American Educational Research Journal
Winter 2000, Vol. 37, No. 4, pp. 877–907

A Pragmatist Revisioning of Resistance Theory

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Resistance theorists in education urge educators to evaluate the moral and political potential of opposition in schools. The scholarship of resistance calls us to examine oppositional acts of students in school settings as moral and political expressions of oppression. Resistance theorizing over the past several decades has not, however, adequately explored the idea that resistance is communication; that is, a means of signaling and constructing new meanings, and of building a discourse around particular problems of exclusion or inequality. In this paper, I use pragmatist theories of inquiry and communication to interpret and critique resistance theories in education. Using Dewey and Bentley's notion of transactionalism (1946), I present a theoretical framework for future inquiry into school opposition. Interpreting resistance theory through a pragmatist lens leads to a more relational reading of resistance, and can promote school-based inquiry (rather than simple avoidance or punishment) directed toward acts of resistance in schools.

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Resistance theories, emerging in the last several decades from neo-Marxist, neo-Gramscian, postmodern, and post-structural examinations of power struggles, have raised important ideas for educators. Resistance theorists[1] have attempted to explain why the opposition of some groups against others is politically and morally necessary in social institutions where mainstream ideologies dominate to discipline participants and social norms. Resistance, in these theoretical formations, is differentiated from mere opposition to authority, however; resistance is understood to contribute, in some way, to progressive transformation of the environment by attempting to undermine "the reproduction of oppressive social structures and social relations" (Walker, 1985, p. 65). Resistance is widely defined as opposition with a social and political purpose. Relating to schools, resistance theories attempt to explain the ways in which working class and other marginalized youth struggle against the norms or authority of schools that often seem to work against their perceived interests. In educational circles, the introduction of the concept resistance in the1970s has produced a veritable landslide of scholarship. Theories of resistance have contributed to the body of knowledge in social theory concerning the issues and meanings of opposition and conflict present when marginalized individuals or groups in schools speak or act out regarding their status, treatment, or relative position in the institution. Resistance theory in education, taken as a whole with its many nuanced and sometimes contradictory conclusions, has done a commendable job in not only exposing the subtle and overt exclusions within schooling processes, but in formulating theoretical explanations for why and how individuals and groups resist oppressive or threatening situations, structural arrangements, and ideologies (Fine, 1991; Fordham & Ogbu, 1985; Giroux, 1983a, 1983b; Hall & Jefferson, 1993; Hebdige, 1979; McLaren, 1999; McRobbie, 1991; Willis, 1977).

What remains to be understood in more depth, however, are the ways in which resistance, as a communicative act, is interpreted by educators as well as researchers, and accordingly assigned meaning within school settings. As an impetus of social and political transformation in a school, resistance communicates; that is, it is a means of signaling, generating, and building dialogue around particular power imbalances and inequalities. Although there are some notable exceptions that I will discuss later in this article, educational theorists who have studied resistance have not regarded or inquired into the communicative potential of resistance. In this paper, I use Dewey's theories of inquiry and communication to re-interpret resistance theories, with the aim of showing how resistance can be understood through transactionalist understandings of communication and social life.

Dewey and Bentley (1949) distinguished between *self-action*, *interaction*, and *transaction* as three modes of inquiry: Self-action describes the state in which things are viewed as acting under their own power, and interaction refers to the state in which a thing is balanced against another thing in causal interconnection. Transaction is the condition of seeing things not in isolation, nor in terms of their "true" nature or essence, but in terms of

their systemic context, their tentative and preliminary status as points of inquiry, their places in an organic world of expanding space and time. Dewey and Bentley used past explanations of scientific phenomenon to illustrate these distinctions. Druids believed spirits were in trees, or that cream was turned sour by fairies; self-action was the view that understood these objects as possessing an "essence" or inherent nature, whether that be magical, spiritual, metaphysical, or "natural." Newtonian mechanical physics was interactional in that it explained how the action and reaction of objects are equal and opposed—space and time were treated as fixed, particles were treated as unalterable. Einstein, wrote Dewey, took a transactional approach, bringing space, time, and particle variability to bear on the problem: "the seeing *together* [italics added], when research requires it, of what before had been seen in separations and held severally apart . . . to break down the old rigidities: what is necessary when the time has come for new systems" (Dewey & Bentley, 1949, p. 112).

Just as Dewey viewed scientific inquiry as having moved through phases, I believe that our inquiry into resistance has slowly moved along the perspectival continuum of self-actional, inter-actional, and infrequently, transactional. Dewey's naturalistic bent shaped his view that these three modes of inquiry represented a developmental movement through time and context, as Bushnell (1993) points out:

> Dewey contends that the progression of inquiry from Self-Action to Interaction to Transaction is historically based. Each perspective is the product of its time and as such, appropriately served and reflected the prevalent thinking of that historical period. . . . Because each method remains dependent upon its historical context, Dewey cautions us against putting too much stock in transactional inquiry as "we do not present this procedure as being more real or generally valid than any other, but as being the one now needed in the field where we work." (Dewey & Bentley, 1949, p. 69, cited in Bushnell, 1993, p. 9)

Transactionalism does not represent "truth" for Dewey as much as a needed insight for contemporary social theorists struggling to make sense of an increasingly complex human environment. Dewey, who in his long career witnessed a great many drastic social changes and movements, strongly believed that all inquiry, to be helpful to human social progress, should reflect the complexity of human transactions and communicative life.

In this paper, I argue that resistance theorists too often conceive of school communications and community in interactionist ways, and that this perspective limits the ways in which we practically use resistance theory to understand and respond to student resistance in schools. Interactions take place between two independent entities in causal reaction; transactions, however, more holistically account for the symbiotic change in both or all parties involved in the experience. A transactional theory of inquiry and of communication can broaden and deepen the inquiry into opposition, push-

ing researchers and educators to more fully examine relevant actors, histories, and contexts. Rather than viewing persons or groups as animated by metaphysical explanations of "self" (self-action), "culture," or by similar identity formations, in isolation or in causal behavior with others (interaction), the entire context of the communicative experience is examined. Transactional understandings of communication view that process as more than a causal exchange of information between two or more people or groups, more than the stimulus and response reactions between oppressed and oppressor. The idea of transaction signals how communicative actions change all actors undergoing a communicative experience, despite the fact that communication is never "pure" but constantly moving through and in subjective interpretations and cultural contexts. Resistance changes all parties involved, bringing actors into greater alignment or even more disparate opposition. Resistance, I argue, is a complex form of human communication.

I begin by examining the theoretical tools that will be used here to critique resistance theories. Dewey's notion of transactionalism will be presented in the next section of the paper. Pragmatism's potential theoretical contributions to resistance theorizing will be explained and defended, and a pragmatist theory of democratic education will be described as the normative basis for this work. Following this theoretical introduction, I then turn to the body of resistance scholarship in education. Using the pragmatist lens, I examine some of the major works in the resistance literature in education, describing some of its significant contributions to the field as well as questioning some of the interactionist tendencies of much of that literature. In the final part of this paper, I outline a pragmatist revisioning of resistance theory as understood through a transactional model of inquiry, communication, and community.

Theoretical Groundings of Transactionalism and Democracy

In "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology," Dewey[2] broke away from the language of Kant, Locke, and Hume in his critique of the faulty psychology of his day (1973/1981). In this article published while Dewey was a professor at the University of Chicago, he criticized the popular conception of the reflex arc as a representation of behavioral unity using a transactional notion of experience. The concept of reflex arc, wherein sensory-stimulus predicates motor-response, was introduced in Dewey's time as a unifying conception of human psychology but was, according to Dewey, "not a comprehensive, or organic, unity, but a patchwork of disjointed parts, a mechanical conjunction of unallied processes" (1973/1981, p. 137). Dewey argued that psychological discussions of reflex arc failed to represent the "co-ordination" subsumed under the reflex arc concept; that is, how the various stimuli, connections, and responses are not "separate and complete entities in themselves, but . . . divisions of labor, functioning factors, within the single concrete whole" (Dewey, 1973/1981, p. 137). Dewey's argument regarding the reflex arc can be understood as a reinterpretation of then-

popular conceptions of human psychology, from a disjointed and interactionist view of the ways in which one reaction triggers another to a transactionalist view of human behavior which seeks to interpret phenomena as coordinated within a larger whole.

Dewey's development of a transactionalist perspective is linked to his naturalism, the idea that humanity and nature are dynamic and continuous with one another rather than separate and unrelated. Note that the concept of transactionalism serves as a "bookend" of sorts to his life-long inquiry: *The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology* was originally published in 1896, and *Knowing and the Known*, in which the concept is more developed, was published in 1949, 3 years prior to Dewey's death. Influenced by this perspective (and inspired by Einsteinian physics), in *Knowing and the Known*, Dewey and Arthur Bentley fully developed the transactionalist view:

> Our position is . . . that since man [sic] as an organism has evolved among other organisms in an evolution called "natural", we are willing under hypothesis to treat all of his behavings, including his most advanced knowings, as activities not of himself alone, nor even as primarily his, but as processes of the full situation of organism-environment. (1949, cited in Biesta, 1995, p. 279)

The idea that grounded Dewey's critique of the reflex arc concept of psychology in the late 1800s was the concept that he, with Bentley, named transactionalism toward the end of Dewey's career. Dewey's conceptualization of transactionalism was first inspired by Hegelian ideas of organic unity, and philosophy as "the search for the real whole" (Backe, 1999, p. 318). By the end of his life, as the Hegelian influence had receded, he had reformulated the idea of transactionalism, as revealed in *Knowing and the Known*, as a central idea within his naturalistic experimentalism.[3] The basic idea of transactionalism, as he developed the concept with Bentley and as I present in this paper, was not to render distinctions between subjects, actions, or operations unimportant, but to instigate social inquiry into how and why these distinctions were identified and what roles they served. Such social inquiry is not to render absolute "truth" in a Hegelian sense, but to help us understand social relations from a more holistic, ecological perspective.

To apply transactionalism to resistance theory, let us take a simple act of what many would label resistance and provide an analysis to illustrate self-action, interaction, and transactional interpretations of opposition in schools. In a largely White, middle-class high school, a group of boys of West Indian immigrant heritage have formed a subculture and organize their identities and actions around their beliefs that school is irrelevant to their needs, that educators misunderstand and talk down to them, and that their immigrant culture is not receiving the acknowledgment it deserves in school.[4] These students construct an identity of style (clothing, body decoration, attitude) and action (speaking patois around teachers who cannot understand the language, cutting class, yelling at teachers, breaking many school rules) to oppose school authority.

Viewed as self-action, this group of students is understood to be acting out their essential or true, inner identities. Whether this essential identity is based on ethnicity, race, gender, or their working class status, or perhaps a combination of these identity-markers, this cultural identity operates as an "internal" and true designation of who these students are, and why they are driven to oppose school authority. Thus, from the perspective of self-action, educators often blame school problems on cultural difference seen as internal and unchanging. African American drop-out rates in a district may be explained away by educators who perceive African American culture as one that inherently does not value educational success; alternately, Asian American perceived (inner and foundational) values of hard work and learning may explain for many educators the reasons why these children in their schools may experience relative success. Culture, conceived as self-action, is the internal driving force that guides youth and shapes all their choices.

As Bushnell notes, "the concept of Self-Action is limiting as it does not recognize the influences that events and entities have upon one another," and a model of interaction is the next logical step of inquiry as Dewey understood it (Bushnell, 1993, p. 6). In this view, opposing cultures in the school are clashing, as two opposing objects or forces influence one another by their collisions. The culture of the West Indian immigrant boys is clashing with the White middle-class culture of the high school teachers and administrators. These two cultures[5] collide, and like two marbles, fly off into opposing directions. The educators represent a culture of authority and legitimated knowledge; the student subculture represents a culture of opposition and unofficial, marginalized knowledge. The two cultures interact but remain fundamentally unchanged by the cultural collisions, though perhaps even more opposed than before. Educators and researchers taking a more interactionist view of resistance would direct inquiry into the ways in which school authorities come into conflict with the subcultures of their school. They would not isolate the problem simply within the subcultural group, but would see the interaction between authority and subculture as opposing forces that must be somehow reconciled.

Although an improvement over self-action, interaction is still representative of a closed system of two or more opposing cultures that do not change, do not share any identity markers or overlapping cultural backgrounds, do not relate to other actors in the social context, nor influence one another in their social arenas. In a transactionalist reading of resistance, the closed system is opened up to recognize multiple and shifting identities. Culture is likewise viewed as an organic, living entity that must change or die; cultural institutions are consequently seen as complex, shifting social settings that contextualize our social dramas. Human relations are understood to shape self-perceptions and actions, and our larger society is recognized as the socio-economic and historical backdrop upon which opposition is enacted and shaped. The subcultural formation of the boys is set against their West Indian parent culture as well as their new Canadian culture into which they have assimilated to a degree; the boys' (West Indian, working

class Canadian, masculine) cultural influences are examined for varying influence upon subcultural values and rules. The identities of the boys in the subculture are opened up to more complex interpretations, such as those boys who are both members of the subculture and members of various sports teams at the school, thereby negotiating often paradoxical identities of opposition and loyalty to the school. The encounters between authority figures and the subculture are understood not simply as oppositional but as shaping both future encounters and the nature of the conflict itself. Each conflict shapes the ongoing relationship between subcultural members and educators, and is based on the history of past encounters. The resistance of subcultural members in the schools is located in the larger historical and socio-economic sphere as well, wherein the experiences of West Indian parents and grandparents are mined to better contextualize the cultural memories of assimilation and exclusion, success and failure as experienced by elders who immigrated.

Transactionalism refers to the process of inquiry and communication that Dewey believed is most encompassing—at this time and in this stage of human development of knowing and inquiry—of the complex nature of human encounters and human knowing. Inquiry and communication are processes that denote changing forms, roles, and motivations. Our world is not static but a changing and often chaotic ecology of interdependent systems. Transactionalistic inquiry and interpretations of communication are developed in light of this ecological world view, which, like Deweyan pragmatism as well as many forms of postmodern and post-structural inquiry, are antifoundationalist in perspective. Without firm foundations in an unchanging view of identities, cultures, knowledge, or social theory, transactionalism offers a different lens with which to guide and interpret resistance scholarship. It offers a perspective on resistance that can help frame opposition in more communicative terms, thus enhancing the practical capacities of educators to respond to resistance in ways that enhance its coordinating, communicative potential.

Communication is not the act of expression and exchange of views by individual actors who are simply encoding and decoding linguistic symbols, from the pragmatist's point of view. Such a mechanistic, interactionist interpretation leaves out the shared project of meaning-making which is inherent in communication. Communication is the making of something in common (Biesta, 1995), in which two or more humans modify their individual experiences through joint activity. This joint activity can be chiefly linguistic but need not be solely defined as language dependent. The teacher who is attempting to make one of the West Indian boys talk to her in English, and his own clowning refusal to do so as he continues to speak in his island patois, represents a joint activity modifying all parties involved. Although the transaction does not result in common aims for teacher and student, but more likely further frustrates such movement, the communicative act is assigned meaning and makes an impact upon both the actors involved and the future transactions of teachers and subcultural members. Whatever the com-

municative medium, both or all parties are modified through the process of making something in common. Their actions are not necessarily more coordinated in this communication; the act-in-common, in this case, is one that further propels the identities of teacher and students into more oppositional stances. Ironically, resistance theorists may label such acts of opposition "resistance" even though theoretical definitions of this term require oppositional actions to have some revealing, liberatory effects on actors or institutions. For example, the work of Willis (1977) and others highlighted the complexities of resistance by suggesting that "what might appear to be genuine instances of resistance have had the long-term effect of reproducing, at a deeper level, the dominant order . . ." (Munro, 1996). Opposition, however, can *become* resistance when oppositional communicative acts help modify all parties involved so that their social positions are in better alignment and more coordinated to meet each group's social and academic aims. In our example, the teacher must be moved, in her frustration to communicate with the boys, to inquire into why it is that the boys speak patois more frequently around her. She must not only seek to understand opposition as an act of meaning-making for herself and others, but to use the act as a springboard to inquiry into her own classroom and educational site.

Communication is at the heart of pragmatist notions of community and democracy. Unlike contemporary ideals of community, which imply or rely on a minimizing of individual or group differences to build civic society (Etzioni, 1993), pragmatism conceives of community not as something naturally or culturally acquired, but as something we make or construct, together. For Dewey, community did not require a common metaphysical belief system among participants, nor specific traditions of community, nor unchanging procedures or norms that provided stability at the expense of growth. Communities, therefore, are less distinguishable for their unchanging traditions or rules than for their communicative processes induced by change, conflict, and growth. Community for pragmatists is created and maintained through the process of communication understood not as peaceful, perfectly coordinated exchanges of views which result in common purposes, but as human webs of relation and meaning that undergo the inherent conflicts, contradictions, and bondings of shared life (see Knight Abowitz, 1999a). Communication is thus at the cornerstone of pragmatist definitions of community and of democracy.

In *Creative Democracy—The Task Before Us*, Dewey (1940) outlined three tenets of democratic faith, or beliefs that "if democracy is to re-create itself, individuals must continue to hold and to practice" (LaCelle-Peterson & VanFossen, 1999, p. 4). These tenets are, among other things, necessary for the progressive educator who seeks to make use of student resistance as a (potentially) communicative act. The first of these is "a working faith in the possibilities of human nature" (Dewey, 1940, p. 223). Antidemocratic notions of racial, ethnic, gender, or sexual prejudice would be examples of contemporary hindrances upon this faith in the possibilities and endowments of all persons. The second tenet of democratic faith is "the faith in the capacity of

human beings for intelligent judgment and action if proper conditions are furnished" (Dewey, 1940, p. 224). Closely following the faith in the possibilities of human nature, this represents a belief in human capacities for reflection and judgment—an idea not widely accepted, for example, by "democratic realists" of the early 20th century who doubted immigrants' and other "common" (read: poor, immigrant, or working class) Americans' abilities to intelligently participate in governance (Westbrook, 1991). Students in schools are often controlled and managed in ways that communicate very little faith in their endowments or possibilities for intelligent judgment.

The third faith for democrats, and the one most significant for our current examination of resistance theories, is the "personal commitment to co-operative action rooted in the conviction that consideration of conflicting claims and views is not only right but personally and collectively enriching." Cooperative action is not the erasure of conflicting claims but the cultivation of differences. "To cooperate by giving differences a chance to show . . . is not only the right of the other persons, but is a means of enriching one's own life experience . . . " (Dewey, 1940, p. 226, cited in LaCelle-Peterson & Van-Fossen, 1999). Cooperative action thus inherently involves conflict—of opinions, perspectives, and persons—which Dewey and later pragmatist thinkers[6] viewed as central to democratic community.

Dewey's notion of transactionalism can be seen as implicit within notions of communication (wherein those who participate do not simply exchange meanings but create multiple meanings in common), community (not inherited through custom but constructed through communication), and democracy (enacted and re-created through democratic faith, habit, and practices). These transactionalist, progressive theories of inquiry, social action, community, and democracy are not necessarily likely lenses with which to critique resistance theory. Resistance theorists, as a whole, may share Dewey's passion for democracy, but their neo-Marxist views often situate their work deeply within structurally embedded conflict. But so embedded are the conflicts described in resistance theory that the theoretical strides made by these thinkers are at times hindered by a stagnancy, a failure to see groups or individuals as changing, multifaceted, and part of larger webs of meaning and communication. Resistance theorists in education have moved from self-action to interaction in their modes of inquiry, but have not always developed transactional understandings of inquiry and communication,[7] leaving such theories helpless to explain the kind of potential coordination that is embedded in conflict. In the next section, I describe the varied body of work I label resistance theory, and use Dewey's transactionalist theory of inquiry and communication to critique this body of work.

The Contributions and Limitations of Resistance Theory

Concepts of cultural reproduction (Bowles & Gintes, 1976), emerging from Marxist perspectives in the sociology of education, follow the correspondence theory which states that schools integrate students "into the capitalist

economic order by tailoring their attitudes through the daily experience of classroom authority relations to the requirements of the workplace" (Hargreaves, 1982, p. 107). One of the criticisms of cultural reproduction theory was that these models ignored the fact that, in some cases, students and others disciplined by the capitalist economic order (working class students, or teachers, for example) actively and passively resisted accepting their "place" in that order (McRobbie & Garber, 1993; Willis, 1977). Human agency, or the ability to shape one's own life path or actions, was a factor ignored by reproduction theorists who believed resistance to be either largely absent or, alternately, uselessly employed against structural and ideological forces of capitalism. Giroux (1983b) stated that

> By ignoring the contradiction and struggles that exist in schools, these theories not only dissolve human agency, they unknowingly provide a rationale for *not* examining teachers and students in concrete school settings. Thus, they miss the opportunity to determine whether there is a substantial difference between the existence of various structural and ideological modes of domination and their actual unfolding and effects. (Giroux, 1983b, p. 259)

Resistance theorists set out to understand the degree to which the correspondence between school classrooms and the capitalist order was completely determined or, as they suspected, only partially realized due to human struggle and conflict.

Thus, neo-Marxist critiques of schooling and their role in cultural reproduction influenced many early works in resistance theory, notably, the scholars associated with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University (CCCS) in the 1960s and 1970s as well as North American theorists working in the same traditions, following in the 1980s. In this section, I discuss the last three decades of scholarship on resistance as it relates to education, examining the work centered at the CCCS, moving into scholarship by North American educational theorists, and finally turning to more postmodern and post-structural analyses of resistance. Whereas modernist, neo-Marxist resistance theories construct a formula which tied resistance to an interruption of the forces of social reproduction based largely on class structures, postmodern analysis frame resistance as a strategy—rather than a theoretical construct with an accompanying metanarrative—for contesting multiple forms of domination.[8] This move to an antifoundationalist approach to examining relations of authority and resistance in schools opens doors to more transactionalist modes of inquiry, thus prodding a field beset by many interactionist assumptions and habits of inquiry.

British Cultural Studies: Marxist Analyses of Youth Subcultures

The CCCS, established in 1964, made significant strides in linking Marxist theories to actual school practices through ethnographic methods and cul-

tural critique.[9] In their work on the particular category of "youth," as a collective CCCS researchers were

> . . . preoccupied with the relations between ideologies (or "ideological dimensions") and form, particularly the spectacular forms adopted by youth subcultures, mods, Teds, skinheads, punks, and so on. Their work turned to the distinctive "look" of these subcultures; but the primary aim was to locate them in relation to three broader cultural structures, the working class or the "parent culture," the "dominant" culture, and the mass culture. (Gelder & Thornton, 1997, p. 83–84)

Resistance by subcultures referred to the collective acts of working class youth to win space in the dominant and mass cultures of the society, although researchers of resistance in schools widely acknowledged the limitations of student resistance of winning legitimate power and the tendency of resistance efforts to further solidify the status quo of social reproduction (see Willis, 1977).

CCCS scholars viewed class struggle as more organic than the deterministic versions of Marxist theory. Relations between dominant and subordinate cultures, for CCCS researchers, were actively oppositional rather than passively given. "The subordinate class brings to this 'theatre of struggle' a repertoire of strategies and responses—ways of coping as well as of resisting" (Clarke et al., 1975/1997, p. 103). These responses are not necessarily forms of rational problem-solving in that they represent attempts to directly change structures which create their conditions: combating unemployment, dead-end jobs, or miseducation, for example. Resistance often is the performance or enactment of imaginary, symbolic, and aesthetic solutions—strategies of style, language, and other symbolic expressions tied to group identity—rather than "reasoned" structural critiques (Brake, 1985). "[Counter-cultures express] profane articulations, and they are often and significantly defined as 'unnatural.' . . . " (Hebdige, 1979/1997, p. 130). The punk subcultures of Great Britain, studied by Hebdige (1979) and others, represented a classic case of class-based, countercultural resistance, derived from working class parent culture and reacting to the dominant conservative political culture of Great Britain in the 1970s and 1980s. The outlandish aesthetic, distinct style and expressively loud, angry music associated with punks made them a wonderful object of study for scholars in the Birmingham Centre interested in resistance.

One of the most cited studies of resistance from this period is Willis' *Learning to Labor* (1977), an ethnographic study of a group of boys in a British school serving a working-class town in the early 1970s. The Lads, as the group of boys is called, were of interest to Willis for their resistance to the curriculum's aims to channel them into white collar, professional jobs. Willis noted how the Lads' opposition did not liberate them from their assigned place in the social class structure, but instead helped to ensure that they would assume the places of their fathers and grandfathers on the shop or

factory floor. Other boys in the school, notably the 'Ear'oles, were assimilating into school norms (in passive ways like listening; thus their name bestowed by the Lads) in ways that would guarantee their school and economic success as managerial-level workers. The Lads, however, reacted to school in more active ways, and "construct virtually their own day from what is offered by the school," using tactics ranging from truancy to

> . . . being free out of class, being in class and doing no work, being in the wrong class, roaming the corridors looking for excitement, being asleep in private. The core skill which articulates these possibilities is being able to get out of any given class: the preservation of personal mobility. (p. 27)

The oppositional activities of the Lads will not sound unfamiliar to contemporary educators in classrooms inhabited by working-class or other kinds of marginalized youth. The Lads created for themselves a school culture derived from their home culture and the (hyper-masculine) work-world of adults in their neighborhood cultures (see also MacLeod, 1987). The Lads' opposition was neither politically nor morally enlightening to educators—it did not serve as a tool of progressive social change. School educators saw opposition as merely an outgrowth of the Lads' deviancy rather than as a sign of political or moral critique. Resistance, in Willis' study, turned out to be the struggle between class cultures to the ultimate success of status quo arrangements rather than the undermining of socially reproductive schooling patterns.

Interactionist understandings of communication narrowed these CCCS inquiries into resistance. Renditions of resistance theory contributed by CCCS scholars rightly acknowledged oppositional forms of communication as expressions of exclusion, anger, and frustration. These largely class-based expressions were viewed as strategic and often creative engagements with and against authority figures, and if not dismissed as deviancy by those in institutional power, valuable in their critical functions. Yet such critical functions depend upon a transactional notion of human society, in that it is only in communication as a social process altering all parties involved that expressions of opposition *communicate* in a manner that might disrupt patterns of social reproduction. Neo-Marxists in the CCCS concentrated on revealing student opposition as a creatively expressive micropolitical act, focusing on the actors and acts of expression rather than the larger communal (not simply economic) context of these transactions. Willis, for example, focused so exclusively on the Lads' experiences and views in his study, that he has been accused of failing to develop, as an ethnographer, a critical perspective on the counter-school culture created by the Lads. Such a perspective may have enabled him to understand the social dynamic going on between the Lads, Ear'oles, and the educators in the school (Walker, 1985). He also makes errors common to an interactionist view when he characterizes the Lads and the choices they make in resisting school. Willis identifies these choices as logical when set against their cultural background of working class, macho,

manual-labor culture; Walker points out, however, upon studying the Lads' own commentary, that these boys may simply see their way of life as one option among others open to them, taking on a superiority in their language only as a way to continue their domination of less macho boys and girls at school. Such mistakes are interactionist, labeling the Lads' struggle as "cultural opposition" rather than examining a wider range of factors that might contribute to their actions. Looking beyond the interactionist view, however, potentially undercuts the Lads' resistance, for if they simply oppose school authorities without a moral or political intent, their resistance does not earn its name. Willis too easily mistakes simple opposition for resistance, Walker argues. By mining Willis' study, Walker points out some of the relationships and perspectives that were not examined because of the author's theoretical rigidity[10] and focus on the Lads to the exclusion of other school players and dynamics.

Over time, the CCCS paradigm of neo-Marxist subcultural studies would be altered significantly, and these alterations helped move resistance theorizing into more transactional realms of inquiry. Feminist researchers such as McRobbie (1991) would expand the narrow focus on class and masculinity that had dominated much of the theoretical and empirical work of the Centre in its first decade. Class would be less likely to be privileged as the only factor to consider in social analysis, and thus class or status could be considered against a number of other identity markers (gender, race, sexuality) that help shape social behaviors. Furthermore, over time the notion of resistance was considerably weakened in terms of its purity; subcultures were no longer purely critical or even necessarily undermining the dominant values of the larger culture. Subcultural activity was seen as "much more dependent upon and co-operative with commerce and convention" (Gelder & Thornton, 1997, p. 148). Subcultures thus became resubmerged, as objects of study, in their social milieu and examined for the ways in which they resist and assimilate, and deny and accept the various cultural norms of the society.

We can begin to see a pattern that will be repeated in the North American studies of resistance. Interactionist analysis gradually gives way, over time, to a larger canvas of inquiry. We see similar patterns in the North American scholarly work on resistance in schooling.

North American Studies of Reproduction and Resistance

North American critical theorists interpret the public sphere (and especially the American public sphere[11]) as structurally dominated by the instrumental logic of capitalism, a sphere in which the have's control, albeit incompletely, the structure and culture—and therefore the consciousness—of the have-not's. Like the CCCS scholars, Giroux (1983a) stressed the importance of "a dialectical notion" of human agency; that is, he emphasized that citizens are not completely dominated by the logics or institutions that organize their

lives (p. 108). Giroux's formulation questioned the ways in which teachers and administrators commonly categorize oppositional behaviors in schools. Oppositional behaviors are most frequently seen as deviant, caused by individual or social pathologies (he is "learning disabled" [LD] or "at risk"), learned helplessness (she has no "self-esteem"), or genetic factors (Giroux, 1983a, p. 107). The concept of resistance offers us a way to see beyond such labels, providing us with a lens with which to understand "deviant" students (or teachers[12]) not as pathological but, potentially, as political, moral actors. Oppositional behaviors in school have "a great deal to do, though not exhaustively, with the logic of moral and political indignation" (Giroux, 1983a, p. 107). Building on the insights of CCCS scholars and their critics who noted that all opposition does not qualify as resistance, Giroux sought to make the label more definitive. Giroux cautioned against labeling all acts of opposition in school as resistance, but urged educators to examine more carefully all oppositional behavior for its "revealing function," or its ability to focus attention on a social criticism. Resistance is, for Giroux, an expressed hope for radical transformation of unjust societies.

Giroux's insights here represent an important early contribution made by resistance theories to the field of education: pushing the field from a self-action modality to an interactionist perspective. When students are seen as deviant, the culture and structure of school and society are off the hook, so to speak, in their accountability for student failure to succeed. Deviance suggests an internal failure, either biological or cultural, that has no meaningful context or inscribing circumstances. By helping to challenge the discourse of deviance with that of resistance, Giroux and other American resistance theorists (Apple, 1980; Anyon, 1981) helped to move the field into more interactionist modes of inquiry, wherein oppositional students are indignant and acting out against the opposing forces, cultural forms, or authorities in their school world.

Like the CCCS resistance studies, North American theorists emphasized that acts of resistance are performed with at least some degree of intentionality, by actors who are conscious of a public problem as they perceive and experience it, and who express their helplessness, despair, or rage through oppositional behavior. Student opposition would be frequently expressed through symbolic expression (style of dress, linguistic codes, graffiti, verbal insubordination, silences), or embodied action (teaching curriculum that is unapproved or banned for political reasons, absence from classes or meetings, physical insubordination, dropping out of school[13]) (see McLaren, 1999). Solomon (1992), for example, documents how a group of West Indian working class boys, the Jocks, communicated opposition to teachers and administrators in a Toronto secondary school. Solomon articulates "how these students resort to, and elaborate on, cultural forms from their West Indian heritage as a response to the authority structure of the school" (Solomon, 1992, p. 33). Students used a variety of practices to position themselves against the administration and teachers, including the selective use of their native dialect to mystify and conceal meanings of their conversations.

Giroux and other North American scholars of critical theory would unfold the oppositional potential of micropolitical acts in schools. A good example of this work is McLaren's study of "clowning" embedded in his ethnography of reproduction and resistance in a Toronto working-class Catholic school (*Schooling as a Ritual Performance*). Clowning was McLaren's designation for the ritualized oppositional behavior of working class boys; he argued resistance activities like clowning must be cast in symbolic and ritualistic terms (McLaren, 1985). Employing the work of symbolic anthropologists such as Victor Turner, McLaren probed the symbolic importance of resistance activity and its links to larger socio-economic structures. Describing the clownish performances of "Vinnie," McLaren noted how the clown disrupts:

> As he mocked, scoffed at, lampooned, and parodied the foibles of both teachers and fellow students, the class clown may be said to have "played" with the internal inconsistency and ambiguity of the ritual symbols and metaphors. Possessing a disproportionate zeal for "being an ass," Vinnie symbolically undid or refracted what the instructional rituals work so hard to build up—school culture and its concomitant reification of the cultural order. (McLaren, 1985, p. 91)

Clowning consistently undermined the authority of the teachers and instruction, as well as the norms of the school itself. "Hegemony is both sustained and contested through our 'style' of engaging the world and the ways in which we ritualize our daily lives; our gestural embodiments, our rhythmical practices, and our lived forms of resistance" (McLaren, 1985, p. 92). Again, the researcher's focus here remains on the clowns, or the marginalized groups who are opposing authority, rather than on a more ecological exploration—from teachers', from kids, from parents' points of view—of the phenomenon of opposition in school. As was true with CCCS scholars, North American resistance theorists often focused inquiry upon the individual or group engaged in oppositional acts and on the structural critique believed to be encoded in opposition.[14] Although this strategy was important to understanding resistance as something distinct from "deviancy," it often left unexplored the many other school actors and contexts which were in relationship to the resistant group, as well as other possible explanations for oppositional school acts besides the desire for socio-political transformation.[15]

Some of the more transactional work on resistance in education has emerged from the field of cultural anthropology. Using ethnographic methods, researchers in this discipline have investigated and analyzed the relative success of oppressed groups within public schooling. Fordham and Ogbu (1986), for example, examined cultural systems relevant to Black communities in the United States, and forwarded the idea that Black students are forced to choose between assimilation or the construction of an oppositional social identity (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Fordham, 1988). Students must either become "raceless" or reinforce their indigenous culture in the school

context, thereby jeopardizing their success[16] in school and beyond (similar to Willis' findings). In her work at Capital High School in Washington, DC, Fordham finds that many of the high-achieving students must become raceless, like one student she calls Rita.

> Despite her verbal claims that she does not view being Black in America as a negative factor, her constant disparagement of those activities and events generally associated with Black Americans negates her claims, suggesting, instead, a preference for those activities her family and some of her friends view as "White activities." (Fordham, 1988, p. 68)

Black students at Capital High must move between two cultures, "the indigenous Black American cultural system and the individualistic, impersonal cultural system of the dominant society" (Fordham, 1988, p. 79). Because Black students are denied opportunities for high achievement in schools, they perceive that they must give up their "Blackness" in order to succeed in the dominant society.

Deyhle (1995), also working in the discipline of cultural anthropology, has studied Navajo youth, families, and schools on one reservation for over a decade. Her work challenges some of Ogbu's theories on resistance. Rather than assuming that all caste-like minorities have similar experiences of cultural exclusion and resistance, Deyhle asserts that indigenous groups like the Navajo represent a specific case of "racial warfare," in which Anglo values compete with Navajo values both in the Anglo-run public schools and workplaces.

> Ogbu argues that castelike minorities face schooling with a set of secondary cultural characteristics—a reinterpretation of traditional culture that is developed *after* contact with the dominant White group—to help them cope with the social, economic, political, and psychological history of rejection by the dominant group and its institutions. Schools, as sites of conflict with the dominant group, are seen as a threat to their cultural identity. These castelike minorities have developed oppositional cultural responses to schooling as they reject a system that has rejected them. (Deyhle, 1995, p. 27)

Deyhle accepts Ogbu's general framework but argues that Navajo are different from other castelike minorities in American culture, having played distinct economic roles than other minority groups. Only a small part of Navajo culture can appropriately be called oppositional, however; "Navajos face and resist the domination of their Anglo neighbors from an intact cultural base that was not developed in reaction to Anglo subordination" (Deyhle, 1995, p. 28). Resistance, for Navajo youth, serves not to merely oppose Anglo authority but to affirm Navajo cultural identity and integrity. "Navajo youth who resist school are in fact resisting the district's educational goal of taking the 'Navajoness' out of their Navajo students" (Deyhle, 1995, p. 40).

Cultural anthropologists have helped to move some of the more interactionist theories of resistance into more transactional modes of inquiry, at least where methodology is concerned. Anthropological field methods may help researchers look at cultural contexts in a more holistic and extensive way, thus enabling them to often go beyond simplistic labeling[17] of complex social phenomenon. Resistance (and accommodation) of both Black students and Navajo students is understood as a reaction to historic and structural oppression, not as a cultural manifestation of inherent qualities. Resistance of the Navajo is seen as a reaction of cultural self-protection and sustenance. Cultural anthropologists help us understand resistance as a reaction to oppression, conditioned, mediated, and sustained over time.

Yet cultures are, all too often, represented as pure forms in these accounts. In Fordham's work, the analysis focuses on two kinds of Black people—the raceless and resisters—and one dominant White culture that dictates norms of success and failure. In Deyhle's account, there is Navajo culture and there is White culture. Culture is rarely represented as multifaceted or as experiencing hybrid forms. Therefore, the individuals within these cultures are usually struggling to negotiate a bicultural positioning, almost always to the defeat of the minority cultural norms and values. Although I do not wish to deny the struggles of these students as depicted by Fordham and Deyhle, how are we to make sense of bicultural accounts in our contemporary cultural spheres? Is the bicultural oppositioning, forwarded by some of the interactionist assumptions of cultural studies of conflict, the lone interpretation of these human relations within diverse social groups? No doubt these accounts possess important truths, but what more could we understand about resistance if these interactionist assumptions were themselves challenged? Postmodern and post-structural theories of power are in a position to assert such challenges.

The Influence of Postmodern and Post-Structural Thinking on Resistance Inquiry

Critiques raised by those researchers influenced by postmodern and post-structural movements focus on Marxism's notions of class-based structures as the absolute basis for reproduction and resistance theorizing. One Foucaultian scholar sums up this critique:

> One of the ideas in radical education and progressive politics that needs to be interrogated seriously is the idea of the chief contradiction, a central notion in Marxist politics. According to this notion, it is necessary to find the chief contradiction in a society and reverse that contradiction before other work (e.g., reform in education) is likely to give desired results. The chief contradiction in Western societies is . . . between bourgeois and proletarian classes. This contradiction is supposed to have a status that could, and should, guide other progressive work. For example, Giroux in his early work . . . emphasized the importance of teachers building up counter-hegemonic and emanci-

> patory work in schools, as opposed to doing hegemonic and oppressive work. . . . From a Foucaultian perspective, no discourse is inherently liberating or oppressive. . . . Thus, it is not possible to invent an antiposition, freed from the authority from which we sought freedom—as Giroux's position seems to entail. (Jóhannesson, 1998, pp. 306–307)

Postmodern critiques of dualistic Western philosophical traditions have revealed how "grand narratives" (Lyotard, 1984), such as Marx's drama of the class conflict, confuse and conceal the multiple dimensions of social conflict and power struggle. Instead of searching for the "true" liberatory agenda that will free disadvantaged students from their future positions in America's underclass, the postmodern challenge is to conceive of resistance as waged in everyday struggles across multiple axes of domination and influence such as gender, technology, sexuality, race, class, ethnicity, and knowledge. Thus, we can see how the influence of postmodern and post-structural theories help to move resistance theorizing into potentially wider theoretical spheres and possibilities for more transactionalist inquiry.

A good example of such theoretical movement is Lather's *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy With/in the Postmodern* (1991), a work exploring the resistance of university students to the women's studies curriculum that she teaches. Resistance, in this volume, is not limited to the working class subverting the dominant class; Lather's work demonstrates how all forms of (classroom) authority, even those that proclaim to be liberating, are actively resisted (see also Shor, 1996). Lather advocates the exploration and challenging of dominant norms and cultural beliefs in the classroom but acknowledges "the danger [of] . . . substituting our own reifications for those of the dominant culture" (Lather, 1991, p. 75). The solution to structural oppression is not simply to reprogram students, for "[r]eproducing the conceptual map of the teacher in the mind of the student disempowers through reification and recipe approaches to knowledge" (Lather, 1991, p. 76). Rather than seeking to simply oppose student ideology with her own, and often more critical, views—an interactionist interpretation of the communicative potential of shared meanings—Lather conceptualizes the intricacy of communicating across ideological divides. Not only does Lather's work reveal how resistance can be used by middle-class university students to reject knowledge that they do not understand or find politically suspect; she offers a definition of resistance that is broader and perhaps more directly applicable for educators. According to a graduate student who helps teach the course, resistance is

> A word for the fear, dislike, hesitance most people have about turning their entire lives upside down and watching everything they have ever learned disintegrate into lies. "Empowerment" may be liberating, but it is also a lot of hard work and new responsibility to sort through one's life and rebuild according to one's own values and choices. (Lather, 1991, p. 76)

Lather's definition challenges the idea that critical pedagogy involves the replacement of one (incorrect, oppressive) belief system with another (liberatory, democratic) belief system. Like McLaren, she links student resistance "to knowledge forms that render them passive and render their own experience meaningless" (McLaren, 1989, p. 198), but unlike earlier critical theorists, she acknowledges that any curriculum, regardless of its liberatory intent, can render students into passive objects. As Munro argues, "the concept of knowledge as resistance/emancipation still assumes an inherently human essence waiting to be liberated from an unjust, imposed power structure." On the contrary, she argues in concert with Lather and following Foucault's (1977) insights, "there is no archimedean point or privileged site of power" (Munro, 1996, p. 19).

Another assumption regarding resistance that has recently been questioned by feminist post-structuralist researchers is the aspect of "consciousness" that is so central to North American resistance theorizing. Recall that Giroux (1983a) speaks of the resistance of moral actors as "conscious" and "intentional" (see also Bullough, Gitlin, & Goldstein, 1984) in order to differentiate between simple opposition, with no liberatory intent, and the political agency behind acts of resistance. But as post-structuralism has undermined the idea of a unitary subject, resistance becomes far more pluralistic in form. "Because power is decentered and plural, so, in turn, are forms of political struggle," and this requires, Munro argues, the re-envisioning of resistance and agency (Munro, 1996, p. 20). In her study of women teachers, she found models of resistance that were far less politicized and conscious than in previous resistance inquiry. In the discussion of her study of women teachers using life history methodology, she argues that

> Women teachers resist traditional notions of career, success, and commitment which separate, dichotomize and establish hierarchical levels. . . . In continually "becoming," in naming and renaming, in moving back and forth into the margins, women actively subvert and decenter dominant relations. (Munro, 1996, p. 25)

Other researchers, exploring the myth of the unitary subject, use psychoanalytic insights to understand how resistance is not simply a sociological concept, but "a process of managing psychic conflict" as well, a method of learning and not learning new knowledge (Pitt, 1998, p. 536). Pitt reflects on how participants in research may tell their resistance stories or moments in ways that "conceal a much more ambivalent story of implication in the very knowledge that one is at pains to refuse." She maintains that "the problem is that psychoanalytic theories complicate all of our stories of engagement with knowledge by insisting upon the role of unconscious processes in the making of such stories" (Pitt, 1998; see also Britzman, 1998).

Resistance is not simply a product of a conscious self, nor is it is a product of disembodied persons. Building on Foucaultian insights, postmodern feminist scholars have attempted to expand ideas of resistance that reflect individuals at work against the embodiment of cultural norms. Bor-

do's (1993) feminist critique focuses on how Western bodies have been disciplined to correspond to certain narrow norms of beauty and desirability. She uses the theory of Foucault to describe how power relations are "never seamless but are always spawning new forms of culture and subjectivity, new opportunities for transformation."

> So, for example, the woman who goes into a rigorous weight-training program in order to achieve the currently stylish look may discover that her new muscles give her the self-confidence that enables her to assert herself more forcefully at work. Modern power-relations are thus unstable; resistance is perpetual and hegemony precarious. (Bordo, 1993, p. 27–28)

Munro (1996) describes the work of Davis and Fisher (1993), who theorize resistance in a similar vein of embodiment and discipline as they describe the dispersed, diffuse paths of power, "circulating through the social body and exerting its authority through self-surveillance and everyday, disciplinary micropractices" (Munro, 1996, p. 19). Feminist post-structural and postmodern insights explore the fields of resistance both on and inside our bodies and minds.[18]

Educational researchers in critical theory have, in light of postmodern and post-structural influences, attempted to bring the insights of modernistic reproduction theories into sync with notions of a fragmented, partially conscious, and contradictory subject. Critical theorists have attempted to recognize the complications of the postmodern self while not wavering from the economic focus and historical materialism of Marxism. McLaren's work on resistance (1993) challenges monolithic cultural norms while emphasizing the unwavering goal of material transformation of unjust conditions. For McLaren, diverse citizens do not all need to think the same way (as is true in Bordo's work, wherein diverse citizens need not all look the same way); all citizens do need, however, to be educated in ways that will enable constructive dialogue, conflict, and public work that is built on multicultural alliances of all kinds. McLaren's pedagogy of "resistance postmodernism" (1993, p. 138) encourages teachers and other cultural workers to resist dominant forms of teaching, learning, and knowledge, transforming their work environments, curricula, and interactions with students. These transformations demand that cultural workers "take up the issue of 'difference' in ways that don't replay the monocultural essentialism of the 'centrisms'—Anglocentrism, Eurocentrism, . . . and the like" (McLaren, 1993).

In his latest works, McLaren's marriage of Marxism and postmodernism is more heavily weighted in favor of the revolutionary transformations of Marxism than in previous accounts of reproduction and resistance (McLaren, 1998). This trend in McLaren's work reflects the dilemmas of critical theorists who are witnessing the global downfall of socialist alternatives as the injustices of market logic ravage the promises of critical democracy in our time. The call to class struggle in McLaren's more recent work is therefore revived. He laments that, at present, "when social class is discussed, it is usually

viewed as relational, not as oppositional" (McLaren, 1998, p. 439). McLaren wants educators to contest "the unconstrained domination of capital that masquerades as freedom," without laying claim to any universalizing positions on liberation, as more modernist versions of critical pedagogy sought to do (McLaren, 1998, p. 447). Teachers can develop lessons of resistance against late capitalism, as Bigelow describes in his curriculum on global sweatshops for high school students (in McLaren, 1998, p. 456). Resistance is used, in McLaren's vision of critical pedagogy, to pursue the ideal communicative democracy through the development of critical reflexivity, critical knowledge, and sociopolitical action. As McLaren returns to Marxist interactionist notions of oppressed/oppressor and justice, his critics note that Marxist metanarratives are less likely than ever to inspire the kind of revolution desired by some critical pedagogues.[19]

Although postmodern forms of resistance often attempt to retain the justice-oriented goals of neo-Marxist work in this area, the works of Lather, McLaren, and others helpfully move resistance theorizing into a number of promising transactional realms of inquiry and understanding. First, the field is pushed to move "beyond the 'either-or' logic of assimilation and resistance" (McLaren, 1993, p. 131). Rather than treating cultures as closed, intact entities with which we must both identify and assimilate or resist from a distance, we are urged to seek the complexities rather than the closures of intercultural relations. Second, resistance inquiry influenced by postmodern and post-structural world-views also acknowledges that individual subjects are not of one cultural context or orientation, but are hybrids—moving through cultural spaces and times, not essentializable to a set of character traits, beliefs, or political stances. Identities of persons and cultures become more complex, reflecting the view of persons and cultures as organic, changing, fragmented, living entities. Third, we are urged to see power relations not as predetermined, but with both hegemonic and transformative potential. In sum, these "post" researchers use some of the antifoundationalist lessons of postmodern and post-structural critique, combining them with a vision of democratic practice. In the process, resistance inquiry takes on more transactional understandings of power, social relations, and conflict. Lather's scholarship, for example, examines the transactional nature of teacher/student relationship in a critical classroom and questions how her intentions for liberation are understood and resisted by students. She begins to focus not simply on those resisting and their critique, but on the relational, communicative context of that critique.

As we conclude this critique of resistance theory in light of pragmatist notions of transactionalism, we see how postmodern and post-structural thinking has helped to tear down and reconfigure the notions of power and resistance in schools. In the last part of the paper, I illustrate how pragmatist notions of communication and community can be usefully employed in resistance theorizing and its application by educators. How can resistance work in schools be employed to more directly transform public spheres of education? I will discuss the antifoundational concepts of community and

communication that are central to the argument that resistance represents communicative acts in the pragmatist sense. I will further argue that these conceptions of communication and community can be useful to resistance work; indeed, I hope to demonstrate that without communal forms of relations, we are unlikely to understand resistance for its communicative potential. Resistance has little power as social critique without a community to read, interpret, and respond to its enactment.

Resistance, Communication, and Community

Resistance theorists, from Marxist to Foucaultian in orientation, have certain limited notions of community inscribed in their discourses and theorizing. Community, when it is explicitly revealed in any form as a notion relevant for resistance conceptualizations, is discussed as the bonding between persons who suffer together and resist in solidarity. Community is intimately tied up in the experience of oppression, in these accounts. Communication is presented as a conductor of limited information between two distinct communities, oppressors and oppressed; the communication of resistance is largely understood in both modernist and postmodernist renderings of resistance, therefore, as interactionist: causally determined actions or behaviors between opposed forces for whom communication is, at best, an exchange of information and at worst, a competitive struggle for control. For example, in Mullard's view, "resistance should be seen as an expression of power relationships where socially distinct groups interact competitively, each possessing interests that are 'anchored in diametrically alternative conception of social reality' " (Mullard, 1985, cited in Soloman, 1992, p. 12). Even in more postmodern renditions of resistance theory, such competitive, oppositional notions of individuals and groups imply that communities designed to provide for intercultural meaning or communication are wholly absent, appearing only in false forms which disguise institutional power wielded by authorities. In such formulations of resistance, complex identities, alliances, and social webs are completely erased; multiple identities and the contexts of the actors and the situation are frozen in time. In conceptions of resistance, community is most often seen as a term reflecting dominant discourses of normalization and hegemony.[20]

Communication, the foundation of pragmatist notions of community, involves the sharing of experience, not the sharing of certain physical traits, or world-views, or metaphysical beliefs. Communities certainly can be formed from shared experiences of marginalization, especially if oppression and exclusion have historically victimized the group. Such communities provide the networks and relations in which collective political actions might develop. However, these foundations of solidarity and sameness are not are only experiences of community, for we are members of multiple communities with amorphous, shifting boundaries. An example might provide an illustration of the web-like ties of community in a school. A working-class female teacher is potentially aligned with a number of communities that

might command her loyalties and commitments. As a working class person she may be deeply involved with class-based struggles in her school against the administration and school board, but may simultaneously feel a deep allegiance to many of the female administrators in her school. These administrators, let us imagine, were people to whom she turned on several occasions for help in building a formal sexual harassment case against her former chair. Though her working class community is engaged in resistance to school policies and norms that exclude working class interests, she simultaneously considers herself allied in certain ways to administrators, and these alliances mark both the acts of resistance as well as the ways in which these acts are received, understood, and acted upon by those involved. In speaking of resistance as persons or communities aligning against one another to combat oppression or marginalization, notions of more complex communal ties and relational webs are dismissed. In light of considerations of multiple identities—credited to postmodern theorists but acknowledged by pragmatists at the turn of the century—no one person belongs only to one community. Nor do historic experiences of marginalization solely determine identity and communal bonds in the present. The interactionist nature of most resistance theory sheds no light on the multiple cultural meanings of community, ignoring the complex relational ties of participants as well as the fact that resistance takes place in institutional communities[21] of various types. There is often a larger community within which both those who resist and those who are in authority live together and share some meaning.

Dewey's transactionalism can be useful in expanding the limited accounts of both communication and community that we find embedded in much of the current theory. Dewey offers us conceptual beginnings for understanding the communication process. Students and/or teachers who are engaged in opposition are taking the first steps toward the creation of a shared social enterprise. In actual fact, these first steps of opposition signal the interruption of old meanings—meanings that occupied primary position in the shared enterprise, whether through domination, historical acceptance, or a combination of factors—to signal that new meanings are in the making. Opposition, simply put, presents a problem; it presents a change in conditions that further demands inquiry, reflection, discussion, and action. Gouinlock has this to say about Dewey's notions of inquiry:

> Inquiry, he says, is initiated just because the situation is problematic in some crucial way. Prior to inquiry, the status of relevant events in the environment is somehow puzzling or uncertain; otherwise, inquiry would not occur. The very process of inquiry is inseparable from manipulating and organizing overt events, and its intent is to *produce* the full-fledged object. Clearly, it is not reducible to conversation. (Gouinlock, 1995, p. 78)

Resistance can be viewed as a productive step toward inquiry. Inquiry, the experimental approach to problem solving, necessitates communication—a concept that Dewey insists is not simply conversational in nature but

involves shared work (mind and body, mental and physical, material and discursive). Through this work, Dewey believed that the parties involved could be reoriented towards the initial problem. "In order to produce objects of perception (as of knowledge) suitable to the peculiarities of the problematic situation, some sort of intentional reorientation toward the troubling conditions must be undertaken" (Gouinlock, 1995, p. 78). That reorientation takes place in acts of communication, which modify all parties involved in resistance:

> To be a recipient of a communication is to have an enlarged and changed experience. One shares in what another has thought and felt and in so far, meagerly or amply, has his own attitude modified. Nor is the one who communicates left unaffected. (Dewey, 1916, p. 5)

Dewey defines communication as the sharing of experience which "modifies the disposition for both parties" who engage in the experience (Dewey, 1916, p. 9). The act of opposition produces growth and changes in the current situation among all involved through inquiry and communication.

In recent years, however, community is a notion summoned to enforce moral order rather than set intersubjective inquiry into motion. The idea of community, unfortunately, signals homogeneity and normalization, assimilation and closure, forces which do nothing to illuminate resistance as a valuable impetus for inquiry and dialogue. Is any notion of community reconcilable to postmodern notions of fragmentation, power, and fluidity of identities? For example, does a pragmatist conception of communication and community require "shared subjectivity," as some critics of communitarianism argue (Young, 1990, p. 230)? Shared subjectivity is the idea that in community, individual needs, wants, and selves are—if not completely then at least significantly—assimilated into common ends and a common, single vision of shared existence. Young believes that the community ideal is inextricably and dangerously linked to the ideal of shared subjectivity. She argues that "the ideal of community expresses a desire for social wholeness, symmetry, a security and solid identity which is objectified because affirmed by others unambiguously" (Young, 1990, p. 232). Such a wholeness and security is an illusion, but more critically, it is one that threatens the pluralism of a democracy, instilling racism, classism, and various other exclusionary norms.

Young is correct that neo-Aristotelian ideals of community are often constructed around our desires for intersubjective understanding, solidarity, and communion with like others; the ideal of community summoned in pragmatist thinking is to be distinguished from such a dream by its experimental methods of inquiry and reflection, and by its democratic antifoundationalism and faith in human freedom. The idea of community in pragmatism requires active citizenship in which shared experience creates the bonds of members. These bonds of experience help to construct the shifting structures of consensus on which shared life is continuously built

and rebuilt. The life that is shared by members does not inherently destroy individuality nor assimilate persons into one solid identity. If we are members of multiple communities, as pragmatists insist, then we must retain important individual meanings, symbols, and narratives through our various experiences of communal life. Our various experiences of community life act to resist closure onto any one communal narrative or identity.

Although Dewey's theories of transactionalism, communication, and community all resist a normalizing, homogeneous view of community life, his theories must certainly be put in a dialectic with postmodern, feminist, and other critical discourses on power. Dewey's thinking on difference was hampered, for instance, by a focus on pluralism, or as Fraser describes it (1997, p. 185), a view of difference that "is viewed as intrinsically positive and inherently cultural." Seigfried also notes this weakness in classical pragmatism when she notes that "[p]ragmatists are more likely to emphasize that everyone is significantly and valuably Other, while feminists often expose the controlling force exercised by those who have the power to construct the Other as a subject of domination" (Seigfried, 1996, p. 267). Feminism is one framework that helps pragmatism construct a more insightful analysis of power, and feminist as well as other critical perspectives on pragmatism help to interrogate and reconstruct Dewey's ideas in light of contemporary critiques of power.[22]

By arguing for a pragmatist notion of community, am I turning a blind eye to power, and arguing for an end to conflict, a closure to the constant fissures in human relations? Conflict in the form of challenging institutional authority, after all, is at the heart of resistance theorizing; the belief that such challenges can produce new understandings of participants and of power relations drives the ideal of resistance in critical theory. Community is often rhetorically summoned in both popular and academic discourses as a smoothing-over, a healing band-aid to chaotic institutions and worlds. By borrowing from Dewey's philosophy, however, my emphasis on community deliberately depends on the idea of conflict. Because community members do not dissolve in communities, because members are both individuals and members in important ways, difference and conflict are not only unavoidable, they are enriching to common life.

> A progressive society counts individual variations as precious since it finds in them the means of its own growth. Hence, a democratic society must . . . allow for intellectual freedom and the play of diverse gifts and interest in its educational measures. (Dewey, 1916, p. 305)

Central to this idea of community is the erasure of the binary opposition between individual and community. Resistance is the point where individual agency meets communal norms; communication, in the Deweyan sense, implies that all parties are altered in the experience. Although Dewey's theory does not sufficiently illuminate contemporary problems of institutional hierarchy and hegemony, transactionalism offers us a theoretical per-

spective to understand resistance in a communicative framework. Although Dewey's transactionalism is an important lens with which to read resistance scholarship and work, as I argue here, it too must be continually read against and critiqued by contemporary critical pragmatists, critical theorists, postmodernist, feminists, and others.

Dewey's notions of transactionalism, communication, and community are at the heart of my argument here, but it would be unwise to limit a rendering of educational community to only Dewey's views on the topic. Postmodern theorists and others will find fault with much of Dewey's pragmatism, including his naturalistic metaphysics; critical theorists will find him wanting for his shortcomings as a radical; feminists and others will find his work lacking insightful analysis into power. All of these critiques should be used to reconstruct classical pragmatist philosophy for our own times, as Dewey would have wanted. Yet, as I argue here, it will benefit contemporary resistance theorizing if scholars of power and difference might also look back at classical pragmatism as a conceptual resource. In turning back to Dewey's concept of transactionalism, we find an idea relevant to current resistance theories as they continue to unfold.

In interpreting resistance as a potentially valuable expression, conflict can be a first step in the inquiry required to formulate common political and moral aims in schooling. Yet it is often treated as "an obstruction to be beaten down, not as an invitation to reflection" (Dewey, 1981, in Seigfried, 1996, p. 166). A number of factors in progressive educational practice can influence the success of resistance as a source of inquiry rather than the impetus for further silencing and exclusion of certain students. Progressive educators can cultivate conditions that are right for shared norms of inquiry, critique, and deliberation on current practices and ends. If these conditions are right in an educational institution, communication can foster more shared meanings and aims. Such conditions—a willingness to question, critique, investigate, and learn in the search for clarity and multiple perspectives—require both moral and intellectual habits not easily cultivated in today's assessment-happy schools. The challenge of this work is considerable, especially when we consider that it compels educators to truly listen and respond to the needs of some of our schools' most marginalized students, students for whom quick solutions of "zero tolerance" discipline are increasingly popular. Communal practices around resistance, as suggested here, could limit or halt the objectification of resistant students who are, at present, more easily seen as "other" and shuttled off to special schools, programs, or the streets rather than affirmed and acknowledged.

To their vast credit, resistance theories have served to enlighten educators regarding the potential relevance of opposition for students. Yet acts of resistance are not self-revealing political statements that take place in social vacuums. They occur in the social sphere—in educational communities, for example—and as such, resistant acts take on complex and often contradictory meanings for those who experience them, including those authorities who react in official and unofficial ways to these acts. Resistance, like any

communicative act, changes all those involved in the experience, and can open up possibilities for dialogue, communication, and even community between unlikely parties. These possibilities are opened up in institutions that foster critical reflection among practitioners and students, an open atmosphere with communal norms of trust, dialogue, and shared work. Regrettably, we have much work to do before many our schools can be places where people are encouraged or even allowed to cultivate these norms and practices.

Notes

[1]I have included, in this category, a wide variety of educational and social theorists who may or may not label themselves "resistance theorists." What these theorists—Marxists, neo-Marxists, poststructuralists, and feminists alike—hold in common are their contributions to the analysis of resistance or opposition exhibited in schools or other social institutions.

[2]In using Dewey's theory of transactionalism here to critique and revise resistance theory, I do not claim perfection or absolute truth in Deweyan pragmatism (neither, for that matter, did Dewey himself); rather, pragmatism is employed here as a tool which, though important to the task at hand, must itself be read critically. One primary example of how Dewey's pragmatism must be read with and against more contemporary and critical perspectives concerns pragmatism's silence on relations of power. Although Dewey acknowledged conflict as an inherent part of the coordination of human experience, he, like other pragmatists, did not fully emphasize or theorize the power dynamics attached to human conflict. Communication, as contemporary critical and feminist pragmatist thinkers point out, is a process conducted within, and shaped by, relations of power (Knight Abowitz, 1999b; Seigfried, 1996, Cherryholmes, 1988). Although some might argue that Dewey's conceptions of domination may have crippled his social theory, I do not believe that this flaw damages my argument that resistance, while typically solely analyzed with a conception of power and domination, is fundamentally a communicative act, thus requiring a theory of communication in which to ground its meanings.

[3]Garrison (1999) notes that "early in his career Dewey adhered to neo-Hegelianism, but eventually drifted away . . . . Having abandoned Hegelianism he also abandoned the idea of the Absolute, of ultimate cosmic purpose (telos or entelecheia), or any ultimate eschatology, fulfilling itself in history" (p. 362). Garrison does note that by 1916, Dewey had formulated his naturalistic metaphysics that is a reconstructed version of Aristotle's metaphysics of the actual and the potential (p. 365).

[4]This example is based on Solomon's "Jocks" in his 1992 study of a Toronto high school.

[5]For purposes of illustration, I limit my example here to two opposing cultures, but interactionist views do not magically limit this number of groups or individuals in any way.

[6]Critical pragmatists, in particular, have emphasized the importance of conflict in democratic communal constructions (see Knight Abowitz, 1999a).

[7]Resistance theorists are not alone in their affinity for an interactionist perspective. Colwell (1993) notes that "the prevailing outlook in science, philosophy, and human affairs is still largely interactional."

[8]My delineation and categorization of modern and postmodern resistance theories is, of course, a construction for my own purposes, but my rationale is simply to distinguish those resistance theorists more indebted to a Marxist theoretical paradigm from those who conceive of resistance as a strategy or action more or less separate from any one theoretical narrative.

[9]I provide only a brief sketch of this work here, because the contributions of the CCCS are well documented in the literature. See, for example, Gelder and Thornton (1997).

[10]Hargreaves (1982) has a more damning name for this: theoretical closure.

[11]Joas (1992, chap. 3) reveals how the Frankfurt School scholars found America in particular to be a wasteland of Western capitalism.

[12]Resistance theorists, especially those I have labeled "modernist" here, have been especially interested in student resistance of authority in school, but resistance is a strategy also utilized by teachers in school to assert their agency for the purposes of progressive social transformation (see Munro, 1996; Filax, 1997).

[13] Fine (1991) argues that dropping out is a final (and perhaps the ultimately self-defeating) form of resistance: " . . . it is often the academic critic resisting the intellectual and political girdles of schooling who drops out or is pushed out of low-income schools" (p. 50).

[14]Reading McLaren's article on "clowning" in *Journal of Education* (1985) renders this limited impression of his resistance theorizing. A more thorough examination of the practice in the larger work, *Schooling as a Ritual Performance*, provides a more complex view of the resistance practice. This is especially true when considering McLaren's new introduction and coda which positions his work as much more influenced by both post-modernism and historical materialism than when he originally studied the Toronto Catholic school for Schooling as a Ritual Performance. I discuss this more fully later in the article.

[15]As an example, Hargreaves criticizes Anyon's study for using resistance as "a trawling device which, like a finely meshed fishing net, sweeps the oceans of pupil activity for 'appropriate' examples, allowing only the smallest and most insignificant items of pupil activity to get away" (1982, p. 113). Similar to Walker's critique of Willis, Hargreaves sees Anyon's work as crediting all pupil opposition with resistance.

[16]Used here to mean completing school and moving on to post-secondary training/education and secure employment with a fair wage.

[17]Pitt (1998) refers to this tendency to label resistance as stories of "good" and "bad" resistance—the good resistance occurs when the oppressed becomes conscious of their plight and mindfully executes successful opposition against the status quo. The bad forms of resistance serve ultimately to reproduce the status quo. Pitt (1998) and other feminists influenced by psychoanalytic inquiry wish to complicate these good and bad stories of resistance.

[18]In my own conception of resistance as a communicative, transactional act that must be accounted for in progressive educational practice, I utilize a social interpretation of the term. In doing so I do not wish to ignore the insights of psychoanalytic theorists, but consider a sociological interpretation more "visible" for educators and more available for the types of inquiry and problem-solving practices that might be possible and necessary in school settings. Educators should always keep in mind, however, that socialized resistance is only one aspect of the conflicts at play in classroom opposition.

[19]Several rebuttals to McLaren's 1998 Educational Theory article make use of some of the postmodern and post-structural insights mentioned previously in this article. Lather objects to "the assumptions McLaren makes about the possibilities of a universalizing discourse of truth telling, and correct readings in the face of ambiguity and uncertainty" (1998, p. 492). Biesta strikes a similar postmodern note in his rebuttal, using a Derridean concept of justice to argue that "a critical pedagogy committed to justice will, therefore, have to articulate this commitment out of a recognition of the impossibility of justice" (1998, p. 510).

[20]Carlson (1997) labels such constructions part of a "normalizing community" discourse which, associated with cultural neoconservatism, seeks to recapture a "romanticized lost American community." "In unsettling times," Carslon notes, "such hyper-normalizing constructions of community have a wide, popular appeal" (p. 100).

[21]This is not to suggest that all institutions are communities; schools can, with a great deal of intention and work on the part of adults and students, construct public forms of community in which norms of interdependence and democratic participation are normed. I pose this construction as an ideal of the democratic education envisioned by Dewey (1916) and more contemporary authors on the subject (Shor, 1996).

[22]For elaboration on this point, see Knight Abowitz (1999a). Other hybrids that are potentially well-positioned for the work of critiquing and reconstructing classical pragmatism include the prophetic pragmatism of West [see, for example, West (1993a, 1993b)] or critical pragmatism [see Cherryholmes (1988)].

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Manuscript received May 13, 1999
Revision received October 20, 1999; February 29, 2000
Accepted August 24, 2000