Individualism and Community:
Ritual Discourse in a Parochial High School

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Students identified two contradictory emphases at St. Anne's High School. The school's religious foundation led to an emphasis on caring among its members. However, as a private secondary school it also had to promote competitive achievement. Two all-school rituals are examined in light of this structural tension. The analysis suggests that the assemblies used "love" and "fun," two American metasymbols, as temporary mediators or regulators of the school's tension. SCHOOL RITUALS, INDIVIDUALISM AND COMMUNITY, PAROCHIAL EDUCATION, EDUCATIONAL CONTRADICTIONS.

St. Anne's is a coeducational parochial high school owned and operated by Franciscan Sisters in Port Gilbert, a midwestern blue collar city of 100,000. St. Anne's considers itself a college preparatory institution: its 1000 students choose from course offerings that emphasize academics; vocational subjects such as drafting or welding are absent. Over half the seniors plan to attend four-year colleges or universities, although most of them will enroll in the local branch of the state university. Overall, St. Anne's has a positive reputation in Port Gilbert for graduating educated, competent young people.

St. Anne's tuition of $1100 sets it apart from the three comprehensive public high schools in Port Gilbert, yet it does not enroll only upper middle-class students. In 1980 one-third of the students came from working class families, as indicated by the nature of the father's job and educational level. Another third had fathers who held professional or managerial positions. However, Port Gilbert's ethnic diversity is only partly visible at St. Anne's. Blacks and Chicanos were less than 6 percent of the student body at St. Anne's, while almost 20 percent of the public school population. Port Gilbert's older Catholic ethnic groups, Germans, Italians, and eastern Europeans, dominated the 1980 enrollment.

The mix of students at St. Anne's was in large part the result of family ties extending back through three generations or more. Ninety-three percent of the students had other family members who had attended the school. Family traditions of attendance at St. Anne's appeared stronger than financial difficulties, programmatic considerations, or concerns about the school's limited facilities. The school's his-

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torical ties with Port Gilbert families, beginning in 1903, drew and kept students in the more pragmatic era of the 1980s (Seeley et al. 1956).

Such continuing ties are not formed solely of good intentions; they must be reaffirmed through repeated concrete experiences that are deemed "good" and "worthwhile." What brought about attachment to St. Anne's, when the school restricted students' freedom of movement through a closed campus, restricted their choice of courses, and added financial burdens to many students' families?

The "Feel" of St. Anne's

Even first time visitors to St. Anne's commented on its climate or "feel." A visiting counselor from the local technical college said, "This school has a nice feel to it." An alumna said she chose Catholic schools for her own children because of the "nice, warm feeling" about them. Some characteristics of that distinctive feel of the school emerge in third-year students' comments.

One of them, Susan H., provided a typical description of St. Anne's: "There's a different atmosphere here—more united, more one than at public school. When I first came to St. Anne's, people were more friendly. They talk to you, even if they don't know you . . . say 'Hi' in the halls."

Joan S. corroborated this view: "I like that it's small, with a feeling of togetherness. The teachers really care about you and everybody around here. It's just like a caring atmosphere."

Tim S. introduced the term "family" into his description. "Family" was a commonly used metaphor for the relations among staff and students at St. Anne's.

Everything's a family. There's groups, but if you need something, it doesn't matter if it's freshman, sophomore, junior or whatever . . . people help each other. I forgot my notebook for a test for Father C. I asked someone. They said, "Sure."

Like Joan, Tim discussed the special relation between teachers and students: "Teachers seem to care. Even if you don't have them for a class, you can go to them—talk, ask for help."

Students who described themselves as "burn-outs," who had a more peripheral involvement in school than those students cited above, likewise pointed to teachers' concern as a distinguishing characteristic.

Ellen P. said, "Teachers care about what happens to you afterward. They want to start you out."

Finally, Linda S. elaborated upon this distinctive attitude of teachers at St. Anne's by comparing them with their public school counterparts:
The public school teachers didn't seem to care too much if you live or die, it seems to me. They don't help you too much there. "Here's the work. Do it or don't." At St. Anne's they care more about you. They want you to learn. They go out of their way more than in public school. In public school, from my experience, they don't really take an interest.

Dan S., a school dissident with antireligious and anticonformist views, criticized most of St. Anne's practices. Nevertheless, he also acknowledged the distinctive social relations, in a minimal statement: "Here, whether we do anything about it or not, you have a semblance of being friends."

Two main characteristics of the "feel" of St. Anne's are described in these students' comments. First, relations at St. Anne's consisted of a unity, a togetherness, a "semblance of being friends." Students identified a set of social relations that established kin-like ties among members, "the family of St. Anne's." Second, "caring" about other members of this family was an element of an implicit "code of conduct" (Schneider 1969) at St. Anne's. Students helped each other (Tim S.); teachers went out of their way to think about (Ellen P.); talk to (Tim S.), help students (Linda S.). The voluntary nature of the caring is crucial. Teachers and students went beyond what was necessary, and that made St. Anne's a distinct place.

Thus, across students representing different kinds of involvement in the school—from very involved students to those just wanting a high school diploma—the school consistently represented a set of social relations characterized by: 1) a unity, a "diffuse, enduring solidarity" (Schneider 1968), and 2) a voluntary giving to others, usually termed "caring." Anthropologists and sociologists term such constellations of relations "community" (Varene 1977; Peshkin 1978; Toennies 1957; Kanter 1972).

But students were also in agreement that the solidarity and caring were disrupted, contradicted by cliques and "favoritism." As my interviews with students proceeded, expressions of giving among school members were met by examples of taking, and solidarity was met with individual competition.

Divisions at St. Anne's

"Because St. Anne's is a private school, most people are well-off. You get a lot of snobs. Some girls are really bad . . . They only know you if they need help. Otherwise they look right through you."

Marge K. indicted students for being exclusive, for divorcing themselves from others. This was a consistent theme among girls and boys. Phil F. explained his experiences:

Each clique has standards. The upper-class clique—the richer ones—want you to conform more to the way they are. At times you're good enough and other times you're not. If you can be of use, you're tolerated; if you're not useful or if you question areas where you don't belong . . . they don't want to go into it.
Laurie S.'s response gave a further idea of the dynamics of being snubbed:

Well, if you're in a group—like the rich people—they don't let anyone else talk to them. When they're together, they don't consider anybody else. Maybe we do this too. It would be better if everyone just got along.

These statements are representative of students' dislike of differentiation and exclusiveness among peers. This theme was almost universal among students at St. Anne's, except among members of the "rich and popular" crowd, students' name for those peers who typically snubbed others. These statements contribute an additional trait to students' definition of community: equality of members; equally good treatment of all members.

There were students who believed in absolute equality of all. They complained about teachers who denigrated slower students by making fools of them in class. However, this was a minority view. More common was a belief in achieved equality, achieved status. As the statements in the next section demonstrate, students wanted equality of opportunity; they wanted an equal chance to compete and succeed in the school's status system. They sought equality as individual competitors. Thus, underlying their complaints regarding favoritism was support for an equal, fair competition among individuals.

Leslie T. discussed "favoritism" in athletics:

I don't like the favoritism toward children whose parents donate money. My brother went out for baseball. One year he went out, they chose 15 players; next year they chose 20 players. He asked Mr. Y. [coach] how certain people make the team. Mr. Y. said that one kid's brother had been a good player, so he thought the brother would be too. Another kid, there would be a problem with his parents if he didn't make the team.

That shouldn't be the way they pick teams. They could do better if they picked people for what they're worth.

Maribeth F. and Joan S. complained that "the same people got picked over and over" in extracurricular competitions. The reasons students were chosen did not always appear to be performance-based. Maribeth argued that although during tryouts for the tennis team she beat a number of girls who were eventually chosen, she was not chosen for the team. She concluded that favoritism operated in the coach's decisions.

Joan S. had an identical experience with try-outs for the freshman basketball team.

In grade school I was on the first string; this other girl was on the second string. But here she made it [the team], and I didn't. I tried to figure out why she would have made it and I didn't. I wondered whether it had to do with money or not, if their parents give more money to the school.

Joan concluded that the students who were repeatedly chosen for places on teams and in clubs had common characteristics: "I went down the list. All the students were rich people, [who] dress sharp, and have the right name."

Favoritism was not limited to extracurriculars. Rita F. described its presence in classrooms as well.

Okay, they're really good at baseball. But sometimes it gets a little big. They get a little big for their britches. It gets me mad. Some teachers, you know, give them so much attention. You sit in the back of the room practically gagging. You're sitting in the back working your butt off and they're up in front goofing off with the teacher and getting away with it. Some teachers are like that. Not all, but some are. But then you say something about it and they say, "You just gotta work harder, push at it."

In these statements, students accepted the premise that individuals compete for recognition and status. They complained when that recognition was illegitimate: when it was more than was due the individual or when it was not fairly earned. They acknowledged the unique talents and abilities of individuals and wanted a fair race to distribute rewards. In this sampling of comments, students with different kinds of school involvements proclaimed individualistic principles. These students were "highlighting the individual person as an autonomous and independent center" (Varene 1981:7).

Students who liked the unity and caring atmosphere of St. Anne's also liked the opportunity to compete as individuals in fair races for rewards and status. In these students' emphases on both caring and competition, on unity and equal access to status, the cultural themes of "community" and "individualism" emerge at St. Anne's (Varene 1977; Spindler and Spindler 1983).

For a private school that must attract and keep its tuition-paying clientele, the tension between its warm feel and its strenuous competitiveness and suggestions of favoritism could have dire consequences. Students' repeated comments on the dual personality of St. Anne's led me to question how the school manages these contradictions. If individual competition dominates in classrooms and in extracurriculars (Carlson 1982; Dreeben 1968), where is the oppositional (Lévi-Strauss 1963; Varene 1977) unity and togetherness fostered? Where is the sense of solidarity nurtured? How is the school able to promote and contain such contradictory experiences?

To investigate this question, I examined many domains of daily life at St. Anne's. Across seven months as a participant-observer, I took notes, conducted formal and informal interviews, and "shadowed" a number of students and friendship groups. I scrutinized the text of daily announcements, the format and content of religion classes, and administrators' conversations with exemplary and unruly students. I watched the "legendary" teachers in action, those judged best and worst by students. I interviewed teachers and students who differed.
in their expectations for and commitment to the institution. I listened to their stories about St. Anne’s, tales of many pasts and presents.

In this essay I investigate two all-school assemblies as important occasions for communications on “good” relations among members. Although other aspects of school life contributed to the nice “feel” of the school (Lesko 1983), structured times in which the entire school came together were especially intriguing. Both in number (15 during a school year) and in participants’ attention to them, all-school assemblies were noteworthy. The assemblies seemed likely to be times at which something important about members’ relations with one another, and thus about the individualism and community tension, was “said.”

In the fall of 1981, I observed an all-school mass and a homecoming spirit assembly at St. Anne’s. My interpretation is speculative; for although it builds upon a body of analyses of secular and religious rituals (for example, Moore and Myerhoff 1977; DaMatta 1977; Turner 1969; Gluckman 1962; Rappaport 1968), analyses of such ceremonies are fraught with difficulties. 1

All-School Mass

Five times each school year, the entire staff and student body of St. Anne’s assembled in the gymnasium for a mass, Catholic’s central liturgy. For the next 30 minutes, they engaged in the formal series of prayers, songs, and blessings that make up the mass. Typically, a single priest presides, assisted by 2 student attendants, a group of 15 singers and musicians who lead the rest of the school in song, and some 30 volunteers who distribute bread and wine at communion time. These people sit on the floor of the gym, while the rest of the school members fill the bleachers.

Each mass began with the adjournment of classes and the assembling of staff and students in the gym. The participants’ change of pace from the normal classroom routine, location, and schedule—heralds a freeing of the mind from common modes of thinking and acting (Leach 1976) and heightens the ceremony’s symbolic impact (Mechling 1981).

Decorations in the gym further distinguished this mass time. Colored cloths adorned the railings that separate the bleachers from the gym floor. A beige tarpaulin covered the gym floor, thereby transforming its normal athletic appearance and function. A long table draped with a white cloth and topped with candles occupied center stage at one end of the gym. To one side of the table, a huge cloth banner hung from a floor stand. On the yellow background, a large human hand opened upward in a giving gesture. From the center of this hand rose a red heart. Groupings of chairs around microphones completed the physical preparations that were so familiar to the arriving students.

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Ritual Discourse

This first all-school mass of the 1981–82 school year had as its theme “Give Good Gifts,” (Matthew 7:11, Jerusalem Bible), the theme for that school year. The banner’s hand and heart were a visual representation of the theme. The readings of the mass centered around “the last shall be first, and the first, last” (Matthew 20:16, Jerusalem Bible). The central reading of the mass, upon which the priest based his sermon, promised that those who are poor or downtrodden on earth will be exalted in the kingdom of God (Luke 14:8–11, Jerusalem Bible). That passage concludes, “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the man who humbles himself will be exalted.”

The prominent feature of this mass was that the gospel reading was dramatized. Eight students pantomimied its message in a number of contemporary applications. While the priest read the brief passage, students portrayed a big car greedily pushing its way to a gas pump and gorging almost all the fuel, so that little was left for the unassuming small car that had been pushed aside. Another scene depicted a power-monger ruthlessly removing people who obstructed his rise to absolute control.

This mass was immediately dubbed “the mime mass” by students. Aside from the dramatizations, the rest of the mass was unexceptional. After the gospel pantomimes, the offering of gifts, the consecration of the bread and wine, the Lord’s Prayer, and communion followed.

Discourse on Competition and Caring

The mass consisted of a complex of symbolic expressions: the banner, colors, readings, pantomimes, and songs each “served as vehicles for a conception” (Geertz, following Langer, 1973:91). This complex of symbols formulated into a regular pattern qualifies as a ritual. Typically, a ritual has an overt, pragmatic purpose, but communicates on many levels. Rituals often express sentiments about the natural and social environment of the participants (Turner 1969; Gluckman 1962). Often rituals are representations of the participants’ world; rituals may also be models for action in the world (Kapferer 1981; Geertz 1973). Thus, one can view the content of the mass rite as a “discourse” on the participants’ world (Da Mata 1977).

The mass pantomimes and readings highlighted commonly experienced injustices of the assembled students; the unjust ruler and the selfish big car “spoke” to the unfair competitive school experiences that students had recounted to me in interviews. The pantomimes raised for consideration the social problems of greed and injustice.

Each pantomimed scene depicted greedy, unjust individuals, triumphing over meek, small, powerless people. But the priest accompanied the dramatizations with readings that changed the scenes’ message to one of hope: the last shall be first, and the first, last. Those who were now small and insignificant would be first and important in
the kingdom of God. Love meant a forsaking of one's individual self in the present for a greater self in the future or in the next life. Loving God and one's neighbor was the prescription for what ailed the social world of the school and beyond.

Thus, the resolution of injustice and greed was charity, Christian love. The banner displayed this resolution: the heart rising from the open, giving hand. "Give good gifts." Participants were encouraged to give love to others, even greedy others, even abusive others. These altruistic actions were reasonable because loving others was the way to create the kingdom of God on earth. Faith in a different, better future made the present, painful world intelligible and, thereby, tolerable (Geertz 1973). Christian love was the resolution of the discrepancy between an ideal egalitarian community based on altruism and the real inequalities of human beings as they were reified in social structures.

Love, following Christ's example, integrated the contradictions of community and individual inequality into one comprehensive world view: the first shall be last, and the last, first.

Both individualistic, competitive strivings and a desire for equality and caring formed the backdrop of this mass. The content of the readings portrayed the ideal Christian response to the inequality: love of God and love of others, just treatment of all. In this way, charity would triumph, not only in the next world, but also in the present one.

So far, the meaning of the mass is quite straightforward, for it is communicated through common religious symbols. But students' comments on this mass delineate a cultural dimension of this religious event, and point to what may in fact be the most potent part of the discourse.

Among comments representative of students' responses to the mass is that of Kevin H., who said, "I often feel uncomfortable going to those things [masses]. I never liked mass much. The last one I liked; it kept my attention with the mime."

Maribeth F. echoed this view: "This mass [mime] was one of the better ones—people listened. Some [masses]—most people talk through them."

Students expected to be personally engaged in a ritual. They approved of this mime mass because it held their attention. To be physically present was insufficient; for the mass to be "good" it had to engage mentally, emotionally.

This interpretation was supported even by those students most critical of school masses. Numerous students found all-school religious rituals to be "bad," "meaningless." Bill T. said, "It's one big social hour."

Paul R. commented on the mime mass: "I got nothing out of it."

These latter students complained when the circumstances of the mime mass did not produce the expected outcome of intense personal involvement. They did not protest the compulsory attendance or ar-

gue against masses in general. Rather, they disgustedly proclaimed the event "meaningless." Both for students who liked the mass and those who did not, the criterion was the same: Did it involve them? Did it get their attention? Did they get something out of it?

In Varenne's (1977) description of the tension between individualism and community in a midwestern town, he argues that the tension between the two is large enough to need bridging. He suggests that the mediative concept for modern Americans is love. Through the "intense personal involvement" that is love (and its derivatives fun and happiness), Americans temporarily bridge the gulf between competitive self-interest and voluntary caring for others. Love (or fun, happiness) establishes personal bonds among isolated individuals. "Love . . . is a bridge between men" (Varenne 1977:197). "Intense personal involvement" in the mass was a bridge among students.

Thus, the explicit content of the mass was Christian giving, charity, love. Giving love to others was symbolized in the open hand and the heart of the banner. The giant red heart rising from the open hand was a general enough symbol to encompass many individual interpretations; it is what Varenne calls a "metasymbol" (1977:19). So, love was likely to be a viable symbol for most participants.

But on another level, in the form of the experience of the mass itself, participants lived "intense personal involvement" with one another. When it worked, the mass kept their attention. It involved them with the pantomimes, with the priest reading, with each other listening and watching. In this way, the mass "spoke" above love too. But it "spoke" through the experience of being personally involved in the action, in the drama.

Thus, my interpretation suggests that "love" temporarily mediated students' conflict between individual competition and inequality and voluntary caring in two interrelated ways. On the explicit, literal level, the mass "spoke" about injustice and greed and unequal disbursement of rewards in life. The Christian resolution was love: treat others in a loving way even if they do not deserve it. But, on a second level, the mass "spoke" again about love. On this deeper, almost unconscious level, the mass "spoke" about the ability of personal involvement to temporarily unite people and enhance their lives. Through a core of commonplace symbols—hearts, crosses, trees, shrubs—an experience of intense personal involvement, an experience of love, was created among many of the participants.

**Homecoming Spirit Assembly**

Homecoming at St. Anne's was the major annual celebration and involved the whole school. Burnett (1969) analyzes homecoming as a "priming" time for all school organizations; it gets school spirit flowing and keeps organizations alive and functioning. Six weeks prior to the homecoming week, planning began in earnest at St. Anne's. The
actual four days of events in late October would touch everyone in the school as they prepared for, participated in, or attended the festivities. "School spirit is the highest at homecoming," summarized a senior boy.

Students arrived in costume on Thursday of Homecoming Week, traditionally dubbed Spirit Day. Nuns, 1950s boppers, army generals, and southern belles gathered in bathrooms, at lockers, and on the floor to discuss each other's attire and the day's prospects. Although classes met for shortened periods so that a semblance of work went on, laughter and fun prevailed. In late morning, students and staff moved from classrooms to the gymnasium, another symbolic movement from normal to out-of-normal time. Students could think and act in ways outside the limits of classroom behavior.

The spirit assembly consisted of relatively commonplace events: competition among classes—in relay races, tug-of-war, and cheering contests. The master of ceremonies, a popular social studies teacher, orchestrated the competitions and led the cheering in his cowboy outfit, complete with pistols, neckerchief, and hat. The teacher had relinquished his normal role to become a cheerleader, a secular minister to school spirit.

Predictably, seniors won the games of tug-of-war easily, while the juniors excelled in the relay race with balloons. The cheering competition climaxed the assembly, with each of the four classes trying to outdo the others in producing the loudest rendition of a school cheer. There were three rounds to the competition; with each cheer the decibel level rose.

**Fun in the Spirit Assembly**

My reading of the spirit assembly begins with its temporal placement between the coronation assembly on Wednesday and the colors assembly on Friday. On Wednesday evening the homecoming king and queen were announced at an evening assembly, which was followed by a reception. The spirit assembly took place Thursday. Friday afternoon was the colors assembly, at which time the homecoming court and football team were honored before the entire student body. Both the coronation, which preceded, and the colors assembly, which followed the spirit assembly, honored individual students, often those "same people who get picked all the time," in one student's words. As already noted, there was a distinct tendency for the members of prestigious groups, for example, the homecoming court and the football team, to come from higher social backgrounds. In my view, the spirit assembly "interrupted" or balanced the spotlight on the high status few with an emphasis on equality and general participation.

The social studies teacher's status reversal into a cheerleader points to other reversals. Unlike classroom activities which were teacher-controlled, students dominated in this assembly. Thus, the normal hier-

archical order of teachers above students was reversed. Equally important, students' peer hierarchy also dissolved through costuming which disguised differences and inequalities. For example, the court distinguished itself at other homecoming events by attire: suits and dresses. The football team would stand out in the colors assembly with its uniforms. On spirit day, anyone could come dressed as a military general, as an astronaut, or in a diaper. The social structural order usually so visible in attire was temporarily abolished with costumes.

The normal order of achieved status also was upset by students' equal access to the action of the spirit assembly. Since the total volume of noise determined the winner, everyone's contribution counted equally. This stripping away of achievement prerequisites for having fun together was a significant part of the communication of the spirit assembly.

The emotion of the event comprised a major facet of its meaning. The noise, the intensity of the cheering competitions, students' total involvement—physical, mental, visceral, emotional—combined into an emotion-charged episode. It was comparable to being at a rock music concert or being a spectator at an automobile race. The intensity of the event swept everyone up into its orbit. This intensity overflowed into the hallways afterwards. Students' excitement, levity, and exuberance were evident in jumping, laughing, and shouting as they made their way to their lockers. Everyone smiled broadly, evidencing the good will and connectedness they felt toward fellow participants.

Students animatedly discussed the events of spirit day for the next week. The yearbook advisor purposefully scheduled yearbook sales for the week following homecoming, in effect "cashing in" on the unified, warm feeling students held toward the school during that period. The advisor knew the effect of homecoming week and used it for the yearbook's benefit.

Finally, much of the meaning of the assembly was based upon a body of St. Anne's "folk tales" or school legends. For example, when students knew the teacher who acted as master of ceremonies in his regular role, his cowboy charisma was more enjoyable. The competitions also reenacted the legend of class rivalries: freshmen versus sophomores, juniors versus seniors. Everyone endeavored to unseat the seniors who boldly, and traditionally, asserted their superiority in every school event. The organization of the competitions communicated that upperclassmen prestige, for juniors and seniors always competed last, as the main event.

I interpret the events of the spirit assembly as a discourse on having fun together, another form of "love" (Varenne 1977). Having fun together involved shared teacher legends, and folk tales about freshmen and seniors, as respective heroes or villains. During the spirit assembly many students who were not usually seen in the athletic or cheer-
leader spotlight represented their classmates on the gym floor. But most importantly, everyone participated in the "fun"; the usual pre-requisites for inclusion in school events, for example, status and ability, were elided. All students contributed and were personally involved.

This interpretation of two parochial school rituals rests upon a conception that the rituals "spoke" to the strain between the school's communal ideology and its competitive individualistic structure, which was exacerbated by the unequal starting places of its student competitors. This analysis is a cultural reading of commonplace episodes at St. Anne's. This reading suggests that St. Anne's relied upon the power of American metasymbols, love and fun, to involve students in its school order and to temporarily resolve, or manage, its organizational contradiction. All-school assemblies were powerful sites for the creation of warm feelings among school members. These warm feelings maintained students' positive attitudes toward the school, despite their disillusionment with its favorism or its failure to really promote Christian community.

Readers may regard this essay as an "overinterpretation" of two commonplace, straightforward school events. This critique supports my analysis, for rituals are most effective when they appear "natural" or ordinary (Varenne 1981), for then the messages are most likely to be unconscious (Mehling 1981). These two assemblies were ordinary events of the school year. Students accepted them as natural pauses in the flow of academics, a factor that enhanced their power.

Conclusions

This analysis began with students' complaints about an underlying structural tension at St. Anne's High School. As a Catholic school it promoted community and equality, but as a secondary school in a stratified society, it promoted individualistic competition and achievement. Students were acutely aware of that tension. The analysis suggests that this tension was the background for two all-school assemblies. Thus, it provides a view of how an organization "resolves" conflicts.

However, this analysis demonstrates the mythic nature of the resolution of "love" and "fun." The assemblies provided temporary mediations of the school's opposing elements, but at no time did the rituals confront the tension directly, for example, by examining its sources in a stratified society. The school rituals acknowledged the conflict and "regulated" (Rappaport 1968) it through the cultural symbols of love and fun.

Finally, this essay emphasizes the symbolic dimension of schooling, especially the potential multilevel meanings in the most ordinary, taken-for-granted events. The symbolic domain has been largely ignored by practitioners and researchers alike. This omission lends a dis-

tinct aridity to perceptions of daily life in schools and to descriptions of schooling, especially when the research has focused on students' meaning in schools. To the extent that St. Anne's is typical, Catholic schools appear to understand the symbol-making dimension of human beings and use it both to enhance their organizational effectiveness (Kapferer 1981) and to contribute an additional facet to their students' education (Rodriguez 1982; Kleinfeld 1979).

Notes

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1. All proper nouns are pseudonyms.

2. Community and individualism are continuing themes in American cultural analysis (Spindler and Spindler 1983). A theme is a proposition or postulate that is fundamental to a group's world view (Opler 1946). Recent theorizing envisions a particular cultural or organizational structure arising from an interplay of themes (Beeman 1983; Varenne 1977). Varenne's Americans Together examines the opposition of community and individualism in small town life.

3. Rituals' outcomes are hard to measure (Moore and Myerhoff 1977). The very nature of ritual makes much information inaccessible. If rituals' symbolic power is its ability to express what cannot be expressed in other ways (Karp 1981), participants may be unable to articulate the meaning in any but superficial terms. This inarticulateness is especially true in modern, complex societies which rely on diffuse, or general, symbolic ideas (Young 1965). Therefore, Moore and Myerhoff acknowledge the "unscientific" use of "empathy and intuition" (1977:13) in analyses of ritual outcomes. Boon (1972) argues for analyses of ritual forms in order to determine the structure of meanings participants could have when rites are effective.

4. This analysis complements reports of how individual teachers and administrators resolve tensions, for example, Berlak and Berlak 1981; Varenne and Kelly 1976; Metz 1979; Wolcott 1977.

5. There are a few exceptions to the dearth of symbolic interpretations of schooling, for example, Rowan, "Shamanistic Rituals in Effective Schools" (1984), Kapferer, "Socialization and the Symbolic Order of the School" (1981), and Burnett, "Ceremony, Rites, and Economy in the Student System of an American High School" (1969).

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