning the practice, did not take the unethical aspects of the situation seriously. However, in the films to seriously treat the unethical practices of the sport and their demoralizing consequences for students, the portrayal of school sports was likened to a *rites de passage.* Sports were shown as analogous to the battleground upon which a young initiate experienced teamwork and struggle, despair and disillusionment, victory and defeat.[32]

The typical school sports story is a morality play that shows a sort of pragmatic "democracy in action." The rules will bend within reason and anyone can play, as long as the game is just a game and the prime source of power is clearly understood. Abuse the rules and the tone changes. In one group of films, gangsters try to manipulate players and even faculty to reap large gambling profits. In another, radicals "disguised as students" (described in a contemporary *New York Times* review as "namby-pamby, bushy haired, and wearing tortoise-shell glasses") plan to overthrow capitalism, beginning with the college football team. The local hero falls briefly under their spell, but recovers in time to win the "game of the year" and the respect of "normal healthy Americans."

COMMUNITY AND POWER

When they cannot relate to "the game," in which students play the lead, teachers usually do not "belong" at all. Typically presented as alien to the community in which they live and work,

32. Schwartz, op. cit., p. 59.

and often in conflict with its values, teachers may be seen as well-meaning and kindly if impotent, or dangerous and evil if powerful, but rarely both good *and* effective.

Studies by Bowman,[33] Boys,[34] and Springer[35] trace community conflict and antagonism through fifty years of magazine publishing, general fiction, and Broadway drama. Brown's study[36] of *Saturday Evening Post* fiction found that teachers "act differently" even when trying to conform. The film research concluded that all but six of the twenty-eight films touching upon relations between school and community portray a teacher as the target of hostility, ridicule, or ostracism. The offending teachers are usually shown as "outsiders . . . with their own set of values often aiding in isolating them from the community."[37]

Nonconformist media teachers usually come to see the error of their ways. One movie depicts a socialistically inclined economics professor striking it rich. He changes his mind about radical causes and returns to his job a millionaire.

Most instances of unreconciled conflict between teachers and community involve the cardinal sins of trying to change society rather than the schools (usually labeled communism) or of finding a source of wisdom outside the approved community context (usually represented as atheism). Sex often appears as a malignant obsession when sought by such unlikely characters as teachers. A cynically explicit portrayal in a 1937 movie shows a southern mob lynch a "yankee" teacher convicted of assaulting an attractive student. The district attorney does not believe the teacher guilty but prosecutes vigorously because of the political value of the case for his own career.

In casting about for occupations to delineate hero types who

33. Claude C. Bowman, "The Professor in the Popular Magazines," *Journal of Higher Education* 9 (1938): 351-56.

34. Richard C. Boys, "The American College in Fiction," *College English* 7 (1946): 379-87.

35. Roland A. Springer, "Problems of Higher Education in the Broadway Drama: Critical Analysis of Broadway Plays, 1920-1950" (Doctoral diss., New York University, 1951).

36. Brown, op. cit.

37. Schwartz, op. cit., p. 40.

are both right and mighty, mass media authors rarely pick teaching. Smythe's analysis[38] of television drama found teachers outstanding among all TV occupations in being the cleanest and the kindest. But they were also rated the weakest, the softest, and the slowest. The more potent teacher risks turning into that symbol of evil intellect—the mass media scientist. On television, the scientist was rated as the most deceitful, cruel, and unfair of all professional types.

Personality ratings used to assess students' images of real-life teachers tapped mass-cultural stereotypes. O'Dowd and Beardslee[39] found that the student image of the school teacher is that of an unselfish, uninteresting, unsuccessful, and effeminate person. The scientist, on the other hand, presents the image of the cool, cruel, hard-driving intellectual and often a loner who cannot be trusted.

Similarly, Gusfield and Schwartz[40] concluded that the teacher image presents "the sharpest contrast between elements of esteem and status, on the one hand, and those of power and income on the other." The teacher ranks as the most honest and second most useful of fifteen occupations and also the weakest and lightest. The scientist again appears to be cool, tough, and antisocial as well as irreligious and foreign.

PUBLISH AND PERISH

It is not surprising that the dramatic uses of scholarship and research contrast sharply with those portraying sports and other entertainment. Academic research leads to murder in nearly half of the twenty-five films found to portray teachers conducting the research. Film teachers invent poisons, revive prehistoric monsters, or train other creatures to do away with suspected enemies. One famous movie of the 1950s shows a psychology professor hypnotizing gorillas to murder the girls who rejected his advances. The typical plot has some obsession drive the demented intellect to in-

38. Dallas W. Smythe, *Three Years of New York Television, 1951-1953* (Urbana, Ill.: National Association of Education Broadcasters, University of Illinois Press, 1953).

39. O'Dowd and Beardslee, op. cit.

40. Joseph R. Gusfield and Michael Schwartz, "The Meanings of Occupational Prestige: Reconsideration of the NORC Scale," *American Sociological Review* 28 (1963): 270.

vent an instrument that gets out of control and destroys its maker, to the relief of all mankind.

In a group of nine films dealing with research, the experimenting teacher or professor falls victim to his own delusions and exposes the stupidity or hypocrisy of scholarship. Typical is the movie in which the professor of Egyptology incorrectly deciphers an ancient tablet and the false message sends him on a series of comic adventures.

Research and experimentation fare better in the hands of amateurs. Student scholarship is usually foolish but never evil or selfish. Incidentally, classroom scenes hardly ever exhibit learning or scholarship. They are used to display problems of authority and discipline. The teacher struggling for discipline in the school is often brutal and sadistic. In films of more recent vintage, students (as if representing the avenging forces of society) strike back in kind. The "class struggle" is one in which the teacher rarely comes out on top.

Images Across Cultures

Through a series of cross-cultural comparative studies we tried to understand our own images better by comparing them with those of others.[41] Four countries of Western Europe and five countries of Eastern Europe (including the Soviet Union) provided our comparisons. A plot sketch from several countries' samples will give something of the flavor of the material.

> "Red Castle" is what townspeople call the new headquarters of the Teachers' Recreation Center. It was a baron's palace before the revolution. A priceless collection of jewels is still stored in the castle. One day a precious stone is missing. The shadow of suspicion falls on Professor Zach, a frequent visitor at Red Castle. But the clever deductions of his students(turned amateur detectives) vindicate the professor, and the real culprits are caught. (Czechoslovakia)
>
> Word gets around that the attractive new teacher is carrying on with the well-known high school "jock." And in the

41. Gerbner, "Mass Communications and Popular Conceptions," op. cit.; idem, "Images Across Cultures," op. cit.

locker room, too. She is nearly ruined before it develops that the student, himself the victim of psychopathic, scandal-mongering father, only tried to rape her in an unguarded moment. (U.S.)

The tactlessness of a dry and dogmatic school director drives one of the students of the elementary school of Borsk into the clutches of a religious sect. The teachers' collective is dismayed. A timid young instructor is drawn into the struggle against the sect. Emboldened through her efforts to demonstrate that religious dogmatism defeats the goals of free education, she realizes the great role of the teacher in public life. (USSR)

The humane methods of the new teacher in an East End slum school lead to disaster. "Spare the rod . . ." gloat the hardened old disciplinarians. The teacher is about to give up and leave when a glimmer of student response at the end of the term gives him second thoughts. (England)

The impoverished peasants of a village refuse to work for starvation wages on the count's estate. But the gendarmes have a firm grip on this treasonous activity. The peasants are ordered to the railroad station to welcome the arriving count. They come. But they come to pay respects to the departing teacher, who is being run out of town as the chief trouble-maker. (Hungary)

A utopian idealist teaching in a lyceé becomes so involved in his pacifist schemes that he neglects his family. Reality finally deals him a tragic but sobering blow: his daughter has a lover, has taken part in a robbery, and is about to run away. (France)

Orphaned, hungary, and demoralized, a gang of boys terrorizes the countryside at the end of the war. A former partisan leader, now teacher, turns them into useful citizens. (Poland)

TEACHER GOALS AND FATES

We found that the Russian and other socialist media teachers are depicted as more learned, democratic, and manly than those of the West. Eastern mass media stories of schools and teachers stress the ideals of service to community and nation more than three times as frequently as American and other Western media.

United States media portray a higher proportion of women

teachers on all levels of education than do the media of other countries. Our media also depict a composite image of the teacher as less professional and less likely either to advance or to slip on the social ladder than the media teacher of other countries. The U.S. media teacher is more easily frustrated and victimized by the much higher level of violence and illegality prevalent in her world than is the media teacher of the other countries.

Teachers are quitting the profession in about 28 percent of U.S. and Western media and in 14 percent of Eastern media stories. The main reasons for giving up teaching in Western media are the frustrations and conflicts of the job and marriage. Eastern media teachers leaving the field of education are most likely to be fired, retired at the end of their service, or advanced to positions of higher leadership.

Teachers stand out everywhere in seeking intellectual values more often than do the other adult characters in the same fictional environment. But Eastern European media characters, and especially teachers, are different from those of other countries in their much more frequent pursuit of goals of social morality (justice, honor, public service, a better world).

We analyzed the barriers that stand in the way of achievement and found that the one major difference between the problems of U.S. media teachers and those of the other countries lies in the teachers themselves. Only in U.S. media are teachers more likely than other adults to be depicted as handicapped by their own weaknesses and fears. The fears may be justified. Over one-third of all U.S. media teachers commit violence and nearly half fall victim to it. This is low by U.S. media standards, but it is roughly twice the mayhem found in media of Western Europe and about six times that found in the media world of education in Eastern Europe.

A happy ending is symbolic insistence that justice triumphs despite all troubles. American media stories are the most insistent. Conditions of success, however, are more indicative of its functions than frequency alone. We compared the goals of unambiguously successful characters with those who clearly fail.

Only in American media are successful teachers depicted as less likely to pursue aims of social morality than are teachers marked for failure. Many U.S. media teachers who do tackle social

goals are naïve, comic, and even mad, and most are crushed by some misfortune that fictional fate throws in their paths.

THE ROLE OF STUDENTS

Being a student is a long and varied stage in life. The range of opportunities for portrayal is great. The institutional and social forces that shape the representation of teachers in the mass media also affect the depiction of students. But the potential diversity of the student image leads to extraordinary differences in scope and function.

American mass media are unique in not earmarking significant resources to young people. They treat children as a low-income, high-profit, quick-turnover market where the message of social power (police, violence) can be sold in its cheapest and crudest forms. As if to underline the analogy to the slum, the trade journals call the children's program segment on television the "kidvid ghetto."

Market considerations also account for the fact that children and youth (as well as old people) in leading roles make the product a "specialty story." They presumably fragment audience appeal and need special exploitation. American youths become universally employable for dramatic purposes (as otherwise) when they *leave* school.

An international study of the "film hero"[42] classified students as an occupational group. Entertainers head the list of occupations with 18 percent of all leading characters. Students are next to the last with 4 percent. (The last were laborers.) The Western European pattern is similar, although students are more numerous than in U.S. films.

The films of Eastern Europe offer striking contrast. Students are in *first* place on the same list of occupations, with percentages ranging from 20 percent in Poland to 24 percent in Yugoslavia and 28 percent of all leading characters in Czechoslovakia.

The diversity of the portrayals permits few generalizations. Focus on childhood and adolescence in American media requires specialized story values. They are often found outside the regular

42. Gerbner, "The Film Hero," op. cit.

social context. Several stories are about mentally ill, retarded, and physically handicapped youngsters. One revolves around a little boy playing Cupid. Another deals with a sadistic teen-age gang leader. A sociology student's research requires her to pose as a prostitute. Youngsters complicate life for attractive widowed fathers or mothers. A hard-boiled manager of a gambling house finds himself the guardian of a six-year-old orphan. A good-hearted mute befriends a homeless prostitute and her little daughter. Six homeless waifs camp out in an unused shack on the Connecticut estate where a glamorous but exhausted star seeks peace and quiet.

Students in the media of Eastern Europe are not only more numerous but also move in the thematic and moral mainstream of their symbolic world. This is a world in which a mountain youth pressed into hard labor by the lord of the manor joins the outlaws to fight injustice—as his father had done before him. A crippled and lonely student finds amusement in shooting birds from his wheelchair, until he downs a homing pigeon awaited by a little girl and her fishermen friends and begins the slow, painful road to recovery for both the pigeon and himself. Three boys on a school outing steal away into the woods and come upon a partisan hideout; their teacher demands an explanation for their absence, but he is the local commander of the native fascist militia! A theft of puppets from the school theater sends a group of youngsters on a wild chase involving an unpopular boy who plays detective, unaware that his schoolmates suspect *him* of the crime. A school girl's vacation love affair, her first, sets her on a course of competition and conflict with her attractive aunt. A school boy longing for a bicycle stumbles upon lost money—and discovers the difficulty of making a moral choice. A group of classmates decide to expose the hypocrisy and stealing going on at their collective farm—but what to do when they find some of their own parents among the culprits? A student poses as a German sympathizer in order to obtain information for the Resistance; the anti-Fascist patriots are out to kill him, but his mission demands that he maintain silence. A young pupil is falsely accused of having stolen his classmate's pencil and confesses to escape the ridicule of his accusers—only to make matters worse.

In these stories, school is often the center of social and moral

struggle. Behind the authority of the teacher stands the power of the state. Analysts rated the media schools of Eastern Europe as "related to real life" and learning as "of immediate benefit" about twice as frequently as in the media schools of the West. Eastern European media students are shown as "interested in knowledge," as "leaders and organizers," and as "participating in community affairs" from two to three times as often as those of the West. East European media students are depicted as taking examinations three times as frequently as U.S. media students, but the latter were observed "dominating classroom activity" four times as frequently as the former.

Knowledge and Its Control

An episode of the television serial "Wild Wild West" features a geology professor who, imbued with noble if (naturally) impractical ideas, goes West in the employ of a rich prospector in order to alleviate his own genteel poverty. But the prospector lets him down. Feeling betrayed (with some justification), he becomes obsessed with thoughts of revenge. His knowledge, now out of control of an employer, becomes a menace to society. He plots to destroy the state through a series of earthquakes triggered by dynamite blasts at critical points in the fault line he mapped through the area. "I have turned the tide," he cries, "employed nature for my own use—now I want my reward." Brawny agent West and his brainy sidekick (!) make sure that he gets it. We last see him scrawling equations on a chalkboard as he holds "class" alone in his jail cell.

All societies suspect what they need but cannot fully control. Symbolizing such uneasy symbiotic relationships are ambivalent images of oracles, eccentrics, witches, alchemists, and others "possessed" of independent knowledge, as well as teachers. The teacher image is likely also to fall short of the mandarin ideal or to suffer from the human tendency to denigrate "outgrown" authority.

Beyond such similarities, however, differences in mass-mediated symbolic functions reveal and cultivate significant social distinctions. As we go from West to East, teachers stand out in their own fictional environments as more distinguished in learning and in qualities of personal and social morality. The terms of this morality are

not necessarily comparable across cultures. The ethic of individualistic liberalism is not the same as that of socialist morality or the Soviet concept of the moral development of the child, even if some of the same terms are used. Nevertheless, the image of the teacher in the socialist media reflects a happier fate and a more stable, purposeful, and socially meaningful existence in its own fictional world than it does in the West.

Differences in social organization account for some of these distinctions. Mass media are cultural organs of industrial society. Their ownership, management, and clientele—extending the institutional order into the cultural sphere—shape their outlook and functions. The organizational and client relationships of Eastern European media interlock with other public institutions, including the schools, the party, and the state itself. The hidden curriculum serves the same institutional interests as the overt one; both are agencies of planned social transformation. This places media images of schools, scholars, and the knowledge they symbolize in the mainstream of the symbolic world undergoing a cultural revolution. In performing their symbolic functions, socialist media can take advantage of their legacy of intellectual leadership in nationalist and proletarian movements in which teachers have had a prominent place for centuries.

Organizational and client relationships of American media also reward development of a particular selection from prevalent cultural patterns. The selection manifests the dual character of private-enterprise views on public enterprise. On one hand, the school is a necessary cost factor whose value is limited to its direct usefulness to the investment in current products, practices, and outlooks. On the other hand, schools represent political capital and popular aspirations for mobility, equality, and social reform. The concept of knowledge and its role in and control by society are caught in the cross fire. The most enduring and pervasive images of teachers in American mass culture are those that humiliate and depress them. Failure in love and impotence in life permit them to be "good." Or they can be vigorous but evil or perhaps only ridiculous.

Poverty is normal and probably desirable for a dependent institution that should not develop a strong power-base of its own. When cut loose from corporate, military, law enforcement or other

established power, even the "miracles of science" turn into "mad scientist" horrors.

No school or culture educates children for some other society. Giving teachers a messianic mission and having schools soak up all the dreams and aspirations citizens have for their children doom the enterprise to failure. No social order can afford to make good such a promise. The illusion itself contains the seeds of the "noble but impractical" image. It becomes only "reasonable" and "realistic" to show teachers full of goodness but sapped of vitality and power. Turn on the power and the impotent figure becomes a monster, only confirming the doubts and suspicions inherent in the ambivalent image.

Unlike the army and the police, the schools do not appear to be a major public responsibility at all. They are shown as places of controversy and conflict, except when the goal is winning for "the team." The school sports story provides a dramatic framework for learning the rules of order and life in a community dedicated to skills directly applicable to competitive power.

American media scholars symbolize the promise of learning on behalf of noble and idealistic goals and undercut that promise by being strange, weak and foolish and generally unworthy of the support of the community. The hidden curriculum cultivates the illusion of social reform through education and, at the same time, helps pave the way for the perennial collapse of its achievement. As things work out in the symbolic realm, the bankruptcy of the schools is their own fault. The invidious distinction between *teaching* and *doing* is maintained. The promise of a productive society to place the cultivation of a distinctly human self-consciousness highest on its scale of priorities is again betrayed.

American media are cultural arms of private enterprise in the public sphere. The images they project have a dual character. They attempt to be serviceable (or at least not inimical) to the commercial and other interests of private enterprise and, at the same time, represent those public ideals that give them universal attraction, currency, and credibility. That is why the study of capitalist mass media and their symbolic functions presents a particularly complex and challenging task.The task is to discover the actual laws of symbolic behavior in a field of conflicting institutional interests

and to assess their real contributions to the cultivation of human conceptions and social policy.

I doubt that the nature of education, the role of knowledge, and the prospect for real changes in school policy can be fully grasped until that assessment is well under way. New developments in communication technology have the potential of altering social patterns of knowledge, as did the "old" developments. The question is whether they will merely extend the scope and reach of the existing structure or begin to change them. That, of course, is not a technological question but an institutional one. Institutions use technology in communications and culture for their own purposes. The image of the schoolteacher in the hidden curriculum of the mass media may continue to be a useful indicator of those purposes.