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The Material Culture of Public School Classrooms: The Symbolic Integration of Local Schools and National Culture¹

Norris Brock Johnson*

Yehudi Cohen (1970; 1971; 1975) has suggested that socialization and enculturation into national society and culture are symbolically reinforced by the integrative functions of customary public school classroom decoration and artifacts. This paper describes the material culture of classrooms within an elementary school in the rural midwestern United States. In support of Cohen's argument, it was found that classroom material culture symbolically represented national, rather than local community, sociocultural orientations and traditions. Cohen's thesis is expanded through (1) content analysis of grade-to-grade variation in classroom material culture and (2) by suggesting a hierarchy of local school integration, as represented in classroom material culture, with the national society and culture. It is concluded that classroom material culture reinforces the symbolic integration of heterogeneous local school communities into a national society and culture. Classroom material culture is an index of the relative degree of symbolic integration between local school communities and national society and culture. CLASSROOM ETHNOGRAPHY; CULTURE TRANSMISSION; MATERIAL CULTURE: NATIONAL INTEGRATION; SCHOOL AND SOCIETY.

As the pilgrim passes
While the country permanent remains
So Men pass on;
But the State
Remains permanent forever
Jerusalem
William Blake

In every culture, material artifacts are an integral part of the process of sociocultural transmission. Belief and value, as well as norm and role, can be conveyed through object and artifact as well as language and behavior. For example, consider the manner in which Pueblo people exhibit the use of material artifacts in processes of sociocultural transmission. *Katcina* figures are dolls associated with Hopi and Zuni religious activity. These dolls are important aspects of rituals promoting sociocultural control and integration. Secret *kiva* ceremonies initiated neonates into the sociocultural orientations

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and belief structure of the Pueblo. Traditionally, *kivas* were lined with *kadcina* figures belonging to each initiate. *Kadcina* were spirits inhabiting the San Francisco mountains. During the periods of solstice, the spirits descended from the mountains to bring rain and fertility to the Pueblo. Young people who did not behave as a Hopi or Zuni ought to behave were said to be carried off by the *kadcina* when they departed to their mountain sanctuary. Carved from sacred cottonwood root, *kadcina* figures are material representations important to socialization and enculturation (Williams 1972). *Kadcina* figures were instrumental to the integration of traditional Pueblo society and culture.

In this instance, the relationship between material culture and socio-cultural transmission is quite apparent. By way of comparison, scant ethnographic attention has been devoted to investigating similar sociocultural transmission and integration functions of customary material culture in public school settings within complex society. In considering some functions of state societies, we are met with the structural requirement of maintaining integration by capturing the allegiance of children from heterogeneous ethnic subgroups and diverse local subcultures. Whether manifestly or latently expressed, public schooling is for our purposes most profitably considered as a mechanism for socialization and enculturation into *national* society and culture. From this conceptual vantage point, we note that the specific manner in which schooling (and the school itself) is implicated in the process of national integration and sociocultural transmission has been more often hinted at than considered in empirical detail.

In this paper, the argument is that a specific, demonstrable mechanism for sociocultural transmission is the presence, in virtually every public school, of classroom decoration, display, and material artifact. Customary, often taken-for-granted items of public school classroom material culture in part function as a mode for the representation and symbolic transmission of sociocultural ideologies, mythologies, and core value orientations. Environments are not passive wrappings, but active mechanisms for socialization and enculturation (Hall 1968; Hallowell 1955; E. Cohen 1976). Classroom material culture is a sometimes not so hidden curriculum the content and symbolic analysis of which contributes an understanding of some sociocultural transmission functions of public schooling. In and of themselves, educational environments are modes for sociocultural transmission. Paraphrasing McLuhan (McLuhan and Fiore 1967), the medium of the school classroom itself is a sociocultural message.

This paper postulates some sociocultural transmission functions of customary material artifacts, decorations, and displays within the classroom of the elementary school I term, Deerfield.² Deerfield is a rural village in the upper midwestern United States. Deerfield's 1974 population was 2,695. In the following sections, I first discuss Yehudi Cohen's (1970, 1971, 1975) theory of the instrumentality of customary classroom material culture to national integration. This thesis is not sufficiently illustrated through empirical materials and cases. To provide empirical support for Cohen's theory, I present a summary description from my research at Deerfield. The empirical question is the degree to which Deerfield elementary school, through its classroom material culture, reflects a nationalistic or localistic sociocultural orientation.

In view of Cohen's argument, one would expect to find quantitatively more classroom symbolic reference to identifiably national rather than local sociocultural orientations and traditions. Indeed, this is the major finding to be reported. The sociocultural orientations and traditions of the several ethnic groups in Deerfield were neither visually, nor symbolically, nor materially represented in the elementary school classrooms. Finally, I extend Cohen's theory by suggesting a *continuum* of public school involvement with and orientation toward national sociocultural traditions and orientations. The claim is that local public schools will exhibit variation in the symbolic orientation of their classroom material culture reflecting their corresponding degree of integration into the national society and culture. Classroom material culture is a valuable category and underutilized index for gauging the degree of symbolic integration of individual local public schools into national societies and cultures.

In the ethnographic examination of socialization and enculturation, for the most part educational anthropologists have primarily focused on the more cognitive aspects of culture learning or on the more behavioral and interactional aspects of culture teaching. As a result, the more material and symbolic aspects of educational settings, processes, and systems have received scant attention. Relevant research exhibits little concern with the nature and character of educational settings themselves—their physical features, textures, or aesthetic aspects—or with the nature and characteristics of the material contents associated with those settings (cf. Hansen 1979)³. Yet educational settings and their contents stabilize, position, and give form to characteristic patterns of behavior and interaction peculiar to those settings (Gump 1976; Sommer 1969). Theoretically, one can argue that the nature and character of the symbols, visual referents, and material contents of educational settings are antecedent to behavioral events and activity (Barker and Barker 1961).

The microethnographic consideration of public school material culture further clarifies the several levels of reciprocity existing between educational institutions and their sociocultural contexts. The concern here is with defining a neglected problem area and unit of study, outlining relevant research categories, and providing an empirical account establishing a framework for subsequent investigations. Related analysis is being carried out on other aspects of material culture such as student clothing and dress (Johnson 1977), as well as on some sociocultural transmission implications of classroom furniture forms, spatial arrangements, and traditional public school architecture (Johnson 1980). In considering some material and symbolic aspects of the educational process, this paper enlarges the conceptual framework as well as the ethnographic data base necessary to the further understanding of, in particular, the structure and functions of public schooling.

Theory

The educational subsystem is functionally integrated with other aspects of its sociocultural context (Grannis 1976). Whether within the family or within the classroom, education is a process of sociocultural transmission (Kimball 1974;

Tindall 1976; Singleton 1974; Spindler 1974). The behaviors and interactions of family life, child-rearing practices in particular, are primary modes for enculturation into specific local cultures. As with the Pueblo, in small-scale homogenous societies sociocultural transmission involves teaching and learning the particularistic ways of the local group. In large-scale heterogeneous societies, on the other hand, sociocultural transmission often means teaching and learning the universalistic ways of an extralocal society and culture. Enculturation into national sociocultural networks often means *unlearning* traditions and orientations displayed within primary family and local groups (Hart 1974; Safa 1971; Steward 1972). In heterogeneous national societies, there is inherent structural tension between local and national orientations and traditions. In only a few instances will local school and national sociocultural orientations and traditions correlate; obvious examples for our culture include suburban, primarily Anglo-Saxon public schools. As a reflex of the heterogeneity of state societies, I assume more instances of discontinuity than continuity between local and national sociocultural orientations and traditions.

Cohen (1970, 1971, 1975) argues that public schooling is an adaptive mechanism for the transmission of national, rather than local, sociocultural orientations and traditions. Public schooling is instrumental to the process of national integration. Enculturation and socialization into national culture and society require that competing local values and practices be disavowed. In legitimizing its authority, a national society requires the allegiance of local subgroups. In lieu of direct force, this allegiance often is achieved primarily through latent means such as the establishment of a uniform ideological focus. A uniform ideological focus is often transmitted through visual representations symbolic of the nation as a whole. To combat competing local ideology, such symbol systems must be implanted very early in the life cycle.

Visual representations symbolic of national orientations and traditions are most effectively displayed in those national institutional settings, such as public schools, to which the populace is most exposed and involved.⁴ Cohen, for example, (1971:41–42) asks us to consider:

. . . of what relevance is the daily oath of allegiance to a flag—and the flag itself, which the child faces throughout the learning period—to the acquisition of knowledge and skills? Of what relevance is the ubiquitous portrait of Washington, Mao, or Lenin to the teaching of grammar and the use of a slide rule in an American, Chinese, or Soviet classroom? Of what relevance is a cross in a religiously sponsored school to the learning of geography, history, literature, and the like? The relevance is this: As part of the state bureaucracy, schools are generally maintained under the sponsorship of the state organization that controls and supports them in one way or another. Just as courts are part of the state bureaucracy and display the material symbols of the state organization of which they are a part, so do schools. . . . Whether the means to this end take the form of uniform dress for schoolchildren (or even for their teachers), standardized sacred books and paraphernalia or fetishes, flags, pictures of culture heroes or rulers that students face throughout the school day, and the like, the object is to present all future participants in the society with uniform ideological symbols. The goal is to make these symbols integral parts of shaped minds, so that response to them in adulthood will

be uniform when the state bureaucracy feels that it needs to use them to gain acquiescence or mass participation in an activity of the society.⁵

Both latently (noninstructionally) and manifestly (instructionally) expressed, classroom decoration and display can be seen to reflect national ideologies, mythologies, and core value orientations. It is not the decoration and display itself that is of significance. The images, symbols, and visual referents *in* the decoration and display become the subjects for study. The symbolic, imagistic, visual representations in classroom decoration and display reinforce a certain level of sociocultural uniformity in heterogeneous, stratified complex societies. This "hidden curriculum" is ever present. Classroom decoration and display reinforce sociocultural traditions and orientations when there is no manifest effort to teach them. Throughout the state, these visual referents will be standardized and quite common. The visual referents function to supplant the myriad competing local, particularistic referents to specific cultural subgroups and communities.

Procedures

As part of a more inclusive microethnographic study of educational process, data on material culture were collected through the cross-sectional (across grade levels) nonparticipant observation of all the classrooms in Deerfield's school system. Reported here are data on preschool through sixth grade observations. Each class was observed all day for three randomly selected days. From grade to grade, classrooms were observed in sequence. More than one room was surveyed so as to better capture the norms, as well as the ranges of variation, that exist over the entire process of schooling. *Schooling*, as etically defined, is conceptualized as a structure, occurring both in time and over space, comprised of on-going socioculturally patterned processes of events and activities in the progressive, developmental sequence termed *grades*. As a process, schooling is progressive sequencing of component stages. We must remember that *schooling* is a twelve-year process, the structure of which remains rather difficult to apprehend. The structure and process of schooling itself are not revealed or apprehended through the observation of only one or two component units (classrooms and/or grade levels) for limited periods of time. A cross-grade observational strategy provided an empirical basis for conceptualizing the interrelationship, as expressed over space, of single, constituent classrooms (Johnson 1976). Thus, this cross-sectional observational protocol established a more holistic perspective revealing patterns of relationship that would otherwise have remained hidden in the isolated particulars of individual classrooms.

A cross-sectional observation strategy demands the comparability of constituent units as well as their representative sampling. To insure comparability, categories for data gathering were taken from Henry's (1960) cross-cultural outline. Representative sampling was insured through the observation of all the classrooms and grade levels in Deerfield's elementary school building. Standardized categories for describing and recording classroom material culture were as follows:

1. Kinds of material items
2. Location and placement within the room
3. Construction materials
4. Production technique
5. Aesthetics (colors, textures)
6. Style (abstract, representational, expressionist)

Material culture observations were conducted during the mid-year winter semester.

This report does not discuss all the items of classroom material culture that were recorded. Only those materials pertinent to enculturation and socialization are analyzed.

Elementary School Classroom Culture: A Qualitative Summary

Preschool (One Room)

Other than a display of student art work, there is a relative absence of visual representations in the preschool room. Individual drawings and paintings are hung from a string spanning the length of the front window or taped to the walls and doors of the room. The art is highly abstract; there are no representational forms. All the art was produced by the children; none was made by the teacher or commercially produced outside the school.

Kindergarten (Two Rooms)

Upon entering kindergarten room, the first impression is of visual assault. Visual emphasis is upon the display of animals having anthropomorphic qualities of speech and personality, on numbers, and upon the elaborate and prominent illustration of national holidays.

In one room, taped to the rear wall are letters and animals having human qualities spelling out the month of N-O-V-E-M-B-E-R. Near the hall door is taped a calendar on which each day of the month is represented by a small square; a small paper-mâché turkey, with the name of each day of the month printed on it, is pinned to the appropriate square. Other paper-mâché turkeys are hung on a cord strung in front of the outside window. On the hallway wall are taped bold, primary-color paper-mâché turkeys. All these displays are student and teacher produced. On the hallway wall is a bulletin board with a scene depicting a Native American *powwow*; clad in deerskin, naked to the waist, and wearing feathered headbands, conspicuously red-skinned "Indians" dance around a kindled fire. Adjacent is a similar scene of prancing "Indian" and Anglo children. Sitting at a log table amid the remnants of a meal, their elders smoke a long pipe. This scene is entitled "The First Thanksgiving."

In the second room, there is a larger paper-mâché turkey taped to the front blackboard. Adjacent is an elaborate commercially produced Thanksgiving dinner scene. Holding a knife and fork, a broadly smiling male stands over a steaming platter of turkey and cranberries. Still in apron, a broadly beaming female sits at the opposite end of the table. Two well-scrubbed freckle-faced children sit facing the viewer. Taped to the closet door of the

classroom is a student-made cornucopia from which flows an interminable array of foodstuffs. On either side of this literal river of food are a male and female child with, as if shouting in glee, their mouths open and their hands upraised. On either side of the hallway door is a large commercially produced calendar. The (abstract) artwork of students is hung on a string directly in front of the outside windows.

First Grade (Three Rooms)

Holiday decorations predominate. Every room exhibits both commercially and student produced Thanksgiving scenes. One room contains a large paper-mâché and cardboard turkey suspended from the ceiling. Occasionally, children reach up and spin the turkey. The word "happy" is printed on one side of the turkey; the word "Thanksgiving" on the other. Another room is conspicuously decorated with student-produced depictions of various foods: turkey, corn on the cob, pies, and the like. On the front wall is a student-produced calendar. Student art is hung from a string in front of the outside windows.

Second Grade (Two Rooms)

Rooms contain both commercially and student produced calendars. Here, though, the depiction of days and numbers are not accompanied by anthropomorphic animals. Both rooms exhibit prominent wall displays of commercially and student made Thanksgiving scenes. Depicting Thanksgiving scenes similar to those in previous grades, commercially produced posters are taped to the sides of each teacher's file cabinets. One poster advertises a special holiday program to be shown over television. Another poster depicts a family in a living room watching television with a dining-room table laden with food in the background.

Third Grade (Four Rooms)

Each room is decorated with prominent displays illustrating national holidays. There is a small, but heavily decorated, pine (Christmas) tree in the corner of each room. On a blackboard in each room are large paper-mâché or commercially produced pictures of Santa Claus. Two rooms have a sled and reindeer paper-mâché and crepe paper display taped the length of a blackboard. In one room, there is a small commercially produced Nativity scene, in styrofoam, atop a metal bookcase. On the rear wall of this room is a magazine cutout of a manger scene. In another room, taped to a blackboard, is an elaborate commercially produced display spelling out "Christmas is . . . ;" the phrase is completed with such words as "Santa Claus," "ornaments," "cookies," "wreaths," "baby Jesus," and "families." In several rooms, both Christmas and Thanksgiving depictions are present. On the rear wall of one room is an elaborate teacher-produced chart listing those students who have read required books as well as the number of pages read. In another room there is a bulletin board on the rear wall on which are printed the following categories: local, state, and national. Students clip references to each from

newspapers and tape them under the appropriate category. Each room exhibits a set of *World Book Encyclopedia*. In all but one room, there is a metal globe of the world on top of the bookcase.

Fourth Grade (Four Rooms)

One room exhibits a prominent commercially produced wall display of a clown's face smiling at the following phrases: "May Day 1," "Memorial Day," "Mother's Day." In each room, student text and workbooks are stacked in bookshelves in the rear of the room; alcove storage shelves as well as shelves in the teacher's closet are likewise crammed full of textbooks. In each room, there is a metal globe of the world either on top of the teacher's desk or on top of a bookcase. Each room contains a set of *World Book Encyclopedia* and several pull-down maps hung above the blackboard behind the teacher's desk.

Upper (Fifth and Sixth) Grades (Five Rooms)

In both English rooms, there are metal world globes on top of either the teacher's desk or file cabinet. Under the outside window in each room there are long, low bookcases full of textbooks, workbooks, and *World Book Encyclopedia*. Above the teacher's desk, the front wall holds several pull-down maps. In one room near the hall door there is a large commercially produced calendar. In the other room, to the left of the teacher's desk, is a small plastic Christmas tree on top of a bookcase. In the Science room, student projects and drawings are hung from four rows of string stretched the width of the room. Bulletin boards have taped to them newspaper and magazine clippings of science-related topics. Workbooks, textbooks, *World Book Encyclopedia*, and laboratory equipment are stuffed into shelf spaces by the door and under the outside windows. In the History room, several commercially produced multicolor maps of the United States are taped to the side walls. On the front wall behind the teacher's desk is a large commercially produced poster depicting the bureaucratic organization of the government of the United States. A companion poster depicts all the past presidents. Sitting on the blackboard chalk rail is a large commercially produced map of 19th century Africa; the map illustrates the "typical" person from each major geographic area and "tribal" group. There are two metal world globes on top of the bookcases.

Discussion

As instruments for the transmission of national traditions and orientations, Cohen (1971:41-42) specifically mentions standardized books and curriculum (texts), paraphernalia or fetishes (turkeys and Christmas trees), flags, and pictures of culture heroes or rulers. The qualitative data indicate the presence of all these items, and more, at Deerfield elementary school. Save for the third-grade current events bulletin board, there are no apparent references to, or symbols of, local sociocultural and ethnic traditions or orientations.⁶ Composed of German, Scandinavian, Swedish, Italian, Polish, Black, and Jewish

subgroups, Deerfield is a socioculturally diverse community. At Deerfield, many Italian families witness the January observance of Befana, the October witness of St. Francis, and the June observance of St. Peter. The few Jewish families in Deerfield observe Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in October and Hanukkah in December. Older members in the several families of Swedish descent press their grandchildren to continue traditions of observing the March Annunciation and St. Lucy's Day in December. In terms of associated paraphernalia and fetishes mentioned by Cohen, though, none of the *symbols* of these sociocultural orientations and traditions are exhibited at Deerfield elementary school. Every classroom exhibits important representations of national sociocultural norms, events, activities, traditions, and orientations, including those that seem to transgress the legal separation of church and state.⁷ The theory that public schooling disavows local sociocultural orientations and traditions is supported through the Deerfield data.

Yet, the qualitative data reveal a more subtle pattern. Cohen assumes the more-or-less even distribution, across grade levels, of visual referents to national orientations and traditions. For example, every classroom at Deerfield exhibits 18-inch Westclock clocks, calendars, and an American flag conspicuously placed in a front corner of the room. Until the upper grades, every classroom exhibited both commercially produced and handmade alphabets hung over blackboards. Yet the data illustrate that every classroom and grade level do not exhibit consistency of material culture. Not every classroom contains textbooks. Not every classroom contains wall maps and desk globes. Here it is not so much a matter of the relative presence or absence of referents to national sociocultural orientations and traditions, as Cohen argues, as it is a matter of the particular cross-grade patterning these referents exhibit.

During the middle grades, there is a discernible shift in the kinds of material culture exhibited; there is, though, little material culture variation across classrooms at a particular grade level. Displayed posters, illustrations, and drawings disappear. In comparison with the lower grades, classrooms become visually and materially stark. Are we to conclude that, at these grade levels, there are no material culture references to national orientations and traditions? Not at all. Rather, during the middle grades there is only a shift *in the mediums* through which national orientations and traditions are expressed. Table 1 summarizes the preceding qualitative data and shows the manner in which mode of production is associated with particular items of classroom material culture, as well as their grade-level distribution. The quantitative point illustrated here is that commercially produced referents to national sociocultural orientations and traditions are concentrated in the later grades, while noncommercially produced referents to national sociocultural orientations and traditions are concentrated in the early grades. The pattern to be explained is that the symbolic, national orientation remains consistent while its material mode of production varies.

Mode of production is an important consideration. The data illustrate that commercially produced items of classroom material culture are more standardized than are items produced by the teacher or by students. Cohen's material culture constants of textbooks and flags, and my additional constants

Table 1. Grade-Level Distribution of Classroom Material Culture*

	P	K	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th 6th
Student and/or teacher produced							
Academic products							
Papers							+
Projects							+
Alphabets							
Animals (anthropomorphic)		+	+		+		
Naturalistic/representational		+	+				
Art							
Abstract	+	+	+				
Representational		+	+	+			
Calendars		+	+	+			
Charts							
Achievement							
Number		+					
Holidays							
Scenes		+	+	+	+		
Stereotypes		+	+	+	+		
Symbols		+	+		+		
Posters							
Academic					+		
Graphic					+		
Commercially produced							
Alphabets		+	+	+	+		
Academic products							
Cutouts (magazines, newspapers)							+
Posters			+			+	+
Calendars		+		+		+	+
Clocks	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Encyclopedias					+	+	+
Flags	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Holidays							
Scenes		+	+	+	+	+	+
Pictures		+		+	+	+	+
Posters				+	+	+	
Stereotypes				+	+	+	+
Symbols				+	+	+	+
Laboratory apparatus							+
Textbooks					+	+	+
Workbooks					+	+	+
World globes					+	+	+
World maps					+	+	+

*+ sign denotes presence.

of clocks and calendars, are mass-produced national referents standardizing and integrating local school classroom environments. These items are produced extralocally. On the other hand, nonstandardized material culture is seen to be locally produced. The artwork, decorative posters, and charts produced by the teachers and students at Deerfield are unique. The data illustrate variation in these items from classroom to classroom. By extension, the conclusion is that the amount of variation in student- and teacher-produced items of material culture will be expected to vary from local school to local school. More than likely, public school classroom material culture referents to local community sociocultural orientations and traditions will be expressed (if they are expressed at all), in handmade, noncommercially produced items. Correspondingly, it is expected that commercially produced items will more than likely refer to national sociocultural orientations and traditions. This is a hypothesis to be tested in other local school systems. At Deerfield, however, the finding is that *both* commercially produced and noncommercially produced items of classroom material culture referred to national rather than local sociocultural orientations and traditions. Symbolically, Deerfield is significantly integrated into national-level systems.

There is a further implication suggested by the data in Table 1. A by-product of the pattern of distribution of classroom material culture illustrated here is that, at various levels of age and cognitive development, students will be continually exposed to national sociocultural orientations and traditions. It can be argued that different items of material culture are exhibited at the level where they will result in the most efficient cognitive conditioning. For example, in the early grades there is a pronounced emphasis on the making and display of student-produced art; children participate in the literal making of national images and symbols. In the upper grades, cognitive conditioning is more subtle. Informal, contextual learning is overshadowed by a formal text and subject-oriented standardized curriculum established by federal and state agencies. Standardized, commercially produced classroom maps and globes refer to the nation and the world. In no instance was a geographic reference to the local community observed. Standardized, commercially produced wall decoration refers to national events, national heroes and leaders, the structure of the nation, and the relationship of the nation to the rest of the world. No matter at what grade level or at what age, then, students will be continually exposed to the myths, orientations, and paraphernalia symbolic of American society and culture.

There are additional modifications that can be made to Cohen's thesis. Consider, for example, the national-level integrative functions of clocks and calendars. It was mentioned that every Deerfield classroom exhibited an 18-inch Westclock clock, various types of calendars, and a prominently placed American flag. To learn to regulate activity by calendar and clock is an important sociocultural lesson. From this vantage of functional integration, it is not by accident that school clocks and calendars are commercially produced. Commercially produced classroom material culture standardizes most all public school classrooms. Specifically, calendars and clocks regulate industrial society. Similarly, the clock and calendar regulate school activity as well. In both instances, standardization is emphasized. The wall clock in the

inner city school serves the same integrative and standardization function as the wall clock in the suburban school. Indeed, the point is that activity in both public schools is regularized and standardized on the same common basis. Further, consider the fact that calendars have long served as integrating mechanisms in state societies (Fried 1960). Again, the functional emphasis is on setting one common standard—here, the regulation of activity irregardless of natural cycles. Finally, literacy itself is involved in several definitions of the state. By definition, learning to read and write are required for participation in national networks. It is not uncommon for this requirement of literacy to come into conflict with various local community modes of oral communication. In this sense, literacy itself, and an emphasis on literacy, is indication of participation in national, panlocal networks. As has historically been the case, the Deerfield data illustrate that this continues to be the case. As in most public schools, consider the Deerfield lower-grade emphasis on the visual representation of letters and numbers. Consider the manner in which student activities include the learning of time reckoning by clock and calendar. To be elaborated, these material objects are a required part of the curriculum. Time itself, national-time reckoning, becomes a subject for study. Students are expected to know “Today’s Date,” “Number of Months in a Year,” “Number of Days in a Month,” and so forth. So standardized, clocks and calendars function as curricula for the transmission of national-level orientations. By contrast, it is common for local orientations to conflict with the orientations in the school. For example, agricultural communities such as Deerfield traditionally are organized around cycles differing from the *school year*. Time is marked by the growth cycle of grain. Events are marked by the need to complete agricultural work. Parents would not have wristwatches for themselves, but yet would present them as presents to their children. Parents (and teachers) expressed concern that students “be on time,” but local “time” often conflicts with school “time.” At Deerfield, as recently as the 1960s there was considerable parent/school conflict over (especially) males irregularly attending school in order to help with family agricultural work. In American industrial culture and society, there is one, and only one, mode for regulating event and activity. Public school clocks and calendars are material representations of important national-level sociocultural orientations.

Holidays are an important mechanism for the transmission of national sociocultural myths, themes, legends. By law, all public school children presumably are presented with similar paraphernalia at the same time and in the same manner. Deerfield observes Christmas, Easter, Father’s Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Lincoln’s birthday, Memorial Day, Mother’s Day, St. Valentine’s Day, Thanksgiving, and Washington’s birthday. These national holidays are integrated into classroom lessons. In the first grade, students are expected to know why Halloween is celebrated and why Thanksgiving is a holiday. In the second grade, teacher lesson plans include the making of posters for Columbus Day and the making of masks and costumes for Halloween. Up to the fourth grade, most of the classroom material culture is student-and teacher-produced paraphernalia associated with national holidays. As previously mentioned, Deerfield’s multiethnic community observes important holidays and celebrations of its own. The paraphernalia and

symbols associated with these several local community sociocultural orientations are not represented in the material culture of the elementary school classrooms.

National holidays are associated with particular stereotypic symbols and images. In clan and moiety-based societies, animals with human qualities, such as speech, symbolically integrate large numbers of people. In our society there is an association of rabbits with Easter, eagles with national power and authority, pine trees with Christmas, and turkeys with Thanksgiving. The making and display of these symbols by students reinforce the national sociocultural orientations they represent. As well as the observance itself, the paraphernalia symbolically representing the observance is important. Originally ethnic symbols themselves, such paraphernalia are deregionalized and ascripted to represent the nation. A stereotyped Thanksgiving scene encapsulates and makes visual the legitimizing myth charter of the society as a whole. Visual representations also make an association between particular national holidays and particular foodstuffs, an association highlighting the connection between economic and educational subsystems. It is in this manner that schooling specifically functions to transmit national sociocultural orientations and, by extension, functions as a mode for national integration.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that at Deerfield the material contents and visual character of the elementary school classrooms are predominately determined by federal and state law. Most of the material items discussed are purchased from standard school supply catalogs. The principal orders, stores, and distributes these standardized, commercially produced materials. Textbooks, encyclopedias, wall clocks, calendars, globes, maps, alphabets, and the like are items produced by supralocal powers. Teachers, students, and the local community have little involvement in this matter. The nature of the setting in which elementary school children spend over 7,000 hours of their lives is primarily influenced by national rather than local mandates.

As teachers are not told exactly how they are to, say, decorate their rooms, material culture variation is expected. Consistency in visual displays is also expected. Teachers are under both state and federal mandate to ritualistically observe particular holidays, as well as to include particular activities within the curriculum. Most of the subjects symbolized through the material culture under discussion were incorporated into teacher lesson plans. These lesson plans are in part derived from "suggested" courses of study provided by the State Department of Education, which regularly evaluates Deerfield's grade-level objectives and lesson plans. The State Department of Education is responsible to the Federal Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Many Deerfield teachers did not want to take time to discuss holidays or national myths and legends. Most teachers were aware of the socialization and enculturation implications of which I speak. Teachers were required to incorporate such activities into their curricula. Knowledge of George Washington, clocks, calendars, and Thanksgiving is part of state-certified standards of minimal grade-level competencies. In essence, the nation requires that public schools serve as a mechanism for the transmission of national rather than local sociocultural orientations.

Conclusions

To what extent can the specific Deerfield findings be generalized to other local school systems? On what basis might variation occur in the classroom material culture of other local public school systems?

In an essay outlining a framework for comparative research on schools and education, Wax (1971) reminds us of the range of types of public schools occurring in different types of sociocultural environments: vocational schools, rural schools, urban schools, suburban schools, reservation schools, and so forth. Different types of public schools serve different subcultural and/or local populations, themselves exhibiting varying degrees of integration into the national society and culture. Thus, I do not expect every public school system to exhibit the same degree of symbolic or actual national integration found at Deerfield. It is in this sense that we might envision a hierarchy of local public school participation in and integration with the national society and culture. Within stratified, heterogeneous state societies, we expect some local communities to be more integrated into the national society and culture than others. Local school communities can be expected to reflect varying degrees of integration. Deerfield is highly integrated into national sociocultural orientations and traditions. Upwardly mobile, rural residents desire that the school system train their children for participation in national networks. Families feel that "getting ahead" and "getting an education" mean internalizing a national sociocultural orientation. On the other hand, other public schools are so separatist and particularistic in their sociocultural orientation as to be on the verge of becoming community (local) rather than public (national) schools. Conflict between local and national sociocultural orientations and traditions is not unexpectedly expressed through public schools.

Consider the manner in which normative sex/age roles, property relationships, and most especially consumption and consumerism are visually suggested. The manner in which the images and symbols of Thanksgiving were visually displayed stress an orientation toward nuclear, neolocal family structure, which, for example, may or may not be at variance with the modal family structure in various local school communities. Contemporary conflicts over school control (orientation) often involve textbooks, the observance of ethnic traditions and local holidays, and a general concern with the symbolic referents of classroom material culture. In the extreme, it is within private and (nonpublic) sectarian schools that visual references to local sociocultural orientations and traditions will predominate. School communities such as the Amish (Hostetler 1974) consciously reject the symbols of the Great Tradition of the nation and use school environments to reinforce their own particularistic Little Tradition (Wax and Wax 1971).⁸

To the extent that schools are mechanisms for sociocultural transmission, an implication here is that classroom material culture is an indication, or index, of the relative degree of a public school system's orientation toward, allegiance to, integration with, and participation in the continuum of sociocultural orientations from the local to the national. My claim is that *all* public schools will exhibit *some* classroom material culture of representa-

tional and symbolic import. When observed across grades, every public school will exhibit variation in the sequencing of classroom material culture. As compared with other public schools and in contrast with private and sectarian schools, variation in classroom material culture ought to be viewed as a representation of the relative positioning of a school community in the national/local hierarchy. The empirical question will be the degree to which classroom material culture reflects a nationalistic or localistic orientation. Along the lines of the model presented in this paper, more empirical data are needed in a variety of local school settings to determine the range of variation in material culture along the local/national continuum.

This paper has argued that material culture is an integral part of processes of socialization and enculturation. At Deerfield, it was found that customary classroom material culture represented symbols of national rather than local sociocultural orientations and traditions. My conclusion is that classroom material culture functionally reinforces the integration, here expressed symbolically, of heterogeneous local communities into national networks of society and culture. Whether the specific Deerfield findings are generalizable to other school settings is not the most important consideration. What is important is the generalizability of the category of observation and analysis suggested here. Classroom material culture is a valuable category for the ethnographic and comparative study of schools and schooling.

Endnotes

1. This is the revised version of a paper presented at the 77th annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Los Angeles, California. Data on which this paper is based were gathered during 1974 under grant No. MH58496-01 from the National Institutes of Mental Health. Data analysis and writing were supported by grant No. B-393 from the Spencer Foundation. Yehudi Cohen, John Ogbu and Harry F. Wolcott read earlier drafts of this paper. Their comments and encouragement are greatly appreciated. The author is solely responsible for the content of this paper.
2. Deerfield is a pseudonym for the village in question.
3. A scanning of Burnett et al. (1974) further illustrates the comparative lack of ethnographic attention to material culture.
4. It is not by chance that public schooling is mandatory. In her synthesis review of concepts of national integration, Safa (1971: 208) points out that the school is the only national level public institution in which all members of the society, theoretically at least, spend a considerable portion of their lives:

From an ideological viewpoint, the school provides a common institutional system through which all children must pass and from which they derive a common set of symbols, values, and goals. Thus, they learn to salute the national flag and to sing the national anthem, and they acquire a vision of the past glories of their national heroes. . . . The school provides a framework through which a national ideology can be shaped and formulated, and then taught to a large segment of the society at an age when competing values have presumably not yet had a chance to hold.

Hart (1974) suggests that schools function not so much to make children better members of their families but better members of their extralocal society and culture. Steward (1972) argues that the functional interdependence and integration of sub-

groups and communities in a national society is, in part, based on common participation (often compulsory) in public institutions such as schools. The alternative is for each particular school to reflect its local sociocultural context. In such a situation, national integration would be that much more difficult to achieve and maintain.

5. Cohen's claim is that the referents discussed here "shape" and "mold" the minds of children. My concern here is with the transmission of culture rather than with the learning of culture. It remains for cognitive studies to determine the degrees to which children differently respond to and internalize the orientations and traditions I claim are being transmitted through classroom material culture.
6. This is not to say that, at some time or other, Deerfield teachers do not make didactic use of local events, situations, or traditions. I did not, though, witness any such usage.
7. Steward (1972) has coined the term "stateways" in referring to elements within the national society and culture that politically and economically impact on local communities.
8. The manner in which classroom material culture reinforces socialization and enculturation into national society and culture is brought into much sharper focus by examining cross-cultural contexts. In his study of Alaskan Inuit (Eskimo) public school education, for example, Collier (1973:71) notices that

Mrs. Pilot went to great effort to have a colorful, freshly decorated room in keeping with the seasons. There were spring motifs (even in deep Arctic winter in the month of March) and child-play images: a choo-choo train hauling a long load of alphabets, a cutout line of circus figures, a calf drinking from a bucket of milk, a board with a huge bumblebee, and cutouts on a pinup board of the proper diet—spanish rice, bread, butter, milk, and gingerbread—actually the menu for the school lunch. These were gay images of childhood, but they were not for Arctic children nor an Arctic environment. One of Mrs. Pilot's survival lessons is not how to keep from getting lost in a blizzard but how to obey green and red stoplights in Anchorage, taught with a full-size green-yellow-red stop sign.

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1980 Annual Meeting

The Council on Anthropology and Education will hold its annual meeting concurrently with the meeting of the American Anthropological Association in Washington, DC, December 3-7.

Schedule of Special Events

CAE Board Meetings (2)	12/3	6–9 PM and 12/7 12–3 PM
CAE Annual Business Meeting/Reception	12/6	5:30–7 and 7–9 PM
Committee #1		
Informal Discussion — Zimmer	12/5	2–5 PM
Business Meeting	12/6	9–10 AM
Committee #2		
Informal Discussion — Florio	12/5	8:30 AM–12:30 PM
Business Meeting	12/6	10:30–11:30 AM
Committee #3		
Business Meeting	12/6	4:30–5:30 PM