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How to Integrate Negative Youth Subcultures into Secondary Classroom Practice Using Critical Pedagogy

Judith Leonard

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Educational Studies

Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts at
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c Judith Leonard, 1998

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ABSTRACT

How To Integrate Negative Youth Subcultures
into Secondary Classroom Practice Using
Critical Pedagogy

Judith Leonard

This study examines negative youth subcultures from the point of view of various theories developed to explain the formation. The emphasis is placed on resistance theory to explain the forming of negative youth subcultures and how critical pedagogy can address some of the issues concerning the integration of these students in schools. An alternative school in the Montreal area is presented as an illustration of how resistance theory can explain the negative youth subcultures in this school and how critical pedagogy helps students to cope with formal education. Conclusions are formulated in terms of further work to be done in order to better understand the negative youth subcultures in schools and develop more effective educational practices.

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I acknowledge, with thanks,
two very special women:
Claire and Joyce,
who both taught me more than they will ever know.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to examine the formation and the nature of negative youth subcultures and their effect on educational practices. Negative youth subculture is defined as any collection of troubled youths with a set of norms, values, and behaviours that direct its social action antagonistically and negatively toward the parent culture (Teevan, 1986). Parent culture is defined as the dominant and accepted set of norms, values, and behaviours that monitor a larger group as a whole (Teevan, 1986). If we understand the nature of these collectivities, we may perhaps improve the practice of education in secondary schools with such subcultures. The relevant literature (Shaw and McKay, 1942; Merton, 1957; Giroux, 1983) points to specific theories about youth subcultures, their emergence, and development. There are many theories, but I will specifically draw upon resistance theory developed by Giroux (1983) and explain some of its benefits, as well as limitations, in the explanation of negative youth subcultures. A particular alternative school, The Alternate School, will then be presented in light of the prevailing theory.

The study of negative youth subcultures has been examined from many perspectives. Specifically, the sociological perspective examines the many different processes that lead these youths into such membership. It may be due to the transmission of specific deviant values, the differences in opportunities to achieve certain social success goals, or the collective resistant behaviours toward the parent culture. It views negative youth subcultures as a result of a disequilibrium of specific social factors such as conflict with middle-

class values or pressure from lower-class values. A particular sociological theory which explains subcultures is resistance theory.

In order to understand the emergence and development of negative youth subcultures in schools, we must address the knowledge, rules, and standards that these subcultures are rejecting. By understanding what youths "do not want", we are able to gain insight into what they do want. What youths are silent about in the classroom is as informative as what they do discuss in the classroom. In other words, what youths are dismissing in the educational system is as informative as what they are engaging in within the system. The actions and thoughts of negative youth subcultures are formidable factors that can lend insight to practitioners.

It is important to understand the degree of choice attached to membership within negative youth subcultures. In present society, adhering to the parent culture and its related norms, values, and patterns of behaviour usually leads the individual to progress toward more successful goals. The reverse of this is partially true. Rejecting the parent culture can lead to a lifestyle of deviation and punishment. Yet with this act of rejection, there is a certain amount of reward, success, and status fulfilment by participating and nurturing membership in a negative youth subculture. Negative youth subcultures help the adolescent to experiment with different situations and relationships dealing with various roles, behaviours, and identities. These groups also act as a standard to help the adolescent measure achievements and accomplishments. In sum, negative youth subcultures serve to reinforce and encourage reflection on issues surrounding academic choices, social problems, and career paths facing these youths.

A Brief Account of Some Important Theories on Negative Youth Subcultures

There are many theories regarding youth subcultures. Merton's theory (1957) explains the emergence of negative youth subcultures as a response to the conflict between the ideal and the real. The difficulty of achieving the ideal goal due to restrictions in the 'real world' may often lead the adolescent toward membership within negative youth subcultures. Further to Merton's theory is Cloward's and Ohlin's (1960) theory of differential opportunity. The disparity between the cultural stress on success and the limited means of achieving this success may create a climate whereby membership within negative youth subcultures is a viable response to cultural obstacles to success. A third theory views the emergence of negative youth subcultures as passed on from the parent generation and readily learned by the next generation. Shaw and MacKay (1942) in their cultural transmission theory examine negative youth subcultures as patterns of behaviours that are generational and situational. Hirschi's (1969) social control theory further develops this notion by explaining negative youth subcultures as inverse functions of their ties to the social order. Finally, Giroux's (1983) theory views these groups as resistance statements to social, moral, and political issues which have little to do with biology, individual pathology, and learned helplessness.

In our post-industrial society, many changes in social structures have helped to nurture the growth of negative youth subcultures. For example, due to the increased period of education, children spend less time interacting with family members, specifically parents and extended family role models. Second,

diminished parental involvement in child-rearing practices may leave these youths in search of models. Third, as two-income families or single-parent families become the norm, job training and personal growth may become the responsibility of various institutions. This trend can lead adolescents to search for a society of their own as they experience more and more isolation. A lack of status for the adolescent may bring about a sense of alienation and dissociation. Deprived of certain support and lacking a sense of belonging, the adolescent may look to the subculture for a sense of affiliation and personal definition (Shaw, 1942; Coleman, 1961; Hirschi, 1969; Leblanc, 1983).

In terms of our educational system at the later elementary and secondary levels, some negative youth subcultures have infiltrated our schools creating profound effects on student motivation, classroom management, academic standards, school discipline, and safety. Even more distressing is the fact that these negative youth subcultures are not 'going away'. Perhaps by viewing negative youth subcultures as learning instruments in our schools rather than competing forces working against the system at large, practitioners may be able to make use of these collectivities in a positive fashion. That is, by understanding the emergence, the structure, and the purpose of these collectivities, practitioners may be able to embrace negative youth subcultures as allies in the practice of education. In a society that struggles to keep families united, neighbourhoods safe, and communities integrated, it is important for educators to understand negative youth subcultures and to learn to use them as teaching tools within classroom practice.

There is a vested interest on the part of any society to ensure conventional integration of its youth and reinforce its blueprint for behaviour

thus maintaining the parent culture through socialization.[1] The political, economic, and social future of the parent culture rests in the hands of a generation that has been properly socialized and motivated to maintain the status and existing social order. The same holds true for negative youth subcultures. The future of these collectivities rests in the hands of a membership that has been properly attracted to, introduced to, and socialized into the subcultural dicta.

Resistance Theory and Education

Another particular explanation for the emergence of negative youth subcultures has to do with the notion of resistance. For this study, resistance is defined as any behaviour, passive or active, that goes beyond opposing one or many elements of the dominant group. The quality, as well as the consequences of the resistant behaviour, must be taken into account in order to evaluate the degree of resistance (Giroux, 1983). Negative youth subcultures frequently offer the adolescent the opportunity for resistance to occur: resistance against the prevailing hegemony[2], against a dominant ideology, against the reproduction of the status quo. Giroux's (1983) analysis includes the individual's needs, history, and subjectivity as well as the individual's ability to act, to struggle, and to critique on a personal and political level. He notes that this opportunity to resist may lead certain youths to a

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1. Socialization is defined as the process of acquiring, accepting, and adhering to the dominant ideas, beliefs, behaviours, etc. of a particular culture or subculture during a certain time period (Teevan, 1986).

2. Hegemony is a specific relationship of power and control whereby one group exercises control over another. It is a system of dominant control imposed upon a subordinate group. Ideology is defined as a system of values, morals, and beliefs inherited via socialization practices. It is a structure of thought and consciousness that frames the individual's perception and experience of the world (Weiler, 1988).

consciousness and to a recognition regarding their place in the social structure. It is this behaviour which can be labelled as resistant if it leads to an altering in consciousness and an emancipation in status. Such dynamics occur when individual members within a negative youth subculture understand that they are not passive recipients of domination. They are active agents able to negotiate, mediate, and change their environment on a personal and collective level (Giroux, 1983).

Limitations of Resistance Theory and Negative Youth Subcultures

There are certain areas within resistance theory that are limited in terms of a complete view of resistance and negative youth subcultures (Giroux, 1983). First, clarification regarding two key words used in Giroux's theory, opposition and resistance, is necessary since Giroux distinguishes between behaviour that is opposing and behaviour that is resisting. Both types of behaviour occur due to very different and specific situations. For example, oppositional behaviour may appear to work against social contradictions, but this behaviour will often end up adhering to and eventually merging with the hegemonic ideology. On the other hand, resistant behaviour implies a deep understanding of the social situation and can lead to personal growth and freedom. It is important to understand the difference between these two types of behaviour since adolescence is most often a period of opposition as youths struggle with identity, independence, and autonomy. Negative youth subcultures will often demonstrate resistant behaviour rather than simply

oppositional behaviour.

Second, the issue of gender has been neglected in resistance theory in terms of explaining negative youth subcultures. Most of the research on negative youth subcultures is based on male adolescents. It is important to consider the reasons explaining why females are absent in this research (McRobbie, 1975). One reason may be because females are engaged in domestic activities while males are engaged in negative youth subcultures. Another reason may be because females have simply been ignored or marginalized in the research. Yet, recent research has demonstrated a rise in female oppositional behaviour in terms of negative youth subcultures whereby there are actually all-female negative youth subcultures (Harris, 1988; Brendtro, 1992).

Third, resistance theory tends to focus on those acts of resistance considered overt and active, overlooking the power and impact of many covert and passive acts of resistance. Acts of resistance within the school climate usually tend to be the latter. They tend to be subtle, discreet, and almost with an air of subterfuge, thus making the control and discipline of these individuals problematic. We cannot ignore these 'underground' acts of resistance because they are often more conducive for change than open rebelliousness.

Working in secondary schools is indeed challenging. Demands placed upon practitioners today are different from those in the past. This is partly due to the breakdown of various social institutions. The family structure has broken down. Communities have changed. Institutions have been weakened and social agencies have diminished their services for a multitude of reasons. Educators are required to meet the demands of a changing student population

and cope with the constraints of curriculum. How teachers meet these goals indeed determines the success of educational practice, whether it be in the regular or specialized setting, such as alternative education.

The Alternate School

One particular school of interest regarding negative youth subcultures is that of The Alternate School, an alternative school on the South Shore of Montreal. As Head Teacher of this school since its inception (1981), I have witnessed many aspects of negative behaviour, both opposing and resistant, overt and covert, from troubled adolescents. The population of the school has changed over the years. The school was originally designed to work with mostly white, male, late adolescent delinquents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The Alternate School now deals with a different population. Both sexes now seem to have approximately equal representation (56% male; 44% female). The ethnic mix has somewhat increased over the years (75% white; 25% other). The age range for students has widened (12 years to adulthood) as has the socioeconomic background (from lower class to upper middle class).

The Alternate School, which is housed in a shopping mall (9000 sq. ft.), is a fully recognized school by the Ministry of Education of Quebec. It is a school that works with troubled adolescents such as delinquents, drop-outs, and dysfunctional teens dealing with issues of legal consequences, sexual and physical abuse, unwanted/wanted pregnancies, rape, eating disorders, substance addictions, and the like. During the past seventeen years, the school has managed to maintain its status as a small school allowing intensive

personal, social, academic, and behavioural intervention to take place. Rarely does the school deal with more than 70 students from the Secondary I-V (Day Youth and Day Adult) levels for a period of one year only. It is a rare exception when a student is brought back for a second year. Only if the staff feels the student cannot be maintained in a regular school setting or another alternative setting will the staff request the student to return for a second year. There is an informal follow-up procedure that allows students and teachers to remain in contact with each other. The staff consists of six teachers, one behavioural technician, one tutor, and one secretary.

In conclusion, the intent of this thesis is to introduce the relevant concepts specifically applied to negative youth subcultures, their emergence, development, and effect on the educational system. Chapter 2 will examine culture and how negative youth subcultures emerge as responses to this culture. Chapter 3 will discuss some of the dominant theories which attempt to explain negative youth subcultures with a specific focus on resistance theory, its benefits, and limitations. Chapter 4 will examine an alternative secondary school setting, The Alternate School. Chapter 5 will explain how The Alternate School uses critical pedagogy as an educational tool with negative youth subcultures. Chapter 6 will present some of the value of this knowledge and its applicability to classroom practice as well as suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

CULTURES AND NEGATIVE SUBCULTURES

CHAPTER TWO

CULTURE AND NEGATIVE YOUTH SUBCULTURES

This chapter examines the relationship between the parent culture and the subculture, the reasons youths seek out membership in negative youth subcultures, and the key elements of negative youth subcultures. By understanding these three areas, teachers can make certain changes in their classroom practices in order to accommodate and assimilate troubled youths into the mainstream of school life. As will be noted in a later discussion, these key elements are evident in the practice of critical pedagogy at The Alternate School.

The Content and Process of Culture

Culture organizes and frames individual perceptions of the world, offering a matrix of rules that reproduce a prescribed standard of behaviour. The content of culture resides in the "accumulation of knowledge, rules, standards, skills, and mental sets that humans utilize in order to survive; that is to say, adapt to the environments in which they live" (Nelson, 1979; p. 6). Whether these cultural elements refer to the physical aspects of culture, like its tools and technology, or to the nonphysical aspects, like its ideas and knowledge, the conglomerate of cultural elements of a society creates the process of culture. The process of culture refers to the lived subjective experience whereby individuals define themselves and their relationship to others, creating an experience that is "pluralistic, shifting and hybrid" (Giroux; 1996; p. 15). The content and process of culture keeps human behaviour from being random and

haphazard. All individuals, especially youths, must see the benefits of wanting to learn acceptable behaviours, to defend cultural norms, and to preserve the parent culture. The perpetuation of the fabric of any parent culture resides in the appropriate motivation, socialization, and acculturation of its adolescents into the prevailing social patterns, norms, values, and cultural elements. Culture serves as a design for living and future living because culture not only "relates to the beliefs and values people have about societies" but also to the "social change and the ideal society they seek" (Billington, 1991; p. 1).

Cultural content is transmitted by a prevailing group within a society, a specific group that has acquired a certain level of education, economic status, and heritage. Not only does this group pass on the cultural content, but it uses culture to its advantage by constructing knowledge, establishing norms, and enhancing values that are self-serving. Because of its advantaged position, this group has a vested interest in directing, motivating, and encouraging normative behaviour among youths. Brake (1980) claims that "...if youths are not socialized into conventional, political, ethical, and moral outlooks; if they are not programmed into regular work habits and labour disciplines, then society as it is today cannot continue" (p. vii). Reinforcing normative behaviours reinforces the structure of the social order at large. Therefore, not only does the dominant group hold advantaged positions to transmit and protect culture, it also is able to construct and alter it. It is capable of creating, establishing, and maintaining specific intellectual and cultural standards, based on its status in the hierarchy.

Hegemony is present in everyday events witnessed in business, politics, and schools. To understand the power relationship between schools and

troubled youths, we may use Giroux's (1983, p. 197) detailed explanation of Gramsci's notion (1971) of hegemony. Daily practices, symbols, and rituals through specific cultural apparatus, like schools, reinforce and perpetuate the interests of the dominant class. Hegemonic order is not static and fixed in schools since it is constantly shifting between the school authority and youths. Even with this shifting, schools reproduce the hegemonic sociopolitical and economic order. Schools are not the great equalizer nor are they the route to freedom for social mobility. Schools confirm and reaffirm social inequality and exclusivity. At present, schools serve as a vehicle to express the cultural traditions and ideas of hegemonic groups. Through various practices such as curriculum, relationships of power (i.e. administrator-teacher, teacher-parent, teacher-student, etc.), tracking systems, rules of discourse, textbooks, elitist centres (i.e. Ivy League schools), and less-than-elitist sites (i.e. inner-city), schools perpetuate inequality. Due to the vested interests of the controlling group, schools work in subtle ways to convince youths that this social order and structure is the way it should be and that the social relationship is just common sense. It manipulates and constructs perceptions, consciousness, and attitudes about the social order to make the system appear natural, fair, just, and equitable for all. Furthermore, this perception is presented in such a way that youths begin to believe that the interests, needs, and concerns of the dominant class are also their interests, needs, and concerns. The notions of inclusiveness and universality are inherent in this perception of the social order, a social order upheld by schools.

By controlling structural determinants, schools impose reality upon youths, instilling in them a sense of powerlessness and an inability to escape

oppression. Yet youths can evaluate, analyze, and critique certain situations and structures that are oppressive. Youths see the social order through their own perception which is never really free of hegemonic imprints. They bring a tension and conflict to the hegemonic relationship between schools and themselves. By making use of the dialectical nature of hegemony, youths should be encouraged to unravel and act upon the very oppression that renders their existence problematic. New forms of resistance emerge that challenge and imbalance the social order even though these channels of resistance are often limited by schools. By creating alternative means, youths may challenge, resist, and change the prevailing hegemony thus forcing schools to struggle to reclaim their position of power (Giroux, 1983).

No other agency outside the home "can play a more important role in developing well-integrated and socially effective youth" (Engel and Hurrelmann, 1989; p. 6) than schools. With such a process, it is assumed that what exists, exists because it has always been, and will continue to be, a natural state of affairs. This is the successful effect of the well engrained hegemonic ideology so thoroughly in place that the social order just seems to be common sense until a group of individuals converge and resist. Adolescents who show themselves as a group of individuals who converge as a collective and negatively resist the prevailing hegemonic ideology are called negative youth subcultures.

Adolescence and the Negative Youth Subculture

Adolescence is a term that came into frequent use in the late 18th century. Due to certain changes such as legislation against child labour and

prolonged education, it became necessary to recognize the transition between childhood and adulthood. This period of youth is now recognized as a separate and distinct category, "an inescapable intersection of the personal, social, political, and pedagogical" (Giroux, 1996; p. 1). Adolescence is considered a period of growth whereby the individual requires a neutral arena to resolve certain conflicts regarding identity and autonomy, a period of time where youths attempt to seek out and establish personal identities.

The complex nature of adolescence varies from culture to culture, from time period to time period, from individual to individual. For example, in rural times, youths had a focus and purpose. They had clear roles in the family and on the farm. Due to various cultural changes over the course of time such as automation, the mass market, labour laws, and compulsory education, the importance of the role of youths decreased. In contrast to earlier societies, present day youths sense the ambiguity and unpredictable nature of modern society. This sense of instability becomes even more taxing in a culture that experiences rapid changes in its value system, its social structure, and its technological progress. Modern socialization has become a process whereby child rearing and job training have moved further into the hands of institutions and subcultures rather than remaining in the hands of parents. The extended family and the small village community that once reared and educated the young have now given way to less intact families, more day cares, and longer school hours. The practices of our modern industrialized society have adolescents more segregated from their parents and other significant role models.

This increased segregation can lead to specific socialization problems. In

general, society is usually more concerned with the integration of the developed individual and less concerned with the individual who is alienated, isolated, and exhibits aberrant behaviour. Yet "delinquency does not take place in a vacuum; it thrives in a culture which it reflects and reinforces" (Kvaraceus, 1966; p. 13). Delinquency must always be viewed within a context for it is never an action that is unique, isolated, and out of order.

Billington (1991, p. 33) cites the work of Mary Douglas (1980) and her explanation of verbal context and the construction of everyday social order. Douglas asserts that there is a natural and moral order to most everyday activities and each activity receives its value based on contextual judgements. For example, food and dirt are two naturally occurring phenomena in everyday activities, yet they are only normal in context. Dirt in the backyard is considered natural and normal; in the house, it is not. According to Douglas, deviancy and normalcy are two naturally occurring phenomena in everyday social activities. Deviancy in the ghetto is considered natural and normal; in a church, it is not. Both sets of behaviour are viewed as normal and natural based on certain rules and systems that determine the boundaries of appropriate context. Normal law abiding behaviour in the midst of a negative youth subculture would be considered deviant just as law breaking youth behaviour would be considered deviant in the midst of the parent culture. Following Douglas' logic, negative youth subcultures are normal and natural within their own context and moral order. They are simply manifestations of behaviours that are 'out of order'. It is in the context of the parent culture's reaction to these subcultures that makes them abnormal. Remove, isolate, or obliterate the subculture from the parent culture and moral order is returned.

Adolescents experience their own degrees of disequilibrium and imbalance. This may lead them to alter behaviours and move away from the norms. It may lead them to seek out a group which finds solutions to common problems. "It is generally accepted that peer group relationships play a major role in the socialization of adolescents and that such relationships are crucial for understanding adolescent involvement in delinquent conduct" (Harris, 1988; p. 13). These groups validate the most commonly felt frustrations and become the positive reinforcers in the lives of these youths. The existence of negative youth subcultures is related to many factors such as the structure of the community, the existing subcultural traditions, mobility patterns, school affiliations, and the opportunities available to youths. Negative youth subcultures, emerging from dissatisfaction with the norm, often create a set of values and beliefs quite different from the mainstream. Unable to function in the mainstream, youths may seek satisfaction through membership within the negative youth subculture.

Youths participate in negative youth subcultures for many reasons. One element refers to the ability of the youth subculture to satisfy the needs and desires of its members, needs not satisfied by the parent culture. Since the parent culture only partially allows for these needs, the negative youth subculture emerges to answer various problems, anxieties, and needs experienced in the life of youths. The choices made regarding uniqueness, exclusivity, privacy, and freedom from the parent culture determine the structures of the youth subcultures. Furthermore, youths who participate in negative youth subcultures often lead an isolated and solitary existence much removed from the conventional activities of mainstream youths. Because these

youths may often feel rejected by the adults and authority figures in their lives, they may attempt to find a sense of belonging in the youth subculture and thereby reduce their feelings of isolation, rejection, and lack of support from certain social agencies. The sensations of failure, alienation, boredom, and deprivation are often common to youths who participate in negative youth subcultures. These youths engage in negative youth subcultures in order to be validated and heard. These collectivities answer the need to be noticed, valued, and recognized.

Members of negative youth subcultures may have a different perspective about success goals and opportunities than non-members. These youths may feel deprivation on many levels such as educational, monetary, and familial. Many social institutions are built upon a middle-class value system that measures, as well as determines, the level of success youths may achieve. These institutions support the values of deferred gratification, nurturing ambition, developing long-term goals, self-discipline, and sustaining effort (Short, 1968) which are all values usually in direct contrast with those of negative youth subcultures.

Furthermore, members of negative youth subcultures may have inappropriate aspirations in terms of their future and achievements. Based on present society, some youths perceive this culture as having moved from a work-oriented culture to a play-oriented culture as witnessed by the smaller work week and heavier spending on recreation. Some youths wish to emulate a life of pleasure and immediate gratification. While adults have access to a pleasure lifestyle due to income, youths may resort to crime in order to gain these coveted pleasures.

Negative youth subcultures tend to serve as a family outside the home. Frequently, the most critical relationship during adolescence may be found outside the family and the home. When excluded, affinity anywhere will be sought. Sometimes, it is to seek out fellowship, belonging, and a sense of brotherhood. Sometimes, it is for protection and intimidation. Other times, it may serve as a bridge between childhood and maturity whereby specific attention and emotional support are given.

There is a certain sense of stability that emerges with membership due to the direction, clear codes of conduct, and the role models available to directionless youths. The problems of drop-outs, teen motherhood, substance abuse, and family dysfunction only help to enhance the allure of negative youth subcultures for adolescents in conflict. In the USA, on any given day, 1500 students will leave school, 2795 girls will get pregnant, 211 teens will get arrested on drug charges, 3000 children will witness divorce and 2,000 will be abused (Cantrell, 1992; p. 4). No longer feeling like an individual banished from the world of adults or like an outsider in most of society's institutions, youths may find the very necessary human elements of approval, identity, support, and status in these tight, cohesive subcultures. Often serving as a mirror to examine and evaluate appropriate courses of action, youths use subcultures as measuring sticks for growth, change, accomplishment, and achievement.

In sum, negative youth conduct must always be viewed within context because it is not an absolute behaviour. It occurs within a systematic ordering and classification of actions, within specific boundaries making the aberrant behaviour appear "out of order", and is often misinterpreted. Giroux (1996) notes that "youth cultures are often viewed in the popular press as aberrant,

unpredictable, and dangerous in terms of the investments they produce, social relations they affirm, and the anti-politics they sometimes legitimate" (p. 11). By rejecting such behaviours, the parent culture helps to renew the social limits, reaffirm the hegemonic culture, cement the social order, and further isolate those already alienated youths simply because they do not adhere to the dictates and conventions of the parent culture.

Membership in Negative Youth Subcultures

Having now explained why youths join negative youth subcultures, we may now examine how these youths adhere to their subcultural norms and reject the dictates and conventions of the parent culture.

Since equilibrium is the key motivation behind most human activity (Cohen, 1969), it is obvious that an alienated and isolated state is not a state of harmony and equilibrium for any youth. Their life problems emerge from two elements. The first element refers to the youths' situation which includes social expectations, personal habits, physical setting, and the resources available to handle the situation. The second element refers to the youths' frame of reference influenced by race, gender, class, personal history, individual beliefs, and cultural values. The frame of reference motivates and justifies a chosen action and is often validated by a specific reference group. Both these elements, the situation and the frame of reference, directly affect the choice youths make in relation to specific problems.

Youths will strive to minimize the stress and tension attached to problems and seek out an immediate solution, positive or not. Solutions that are not positive, that test the boundaries of morality and cultural norms, are

of interest when discussing negative youth subcultures. When a situation forces youths to forego a goal by believing that the goal was not worthy of the pursuit and effort (i.e. school achievement), this choice directly affects the parent culture (i.e. drop-out rates; increasing number of youths on welfare). Other times, the frame of reference may lead youths to their avenues by choosing illicit means directly affecting the delinquency rate.

Youths may use reference groups which recognize and approve like-minded problem solvers. With this type of respect and acceptance, youths may readily embrace the reference group and its specific set of values, norms, beliefs, and other cultural dicta (i.e. language, clothes, mannerisms, behaviours). These subcultures play a major role in how youths seek solutions to problems for it is the reference group which gives credibility and validity to youths' choices. Dependence on one another for validating the frame of reference encourages solidarity and cohesion among the members. Sometimes, youths may even become enmeshed in subcultures that offer less than appropriate norms and encourage values that may be viewed as counter to and negative by the parent culture.

Negative youth subcultures exist with their own code of conduct, standards, and rules for behaviour. Changes between the relationships amidst these clusterings of youths leads to new codes of behaviour and to changes in the social structure. With this effective interaction, a shared frame of reference, similar situations, and an agreed-upon group standard, a negative youth subculture emerges offering solutions that may be less than the institutionalized solutions. Institutionalized solutions, used by the majority of the parent culture, are solutions that lead toward the acquisition of socially-

defined success goals. What makes a youth subculture negative is defined by the options and alternatives the youth members choose as their non-institutionalized solutions to their particular problems of adjustment. Even though the parent culture will constantly be undergoing change, these youths will steer toward conformity, acceptance, and constancy within their group.

Bibby (1992) uses the metaphor of 'cultural permission slips' to explain how subculture is created, shaped and reshaped by its level of tolerance:

> Unless there are a series of stimuli to trigger sudden shifts, attitudes and lifestyles in democratic societies generally change slowly, an evolution, rather than the trauma of a cultural revolution. Societies like ours evolve by both the passing out and the taking of cultural permission slips (p. 284).

These cultural permission slips refer to certain normative behaviours that slowly change based on the acceptance or rejection of an action. Cultural permission slips begin the process of loosening the boundaries of normative behaviour. For instance, the tolerance of longer hair, blue hair, pink hair; of rings in the ears, rings in the nose, and rings just about anywhere on the human body; of teenage pregnancy; of the use of marijuana; of welfare as a career choice, are all signs of cultural permission slips. Negative youth subcultures seek out these cultural permission slips to test and stretch the limits of the boundaries of the parent culture. Kvaraceus (1966) tells us we should be concerned with youths who manipulate these cultural permission slips, who constantly "persist in seriously violating the community's norms of acceptable and approved behaviour" (p. v).

Since adolescents tend to move through the educational system as members within collectivities, the educational system should not only focus on

the troubled adolescent as an individual, but also as a potential member of a negative youth subculture. "Rather than fighting what is inevitable, unless principle is being jeopardized or moral compromise is required" (Bibby, 1992; p. 260), it is best to work with negative youth subcultures. If educational practice could include these groups as learning instruments within the classroom rather than view them as competitive forces working against the system, then teachers could be trained to embrace these subcultures as allies in the practice of education. "Fighting the prevailing forces in the youth culture will be exhausting and, in the end, a losing battle. The dynamics of youth culture are too powerful to subdue" (Bibby, 1992; p. 260).

Educators should utilize this power even though it is difficult to use it to its full educational advantage because negative youth subcultures are difficult to infiltrate let alone dismantle. Youth subcultures are often inward-looking, arriving at their own style of thinking and acting. These collectivities may arise without any cognizance, approval, or encouragement on the part of the parent culture. Issues such as ethnicity, race, class, and age may serve as the source of origin for particular members. Activities that often challenge cultural norms and societal authority are rewarded and encouraged by these negative youth subcultures. From the perspective of the parent culture, negative youth subcultures may look unstructured and haphazard. Yet, these collectivities do have a certain structure, definition, and hierarchy. Antagonism on the part of the parent culture toward the ways of the subculture only reinforces and strengthens the ways of the group. Negative youth subcultures often reward and encourage thinking and action that challenges the parent culture. Because negative youth subcultures emerge in response to certain problems with the

parent culture, the solutions these youths sometimes demonstrate may be viewed as ineffective or deviant by the parent culture. The reverse is true for these youths, who may view their solutions to the problems as effective, productive, and ideal. Even though these solutions are temporary, and in essence, not a real material solution to a problem, they are still solutions offered by the negative youth subculture at a cultural level and should be recognized as such.

The Elements of Negative Youth Subcultures

Negative youth subcultures have their own structures, rituals, and idiosyncracies like any other group. Sebald (1968) describes certain dimensions that are present within youth subcultures:

a) common norms and values
b) argot, styles and fads
c) sense of solidarity
d) gender

Common Norms and Values

The common resentment and negativism to the parent culture's norms and values unite youths, moving them away from conforming to positive behaviours and moving them closer to where 'good behaviour' becomes conflictual and 'bad' becomes comfortable. These youths tend to see middle-class values as unattainable, limited by status position, and the natural order. Most of these adolescents want to attain positions well above present status, but they have low expectations of achievement. It is difficult to determine the extent to which members of negative youth subcultures actually subscribe to

certain values and beliefs specific to that youth subculture (i.e. punk, grunge, retreatism, conflict, etc.).[1]

In the beginning stages of formation, the negative youth subculture may examine various solutions to its common problems. This process may be spontaneous and exploratory. Eventually, this exploratory phase evolves into mutual patterns and finally to affirmed categories of feelings, reactions, and gestures. As Giroux (1996) points out in his book "Fugitive Cultures: Race, Violence and Youth":

> Diverse in its desires, marked by a continuum of lifestyles, and negotiated within and across a range of class, racial, gender, and sexual orientation, youth formations inhabit many fronts ranging across the cultures of the mall, computer bulletin boards, rock music, gangsta rap, urban basketball courts, hacker coffee shops, and an urban underground where sex is traded, drugs exchanged, politics created, and sexuality expressed (p. 11).

Adherence to certain values builds a strength of consciousness. A negative youth subculture gains this status if it is significantly different and deviant from its parent culture. Short (1968) outlines six specific values pursued and honoured by negative youth subcultures. The first value is 'getting into trouble'.

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1. Bibby (1992) in his book "Teen Trends: A Nation in Motion" examined certain areas in Canadian youth culture. Of particular interest are the results from his survey of 4000 Canadian youths born between the years of 1979-83 (15-19 years old). His research showed that many of these youths embraced a relativist view of life and morality. Their notion of "truth in the areas of beliefs, ethics, morals, and lifestyle alternatives was a matter of personal opinion" (Bibby, 1992; p. 262). Truth, for these youths, does not exist as an absolute, as a reference point external to their lives. These youths adhere to the notion that the best they can achieve is relative, based on personal opinion, and very subjective. "Beliefs are the private property of the individual" (Bibby, 1992; p. 262). The litmus-test for any ethical or moral action resides in the personal standard for behaviour thus creating an atmosphere of strong individualism and selfism. By assuming that such unexamined diversity is constructive and positive, a relativist philosophy can create members who are not discerning, not challenging of the status quo, not reflective, and living in a state of blind acceptance. This has serious consequences for social ideas and behaviours, which in essence are simply reflections of the cultural and personal experiences of individuals.

As opposed to middle-class values which reinforce youths who live on the 'right side of the law', negative youth subcultures reinforce those youths who test the limits, cross the boundaries, and come up against authority.

A second value that is supported within the milieu of the negative youth subculture is 'toughness'. This value not only refers to a physical quality, but also to the secondary qualities attached to toughness (i.e. machismo, tattoos, objectifying females, emotional coldness and a disregard for the 'finer things in life' like art and etiquette). An interesting aspect of this toughness is an adamant dislike (bordering on hatred) of anything linked to homosexuals. Not only will some males in negative youth subcultures react to homosexuality in terms of ridicule and ostracization, but some have specific weekend activities that involve injuring suspected homosexuals. Furthermore, the pejorative terms (i.e. fag, queer, queen) are not simply reserved to homosexuals. These terms are also used by youths to label those individuals who are upwardly mobile and successful in school.

The third value involves a specific interpretation of the term 'smartness'. Negative youth subcultures disregard the middle-class definition of 'smartness'. They reject the value attached to mastering knowledge, culture, and social practices normally imparted by formal educational institutions. This type of 'smartness' is often affiliated with being effeminate. The true definition of smartness according to negative youth subcultures involves the skills of outwitting, outsmarting, and outfoxing individuals so that maximum gain with minimum effort may occur. There is an actual practice known as 'doin' the dozens' or 'playing house', a ritual form of verbal aggression between two rivals. The nature of this verbal onslaught involves comments that are

inflammatory, sexually perverted, and disparaging to mothers. Approbation in this ritual is given to the youth who demonstrates quick, imaginative, clever remarks.

Excitement is the fourth value revered by negative youth subcultures. Hot-wiring cars, carrying weapons, participating in mosh pits, and roaming the streets help to create the thrill, high, or adrenalin rush, needed to realize this value.

The fifth value involves destiny and fate. Negative youth subcultures believe they have very little control over the choices in their lives. They believe that if destiny allows it, their dreams will manifest themselves with minimal effort and work, the true definition of the 'pleasure-bent' life.

The sixth value deals with autonomy. Negative youth subcultures have an aversion toward convention, restrictive rules, and external controls. These youths resent being dominated by traditional authority. Yet, on personal levels, they prefer to be in situations whereby control is exerted. They perceive this as a type of care and concern. They equate being controlled with being cared for, and feeling safe, secure, and worthy. Furthermore, youths test the boundaries of this control in order to challenge the strictness of the authority and to determine whether the source is firm, tenacious, and persevering. If the authority does not back down, they see the authority as credible, reliable, and valuable. This proves problematic because some schools are not capable of ministering strong consistent disciplinary measures and controls. Strict, unrelenting codes of discipline require manpower, conviction, and results.

Argot, Style and Fads

Language is a critical element in the transmission of culture and specific roles. In order for language to function as a symbolic interdependent system, all members must share the literal and contextual meaning of these symbols. Negative youth subcultures use a specialized vocabulary as a precise form of communication specific to that subculture. The distinct channels of communication such as videos, radio, television, youth magazines, underground newspapers, and street language reflect the degree of communicative cohesion that exists in negative youth subcultures. Street language is a specific dialect, a specific intergroup lingo or jargon usually not shared with the parent culture. It is an adaptation to a circumstance and a shorthand device used to communicate in a manner that 'outsiders' cannot understand. This language holds a status criterion and includes a precise reference that captures the essence of the message. It emerges over a considerable period of time among youths who have shared common experiences in particular situations. Using argot is more than using words. It is using new knowledge, insights, and commonly shared experiences. It demonstrates the youth's integration into the subculture and because the argot is indigenous, it promotes group cohesion and privacy.[2]

Communication between youths not only occurs through language, but also through shared cultural practices such as music, art, and fashion. Specific styles and fads may be particular to the subculture. Grooming, dress,

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2. Some examples of youth street language specific to a negative youth subculture are: "dis" (to do something wrong to someone); "drop a dime" (snitching); "dropping the flag" (leaving the gang); "gang banger" (member) and "packing" (carrying a weapon) and "ride on" (to purposefully go out and attack someone) and "take him out of the box" (to murder someone). This terminology varies across areas (Cantrell, 1992).

gestures, 'hang-outs', and behaviours specific to the subculture may even lead to rituals and the cultivation of a unique identity. "Youth subcultures are said to be an aspect of class resistance, their deviant and often bizarre style of dress is a way of making sense of their marginal position in society" (Billington, 1991; p.132). There may even be negative youth subcultures that purposely adopt a form of communication, music, dress, or behaviour that is deliberately antagonistic or subversive to the parent culture. "When a sufficiently elaborate corollary of symbols has become the unique property of persons involved, a collective identity has been born" (Sebald, 1968; p. 167). The present use of the swastika among skinheads and punks does not necessarily reflect their knowledge or understanding of the historical impact of this symbol; however, the parent culture witnesses this gesture by negative youth subcultures as an insult to the atrocity attached to the swastika because the parent culture sees this symbol laden with horror. Punks and skinheads use the swastika as a subcultural symbol representing any number of sentiments (i.e. alienation, anger, power). Not fully understanding the impact of this symbol, these youths antagonize the parent culture with their flip disregard toward the swastika.

Gestures are indicative of certain behaviours. Members of negative youth subcultures may wear jogging pants with one sock rolled halfway up a leg, the buckle on a belt dangle down the right side of the thigh, a bandanna in the back left jean pocket, or running shoes laced in a specific fashion. Specific membership is also determined by colours of clothing, beading in hair, shaving slogans on the head, and piercing certain body parts. There are also physical signals such as folding the arms across the chest or writing specific words on

the bottom of running shoes.

Negative youth subcultures specifically engage in cultural practices that are subversive to the parent culture and energizing to the subculture. Hanging out at the mall, roaming the streets in packs, shooting pool, or dropping baskets on the court are all opportunities for association for these collectivities. Certain sports, such as basketball, may often be the forum whereby respect and admiration are gained without breaking any rules (Giroux, 1996).

Members of negative youth subcultures create their perspective based on their own consciousness. Because youths rarely hold any vested interests in institutional structures such as money and property, youths are not fully involved in many of the institutional frameworks. Instead of institutional property and power, youths will make use of their dress, their cars, sound systems, and relationships with the opposite sex as indicators of power.

Sense of Solidarity

Negative youth subcultures are very selective about their membership for many reasons. The very nature of their activities requires a consensus, loyalty, and solidarity in order to ensure the survival and growth of the group. Therefore, the individual member must repress personal wishes to help actualize the wishes of the group. Second, the individual must be a stable and conforming member because the individual must adapt to the subcultural norms and values as well as be able to exist in close continuous interaction. The member who does not subordinate individual desires and is unstable will not be tolerated by the group and will often be rejected as a candidate.

A sense of attachment, affiliation, and belonging helps to build a sense of solidarity when members of the youth subculture are accepted as individuals. This identification helps youths to move toward autonomy by leaving behind parental control. A sense of solidarity or esprit de corps is demonstrated even in their thinking and language. A sense of 'we-ness' emerges cementing youths further to this group. The more cohesive negative youth subcultures become, the more delinquency occurs. The more the needs are met and the more opportunities subcultures offer youths, the more committed youths will be to these groups. Such intense membership will have a powerful effect on youths' perceptions, values, expectations, and behaviour. Youths will be reinforced for deviant behaviour rather than receiving negative sanctions from the parent culture. In essence, the parent culture inadvertently encourages solidarity pushing youths deeper into subcultures.

Gender

Most members of negative youth subcultures used to be predominantly male and lower class. Yet the face of these collectivities is changing. Females, in negative youth subcultures, now have moved from being objectified as sex objects and possessions to actually forming their own negative youth subcultures. Females are not allowing themselves to be viewed as sex objects or as possessions. Interestingly, females are skillfully manipulating the males into taking care of certain duties for them (Benitez, 1996).

Society has overlooked female negative youth subcultures simply because, in the past, they tended to be involved in less serious behaviours than

males. Their criminal activity was usually victimless or self-destructive. In general, society is less tolerant of deviant females than it is of deviant males (Solomon, 1996). Deviant females tend to be arrested for status offences such as underage drinking, running away, truancy, prostitution, and money-making activities.[3] Garland (1996) looked at these female collectivities and found interesting elements relating to commitment, protectiveness, and cooperation. Females in negative youth subcultures tend to be more committed, more motivated, and more controlling than their male counterparts. The older females try to keep the younger girls (12-14 years) out of the group, but if the younger ones do manage to join, the older girls will then try to protect the younger ones, teaching them how to exert their power in one of two ways: physically or mentally. Females tend to participate in these collectivities because they are specifically seeking out a sense of family, security, and respect. Their activities are more often motivated by money than anything else. Second, the allegiance and loyalty in female negative youth subcultures appear to be stronger than in the male counterparts. Females tend to leave these collectivities due to maturation and the desire to seek a better life.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed three critical areas in the study of negative youth subcultures. First, it was important to understand the relationship between the parent culture and the negative youth subculture. By understanding this relationship, teachers may see the discrepancy between what schools teach

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3. Deviant males tend to be arrested for rape, robbery, homicide, aggravated assault, arson, and theft (Solomon, 1996).

and what these youths actually achieve. Second, it was critical to understand the myriad of reasons why certain youths join negative youth subcultures. It is important to evaluate the reasons why membership in negative youth subcultures is sought. By evaluating these reasons, teachers can make specific changes to classroom structures to accommodate these youths. Third, by understanding the key elements of negative youth subcultures, teachers become more informed and innovative in developing classroom strategies. Recognizing the specific norms and values can also direct teachers to find the means to challenge the integrity of the groups. Being able to interpret the gestures and argot will open doorways to improve communication between educators and youths. Teachers may also use the strong solidarity expressed in these groups by changing this loyalty into positive classroom spirit. Creating a sense of affiliation and commitment to the school may perhaps reduce the rates of vandalism and violence. Finally, understanding the role females play in negative youth subcultures can help teachers to reach troubled girls and help them to make constructive choices regarding education, careers, and personal matters.

With such a framework already established for discussion, we now turn to examining some of the key theories regarding negative youth subcultures with a specific focus on Giroux's resistance theory.

CHAPTER THREE

UNDERSTANDING CERTAIN THEORIES

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There are many theories that focus on the emergence and development of negative youth subcultures. Three theories (Merton, 1957; Shaw and McKay, 1942; Giroux, 1983) will be examined with a specific focus on resistance theory. The sociological view of negative youth subcultures places the emphasis on the growth of a subculture by members who do not exhibit any personality or intellectual defects (Shaw and McKay, 1942). Due to a lack of unity, solidarity, or organization within the parent culture, negative youth subcultures may emerge with their internally differentiated subgroup of behaviours. The members of the group will develop their own ways of thought and action. Specifically through personal interaction with subculture members, a common bank of knowledge, values, and behaviours takes shape. Thus, negative youth subcultures arise out of an individual response to an interpersonal conflict, a retaliatory response, or an affirmative action based on an understanding of social position within the status hierarchy. In areas of diverse ethnic standards, negative youth subcultures may emerge due to an inconsistency with the prevailing values and beliefs. With no clear direction, troubled adolescents may resist and rebel against the mainstream set of values, rejecting the status quo in order to achieve solidarity, identity, and survival among themselves. These negative youth subcultures are not random or vague in their growth. They exist with their own codes of strict, unconventional moral behaviour.

Anomie: Durkheim and Merton

Merton (1957, p. 161) uses Durkheim's notion of social integration (1895) to offer some insight regarding the genesis of negative youth subcultures. The disintegration of traditionally reinforcing institutions (i.e. school, law, family), rapid population growth (i.e. immigration, mobility), cultural diversity, the rise of capitalism, high unemployment rates, and the expansion of business and industry are some of the elements that can weaken the traditional norms of a community. The unsettled status of government, education, community, family, and other social systems may nurture a climate of unrest, struggle, and change. When a parent culture no longer offers integrative functioning institutions, troubled adolescents may more readily perceive the injustices in status allocation and mobility chances. Conflict and unrest may emerge. The high rate of poverty and a transient population may exacerbate social conditions that foster the emergence of youth subcultures. These groups may grow from "weak social control and a failure of normally directing and controlling institutions to function efficiently" (Harris, 1988; p. 16).

Merton (1957, p. 132) explains Durkheim's two-tier system of basic human needs: the physical tier and the moral tier. Because human behaviour is need driven, individuals choose actions that will result in the satisfaction of their needs. Much like Maslow's hierarchy of human needs[1], individuals will choose to

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1. Maslow, a humanist psychologist, bases his theory of human needs on Hull's drive reduction theory. Maslow purports that human needs are limited, arranged in a specific hierarchy and are the source of human motivation. Like Durkheim's physical needs, Maslow believes that unless the physiological needs (i.e. hunger, thirst, sleep) are satiated, then the individual cannot advance to the next levels like Durkheim's moral tier: safety (i.e. physical security; safe home); belongingness (i.e. group affiliation, membership, caring family); esteem (i.e. self-worth, accomplishments, achievements) and self-actualization (i.e. maximum personal potential). These needs are important to include in the design of pedagogy especially when dealing with negative youth subcultures. Many of their basic lower needs are often not met.

satisfy their biological needs first. The second tier, the moral needs, is unlimited, basically insatiable, and open-ended. These needs revolve around desire, passion, and greed. When the authority attached to conventional, traditional social order weakens as in times like depression (requiring greater self-control in spending), sudden prosperity (creating unrealistic heightened aspirations and goal seeking) or rapid social change (creating a new social order), desires, passions, and greed may escalate. When second-tier needs are greater than the availability of the means to satisfy these needs, non-conforming behaviours emerge. When social disintegration starts to occur, efforts to achieve second-tier needs may escalate. Weakening of authority fosters a lack of discipline and this leads to a breakdown in the social order. This creates a social condition known as anomie.

Merton further develops Durkheim's concept of anomie by focusing on the relationship between success goals and the means to achieve these goals. When access to legitimate success routes for these prescribed goals is plentiful, then minimal social frustration occurs. But when there is a discrepancy between aspiration and availability of goals, the social order is strained and a breakdown occurs. When these success goals are emphasized in the social order but access is limited, anomie occurs especially when the discrepancy is acute. The disjunction between "the universal aspiration to accumulate material wealth and the limitations imposed by the American system of stratification, where all are not given an equal chance to realize their aspirations" (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990; p. 78) creates an environment that nurtures the growth of negative youth subcultures. When faced with the disequilibrium between the desire for the success goal and the frustration of achieving this

goal, youths might seek out alternative routes to minimize this disequilibrium and render these success goals more attainable. According to Merton, if youths have not been adequately socialized to follow normative, law-abiding behaviour, then deviant, non-conforming behaviour is an alternative route to minimize disequilibrium. But this explanation may be problematic since not all inadequately socialized youths choose deviancy as an alternative route. As Hirschi (1990) points out, social class cannot always be used to explain away the exceptions. If so, we run the risk of using the concept of social class to explain behaviours much the way biologists use heritability to explain away the inexplicable.

Merton outlined five basic routes of alternative behaviours that youths may use to dispel the disequilibrium: conformity, innovation, ritualism, rebellion and retreatism. Due to the focus of this paper, only rebellion and retreatism will be examined.

When a community demonstrates an instability (i.e. transient population, change in industry), access to legitimate routes for success goals may become inaccessible for certain youths. To further complicate the situation, this instability may even make illegitimate routes inaccessible for adolescents therefore heightening frustration and conflict. When legal as well as illegal routes are unattainable for youths, their level of discontent rises. Couple this with a weakness in social control and rebellious acts such as aggravated assault and vandalism may emerge. Research is inconclusive as to whether there is an increase in these violent subcultures or not. This type of subculture attracts more public concern because the nature of its activities makes it highly visible. These activities are frequently sensationalized by the media.

Because these communities are often highly populated with families in crisis, they are more oriented toward survival rather than advancement, and more oriented toward the present than the future. The attraction of the rebellious subculture resides in the fact that it is the great equalizer. Committing acts of violence is not based on gender, race, or class. All that is required, is that the adolescent has the 'bravado' and the ability to endure pain. "The acquisition of status is not simply a consequence of skill in the use of violence or of physical strength, but depends rather on one's willingness to risk injury or death in the search for a rep" (Cressey and Ward, 1969; p. 757). Further to this point, Cressey draws attention to the fact that "as long as conventional and criminal opportunity structures remain closed, violence continues unchecked" (p. 757).

Giroux continues this thought by explaining that when violence "becomes hermetic" (Giroux, 1996; p. 44), so too will certain acts leading to resistance, change, and collectivity. When violence becomes resistant to outside influences, change cannot infiltrate the community. Often times, cause and effect become mistakenly interchangeable when attempting to explain the existence of these rebellious subcultures. It is important to remember that part of the reason the youths rebel is due to the inherent inequality within the system. The effects of their actions are not seen as the cause of their actions. Yet when violence begins to spill out of these walled urban ghettos "spreading like a disease into the adjoining suburbs and business zones that form a colonizing ring" (Giroux, 1996; p. 42) around these ghettos, then the dominant group may become aware and offer new opportunity structures such as street programs, community projects, and support from social workers. Sometimes these

rebellious subcultures view these actions as signs of social accommodation, which may help alter their sensations of rejection and isolation. They may then work hard to become successfully integrated into the social structure.

The retreatist subculture tends to involve that adolescent who is truly caught in a contradictory state between legitimate and illegitimate means. Merton asserts that retreatist behaviour will occur when the individual cannot achieve success via legitimate means and chooses not to fully engage in illegitimate means due to personal internalized prohibitions. Within this state of limbo, the youth may entertain thoughts of personal inadequacy and failure rather than question the social structure itself. In order to escape these sentiments, the youth may abandon all efforts to achieve success, retreating into avoidance behaviour. "The consumption of drugs, one of the most serious forms of retreatist behaviour, has become a severe problem among adolescents and young adults particularly in lower-class urban areas" (Cressey and Ward, 1969; p. 759).

Merton's notion that adolescents who have witnessed failure via legitimate routes and choose not to entertain illegitimate routes is significant, but there are a few important questions regarding Merton's category of retreatist subcultures. Contrary to Merton's premise that most retreatist youths have internalized prohibitions, research shows that most adolescents involved in drug consumption have a previous history of delinquency. In other words, these adolescents have embarked upon a path of illegitimate means and do not truly adhere to any internalized prohibitions (Cressey and Ward, 1969). Furthermore, the reasons these adolescents engage in retreatist subcultures may not solely be due to one type of failure, as Merton states.

Perhaps they have experienced double jeopardy. That is, in their attempt to achieve their personal success goals, they may have experienced failure via legitimate as well as illegitimate routes. Thus, they may engage in retreatist behaviours due to a breakdown in significant relationships within their personal and social roles.

Hirschi (1969) examined the relationship between social roles and negative youth subcultures. He felt that the more significantly tied the youth was to the community at large, the less likely membership to a negative youth subculture would be. Links to the community emerge through intense connections and attachment with significant adult role models such as parents, teachers, and community leaders. The more integrated and socialized the youth is to the community, the greater will be the commitment to the pursuit of success as well as the acceptance of conventional beliefs and attitudes. This is an important piece for further research in terms of the design of curriculum and schools and their committment to the community.

Shaw and McKay Cultural Transmission Theory

Shaw and McKay (1942) suggest that negative youth subcultures may emerge because of exposure to a negative parent culture. Youths may be prone to developing negative behaviours if close proximity to a negative parent culture occurs. Given the right circumstances and events that lead to intimate association with criminal adults, most youths will take on criminal behaviours. By examining persistent urban criminal activities, from generation to generation in spite of population changes, Shaw and McKay develop a theory that addresses the effect various social factors like mobility, immigration, rapid

population growth, and expanding industry have on weakening community norms. Negative youth subcultures tend to emerge in communities that are prone to poverty and rapid changes in population. This social disorganization refers to "the unsettled conditions of urban life generated by growth and change" (Harris, 1988; p. 16). When a community fails to offer positive avenues for its young to pursue success, youths will take things into their own hands. In the attempt to establish order that social institutions have failed to provide, negative youth subcultures will provide a certain element of security, stability, status, and belonging.

Shaw and McKay also find that it is not so much the broken home itself that contributes to the lure of negative youth subcultures, but rather the inadequacy of the home. Even though behaviour is a product of many factors within the social situation, the importance of the home is critical for it will "determine what shall be taught, rewards for learning and punishment for deviation. Of all groups, the family is first" (Sterne, 1964; p. 21). Whether the family has undergone a crisis, a divorce, a separation or a desertion, any dysfunction within the family may lead to a weakening in the respect for the institution. When one parent or another is absent, the youth might be exposed to less guidance, advice, and control. Supervision may be weakened. Authority over the youth may be reduced. Loyalty to the family structure may be tarnished therefore enhancing connections to negative youth friendships.

Shaw and McKay's cultural transmission theory further looks at how negative youth subcultures engage in different means to achieve success goals and how members acquire and adopt certain attitudes, thoughts, and actions. The perpetuation of this negative subculture is continued by the transmission of

values and behaviours specific to negative activities. Access to criminality is heavily dependent upon connections with negative mentors, inappropriate adult role models, and adult criminals. The lure, rules, and protocol of negative behaviours are taught to younger members by the more experienced generation of criminals who pass on negative values and skills. Through stable relationships between the members and their adult role models, these youths begin to seek out entry points into the criminal hierarchy in order to move closer to 'success'. This hierarchy is organized, tightly structured, and available only to certain individuals, much like the conventional hierarchy.

There are some problems with Shaw and McKay's theory. If attraction to negative youth subcultures is mostly dependent upon proximity to negative adult role models, how do Shaw and McKay account for those individuals who walk away from such situations? How do they explain individual youths who interact with negative adult role models and yet manage to escape such a collectivity? Finally, Shaw and McKay use criminal activity to explain the cause of social disorganization as well as to explain the product of social disorganization. In other words, criminal activity is not only the source of social disorganization, but also its end result as well.

Giroux's Resistance Theory

Giroux (1983) argues that human beings are active agents capable of questioning, contesting, and redefining their social situation. Often times, conflict serves as the starting point for challenging social situations and altering the relationship between the individual, power, ideology, and culture.

Resistance may be viewed as an action regarding the prevailing

hegemony and aimed at the dominant group. The subordinate group must first see an issue as problematic, then become critically conscious of the discrepancy, and finally prepare to actively resist the dominant ideology. The relationship between individual consciousness and structural determinants in resistance is complex. Resistance cannot just be the rejection of a dominant value; neither can it be an acceptance of submission or a partial uncovering of the dominance. Resistance must lead to a change in the hegemonic ideology. Such change may only come in a fully developed critical consciousness, a result of praxis.

McLaren and Leonard (1993) outlined Friere's (1970) notion of praxis. Freire believed that the social order is in a constant state of change, continually being created and recreated by individuals who witness problematic areas of their existence. Through the development of a critical consciousness, the individual is able to render solutions from these problems. This may occur collectively, but it will invariably emerge from the individual who struggles to find meaning and make sense out of the environment. This transformation emerges only through a process of reflection, whereby a critique of the issue on a micro and macro scale occurs. It is a dialectic of individual and society, action and reaction, possibilities and constraints, and change and resistance. Through reflection and action, praxis allows the individual to understand the limitations of the environment and uncover the means to resist these very limitations. This resistance may take on many forms such as withholding voice, being free within the dominance, or counter-resisting. In either case, the reflective period leads to some form of action with an intent to transform and change the environment. Freire's praxis involves the power of the individual to act as an

agent of change to create and recreate meaning. By "naming, reading and knowing reality" (Weiler, 1988; p. 18), the individual challenges the received vision of reality and appropriates a personal view. Such a critique of hegemonic ideologies via reflection-action-reflection can lead to social transformation.

Behaviour that emerges from conflict and challenges an issue may either be oppositional or resistant. Oppositional behaviour, although it may be contradictory toward the social norm, will eventually become behaviour that merges with the hegemonic ideology and fades into the normative standard. Oppositional behaviour tends to work within the existing framework of the social structure. On the other hand, resistant behaviour involves three basic elements. First, the individual must have an awareness of the social situation and an analytical critique of the dominance. The individual must become aware of the elements of the hegemonic ideology and what kind of an impact these elements have on the individual's life. Second, the behaviour must include a certain element of social reflection. The quality and intensity of resistance must be evaluated. Third, the resistant behaviour should lead to some form of freedom from the dominance. The consequences of the action must lead to some form of self-emancipation, an altering of consciousness, and some level of awareness regarding the individual's position in the social hierarchy. What is valuable about resistant behaviour is that it helps the individual to see the power of being an active agent during a period of transformation. By actively participating in the negotiation, mediation, and transformation of the social structure, the individual is not simply a passive recipient of the dominance. The individual embarks on a process to change the existing social and cultural

structures.

As stated previously, negative youth subcultures emerge from the conscious effort of youths struggling against prevailing ideological structures. Through the active critique of dominant structural determinants, the subordinate group "can create alternative cultural and political institutions to establish their own understanding of oppression in order to oppose and change it" (Weiler, 1988; p. 13).

Giroux (1983, p. 197) explains Gramsci's ideas (1971) of individual power in a theory of thought and action. The hegemonic thought of the parent culture leads to dominating, ruling, and transmitting the dominant ideas to subordinate groups. On the other hand, the resistant thought of the subordinate group leads to doubting, critiquing, and examining the dominant ideology. The role of individuals as human agents of change leads the subordinate group to challenge, resist, and possibly rebel against the prevailing norms. Such action then alerts the dominant group to "struggle to reimpose the hegemony (which is) in constant danger of being resisted and contested by subordinate classes" (Weiler, 1988; p. 14). Much of the struggle of the negative youth subculture is to understand, assert, and ensure its respective place in the social environment by calling upon the individual's power to reach a point of critical consciousness and a desire to act and possibly resist.

"Actions and cultural patterns that have been labeled deviant can be viewed instead as acts of resistance by individuals and groups against a dominant culture that has exploited and devalued them" (Weiler, 1988; p. 19). Negative youths cannot solely be viewed as anti-authority deviants, travelling in packs, on paths of destruction. They may actually be forming subcultures

seeking to create authentic meaning by resisting the hegemonic values and knowledge. "Individuals are not simply acted upon by abstract structures, but negotiate, struggle, and create meaning of their own" (Weiler, 1988; p. 21). This critical struggle to find meaning leads individuals toward a newer, stronger, and better standing within the social environment. It is healthy for individuals to retain their capacities for intelligent resistance and to stand strong against pressures to comply. Such thought and action leads to societal improvement on the individual, as well as on the collective level. For change to occur, these youths must understand the source, the reason, and the direction of their resistance. Often times, specifically in the phenomenon of negative youth subcultures, resistance occurs due to the fact that they are struggling to avoid 'dropping out or dropping dead'.

All education is political. Educators must work with students to challenge the inequalities and injustices imposed by a hegemonic ideology. By questioning situations, traditions, history, and life space, students can be taught to think critically and move towards liberation. This type of teaching, known as critical pedagogy, succeeds best when the multiple subjectivities of both teacher and student are included in the classroom and when the conflicts and issues are presented by the students themselves for discussion and exploration. This development of a critical consciousness occurs in three stages: intransitive thought (fatalistic); semi-transitive (some hope for change) and critical transitivity (dynamic relationship between thought and action, praxis) (McLaren and Leonard, 1993). This is a process that is important for teachers to implement within their classrooms especially when working with very disempowered negative youths.

Conclusion

In sum, these three theories hold significant meaning when working with negative youth subcultures. Durkheim's two-tier system of needs and Merton's (1957) view on the discrepancy between the means and the ends are good foundations for teachers to use when structuring classroom practice. Shaw and McKay's (1942) emphasis on enhancing the role of the dysfunctional family and reducing the role of negative mentors ties in very well with Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) research about the importance of community bonds between negative youths and social institutions. This is a critical message schools can use when adapting curriculum design. Finally, Giroux's (1983) insightful explanation of the role of conflict and resistant behaviour can only help teachers to understand the voice of negative youths. The following chapter examines The Alternate School, a public school working solely with negative youths, some of whom are fully enmeshed within their subcultures. It focuses on the importance critical pedagogy can play in establishing meaningful educational experiences for these youths and how theory can be adapted into practice.

CHAPTER FOUR

EVALUATING AN EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

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EVALUATING AN EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

This chapter presents The Alternate School as an illustration of an attempt to practice critical pedagogy with negative youth subcultures in a school setting. This school uses the values honoured by negative youth subcultures such as toughness, smartness, excitement, autonomy (Short, 1968), and the elements of critical pedagogy such as student-centered dialogues and generative themes (Freire, 1970). Through this integration, The Alternate School raises the critical consciousness of students to explore and tackle the very elements of the parent culture they are resisting.

The birth of The Alternate School was the result of the struggle of two teachers, who resisted the rigidity and authority of the secondary school system. These teachers recognized the particular problems troubled adolescents presented to the system. They implemented new and radical measures in order to accommodate these students' needs. As one of the two original creators of The Alternate School and as its Head Teacher for the past seventeen years, it is indeed a challenge to objectively critique that which is subjectively lived. Such a dialectic between the objective and the subjective is the first problematic area Freire reminds us of in his forward to Giroux's (1983) "Theory and Resistance in Education". Freire states that "one of the most difficult things is to live in the world without falling into the temptation of either overestimating subjectivity to the detriment of objectivity or over-estimating the latter over the former" (p. x).

The Alternate School

The Alternate School is an alternative secondary school aimed at helping at-risk and troubled students (i.e. dysfunctional, delinquent, drop-outs, etc.) in a small setting (65-70 students). These students have experienced social and personal difficulties that have interfered with their academic success (i.e. conduct disorders such as temper control and impulsivity; sexual crises such as rape, incest, abuse, and teen pregnancy; substance addictions such as alcohol, food, and drugs; delinquencies such as prostitution, gang membership, "street kids", runaways; armed robbery, assault, drug trafficking). All the students at The Alternate School are considered troubled adolescents categorized at various levels of delinquency. Delinquency is considered a normal, natural entry requirement into the school. These are youths who have resisted the traditional educational system and are in search of an alternative route.

The Alternate School is fully recognized by the Ministry of Education of Quebec as a secondary school. Because it functions as 'skunk work', the school is able to employ some unorthodox methods and to give non-traditional courses. I believe it is this very existence of living within the system, but practicing outside the system, that facilitates the transformation of school from the 'anti-democratic, authoritarian, anti-intellectual, passive, teacher-talk banking' model to the one proposed by Freire as explained by McClaren and Leonard (1993). This model appears to be democratic, intellectually challenging, student active, and emancipatory. This is the approach used at the school. Furthermore, the philosophy of The Alternate School is founded on mutual respect and equality. These are not simply words; they are put into daily actions. The traditional approach that the teacher is authority, always

right, and has certain inalienable rights does not exist at The Alternate School. Teachers and students perform the same tasks from cleaning toilets together, discussing courses of discipline, structuring examinations together to designing curriculum as a team. Staff and classroom decisions are made after extensive dialogue and consensus are achieved. This democratic atmosphere encourages these students to see themselves as active agents of change (Giroux, 1983). Through the process of dialogue and consensus, students are encouraged to question the rules, contest the decisions, and redefine their situations.

Linking Resistance Theory to The Alternate School

Giroux's resistance theory (1983) can be used to explain the formation of negative youth subcultures at The Alternate School. All the students at the school, at one point or another, attended regular secondary schools. In each of their histories, a conflict or series of conflicts can be traced as the source of their change. The conflict could have manifested itself in the personal lives of the students, their families, their social environment, or their school relationships. Most of the students used their regular schools as sites of conflict whereby they took action, albeit inappropriate action such as foul language, violence, vandalism, to demonstrate dissatisfaction with their treatment by school authorities within the regular school system. The students saw their treatment as problematic and actively moved from a state of hopelessness and resignation (i.e. "It's pointless. What's the use?") to a state of semi-transitive thought (i.e. "May I have an interview at The Alternate School?") to critical transitive thought (i.e. "I do not like how this is being done. I gotta' do something about it."). Using small steps, the students are

demonstrating the development of critical consciousness. By resisting the thought and actions of the dominance of the school authorities, these students become active agents of change.

Ironically, over the course of the past seventeen years, I have witnessed a change in the thinking of the dominant school authorities. Due to the resistant actions of our students, many school authorities have shifted their perceptions of these students to a more positive light. One student who graduated from The Alternate School in 1991 has just recently been hired as a psychoeducator by her previous school, the same school that once was a site of conflict and aggression for her. What better evidence is there to indicate a change in the dominant ideology of some school authorities and some students. This young woman is just one of many students from The Alternate School who has negotiated, mediated, and transformed the social situation.

Most of our students reject the dominant values adhered to in the regular school system. They do not simply accept these values. Instead, they develop a pattern of thought and action that leads to solutions. When our students enter The Alternate School, they already have experienced and resisted certain limitations within their environments. They have understood that simple oppositional behaviours (i.e. skipping classes; verbally assaulting teachers; avoiding homework) do not change situations; if anything, they worsen them. Students who demonstrate oppositional behaviours in schools contradict the everyday social order of the school for a limited period of time, but eventually most of these students fade back into the norm and fit into the mainstream of regular schools. The Alternate School works with those students who do not fit.

Through the experience of their problems, our students find solutions that require action. Their behaviour becomes resistant and leads them to a sense of freedom from the dominance of a system they feel did not work for them. The students view their situations as problematic affecting their life space. A period of reflection moves the students toward action either by withdrawing from the system, by existing independently in the system, or by counter-resisting.

The first required action is for students to make the initial contact with The Alternate School. Students must make a telephone call to the school to self-refer and establish an interview time. This first stage is critical for it indicates that they are attempting to take charge and make changes. They have left behind the fatalistic and hopeless voice of intransitive thinking and have moved to the stage of semi-transitive thought as outlined in Giroux's (1983) description of critical consciousness. It is this stage that is the key to the success the students experience with us. At this point in the students' lives, the particular issues related to mainstream schooling have become problematic. The students have on some level evaluated the issues and have found them unacceptable. Through this process of questioning and evaluating, the students reach the conclusion that change must occur. They redefine their situations and see the possibilities for a new reality. This phone call is the step for change. It shows students they have the power to better their situations on a micro as well as macro level. As much as schools make youths feel powerless and submissive, this phone call signals the reverse. It signals to youths that the everyday social order can change. Upon the first or second interview, students then spend a trial period with our school so that they may

determine if the school is appropriate for them.

This second phase in the entry procedure places the power for change once again in the students' hands. After this trial period, students have the choice to leave the school and seek out 'something else' that benefits them. For those students who choose to stay, the third phase is a probationary period, a period of time when students participate fully in classes and school life.

It is apparent that students who actually enter our school are those students who have already experienced a discrepancy between "what is and what is supposed to be". They have critiqued their educational experience and have decided to act. Such decisions lead to actions against school authorities through resistant behaviour. This desire to change self and system is the collective motivation of students at our school. This common perspective instantly unites many of our students into the role of human agents of change capable of transforming their environments. Students who share the struggle to change the prevailing ideology quickly find each other within the dynamics of the school. Students spend much of their one-year stay at our school in one of two stages: semi-transitive thought, whereby they demonstrate some hope for change or critical transitive thought, whereby they demonstrate a strong, positive dynamic between thought and action.

These patterns of thought and action are resistant behaviours because they empower students to understand their place in the hierarchy and their ability to transform the existing social structure. I easily see histories of resistant behaviour as I watch our students enter the school each day. Mary, a fourteen year old female, who left an abusive relationship with her twenty-six

year old boyfriend, volunteers at a battered women's shelter to gain back her control and fight against the system. Liz, an eighteen year old female, fighting the disease of anorexia nervosa, runs seminars in elementary classrooms to young girls about the ravaging effects of the disease. Tim, a nineteen year old male, actively speaks out against sexual abuse when he recounts the effect of a male rape he experienced at the age of fourteen. Adam, a seventeen-year old male, resists the wave of violence he was brought up with in his family by donating time and his photographic talent to an urban organization combatting youth street violence. All of these examples of behaviour show students who are understanding the source of their struggle and how they choose to resist. The students see active solutions within their problems and extract meaning from their environments.

With such acts, these issues are constantly being battled. The social order is constantly in a state of change. Students help to create and recreate the social order. From their collective experiences of being oppressed, our students emerge with their own way of thinking and doing. Our students cluster together as a response to their conflictual situation in their social environments. Whether it be due to exposure to a negative parent culture, an inconsistency with the ideal and the real, or the failure of institutions to provide social order, negative youth subcultures at The Alternate School emerge from the conscious efforts of our students attempting to resist the prevailing ideology and ensure their status in the social hierarchy. They create authentic acts that lead to personal freedom and social change.

Conclusion

As previously stated, it is important to understand what students at our school are accepting and what they are rejecting; what silences them and what activates their voice; what motivates them and what doesn't. Using research such as Sebald's[1] (1968) elements of negative youth subcultures can certainly prove to be helpful. For example, the behaviors of the negative youth subcultures at our school are linked to the values of "getting into trouble, being tough and acting smart". We use these values to our advantage. By using our students' ritual of "doin' the dozens", we encourage students to challenge each other in a verbal, creative, and positive manner. Rather than awarding victory to the rival who utters the wittiest negative remark, victory is given to the student who develops the most positive one.

Strategies that combine our knowledge of negative youth subcultures and good sound pedagogy bring formidable results when working with a population of troubled adolescents. We turn now to examine the worth of critical pedagogy as a viable teaching tool for these youths.

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1. See page 23 of this paper.

CHAPTER FIVE

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AND THE ALTERNATE SCHOOL

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Critical Pedagogy

Freire (1970) addresses the relationship between schools and the larger social order and how these elements shape the individual as well as the group. He feels that the individual has the power to either give into dominance or seek emancipation from these elements.

The Alternate School is like most schools. It is a sociopolitical institution that reflects, perpetuates, and reproduces the prevailing ideology assuming specific values about what constitutes the good life. It shapes perspectives of its troubled adolescents and holds certain types of knowledge as valuable. Through the enlightenment and establishment of critical consciousness, teachers and students attending the school can create daily change and reconstruct the environment of the school.

Critical pedagogy (Weiler, 1988) is a method of teaching which recognizes individual subjectivities through discourse.[1] It is also a process of

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1. "Discourses are essentially dialogues and they vary according to the kinds of social institutions and practices within which they take place" (Billington, 1991; p. 40). These means of communication are very important because words gain their meanings and power from context; from the specific discourses. Such dialogues allow for a struggle to emerge between individuals or groups following a set of tacit rules that manipulate the power behind the discourse. Discourse contains conflict and contradictions and struggles. As much as discourse attempts to be neutral and include both parties, it is impossible since there will always be a hierarchy of discourse. Discourses are in essence forms of social control. They exert power over opinion. Discourses also determine what type of new forms of knowledge and opinions will emerge. Discourses help to perpetuate the ideologies. "In any society, there will be a whole range of systems of ideologies. These are embodied in complexes of discourses; structures which rule our ways of speaking, thinking and acting and which operate by forming us into subjects" (Billington, 1991; p. 43). Certain discourses have a status and command a good deal of power such as discourse about justice, health, and sanity. Unfortunately, other discourses command less status such as discourses about dominance issues like race, gender, and class.

construction, "an eminently political discourse and practice" (Giroux, 1996; p. 11) whereby both teacher and student act as agents of change accommodating each other's personal history and subjective experiences. At The Alternate School, the existing hegemony is tackled by presenting the issues of race, gender, and class inequality in a problematic fashion. Through discourse, these issues are exposed, examined, critiqued, and questioned. By exploring these subjectivities, teachers and students create a discourse of generative themes which are problematic to the teacher and the student as well as reflective of wider social tensions and conflicts. Thus, critical pedagogy is a process of understanding how social realities are created, formed, sustained, and changed. It is a process that helps the teacher and student be reflective and speak about their own presuppositions, assumptions, and biases. By respecting and acknowledging these personal subjectivities, both parties can dialogue to create and recreate meaning and learn to see themselves as agents of change, which is the beginning of social transformation. Critical pedagogy has its value especially if environments are constructed that respect and nurture individual voice, if a common goal of social change is established between parties, and if the recognition of humane treatment of all is reinforced.

Critical pedagogy is hard to practice because of the pressure it places on the teacher and student to complete course outlines while entertaining a new way of interacting with each other. Furthermore, it is a method that works better with smaller groups of students like The Alternate School. Since critical pedagogy asks for the development of individual voice, it is usually easier to elicit problematic areas in smaller groups than larger ones. Radical thinking and individual resistance do not easily emerge in crowds. Finally, the

time and training it takes to master the method of discourse and fair dialogue is slow and arduous. Yet even with all these limitations, critical pedagogy is still one of the most effective ways to transform troubled adolescents.

As much as Weiler (1988) recognizes the political, socioeconomic constraints of school, she also recognizes the power school has to change the individual. Through the practice of critical pedagogy as defined by Weiler, education is asked to be synonymous with liberation, democratic empowerment, the construction of the human experience, the reconstruction of the social reality, and the transformation of the self. However, what often prevails in traditional education is a stagnating mechanical delivery of information that promotes anti-intellectualism, passivity, and authoritarianism. These elements help to maintain the elitist standards, values, and culture, which are the feeding ground for negative youth subcultures.

Three important elements of critical pedagogy include critical consciousness, generative themes, and student-centered dialogue. All these elements can be implemented in secondary classrooms to help develop a pedagogy that is effective with negative youth subcultures.

Critical Consciousness

When students start at The Alternate School, they often demonstrate a passive resignation and an intransitive approach toward life. This sense of fatalism and hopelessness tends to permeate their daily actions, thought, and attitudes. At The Alternate School, the students involved in negative youth subcultures quickly demonstrate the common values that Short[2] (1968)

2. See page 25 of this paper.

described. By structuring the mode of instruction to be cooperative and interactive, students immediately begin to talk about their ideas, thoughts, and feelings with peers and teachers. An atmosphere of democracy and equality prevails so students are free to express their reactions on issues. Students are challenged to step forward and take responsibility for themselves, for the group, and for the social condition. Most of the student population at The Alternate School is involved in deviant and dysfunctional behaviour. Problems posed by teachers in regard to social issues such as the homeless, battered women, and weapons lead students to initiate projects that address the personal level while improving the social condition. Projects such as monthly meals served to the homeless, weekly volunteer time given to women's shelters and the annual Amnesty Weapons Day help students to assert their leadership skills, activate their compassion often dormant in troubled adolescents, and distance themselves from their personal crises. Furthermore, when these students are enmeshed in the neighbourhood and bonded to the community, delinquent acts are reduced. It proves to be difficult for the troubled adolescents of The Alternate School to perform destructive acts on individuals who are known to them and who are not faceless individuals (Hirschi, 1969).

The Alternate School requests its students to move toward liberation and social change. Community programs serve such a purpose. They help students to move from their intransitive state of fatalism and apathy to a state of empowerment, whereby they can make a difference in the social condition. The use of thought, voice, and action helps these students to make change within themselves and within the social structure.

Critical consciousness does occur at The Alternate School. The school

uses an approach that develops critical thinking. The first step in helping students to develop their thinking processes involves the teachers, who are asked to "suspend personal belief biases" (Bibby, 1992; p. 161). In order to understand the student perspective, teachers must examine their own belief bias. Teachers at The Alternate School are reminded that with negative youth subcultures, the starting point of learning, discussion, and change may be more important than where the process ends. Activities must originate from the students themselves, who are taught to think about, discuss, and tackle issues with a six-step thought process presented in question format:

1. What is the actual content of the issue?
2. Who is presenting the issues and how does this impact on the truth of the issue?
3. How do I know what I know?
4. How is this issue like something else/unlike something else I know?
5. To whom would this issue be relevant and why?
6. Why bother looking at the issue in the first place?

With such an approach, students are asked to look past the superficial. They are asked to analyze the deeper meaning of the social issue, understand its context, determine its relevancy, and construct an articulate response in their own voice.

At The Alternate School, the students are encouraged to see their problems on a micro and macro scale. They are taught to understand that their actions are directly linked to the actions of others and that their choice of possibilities is directly tied to the limitations of others. For example, students were recently discussing the problems black youths face when entering local stores. They expressed their anger at immediately being scrutinized. Linking

this experience to the study of the historical oppression of the Black American in the Civil Rights Struggle of the 1960s, black students were shocked to see that, in their view, very little had changed on the micro level. They understood the effects that Affirmative Action and the vote had on the macro level, but that difficulties still exist on a personal and individual level.

A second example of critical consciousness occurred during a class in the course "Student In Society", an in-house course designed by The Alternate School to address social issues of student concern revolving around philosophy, history, politics, psychology, and sociology. Thematic units were presented on the 1996 referendum concerning the separation of Quebec from Canada. One exercise asked students to uncover the truth about the referendum by examining the coverage of the French and English media. Through the use of dialogue, students concluded that political truth is evasive since it is often created, manipulated, and distorted based on the interests of the dominant group. Students witnessed what one voice can and cannot do. They discussed the many voices of the National Rally of October 1996, the partial voices involved in the tampering of the ballot boxes, and the sovereignist voices of the political leaders Parizeau and Bouchard. Further discussions led students to discuss problems such as the universality of truth, the search for truth, its relativity, and its actual existence. This theme continued with students understanding that they too can transform society and create history by personally structuring patriotic gestures such as singing the national anthem, writing letters to the political leader Bouchard and examining the many ideas of truth (i.e. Plato, the Bible, the judicial, the personal, etc.). Through such discourse, students understood the intricate web of power and how it reaches

into the very fabric of society. They looked at common sense, the myths of mass culture, and the source of their values.

Another example of how students develop a sense of critical consciousness at The Alternate School involved a small group of students who were selected to visit an inner-city kindergarten class to observe children's thinking, their manner of play, and their perceptions of the world. These secondary students were given a list of terms and concepts such as Piagetian conservation and egocentrism. When these students were adequately prepared, they spent time in the kindergarten class observing the teacher, interviewing the children, and participating in activities. So profoundly touched by this experience, these students became involved with the kindergarten children through intra-school visits, the planning of Halloween and Christmas parties, and a genuine interest in the children. What struck most of these troubled youths was their ability to select those kindergarten children who would probably end up in secondary alternative education years later. They discussed socialization and its effects. They asked "What happens to us? We were once like those kids. What changed us?". Such student-generated questions helped set the ground for the critique of various institutions (i.e. family, school, church) and their effect on socialization of the individual.

Generative Themes

Critical pedagogy requires students to assert themselves, see the inequalities of the social order, tackle the injustices of domination, and uncover the politics of education. Freire (1970) suggests that it is the duty and moral obligation of teachers to become problem-posers and present thought-

provoking subjects based on social issues relevant to student life. By using student vocabulary, situations, and status, social issues can lead to reflection, action, and change. As Aronowitz (1993) explains, students can "achieve a grasp for the concrete conditions of their daily lives" (McClaren, 1993; p. 9) as well as mobilize themselves for social change. Generative themes help highlight the dilemma behind many social conditions. At The Alternate School, generative themes appear through innovative curriculum. "Gender Issues", "Great Thinkers", and "Student In Society" are three separate courses that are based on student-generated issues. These courses have been created and piloted at The Alternate School. They have been approved and accepted as accredited secondary leaving courses by the Ministry of Education of Quebec.

In terms of generative themes, the course "Gender Issues" is of particular interest because it serves as an example of how generative themes can lead to critical consciousness. In the attempt to problematize the issues concerning gender, teachers, and students designed a series of workshops addressing topics like patriarchy, hegemony, and inequality. During one particular discussion, female students were examining obstacles young women face in modern society. Factors such as curriculum design (Math/Science vs. Home Economics/Typing), the media (inappropriate female role models), and the welfare system were presented as instruments that discriminate against women. Some of the female students decided to continue their study of the welfare system. They posed as students in dire need of financial assistance at the local welfare office. They were shocked at their results. Certain welfare payments were available for female adolescents in need of moving out of dysfunctional homes, but only if they were pregnant. These girls began to

further explore the deeper meaning: that perhaps the dominant value of keeping females subservient was behind these pro-pregnancy payments. Some girls asked what financial reward is offered to those females who do not get pregnant, who stay in school, and deal with family problems. "None" was the answer. Since there is no financial reward offered for positive behaviour, these female students felt that some girls would obviously opt for pregnancy saying 'it was common sense if you needed the cash'.

Student-Centred Dialogue

Creating a safe environment in the classroom for students to express their concerns about relevant issues is one of the single most important tasks for teachers practicing critical pedagogy. Just as generative themes permit students to explore these issues, student-centered dialogue serves as the vehicle for this exploration. Through the development of voice, freedom, and empowerment, students engage in dialogues that transform their resistance.

Voice: Voice, according to Weiler, is a tool to allow the teacher and student to recognize themselves as active agents of change. At The Alternate School, most classrooms have a trustworthy climate allowing students to safely discuss their cultural and personal experiences such as rape, incest, incarceration, discrimination, and sexism. Through this, teachers and students understand how the hegemonic ideology and institutional practices frame experiences, develop cultural meanings, and construct individual identities. The sharing of biographies and multiple subjectivities helps the individual to emerge as a dynamic member in the educational process. Such a safe atmosphere for voicing subjectivities helps to develop consciousness.

Voice also allows the meaning of words to be validated. Since words and language do not exist as neutral tools of expression, individuals adopt and appropriate the language making it their own. Words and language are shared and interpreted from context. This is where the use of argot comes into play. At The Alternate School, in order for teachers to converse and communicate with their students, it is imperative that they develop an understanding of students' argot. Not only does such a skill help teachers with negative youth subcultures, but it also shows students the importance of language as a contextual tool.

Voice is a tool that can create freedom or resistance. It may be used as an instrument to help maintain dominance and minimize resistance. Since dialogue has rules as to who can speak, when, where, how much, how long, and what can be said, the very act of giving permission to someone to speak is in itself a form of dominance. Teachers must use this tool with caution for they may unknowingly or even worse, knowingly regulate, structure, or even silence the voice of the student. Any silencing of a voice may dismiss, ignore, or marginalize a student. Any attack on voice may threaten, inhibit, and minimize the student's opportunity for social transformation and personal freedom.

At The Alternate School, one situation in particular points to the change that can occur when a student chooses to voice resistance. Sally, a tall eighteen-year old blonde female, was extremely weak in Math. Her confidence was more than doubly shattered when the males in the class openly taunted her with the stereotype of "being blonde, female and dumb". Regardless of reprimands, the behaviour of these males only changed superficially. Sally would inform me on a daily basis not to worry since she "was used to guys

bugging" her. Unable to quickly change the behaviour of the group, the teacher worked on the behaviour of the individual. Talking with Sally about standing up for herself actually led to change. When she finally saw her situation as problematic, Sally decided to resist the prevailing male thoughts regarding her skills. One day while struggling with the snickering as well as a Math problem on the board, Sally clearly stated her dissatisfaction with her male counterparts. Silence descended upon the room. She successfully finished the problem; the class cheered. (Sally still struggles with Math, but smiles since she silenced the males.)

In sum, this situation changed only when the voice of the individual, who tired of the control of the dominant group, stood up, and resisted, regaining the liberty as an equal voice. In this case, the classroom did become a site of conflict, where personal subjectivities were recognized. It became a place where the prevailing ideology was challenged due to the constraints placed on an individual's freedom. The individual voice was no longer silenced and powerless. Conflict led to resistance which led to change.

Freedom: As previously noted, learning environments, curriculum objectives, and educational values are based on a hegemonic ideology that oppresses and restricts individual liberties. When students are allowed to express their voice through a student-centered dialogue, they may often experience the opportunities that freedom of choice may bring.

An illustration of how students exercise their freedom lies in the work experience component of the course "Student In Society". Students attend school four days a week with the fifth day serving as an accredited work experience day. Students volunteer in a business environment (i.e. companies,

garages, restaurants), and community agencies (i.e. centres for the homeless, hospitals, schools, day care centres, senior citizen homes, etc.). Linking these students to local communities helps on many levels. First as Hirschi[3] states, it does indeed lower the rate of delinquency because acts of vandalism, assault, and theft are difficult to perform when anonymity is removed. Students are free to make the choice to engage positively or negatively in the work placement. When students make the choice to immerse themselves in the placement, they are often offered part-time and full-time jobs. Respectable employment leads to many opportunities. Reducing delinquent acts, severing the bond with the negative youth subculture, and minimizing resistance to positive changes are just some of the benefits these students experience when they make these powerful choices. These students understand how choices affect their lives. The students understand the constraints of their actions. These students step forward to put in a good day's work, nose ring and all. Employers, seeing the benefits their companies reap from honest free labour, change their impressions about these youths. A change in the prevailing hegemonic ideology on a microscale occurs due to the freedom of choices these students make.

Empowerment: The idea of freedom is closely linked to the idea of empowerment in critical pedagogy. To empower does not imply to give power to students, but rather "to help others to exercise power" (Weiler, 1988; p. 59). This orientation removes teachers from the position of authority and benevolent giver of power. It requires teachers to understand the limits, the errors often involved in human judgements, and the inconsistencies of human

[3]. See page 39 of this paper.

action.

At The Alternate School, the philosophy of placing students in environments that challenge their desire to change is witnessed in most actions. For example, it is the responsibility of the student, not the parent, the lawyer, the psychologist, or the social worker, to make the initial phone call to establish an interview time. All communication is with students; parents play a secondary role. At the start of each year, a Parents' Night is held to educate parents and guardians about the school and its philosophy. Parents are then asked to not return until the end-of-year ceremony. All report cards are given to the student. All discipline measures are established with the students themselves regardless of age. Any parent-teacher-student conference must be approved by the student. Determining consequences for actions are decided in a cooperative manner. For example, after lengthy discussions with their core teacher (significant advocate), students who have broken the law will step forward to report the crime, with the core teacher present, to the legal authorities and their respective guardians. This procedure makes use of Cohen's[4] notion of disequilibrium and the desire to seek out harmony. By helping our students to analyze the situation and readjust their frame of reference, more respectable, normative choices are made regarding future behaviour and courses of action. This measure also nurtures empowerment and autonomy on the part of our students, minimizing their resistance. This confirms Short's[5] explanation of the value of autonomy as honoured by negative youth subcultures. These small measures enable students to empower

4. See page 19 of this paper.

5. See page 25 of this paper.

themselves and assume responsibility. Disliking convention, restrictive rules, and external controls, these students appreciate this token of responsibility. Such gestures minimize their resistance to the parent culture because they are not being dominated by traditional authority. They, in essence, are being dominated by their own choices and their own actions.

Further examples of these small measures of empowerment exist at The Alternate School. Students, as a group, determine how the day will unfold. There are no bells, no structured periods for instruction, no lunch hours, and no set time to end the day. Teachers and students determine the time spent on each subject, based on the interest and motivation of the group as a whole. Students may eat their lunch during teaching time. Students end their school day when their lessons and work for the day have been done. Teachers and students have stayed at school to complete unfinished assignments anywhere from midnight to six o'clock in the morning. This action reinforces the principle Cohen (1955) put forth in his theory that students themselves are in essence ultimately responsible for their choices, consequences, and changes as well as finding balance in their lives. Just as these students make the choice to join negative youth subcultures to minimize the disequilibrium in their lives, so too can they choose to disengage from the group. What is needed is for the students to explore a series of options they can choose to participate in in spite of their present membership.

These measures are in place because the students at The Alternate School are basically on their last chance. They are well past the at-risk point on the continuum of behaviour. They are very adept at shirking any and all

responsibilities and are notorious for always blaming others such as the social worker, the victim, and the principal. It is never their fault. Instilling responsibility for recognition of the problem is fundamental in order to begin the process of critical consciousness, a process that starts with students becoming aware of 'self' and their presence in specific situations. Once this occurs, these students can take certain measures that lead to appropriate action and change.

Critique of The Alternate School and Critical Pedagogy

In any educational exchange, all parties enter the relationship with personal experiences, subjective histories, and the influence of the cultural ideology. These elements will directly influence the educational experience of the students. Such is the case at The Alternate School.

In general, The Alternate School demonstrates the key elements of Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy while working with negative youth subcultures in the secondary school system. It is a school that does not use tracking or standardized textbooks. It is a school that demonstrates the worth of its troubled students not only by its philosophy and practice, but also by its physical location. As previously noted, it is housed in a shopping mall, decorated by students with wallpaper, wicker furniture, Monet prints, plants and a modern kitchen. It has created partnerships with parents, the community, police, businesses, psychologists, social workers, the media, and the local universities (i.e. McGill, Bishop's). Students spend more time reading, thinking, and talking than taking notes and listening to lectures.

Yet it certainly is not without its limitations. Teachers and students

enter their relationship with engrained patterns and learned beliefs about power. With some teachers and students, it is difficult to disavow authority. For some students, authority fuels their aggression and resistance, making these students very difficult to work with at the school. Furthermore, teacher interests can either enable or constrain students in the discourse. Teachers are critical players in influencing the climate of their classroom because they are the gatekeepers of generative themes. In essence, it is teachers who funnel the discourse. Sometimes the climate for discourse is not trustworthy in specific classrooms at The Alternate School and these teachers fall into the trap of defending their own truth rather than exploring that of the students. It is an on-going process to encourage these teachers to release their views of authority and to encourage their students to share their values, intuition, insight, and philosophy.

Second, because The Alternate School is a recognized school by the Ministry, the mainstream curriculum must still be covered. Students are required to write the standardized provincial examinations in June and compete for entrance into post-secondary programs. This limits the generative themes that can be covered due to time and subject constraints. Third, due to budget cutbacks, certain courses such as art, dance, and music have fallen by the wayside. Such a restriction creates students who, as Shor (1993) explains, have "become cultural deficits dependent on the teacher as a delivery system" (McClaren, 1993; p. 31). Fourth, the partnership with business is tenuous since it requires a delicate balance between accepting their financial support while diverting their philosophical input.

Freire (1970) asks educators to see themselves as agents of change, as

transformative intellectuals (Giroux, 1983). At The Alternate School, teachers do immerse themselves in the process of change. These teachers are asked to question what they do within their classrooms, how their practice affects their students, and how their students can themselves become active agents of change. Critical pedagogy is a call for The Alternate School to continue being critical and emancipatory rather than a functional thumbprint of the elite.

Conclusion

At The Alternate School, we are attempting to practice critical pedagogy. Students question and evaluate oppressive elements within their social sphere. They critique and resist these elements. They transform their educational experience through the help of the teachers. Most of the classrooms are intellectual centres where problem-based dialogue occurs. Generative themes help students to challenge existing knowledge, question democracy, critically think about equality, and unravel the mechanisms that maintain inequalities. Students are engaged in a transformative process of recreating themselves and their surrounding social structures through the development of an empowered voice and the redirection of their resistance.

The philosophy of the school is 'Make a Difference"; its motto is "Go the Distance". Change is slow. As Shor (1993) states, "the transformation of teachers and students from authoritarian to democratic habits is a long-term project" (McClaren, 1993; p. 29). Yes, change is slow, but as one of The Alternate School students said: "How else do you eat an elephant except one bite at a time?"

In this chapter, critical pedagogy was discussed as a valuable means of

working with youths involved in negative youth subcultures. The Alternate School was presented as an example of how this pedagogy can help these youths. The next chapter will summarize the key recommendations and suggestions schools can implement in regards to educational plans for negative youth subcultures.

CHAPTER SIX

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

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MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Due to various alarming social trends, some youths feel the insecurity, hopelessness, and despair of a changing society. In light of these factors, the allure of the negative youth subculture is heightened. A sense of identity, belonging, protection, and excitement attracts individuals to such antisocial activity.

This paper examined the characteristics of negative youth subcultures and how various theories can be used to explain their formation. Emphasis was placed on resistance theory as an explanation regarding negative youth subcultures. An analysis of an alternative secondary school using critical pedagogy as a possible method to help these youths in schools was presented.

The parent culture organizes and shapes youths' perceptions. Some youths feel disillusioned because the hegemonic ideology institutions like school embody presents a social order that has and will always be a certain way. Schools legitimize, reinforce, and perpetuate this ideology through inequalities expressed in power relationships, curricula, and policies. Discontented with these inequalities, negative youth subcultures create a conflict between schools and themselves. Yet this conflict is indeed a healthy one according to Douglas' (1980) description of everyday social order[1]. Negative youth subcultures find ways to free themselves from a school system they find unacceptable. Having recognized the problem, they resist and challenge the existing relationships of power. They are aware of their status within the hierarchy and are dissatisfied

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1. See page 15 of this paper.

with the position. They choose to take action through resistance.

Negative youth subcultures create a set of rules, goals, and conduct codes that differ from the hegemonic norms. They reverse the norms of the parent culture and create a negative polarity. In their view, their behaviour is appropriate because it is inappropriate to the parent culture. Steering clear of the activities of mainstream schooling such as study, practice, and deliberation, negative youth subcultures engage in short-term, immediately gratifying activities. They encourage group autonomy and disregard impersonal rules and rigid schedules. It is important for teachers to determine what norms, values, and rules negative youth subcultures are resisting. Schools will then be able to understand the meaning attached to the resistant actions of these youths and develop an appropriate educational plan through the use of critical pedagogy. Freire (1970) states that education exists for two purposes: either to free or domesticate individuals. As Billington (1991) explains, "education for freedom is a critical challenging process, committed to and engaged with the oppressed in finding a voice for their silenced culture" (p. 154).

Moving Towards Change

Structuring an educational environment which allows troubled adolescents to find their voice is critical. It is important for students to feel accepted and safe while expressing their perspective of reality. It is equally important that their knowledge and experiences be respected and validated. Educational environments can be established "to respect the consciousness and culture of students and to create the pedagogical situation in which students can articulate their understanding of the world" (Weiler, 1988; p. 18). By

nurturing student voices, the needs and potentials of negative youth subcultures are recognized. Silencing their voices only leads to further resistance.

First, what we, as teachers, decide about education is important, but what students decide is even more important. Being aware of the problems facing youths, these issues can be incorporated into classroom practice, curriculum design, and the structure of the educational system. Giroux (1983) sees curriculum as an avenue for domination and liberation. By empowering students and teachers, schools become places where counter-hegemonic programs are established. Critical pedagogy is an emancipatory activity teachers use to create the moment when their classrooms become open to change. It is an important educational tool to use with negative youth subcultures because it places students at the centre of the curriculum. By helping students to address unresolved issues regarding race, class, gender, family, and the personal, we eliminate the contradiction we so often hear about schools: the needs of the students versus the needs of the system. Critical pedagogy allows these needs to become one and the same.

Second, I believe that unity between negative youths and appropriate adults is equally important. Negative youth subcultures are sustaining organzations that counteract isolation, alienation, and anomie. They are functions of the lack of ties to conventional standards of conduct and become more prevalent as the bonds youths have with society weaken. Schools should nurture a connection between troubled youths and appropriate role models. Connecting troubled youths with local business sites helps to bond these youths to the community. Courses such as "Student In Society" of The Alternate

School serve this purpose.

Because most troubled youths view the process of obtaining a secondary school leaving certificate as dependent upon whether or not teachers like them (Engel and Hurrelmann, 1989; p. 170), the relationship between teacher and student is significant. The relationships the teachers at The Alternate School have with their students are critical. We have clear expectations, clear technical vocabulary, and clear corresponding practices. We have a 'common sense' approach with our students. We determine the moment of contact, the degree of influence, and the focus of the relationship. We create a sense of family and nurture a sense of individual and school pride. "Efforts of delinquency prevention must focus on changing the social climate of school settings in order to develop attachments between the school and the individual student with the aim of replacement of negative social relationships with positive ones." (Engel and Hurrelmann, 1989; p. 179).

Third, teachers must have a committment to academic excellence on all levels. They must work hard to hold onto their less capable students. Maintaining academic standards while working on behaviour is often difficult. The desire for academic excellence may make teachers impatient with those students who do not learn quickly or work hard enough. Certain students will quickly absorb the knowledge and skills required in 'school success'. One problem teachers are experiencing is the definition of school success imposed by the Ministry of Education. We need to expand our definition of success to include excellence in other areas such as the arts, technical work, and other forms of non-mainstream knowledge. With a wider definition, others may be encouraged to stay in school as long as possible in order "to get whatever

rubs off" (Brauner, 1965; p. 82).

Fourth, as teachers, we must work from within the subculture to reframe the value system of negative youth subcultures. As previously noted, negative youth subcultures reject middle-class values. For example, the parent culture views education as a means of advancement and a necessary prerequisite for leading a satisfying, productive life. Many negative youth subcultures view education differently. School is viewed as a meaningless activity and excludes those students not adequately 'groomed' for status positions. School simply echoes the discrepancy between the aspirations of the parent culture and the limited means of achievement of the subculture. With such a disenchanted view, school pales in importance to popularity, peer approval, and risky behaviours. These adolescents destroy property rather than acquire it, vandalize books rather than read them, and waste money rather than save it. Negative youth subcultures give status and prestige to these qualities, the very qualities the parent culture often negates or dismisses. Schools can help empower youths by recognizing and using these qualities. The esteem that comes from honestly earned money, the pride that comes from legitimately owning a compact disc, and the sense of accomplishment that comes from reading books "cover to cover" are all qualities we, as teachers, can instill in these troubled youths. Furthermore, cross-age tutoring programs with at-risk elementary students can help troubled secondary students demonstrate competency in academic and non-academic areas. We must help students to see the opportunity structure. We should always try to point out the negative consequences of a behaviour and highlight immediate positive alternatives.

Fifth, teacher-training programs should include two specific courses. The first course should deal with negative youth subcultures as a focus of study. The content would sensitize teachers in training to the behaviours, attitudes, and values of these youths. Programs that are designed to decrease gang identification, status, and cohesiveness can be valuable for teachers. Because it is difficult to move these adolescents out of negative youth subcultures, it is important that teachers learn ways to devalue the negative youth subculture. Disintegration of the group's influence and creating an ambiguity about its leadership help to minimize the influence of the negative youth subculture. Leaders of negative youth subcultures can be worked with because they accept legitimate action. Teachers can work with the leader in the group and invoke the commitment of the members. It is imperative for teachers in training to develop this skill. The course would also focus on strategies for discipline and methods of instruction to use with these students so as to minimize their negative influence in the classrooms. At The Alternate School, we have fostered a mutual relationship with two universities and their teacher-training programs. Our students serve as 'guest lecturers' in certain methodology courses. This is highly beneficial for teachers in training to be exposed to 'this type of student' for obvious reasons.

The second course that teacher-training programs should offer would focus on critical pedagogy. This is a powerful pedagogy all teachers should be exposed to in their training. It is a mistake to assume that critical pedagogy is solely about dialogue on student-generated topics in loosely structured classrooms. Critical pedagogy is a methodology that encourages teachers and students to engage in a coherent, organized, holistic educational experience. It

is a strict pedagogy that demands responsible interaction, cooperative decision-making, and reflective evaluation. Furthermore, on an optimistic note, it is an influential pedagogy because it allows teachers to maintain their ideals and principles in a very "cynical business". In a field that often leaves teachers negative, powerless, and disillusioned, critical pedagogy gives teachers the freedom to create a curriculum "that matters" and to interact with students in meaningful ways. We have witnessed the success of critical pedagogy at The Alternate School both on a personal level with our students as well as on a Ministerial level with our school-generated accredited courses. This notion of empowerment has even been carried into our professional development at The Alternate School. Over the years, we have attended endless workshops, conferences, and seminars on troubled adolescents and negative youth subcultures. Feeling very dissatisfied with the content, we embarked on our own professional training. We shadowed two Youth Vice Detectives, on night shift, from the Anti-Gang Squad of the Montreal Police Force. We literally "walked the streets" into the wee hours of the morning to get first-hand knowledge and experience of negative youth subcultures "in action". In sum, we recognized one of our needs, resisted mainstream training, and took action. (Critical pedagogy even works on teachers!)

Sixth, evaluating and investing in social programs help. The scope of this paper does not allow for detailed discussion of this area, but briefly put, large-scale measures such as restructuring the social network or strengthening the control system are important avenues to explore. The laws governing youth behaviour (i.e. Youth Protection Laws, Youth Offenders Laws) are presently under review and this is a good thing. Minimizing socioeconomic disadvantage,

reducing unemployment, expanding programs for marginal groups, reduction of violence, and adequate leisure facilities for youths hold possibilities for change.

Finally, adolescents leave negative youth subcultures due to maturation and the desire to find a better life. We, as teachers, must show these students how to establish short-term goals and engage in positive activities. "Gender Issues", a course at The Alternate School based on "The Circle of Sistahs", an alternative program out of New York City, is an example of how critical pedagogy serves a transformative function. "Gender Issues" helps our deviant females to challenge the traditional system and engage in a pedagogy of resistance. These girls "learn to take responsibility for their own learning, speak in their own voices and engage in critical thinking" (Benitez, 1996; p. 81). At The Alternate School, we teach our females various skills to help them express their opinions, needs, and concerns. They are taught to resist the social expectations that 'nice girls' are ready to acquiesce and submit. They are taught to resist the critical comments they hear when they express their viewpoint, achieve their goals, or show leadership. "Gender Issues" teaches our females that achievement and independence are not synonymous with isolation and that school success for females is something worthwhile pursuing.

Conclusion

Negative youth subcultures have challenged their educational situation. Through their resistance, they have become active agents capable of questioning, contesting, and redefining their social situation. Such resistant actions have led to changes in the dominant educational structure as witnessed by the emergence of numerous alternate schools.

Erecting fortress-like school buildings, installing metal detectors, and policing hallways are extreme measures that some secondary schools have implemented to combat the effects of negative youth subcultures. Instead, some positive, successful measures to use with these students include innovative teacher-training programs, nurturing significant relationships between students, schools, and communities, cautiously establishing school-business partnerships, and working within negative youth subcultures.

We, as teachers, must look to negative youth subcultures to understand their magnetic pull on certain youths. We must attempt to understand their perception of the parent culture and what it is they are resisting. We must attempt to understand their path of resistance as well as their perceived benefits of being in the negative polarity position. It requires an understanding of the values and beliefs of these negative youth subcultures and seeing them as valid examples of knowledge and codes of behaviour for these adolescents. We must try to help these youths appreciate their strengths, intelligence, potentials, and how they could be used in a more positive way. If such an understanding is not encouraged, these negative youth subcultures will in essence only reinforce the mainstream's view of them: anti-authority deviants on a path of destruction.

Schools are responsible for creating ways of engaging, resisting, and transforming society. With this end in mind, classrooms must be safe and responsible so that youths may voice their perspectives on the social, economic, and political boundaries they face. Teachers need to be taught resistance and how to teach resistance. Teaching youths how to critique, develop their own voices, and change their situations helps to channel their

resistance and defiance. By bringing our own struggles into our classrooms, we serve as models for change in the eyes of our students.

In order for schools to become competent in addressing the increasing allure of negative youth subcultures, further research is needed. There are certain areas that would be beneficial for classroom practice. First and foremost is the need to help practicing teachers become informed regarding the population of negative youth subcultures and their activities. Research into this area would help professionals to develop positive, constructive relationships with these types of students. For example, in regular secondary schools, it is suggested that dress codes be implemented and that neutral school zones be created to minimize the influence of negative youth subcultures. This type of research would grant teachers the necessary hands-on knowledge they need when confronting these youths. Second, the development of a negative youth subculture curriculum should be encouraged. The benefits of research into this area are obvious. Third, research in updating inservice professional development programs would help educate novice as well as 'veteran' teachers. On one hand, novice teachers would benefit from the lessons verteran teachers have to offer after their years of experience. On the other hand, veteran teachers would once again be exposed to the zest, enthusiasm, and idealism of someone new to the field. Fourth, research into developing two significant courses for teacher-training programs in universities would be of great benefit. One course would focus on the study of negative youth subcultures, the other on using critical pedagogy within classrooms. Finally, research into how to further develop partnerships with the media, the law, community, and business should be done, but this is recommended with a

note of caution. The influence of business on educational practice is still under debate.

Problems with negative youth subcultures (or perhaps we could call these collectivities "resisting youth subcultures") will not disappear as long as poverty, family dysfunction, and the breakdown of social institutions continues. It will prevail as long as discussions about negative youth subcultures in schools are taboo, as long as we focus solely on changing the behaviour of the individual and not the group, as long as we blind ourselves to the reasons these subcultures exist, and as long as we refuse to believe that these youths are from our streets, our schools, and our homes.

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