NINE

Mr. Henry Makes a Deal: Negotiated Teaching in a Junior High School

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Roald Dahl's book *Boy* contains stories from his childhood, much of which was spent in schools. First he attended a local school in Llandaff, Wales; then, from age nine to thirteen, a boarding school in England. Dahl's father, who died when Dahl was quite young, had insisted his children be sent to English schools because, he maintained, they were the best in the world. Dahl's mother complied. Dahl describes prep hall and one of the masters this way:

> We called them masters in those days, not teachers, and at St Peter's the one I feared most of all, apart from the Headmaster, was Captain Hardcastle. . . . The rules of Prep were simple but strict. You were forbidden to look up from your work, and you were forbidden to talk. That was all there was to it, but it left you precious little leeway. In extreme circumstances, and I never knew what these were, you could put your hand up and wait until you were asked to speak but you had better be awfully sure that the circumstances were extreme. Only twice during my four years at St Peter's did I see a boy putting up his hand during Prep.[1]

At St. Peter's the masters had authority over the student's mind, body, and soul. In the classrooms and in the corridors teachers had the right, and were expected, to shape the students into "good" and correct young men. In one passage Dahl describes Captain Hardcastle's proclivity and ability to plague him both night and day, both in class and out:

> For a reason that I could never properly understand, Captain Hardcastle had it in for me from my very first day at St Peter's. . . . I had only to pass within ten feet of him in the corridor and he would glare at me and shout, "Hold yourself straight, boy! Pull your shoulders back!" or "Take those

> hands out of your pockets!" or "What's so funny, may I ask? What are you smirking at?" or most insulting of all, "You, what's-your-name, get on with your work!" I knew, therefore, that it was only a matter of time before the gallant Captain nailed me good and proper.[2]

If the shaping of boys into virtuous men required physical impetus, physical impetus was applied. Headmasters, masters, and senior students had license to use physical force to correct misdemeanors occurring inside and outside of the school. Dahl was once caned by the headmaster because of complaints about his conduct from the town's candy-store proprietor.

In fall 1988 I volunteered as a tutor at Emerald Junior High School, a public school in a lower-middle-class neighborhood in Berkeley.[3] Daily I saw things that Roald Dahl would and could never have seen. I saw Clair (a student) tell Mr. Henry (a teacher) to "quit looking at me like a cow and just answer my question." I was in the room when Ameer refused to pick up his trash, threw a hall pass in the teacher's face, and walked out of the room. I watched Thomas irritatingly and autistically imitate machine-gun fire while Mr. Henry was trying to read a story to the class. What I saw in the classrooms of Emerald Junior High School was worlds apart from Dahl's descriptions.

I had the opportunity to move about and observe other classrooms, but I was officially assigned to assist Jim Henry, an eighth-grade English teacher, in room 112, and I spent most of my time with him. Through Mr. Henry I had access to the lunchroom, other teachers, and English department meetings. Mr. Henry is white, of slight build, bespectacled, and forty-three years old. He came to teaching after studying law and political science, and he came to Emerald Junior High on the third day of the fall semester as a substitute teacher for Betty Fleischacker. When Ms. Fleischacker was unable to return to work Mr. Henry was hired on a one-year contract. Mr. Henry, like all the teachers at Emerald, teaches five forty-five-minute periods a day out of the six attended by the students. Each teacher is given one "prep" period; Mr. Henry takes his during first period.

Mr. Henry's classes vary in size from nineteen to twenty-four students. The students are from age twelve to fourteen. The fourteen-year-olds are generally "held-backs" from last year. Each class has from one to four held-backs and students of widely diverse academic achievement. The school also goes to great lengths to ensure that classes are integrated and gender balanced. Mr. Henry's classes are almost half African-American; the rest are white except for the three or four Asians in each class. The third-period class has an East Indian, Sunny, and fifth period has two Chicanos, Miguel and Rosa.

What I observed and want to explain about the classroom is the student-teacher negotiations. The conditions that make these negotiations possible are most easily delineated by comparison with Dahl's St. Peter's. At Emerald the teachers were to have influence over the students' minds but not over their bodies or souls, for at Emerald there was a division and separation of students' bodies from their minds and souls. This "political-economy of the body" (to borrow Michel Foucault's term) reflects the separation and division of function between the school, the teachers, and the family. At Emerald the body, the student's physical whereabouts and well-being, is the legitimate territory of the school. Once the child arrives at the institution the school takes responsibility for seeing that the student moves from classroom to classroom, eats at the appropriate time in the designated area, and is physically safe from other students, and the school guards the perimeters so outsiders cannot come in.

The student's soul, that is the heart, the will, the personal values, attitudes, and sense of propriety, is the legitimate territory of the family or, most generally, something outside of the school and the classroom.[4] From this outside sphere the student is to obtain values, attitudes, and a sense of decorum. The student comes to school with these already in hand.

The teachers in the classrooms are responsible for the child's mind. The teachers are responsible for teaching. The teachers are to shape and develop the student's intellect.

What I observed is that this separation of body, mind, and soul (school, classroom, and family) works against the teachers and their attempts to teach. Access to a student's mind, the rudimentary condition for teaching, requires some immediate control over the student's body and sense of propriety. But at Emerald teachers are only to "babysit" the body and soul. In these areas the teacher (like a babysitter) must hold the child in charge, but is given no license to shape or punish. The teacher must first negotiate with the students some compromise on how the students will conduct themselves and on what will be considered acceptable classroom decorum.

THE LITERATURE: WHAT OTHER PEOPLE SAW

The most prominent lines of sociological inquiry approach education as it serves social structural needs.[5] According to functionalists, education works to socialize students into the commitments and capacities for future adult roles and to distribute these "human resources" within the adult role structure.[6] Conflict theorists, on the other hand, are primarily interested in the role of schools in the reproduction of class struc-

tures.[7] For some, the power of schools is rigid and imposed upon students; the educational system reproduces the hierarchical division of labor through unequal schooling and through class subcultures that provide personality characteristics appropriate to job performance in the parents' occupational role.[8] For others, the power of the school is looser and the power of the students expanded—yet the result, class structure reproduction, is the same.[9] Paul Willis observes how, rather than being stamped with their occupational role, working-class "lads" create their own culture of resistance through which, paradoxically, they disqualify themselves from mobility opportunities, a "self-damnation" experienced as "affirmation".[10]

Despite their differences, both functional and conflict approaches share a tendency to "see a harmonious fit between the educational system and the surrounding society"[11] and, linked to this, a concern with explaining how schools produce and reproduce *future* actions and attitudes. My account differs in that I do not approach schools with a futurist eye. I do not see the school in terms of training, socializing, or slotting people into future hierarchies. To approach schools in this manner is to miss the negotiated, chaotic aspects of the classroom and educational experience. A futurist perspective tends to impose an order and purpose on the school experience, missing its day-to-day reality.

It is this imposition of order that blinds most theories to the constant negotiating that takes place in the classroom and thus, I would argue, to the separation of school, classroom, and family in American society. Bowles and Gintis, for example, posit such "correspondence" between school and society that they need not consider how student-teacher interactions may differ from student-school interactions. Willis, who does see student resistance, interprets it in terms of its parallels to class structure. He does not see the possibility that the lads' resistance is tied to the separation of spheres, the separation of school from classroom from family.

Another major line of sociological inquiry looks at schools as formal organizations.[12] For example, Mary Metz, who also conducted participant-observation research in a Berkeley junior high, depicts classroom relationships in terms of the characteristics, processes, and goals of formal organizations. Metz clearly conceives of the students (in her terms) "negotiating," "adjusting," and "resisting" in the classrooms. However, by approaching schools as formal organizations, Metz places the cause of classroom negotiations at a different juncture than I do and advocates a different "cure."

Placing her observations in the framework of formal organization theory, Metz discovers that the school and the classroom have "contradictory organizational imperatives." The school, with its control goals, requires a "hierarchic, bureaucratic organization." The classroom, with learning goals, requires an organization in which the teacher has "flexibility" and "autonomy" and can use "initiative and intuition."

Having established that the school-classroom relationship is inevitably and "inherently ambivalent," Metz denies it a role in the explanation of classroom bargaining. Instead, Metz traces the important cause (the manipulable cause) of classroom negotiations to the different "definitions of the classroom" between student and teacher. Negotiations are the result of "unshared expectations." Accordingly, the most effective answer to negotiations, "disorder," and "skeptical" students is "for the school either to find links between [students'] studies and their existing values and goals or to take as its first task persuading the students to share the goals the school normally has."[13]

My approach differs from Metz's organizational analysis in two regards. First, I do not see the classroom-school relationship as inherently contradictory. It is contradictory only if one assumes that learning must take place in a "flexible," "autonomous" classroom. I maintain that learning does and can take place in other types of organizations as well. As such, the variable relationship between classroom and school (and family) is one of the key considerations in explaining and influencing classroom negotiations.

Second, I do not locate the cause of classroom negotiations within issues of shared definitions and expectations. Rather, classroom negotiations are best explained by examining the power relations between student and teacher, relations that in turn depend upon the nonimperative relations among school, classroom, and family.

In short, by not working from futurist or reproductionist assumptions I highlight the immediate significance of classroom processes in themselves. But unlike advocates of the organizational approach, I see the significance of classroom negotiations not through the mechanics and imperatives of isolated, formal organizations, but through the relationship of the classroom to wider processes and characteristics, namely, the separation of the school, classroom, and family and the corresponding division of the student into body, mind, and soul.

This chapter follows my own progression of understanding, beginning in the classroom and working outward. First, I show that the classroom is a negotiated order, describe the dynamics of negotiation visible in the classroom, and conceptualize the consequences of negotiation in terms of the teacher's ability to teach as opposed to babysit. Then I widen the scope to consider the separation between school and classroom and its negative effects on teacher-student interactions. Finally, I

examine the separation between family, classroom, and school, and analyze its effect on classroom negotiations and teachers' attempts to teach.

THE CLASSROOM

What occurs in the classroom between the teacher and students, both on any particular day and in the long-term relationship, is negotiated. Mr. Henry begins each day and each class with a lesson plan, written on the front blackboard under the title Daily Log. Whether or not the plan is implemented depends on how well Mr. Henry is able to do battle with his resources and how well students decide to utilize theirs.[14]

Negotiations between students and Mr. Henry occur in a number of different areas. Sometimes they bargain over the classroom rules (gum chewing, pencil sharpening, candy eating), sometimes over lesson plans and homework, sometimes over classroom demeanor (arms tucked into shirts, feet on desks), and sometimes over the attention, if any, paid to Mr. Henry's agenda. This is very different from the order described by Dahl. At St. Peter's the teacher had all the power and authority, while the students had little or none. At Emerald, the students have the power both to shape the daily agenda and to subvert Mr. Henry's plans entirely.

The student's shaping power is immediately evident in the pervasive attitude that students are supposed to participate and have a hand in their "learning" and the classroom procedure. "It's your classroom," Mr. Henry tells them as he arranges the tables and storage shelves to best display their work on the walls. While Mr. Henry wants to have control of a sort, it is not the morguelike control of Dahl's prep. At Emerald, too much quiet is suspect. If students are not actively, verbally engaged, they are not learning correctly and the teacher is not teaching correctly. "It is not noise that needs to be explained, it is silence," said Mr. Henry. Correct teaching calls for the teacher to adjust, to listen, and to negotiate with the students. Teachers at Emerald spoke negatively of colleagues who did not approach the students in this accommodating manner. English teacher Betty Fleischacker, for example, was often criticized by other teachers as out of date and old-fashioned, as having "problems with control and authority." She was, in other words, accused of being a Captain Hardcastle.

Students are quick to use and insist upon their right to participate in and criticize the classroom proceedings. Tawanda keeps a notebook in which she records her likes and dislikes, and one day she angrily read to Mr. Fields, a science teacher, her complaints about the injustices of the class. When Mr. Henry confiscated from Katie a history paper that

he had mistaken for a note, Lakisha loudly protested. Her response to Mr. Henry's telling her to be quiet was to insist she had a right to say what she felt because it was a class issue and she was part of the class. Bill, refusing to take a pop quiz, justified his refusal with, "It's my prerogative."

Nonetheless, teachers at Emerald not only try to maintain authority but, at times, insist upon it. When Ameer wanted to engage Mr. Henry in a debate over whether or not he should pick up the bits of paper, Mr. Henry refused to respond. Likewise, when Mr. Henry insisted that Craig remove his arms from under his shirt, Craig refused, saying he was cold. Craig tried to negotiate by agreeing to take his arms out when he needed them to write. Mr. Henry gave him detention. These standoffs happened often, and usually Mr. Henry's response was to tell the students they could discuss the matter after class but for now to do what he said—wipe the desk, sit down, go to the student center, pick it up, or spit it out. Mr. Henry tried to reserve the right to say what was negotiable and what was not, even if it meant denying students a say.

These apparently haphazard claims by teachers at institutionally backed authority ("I am the teacher, so do what I say") struck me as being at odds with the student-centered approach teachers maintained at most times. When I asked Mr. Henry about this apparent conflict, he explained that, yes, teachers want control and authority in the classroom, but that teachers must be "given their authority by the students," teachers must "earn" their authority by displaying to students their ability as teachers and leaders. In this manner a teacher could be the authority in the classroom and still work within a student-centered framework. The difficulty is that students are stingy in giving away their power, and occasionally Mr. Henry refused to negotiate for classroom control. At times he did not wait for students to give him authority but tried to demand an institutionally backed, traditionally based, and rationally fortified right to determine students' behavior. If students responded with the antithesis of this claim, an explosion or standoff resulted. Sometimes this dialectical process was initiated by a student's absolutist or nonnegotiable claim for control of the classroom procedures.

These standoffs are evidence of the students' second means of power, the power of refusal. Students can and do shut down the classroom by refusing to cooperate. The substitute teacher's nightmare of chaos, paper storms, and jeers is always an imminent possibility, and it became a reality in room 112 for an unwary substitute one Wednesday. Teachers are aware of this and try to "choose the battle" accordingly. Eighth-grader Jim is notorious for his unmanageability, and one morning in math class I watched him act with particular intransigence. Yet

Ms. Marlow and two assistants, after a few attempts, let him alone as long as he remained seated. You have to choose your battles, they later told me, and today was not a day to confront Jim.

The students can subvert the teacher's plans for order because teachers have little means to stop them. The discipline system is virtually ineffective. Teachers counter their weak position by creating and then invoking personal relationships with the students, trying to influence students' behavior by construing misconduct as a breach of friendship. Mr. Fields, a tall, dignified science teacher in a gleaming white lab coat, is a master of this technique. He told me that once, when Tawanda was on the verge of exploding, he went to her on bended knee, grasped her hand, and implored, "Tawanda, does this mean you don't love me anymore? Does this mean we aren't friends?" He acted out the scene for me, and if Tawanda saw him as I did she could not help but smile and put her anger aside.[15]

Thus students have the means to both shape and subvert the teacher's plans and negotiate accordingly, and teachers try to cement their cracked institutional authority with personal style. The result is a tension in the classroom between a teacher's attempts to promote a situation in which teaching can take place and struggle with a situation in which only babysitting (their term) occurs. Teachers themselves acknowledge the tendency to babysit rather than teach, and they earn high status in the teacher's stratification scheme when they are victorious in the fight to teach.

More specifically, at Emerald teaching is an order in which the students are "focused" on the subject matter and when the subject matter is "official," that is, when the subject matter is that which the teacher is hired to teach. "Focusing," a term I picked up from Mr. Fields, implies more than attention. A focused class is one that is attending to teacher-approved topics. In the best of circumstances the attention in a focused class is controlled and initiated by the teacher. In the worst of circumstances, the attention of the class is merely condoned by the teacher. Focused official activities include spelling tests, lectures, and class discussions.

Pure babysitting, in contrast, is an order in which the students are not focused (what they are attending to is disapproved of by the teacher) and is not oriented to the official class subject. A teacher is babysitting when the students are sitting around doing nothing in particular or talking or playing in small groups, or wandering around the room. This mode is popular with students and occurs often, though any look at the official log sheet denies it.

A third mode of behavior is rare: students are attending to the class subject, but the focus is unapproved. For instance, Maleek is reading

from their text, *Johnny Tremain*, while he is supposed to be listening to this week's spelling assignment. Though I observed a few individual instances of such behavior, I never observed an entire class engaged in it.

This leaves open an interesting area in which the students are focused, but the subject is not the official class subject. Examples include a group discussion of why kids fight and how they might avoid fighting, a game of hangman, or drawing on the chalkboard. What is interesting about this last category is that because the teacher maintains a sense of control (as he or she condones the students' behavior), and because subject boundaries are open to interpretation, teachers are able to define these activities as teaching of a sort. One day, when the students were supposed to be reading from *Johnny Tremain*, a group of about five began to use the blackboard for a game of hangman. I recorded it in my notes as a deterioration of Mr. Henry's lesson plan. But in the lunchroom, Mr. Henry talked about it with other teachers as a sign of success. Mr. Henry saw the hangman game as thinking work and as learning. So although the game was not what he had planned, neither did he interpret it as a failure, as pure babysitting.

This fourth category is important because room 112 is often in this mode. The focus is off the subject matter, but there is no active struggle for control. Through compromise, the tension between the teacher and the students' dual attempts to control has decreased, but the gulf between what the teacher is actually doing and his defined role as a "good" teacher has widened. Part of this discrepancy is covered over by the teacher declaring that hangman is an aspect of the official subject, part by handing out bonus points right and left so that grades appear to support the ideal of students succeeding in academic assignments.

Mr. Henry's class, and all classes at Emerald, move back and forth between these different quadrants. Typically, the semester begins in a pure babysitting mode. In the early weeks Mr. Henry was unable to maintain any focus, and when he tried to push his rules and agenda the students would refuse, blow up, and continually test and question them.

By the fourth to sixth weeks Mr. Henry was beginning to "create an environment" in which he could somewhat control and focus the class for part of each period, but rarely on the subject matter. These were the days of hangman, drawing on the board, and high-level socializing, but with few direct confrontations and explosions.

In week nine, Mr. Henry told me he was going to try to spend more class time teaching. And, through negotiations and compromises, he attempted to do so. He loosened rules of gum chewing, candy eating, and pencil sharpening. He no longer tried to control the wildness before the bell rang or when he had finished his lesson plan. He lowered

his academic requirements and asked for students' attention far less often than he did at first. In response, the students rarely exploded anymore and gave Mr. Henry their attention and good behavior more often, since they were freer the rest of the time to jump, pound, talk, and even scream in ear-piercing pitches. The classroom is a compromise.[16]

THE SCHOOL

To understand why teachers are unsuccessful in their attempts to teach, we must analyze the conditions for negotiation, that is, the classroom's relation to the school.

The classroom is not the same as the school. The classroom procedures are negotiated; the school's are not. The classroom babysits; the school polices. In the classroom, rules (which are never clear to begin with) can be changed with students' immediate pressure; school rules are followed without question.[17]

School is the procedure of moving through the day in a certain way. School is going from class to class, to lunch, to gym, to a break. Going to school means clearing the halls when the bell rings and getting a hall pass if you need to leave class to go to your locker. At Emerald the procedure is to attend six class periods, with a fifteen-minute break after second period, lunch after fourth, and five minutes in between each forty-five-minute class. The halls are patrolled by Mr. Stern and Mr. Leacher, huge men who thunder the minute the bell rings, "Clear the corridor, clear out. Get to class!"

The school keeps kids off the streets for at least six hours a day. Parents know that if they send their kids to school, for a good part of every weekday they are within school grounds. At any moment it is possible to know what classroom they are in and probably even what desk they are sitting at. Parents know that for forty-five out of every fifty minutes their kids will be in a classroom in the charge of an authorized, certified adult. During class periods, their kids will not be getting into trouble hiding in the bathrooms, since these are locked during classtime.

The goal of the school is to ensure that students come and follow the procedure. When the school fails in this job it is held responsible. Emerald is being sued by the parents of a student who was injured in a fight at the city bus stop. The parents are arguing that the school is responsible for a child while he or she is "at school," even after the child is off school grounds.

Students often try not to be policed and may not always obey rules, but they do not directly struggle to change or negotiate school rules.

Nor do teachers. Teachers must teach the number of students allotted to them, whether they are good students or incorrigible; they must take attendance in each class and they must be on the school grounds a certain number of hours a day; they must also evaluate each student and give a justifiable grade every six-week grading period.

The school regulates the student's body, making sure that the student stays on campus and follows the daily routine of moving from class to class. However, once the student enters the classroom the school's authority largely disappears, for the school abdicates control at the classroom door: There are no school policies on classroom behavior, decorum, or even physical control or positioning. The classroom, borrowing a term from Metz, is "autonomous" from the school. Once the school has delivered the students to the classroom, the teacher is left to establish patterns of classroom behavior; before minds can be shaped teachers must negotiate rules for classroom conduct with the students. On the one hand, this situation leaves teachers free to establish the sort of classroom atmosphere they prefer. But, on the other hand, they have no official resources with which to shape that atmosphere or control students' conduct.

In earlier years, I was told, teachers at Emerald had met among themselves in order to devise schoolwide rules for classroom behavior but could not reach an agreement, so teachers were left to their own standards and devices. Mr. Fields said all the science teachers had reached a consensus on classroom behavior, but it had been largely ineffective because there were no schoolwide standards. Students would come to his class from a class where they had been able to run wild. Each semester, and each day of that semester, each class had to be negotiated to come around to his standard of appropriate classroom conduct.[18]

This separation of school from classroom and the lack of consensus among the teachers explains why a math teacher advised Mr. Henry to first (before even thinking about teaching) "create an environment" in the classroom. She told him to first establish an atmosphere in the classroom that was suitable to his personality and with which the students were comfortable. (In my terms, to negotiate a compromise for physical movements, decorum, and attention.) Even experienced teachers had to renegotiate classroom decorum each semester and with every shift in class composition. The math teacher claimed that in the sixth week of school she was still trying to establish an environment in her second period. She had not yet handed out textbooks or begun systematically to teach math. Just when she thought she and her students had worked out an agreement on classroom behavior, the school had assigned more "compensatory-ed" students (problem kids) to her

classes, and she had to begin "creating an environment" all over again. When these new students arrived, she spent the period working (once again) on getting the students to sit in their seats instead of wandering around the classroom.

In sum, the school's exclusive concern with bodies, its silence on the subject of classroom behavior, deprives teachers of institutionalized resources and support for their authority and compels them to negotiate with students what they are to do in the classroom setting. But the relationship between school and classroom and its effects on teacher-student negotiations can be fully explained only if the third sphere, the family, is considered.

THE FAMILY

The family is separate from the classroom and school. It is external, unrepresented, imperceptible, and unknown. Parents are rarely seen on school grounds and stand out as foreigners when they do drop by to collect homework assignments for sick students. Moreover, what occurs in the family sphere cannot be questioned by the school or the teachers. The family is the sole guardian of the child's soul. And the nature of the values, attitudes, and motivations that the family instills, and how it goes about instilling them, is the family's private business. The school has no right to keep an eye on or intrude upon the family sphere unless physical abuse or endangerment is suspected. Similarly, in the classroom the student's soul is inviolable, although a teacher may suggest counseling if a student shows serious distress or suicidal tendencies. But these few exceptions are perhaps best seen within the school's and teachers' legitimate territory, the child's body and mind.

In the classroom this inviolability of the student's soul and family means that teachers are not to criticize or derogate a student's attitudes, beliefs, lifestyle, values, nor the behavior associated with these. A teacher should not condemn what a student holds (or claims to hold) to be the true, the good, or the beautiful. Souls are to remain in the background, unquestioned, taken for granted, sacred. In fact much of the classroom haggling concerns which behaviors are associated with learning and therefore *under* a teacher's control and which behaviors are associated with the soul and the family and therefore *beyond* a teacher's control. The maneuvering to define the teacher's legitimate territory is possible because of the unobservability of minds and souls and their manifestation only through physical behavior. The premise that minds, bodies, and souls are separable promotes freedom of interpretation and allows inventive students to define their behavior as soul-based behavior and therefore none of the teacher's business.

Teachers are thus expected to take a laissez-faire approach to students' values and behaviors, even when they disapprove of them. Randolph can brag to Ms. Smith about his weekend drinking and encounters with the police in the hope of shocking her, while remaining free from teacher retribution or condemnation; she, in fact, said nothing. Jonathan missed excessive amounts of school because of tennis tournaments and practice and, though Mr. Henry thought this "a crime" because Jonathan is smart and should not be missing school, Mr. Henry hands Jonathan the missed homework assignments without comment. Students who said they did not want to read their papers aloud in Ms. Li's class were told she respected their feelings as she moved on to more willing students. The message is that attitudes like cooperation, attentiveness, and interest cannot be demanded of students.

Further evidence of the soul and the separation of the family and its sanctity can be seen in the teachers' resignation to their lack of influence. Mr. Fields said that this is "just the way things are today." The drama teacher, who has taught on three continents, thinks American children are the rudest but, she said, "you get used to it." Mr. Henry told me the story of a colleague's frustration when she met the parents of a girl who had recently committed suicide. The parents came to this teacher to ask why their second daughter did not have more homework. Though the teacher felt like screaming and raving at the parents for their blindness at what they were doing to their daughter, she only said that perhaps the girl already had enough on her mind and did not need more homework, that she was already carrying the required load.

The reaction of Emerald's faculty to John is another case of teachers leaving the family to look after its own affairs in spite of a child's difficulties in the classroom. John is the most angry and hating child I have ever encountered. I vividly remember him declaring he hated the teachers and was going to kill them. The tone in his voice and expression on his face were terrifying. John refused to work, refused to pay attention, refused to do anything except distract his neighbor by insisting the neighbor join him in games of tic-tac-toe. The teachers agreed that John has severe emotional problems and should not be in school. Ms. Marlow said, "I wonder sometimes what his parents are doing to him." But the problems were in a sphere beyond the teachers' control—they dealt with John as best they could. Though among themselves teachers often theorize about a child's family life as a major source of behavioral and learning problems, family life is never addressed in the classroom or while talking with students.

A final example of the inviolability of the value sphere occurred when Mr. Henry crossed the line and tried to directly promote his views on fighting.[19] The discussion occurred after a fight between some Em-

erald students and a rival school. Mr. Henry stated that fighting was bad and attempted to organize a class discussion about how students could avoid fights. The very attempt surprised me, for by this time I had become accustomed to the teachers' reticence to promote their own values in an open, direct manner. But just as telling was the reaction of the students. Approximately half the class (in each of the five periods) vigorously rejected his claims with a "you don't know what you're talking about." They told him it was stupid to walk away from a fight, that you should fight if someone pushed you around or it would be even worse later. A whole gang might go against you. They thought it was a right to fight back. They thought the suggestion of staying after school for an hour to avoid bus stops during troubled times was ridiculous and impractical. Nor could they imagine their parents suing the parents of other kids who harassed them. They laughed outright at that one. They claimed Mr. Henry did not "see how it is." The students denied his expertise on the merits, value, and necessity of fighting.

To see how this inscrutable separation of the student's values and soul from the classroom is a condition for classroom negotiations, we may turn to Mr. Henry's discipline system. The discipline system in room 112 (and with minor variation in other classes as well) is that the name of a student who misbehaves is written on the board. This is a warning. If the student is delinquent again that day, a check is placed by the name. This signifies a ten-minute detention to be served in room 112 with Mr. Henry after school on Thursdays. A second check means a twenty-minute detention, and a third means the student is put on the school's detention list and is to serve a one-hour detention after school on Friday.

This system proved only loosely effective in controlling students' behavior. Some of Mr. Henry's students simply did not show up for detention, and no more came of it. Just as often, in the rush of classes coming and going the names were erased before Mr. Henry had a chance to copy them down. Furthermore, as with everything else, students could and did negotiate a reduction or dismissal of discipline with promises of future good behavior and improved classwork. Students knew the system was a joke and used ridicule to let Mr. Henry know it. Jason, sharp, quick, and witty, was the first to begin to parody Mr. Henry's habit of writing a name on the board, then pointing his finger and saying, "You're warned." In the fourth week as I walked into class Jason pointed his finger at me and said, "You're warned." I only understood what he was doing as he proceeded to point and warn another student and another. These parody warnings were soon given quite freely by all the students. When a name went on the board during a play reading, the nearby students jeered the unfortunate young man with "You're warned, you're warned, you're warned." The latest variant of mockery, a stroke of collective genius, happened when Mr. Henry refused to dismiss his sixth-period class until everyone was seated. When he at last released them the class rushed the door with a chorus of "You're warned." Mr. Henry has a good sense of humor; he laughed.

The school's discipline system works little better, though this does not curtail its liberal application. Students are assigned a one-hour detention on Friday for classroom misconduct or for breaking school rules (cutting class, off school grounds, in the hall without a pass, etc.). Every week Mr. Henry read aloud the detention list in sixth period. One week I counted sixty-three names—in a school of only six hundred students. The second list was longer still: the names of seventy-five students who had missed their detention from an earlier week. If they did not show up for detention this week they were to be suspended for a day.

According to the multitude of teachers I heard discussing the matter—discipline is by far the most popular topic among teachers—detention is ineffective in altering classroom behavior. The physical education teacher said it best: "Detention is a joke. These kids are laughing in our faces, and I don't like anyone laughing in my face. . . . I have watched while the administration walks in the front door and the kids are running out over the back fence." Teachers feel suspension gives students a free day to stay home watching television or a free day on the streets to get into trouble. Suspension means that the students who most "need" to be in school are missing another day.

The school can and does link the students' grades and promotion to attendance and behavior. The school can hold a student back from high school, but only until age sixteen; by law, at age sixteen all students must be allowed to enter high school, no matter what their grades. Expulsion is an alternative, but it requires elaborate justification and is too extreme for most cases.

The repercussions of detention or suspension for a student are, doubtless, variable. But the separation of the family sphere from the classroom and school allows students to manipulate their parents' ignorance of school activities. Detentions are easily covered up because they are of such short duration. Even the school's hourlong detentions were, so the phys. ed. teacher claimed in disgust, reduced to ten minutes to reward students who bother to show up at all. Suspensions can also be concealed from parents. Mailed notices are intercepted.

Some teachers did try at times to bridge the gap between the family and the classroom by phoning parents and visiting them at home. Mr. Henry relied on this method often in the first part of the term, though he tapered off in the second part. He told students that he did not mind dropping by their homes, that he lived in Berkeley and it was no

trouble for him to do so. But such efforts to bridge the gap between family and classroom are impractical and unpredictable, and they have only short-term effects on classroom behavior. For my analysis the unpredictable aspects are the most telling.

The condition that calls for the necessity of a teacher contacting a family is also the condition that makes these contacts unpredictable and of little real value to teachers. Above all, it is difficult for teachers to approach parents on matters of a student's behavior and discipline, on matters of the soul, simply because it is not clear what teachers can ask parents for without overstepping their boundaries. Complaints about a student's misbehavior may sound like complaints about the student's upbringing, which is none of the teacher's business. Concerns about the student's schoolwork can easily sound like complaints about poor study habits, discipline, and the home environment. Some parents are open to suggestions and alliances with teachers, but some are not. Two incidents—though the first may be apocryphal—illustrate the drawbacks of fortifying the discipline system with parental contact.

First, there was Antara. Mr. Henry was having difficulties with her and mentioned to a veteran teacher that he was planning to call Antara's mother. The teacher frantically insisted that he not do so. Antara's mother, so the story went, was a "radical anarchist" who had somehow kept Antara out of school until the fifth grade. If Mr. Henry approached this woman he would be seen as a "dominating white male suppressor," and she would very likely "blow up" in his face. Mr. Henry decided to try other means to elicit Antara's cooperation.

With Katie's parents, Mr. Henry faced a dead end of a different sort. He believed that his phone call had resulted in her parents giving her a beating. He said he would never call her parents again, and fear of similar results made him hesitant to contact other parents as well.

The unpredictability of appeals to the family for support in enforcing the discipline system leaves teachers alone in doing what they can to control the soul and body so they can do their job and teach. The separations of family from classroom and school from classroom are the conditions for teacher-student negotiations. Mr. Henry can warn, but students learn the warning does not foreshadow anything particularly ominous. Students know they can and sometimes do simply shut down the classroom. Teachers are forced to negotiate.

CONCLUSION

English with Mr. Henry is a far cry from Prep with Captain Hardcastle. Captain Hardcastle was teacher, school, and parent in one. And for students, as Dahl so aptly put it, "It left you precious little leeway." The masters too had little leeway. They had the responsibility of mind, body, and soul. Teachers at St. Peter's were always on duty, in the classroom, in the corridors, and in the town. Furthermore, strict school rules and decorum applied to teachers as well as to students, leaving teachers little leeway to create a classroom environment of their choosing.

In contrast, the students at Emerald have leeway. The separation of classroom from family and from school allows them the leeway to participate in shaping the classroom environment in which a large part of their lives is spent. Mr. Henry has leeway also. Being responsible only for the mind allows him (ideally) to concentrate his efforts in this sphere alone. The separation of the school from the classroom allows him the leeway to create his own classroom procedures and environment. The separation of the family sphere allows him room to be friends with students, to relate to them in an other-than-teacher mode, to talk to them of his and their exploits without the necessity of passing judgment. Likewise, in Metz's liberalized school teachers are free to teach in an "autonomous" classroom that is separate from the "rigid hierarchy" of the school—a classroom in which power between student and teacher is not an issue because the goals and expectations of student and teacher are shared. However, Metz's idealistic pictures do not take into account the fragilities I observed at Emerald. Metz does not acknowledge that some form of domination is necessary to teach a roomful of thirteen-year-olds. An autonomous classroom leaves the teacher with few negotiating, let alone coordinating, resources.

By this criticism I do not mean to advocate a return to the days of Hardcastle. Nor am I suggesting that the liberal critique of Hardcastle is misplaced. Along with the academic accomplishments Hardcastle obtained through "discipline" came the danger of rigid tyranny. The liberal critique was right to focus on the absence of leeway for students, teachers, and parents.

However, now the situation has changed. The principal danger is no longer tyranny but the inability of teachers to spend time teaching rather than babysitting and the shocking proportion of students who fail to acquire even basic reading and writing skills. I would not propose addressing these current dangers with a return to the reign of Hardcastle. At St. Peter's the fusion of the spheres, in which a student's mind, body, and soul were under the continuous power of a single institution, gave rise to an intricate microeconomy of power and disciplinary overkill.

Instead of fusion, I propose an *integration* of the spheres. The family and the school must give the classroom teacher the power to achieve the goals of maintaining order and decorum. Teachers must have a min-

imal authority to discipline the entire child so that they can create an environment conducive to learning. Both the family and school should act to support a classroom teacher's integrated authority, realizing that such authority provides a basis for, not the negation of, liberalized teaching methods. A teacher's authority in the classroom does not preclude an informal student-teacher relationship, nor student involvement in the planning of curriculum and learning exercises, nor the creation of a "student-centered" learning environment. Rather, in a school system of integrated spheres the teachers' classroom authority is the foundation for these methods' success.

Unfortunately, supporting teachers in the classroom so that they can gain access to students' minds is not a cure for all the ills of our education system. Student success will still depend on individual abilities and the quality of teachers. It will still be influenced by institutional racism, the stratification of school resources, and the home environment. However, the integration of spheres must be promoted before all else if the rudimentary conditions for teaching at Emerald, and schools like it, are to be realized.

AFTERWORD: WRITING SOCIAL SCIENCE

Our field work from start to finish, in all of its various stages, had to be translated into written form. At first the form of writing was loosely defined. As long as we were writing, what we wrote and how we wrote were unimportant. Even the work distributed for class discussions could be and was encouraged to be rough, simply photocopies of field notes in raw form. But as it came time to present final papers, and even more so when it came time to present the essays as part of a manuscript for publication, the form of written presentation assumed firm contours. Each essay was to be about twenty-five pages. It was to present one and only one argument. It was to consist of an introduction, literature review, presentation of the argument with supporting field data, and at last, to be wrapped up with a conclusion. (Even the fashion of the titles was merged to a norm.)

This is a standard form of presentation in the social sciences with a standard set of justifications for itself and I was not only willing but eager to comply. I was confident that I could write a tight, clear, concisely argued essay that marshaled field experiences in a way that would not only bring the world of a junior high school to full technicolor, high-definition life, but would also, like lightning flashes, illuminate my analytic claims. Furthermore, my essay would be fun to read. I like to write. I was looking forward to presenting my written work.

I presented a fairly final form of my essay to the seminar during the second semester. I was jarred by my classmates' reactions and by their interpretations of the paper: they seemed to visualize the classroom as a virtual war zone. They also concluded that my conclusions were and must inevitably be radically conservative. They thought I advocated the demise of all liberal teaching methods as well as a return to Hardcastle authority relations.

So I tried to read my paper as they had read it, but then an even more disconcerting twist occurred. For I *could* see how my classmates had read the paper and how they had come to their conclusions. Yet thinking back to what I had seen at Emerald Junior High I did not feel I had distorted, fudged, or misrepresented data. The analysis reflected what I had seen and wanted to say.

After several close rereadings I realized that when I read my paper I was always silently supplying images of students and events that mitigated and contextualized my paper's emphasis on the teacher's weak authority position. Tawanda is the most vibrant example of this process. In the paper I referred to Tawanda's obnoxious behavior in the classroom, her irritating and seemingly constant interruptions. But when I read about these incidents, immediately other images and other aspects of my image of Tawanda came to mind as well. When I read of her interruptions I also recalled her admirable boldness in expressing her opinions. I remembered the times she stood up for herself and refused to accept Mr. Henry's version of events or his punishment if she did not think she was in the wrong. I remembered how she came most appropriately dressed, as she herself proclaimed, as a clown on Halloween. And how, after classroom conflicts with Mr. Henry, when she saw him after school she cheerfully waved and called to him from across the street as if they were always and only amiable friends. And I thought of how these other sides of Tawanda were made possible by the separation of spheres in school life.

Among the manifold consequences of the separation of spheres and the social division of the child, I chose to focus on the consequences for the teacher's authority and capacity to teach because this was to me the most shocking aspect. Still, it is only one facet. And when, to present my argument in essay form, I isolated and emphasized this one aspect, I found it changed. My classmates could not see it as I have seen it. The teacher-authority aspect is only "itself" if seen in the light of and in its relation to the other major facets the division of spheres cuts in classroom conduct: the leeway the division of spheres provides students, the division's support of parents' struggle to retain at least nominal control over childrearing, and the division's relation to the school or state's interest in the control and production of docile bodies.

I would like to have presented my work by examining the teacher's authority in the classroom in strong juxtaposition to the other facets of classroom conduct. These other facets should be examined from their own point of view, in their relation to each other, and in their relation to the separation of spheres as a whole. Bennett Berger beautifully does something of what I have in mind in his analysis of "ideological work" by rural communards in *Survival of a Counterculture*. Also I have in mind Dostoyevsky's approach in *The Brothers Karamazov*, although Steinbeck achieves the same multiperspectival approach with one-eighth the paper and ink in his presentation of Danny and his friends in *Tortilla Flat*.

My essay could not take such an approach. To have done so would have obscured my central concern, which remains the teacher's weak negotiating position. To keep this in the foreground, I had to present the other major facets involved in the social division of the child and the dynamics of classroom negotiation only from the teacher's point of view. To offset the flatness this produced, I tried in the conclusion to flip the Hardcastle-Emerald comparison on its head.

Unfortunately, the essay form that allows me to make my analytical point forcefully also obstructs my making it with richness, roundness, and in its full context. The essay form allowed me to write a solo whereas I would have liked to develop harmonies along with the theme.

So perhaps my point is simply that readers of ethnographic essays must be aware of the possible distortions of the necessarily narrow though forceful arguments that fit into the essay form. And participant-observation researchers should be careful, after going to elaborate, masochistic extremes to understand a social phenomenon in its own time and place, in its richness and complexity, and many colors—in short, in itself—not to lose these advantages in order to serve up "microwavable" fare that, while facilitating consumption and marketability, often has a taste that belies the picture on the box.

TEN

Coming Together: An Interactive Model of Schooling

Nadine Gartrell

In California the attrition rate for African-American students is twice the rate for white students; African-American students have lower academic achievement scores than their white peers; and in 1986 only 5 percent of African-American high school graduates were eligible for admission to a four-year college or university, compared to 16 percent of white high school graduates.[1] A number of community-based programs have attempted to rectify these discouraging figures. In this chapter I examine one such project: Interface Institute (formerly Project Interface or PI), a community-based after-school math and science college preparatory program for junior high school students. PI is located in the Elmhurst district of Oakland, a predominantly African-American, low-socioeconomic community. PI students attend public and parochial schools all over Oakland, but about half come from four nearby public "home schools."

The philosophy of the program is to ensure an effective educational experience for students by forming a partnership with their parents. Such partnership philosophies are appealing ideologically, but they frequently founder as the "experts" try to make the transition from ideology to practice. Based on six months of participant observation and interviews with staff, students, and parents, I explore the reasons for PI's success in implementing a partnership between education professionals and parents and the importance of such a partnership for educating African-Americans.

BRIDGING HOME AND SCHOOL

Historically, there has been tension and "natural conflict" between the home and school as teachers and parents guard their respective do-