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emancipation, resistance and communal action
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This article explores possibilities for critical approaches to leadership in contemporary schools. Focusing on recent critiques of so-called traditional critical approaches by 'postmodern' scholars, I contrast their preferences for resistant over emancipatory (revolutionary) action with the former. In doing so I compare Marx's, Habermas', Baudrillard's and Foucault's views of human regulation, the roles of the individual self or subject and the constitution and function of groups in their respective theories and assess their utility for critical leadership in education. I conclude that the key for a politics that will enable individuals to resist oppressive school practices rests with the ability of subjects to recognize and seek out forms of community they share with others. I conclude the article with an example of how one school employed these kinds of strategies.

If any one topic has captivated scholars and practitioners interested in the administration and management of schools over the last few decades, it has been the idea of leadership. Educators have focused much attention on leadership because they believed, and continue to believe, that it holds the key to improving the performance of schools and the life situations of men, women and children. Not all academics approach the topic in the same way, however. The dominant 'managerial' stream, for example, has operated on the assumption that if provided with the right kind of information, school leaders, usually administrators, will be able to push those buttons that will inspire both teachers and students to reach greater heights. 'Critical' approaches, on the other hand, are concerned less with matters of efficiency and positional authority. Instead many who adopt this view occupy themselves with finding ways to help schools improve the life situations of disadvantaged groups and individuals. They do so by elevating the importance of social critique and advocating measures which they believe will advance the value and practice of social justice, democracy and equity (see for example, Smyth (1989a)).

The late entry of critical approaches into the leadership arena has provided a valuable alternative for those interested in pursuing issues of

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social justice. They came at a time when equity issues were beginning to attract more and more attention. Indeed over the last decade or so practitioners and scholars have increasingly emphasized the inability of our educational institutions to address adequately issues associated with race/ethnicity (West 1994, Cashmore 1996), gender (Sadker and Sadker 1994, Gilligan 1982), class (Barlow and Robertson 1994, Bourdieu and Passeron 1977) and sexual preference (Anderson 1994, Whitlock 1989), among others. The point they consistently make is that young men and women who find themselves on the least valued side of these categories routinely experience disadvantages in schools. This differential treatment may be subtly or blatantly biased. Below I describe a case that illustrates treatment of the latter sort. While it may be only one specific case, readers will undoubtedly acknowledge it as a situation that requires action and, indeed, leadership, if such situations are to be eliminated.

The case revolves around a series of events that took place in an ethnically diverse school located in large North American city (Ryan *et al.* 1995). It involved a situation where a senior high school student, originally from South America, was subjected to racist treatment, in of all places, a religious service. Below is just a part of the student's own account of his demeaning treatment at the hands of a number of this fellow students. It describes only one highlight in a series of actions that lasted for a much longer time. The young man writes:

> Someone grabs a hold of my bench and starts shaking it back and forth. I feel all the parts of my body shake along with the bench, not because of pain or fear, but by simple laws of motion. 'No problem', I think to myself. I've had to go through worse. Then a voice. 'Look at his head jiggle guys. Look at the packy's head jiggle'. (Ryan *et al.* 1995: 73)

How then are critical approaches to leadership equipped to deal with this and other like events? Perhaps the most significant aspect of critical approaches in this regard is that, unlike managerial perspectives, they emphasize the importance of taking action that will eliminate the kind of inequitable social conditions that give rise to these sorts of oppressive situations. Taking their cue from the social criticism tradition, pieces like those contained in Smyth's (1989a) excellent edition, supply readers with analyses and insights in this area previously not readily available. But while these and other such contributions to critical notions of leadership are invaluable, those interested in such matters need also to acknowledge other recent advances in critical social science. Some of these approaches are critical of 'traditional' critical social science (e.g. Foucault 1980, Lyotard 1984, Baudrillard 1988). Among other things, proponents of these positions claim that the more traditional approaches cannot adequately account for contemporary social circumstances. Adopting what some refer to as a 'postmodern' perspective, some of these scholars maintain that current conditions demand a different approach to social critique. On the other hand, however, those of a more traditional critical bent accuse the latter of abandoning the spirit of true critique. They maintain that because so-called postmodern positions have few real political possibilities, they are not really 'critical' at all. Habermas (1981), for example, refers to two of

the leading proponents of this perspective, Foucault and Derrida, as 'young conservatives'.[1]

One line of disagreement between the two perspectives revolves around the pursuit of a utopian state. On one hand, traditional critical social scientists like Habermas see their goal as helping humanity attain a state of *emancipation*, one free of all oppression and exploitation. On the other hand, those who are slotted into a postmodern perspective like Foucault maintain that social scientists should abandon efforts to attain this illusory condition, and look instead towards *resistance* or transgression as a more appropriate political practice. These respective choices are not arbitrary. They flow directly from the ways in which these social scientists view social relationships, and in particular, how they conceptualize domination and subordination. Their different views of human regulation, the role of the individual self or subject, and the constitution and function of groups of people in this process dictate that their approaches to political action will also differ. In what follows I explore various approaches to human regulation and their accompanying politics and assess their utility for critical leadership in contemporary schools generally, and in particular, for the case cited above.

This article is organized in the following manner. I first trace the roots of the concept of emancipation. As a way of illustrating this notion, I show how a well known approach, Marxism, employs it. Next I present three contemporary responses to the emancipatory politics of Marxism. In all of this I highlight how Habermas', Baudrillard's and Foucault's views of human regulation, the subject and the functions of groups figure into their approaches to political action. I conclude that while resistance rather than emancipation may be a more appropriate *concept* for a postmodern subject pursuing equity, in *practice* both approaches entail forms of resistance. The key for a politics capable of resisting oppression then rests with the ability of subjects to recognize and seek out forms of community they share with others, however fluid they may be, and with these others to resist those practices that implicate themselves and others in this oppression. Finally, I show how leadership activities in schools can make use of such strategies, and illustrate this by way of the case referred to above.

Emancipatory politics

Social activists and critical social scientists have long been preoccupied with finding ways to liberate oppressed groups from their imposed shackles. The various elements of this emancipatory theme, however, have been around longer than contemporary social science and scientists, according to Fay (1987). Fay maintains that they have also found expression in one form or the other over the years in Platonic, Gnostic, Hebrew and Christian doctrines. Referring to this particular view of existence as self-estrangement theory, Fay provides a breakdown of its composite elements. It runs as follows. Humans are fallen creatures. Blinded to their true situation, they have lost their way. In the process they have created forms of life which have proven to be frustrating and

unsatisfying. All is not lost, however. If men and women can only get rid of their blinders, understand their true needs and capacities, then they can throw off the shackles that currently bind them. Knowledge of this kind can provide them with the ability to reconnect to their sources of vitality and health and the means to refashion their lives so that they will be full and happy.

Of the various traditions associated with self-estrangement theory, the humanist version has perhaps the most pertinence for social science. It assumes that once men and women have come to understand the workings of nature, society and the mind, they will be able to manipulate the physical world and reorganize their social order to improve their collective existence. Fay (1987) notes that the version appropriated by critical social science displays three phases – enlightenment, empowerment and emancipation. As in the self-estrangement theory, knowledge is an important element. Proponents of this view maintain that it plays a key role in empowering the powerless. Once people are provided, ideally through scientific means, with the knowledge about the nature of their oppression, they will be in a better position to intervene in the affairs of the world, and to alter the current social arrangements to ensure human satisfaction. Changes in the social order are possible in this humanist version because the social order need not be what it is. There is nothing preordained or sacrosanct about it. Because men and women are responsible for constructing these social arrangements, they are both capable of, and entitled to, changing them.

The goal of many of those who seek to change oppressive social arrangements is emancipation. One way of understanding emancipation is in terms of autonomy. The theory here is that the oppressed live with barriers that prevent them from exercising their genuine will. The object of emancipatory politics then is to eliminate those situations that limit freedom. Only when these barriers have been dissolved can men, women and children control the direction of their own lives. Fay notes that freedom in this sense is generally conceived as a condition in which people are self-determining. Who they are and what they do is a result of their own decision. Free people shape their lives in accord with laws which they prescribe for themselves. But freedom in this view is not necessarily an individual thing. Because it also concerns groups of people, it is perhaps more appropriate to speak of collective autonomy. In order for groups to be collectively autonomous they must be in a position to determine the conditions of their own existence in accordance with their own rationally acquired self-understandings, free from external forces that might cause them to be other than what they desire. In this regard, groups can be said to achieve a state of collective autonomy when they are in a position to create, legislate and implement their own policies and practices. These policies and practices, however, must be the outcome of rational deliberation and persuasion and not the result of force or manipulative appeals to emotion (Fay 1987).

While those who practice emancipatory politics may strive for a future about which they speak in positive terms, current unfavorable conditions dictate that they adjust their strategies to work *against* unwanted situations.

In other words, as Giddens (1991) maintains, the main orientation is 'away from' rather than 'towards'. In practical terms many men and women who adopt these politics in the contemporary world work to eliminate or reduce exploitation, inequality and oppression. These people operate under a number of assumptions. They presume, first of all, that there are at least two distinct groups, one of which is illegitimately monopolizing resources, thereby denying the exploited group their fair share. They also believe that current social arrangements provide the respective groups with differential access to scarce resources. Finally, they accept that one group is able to ensure the perpetuation of these distribution practices because it has more power than the other exploited group. Exercising power in this way, the former group is able to secure their own privileged position in part by limiting the opportunities of the exploited group. For those who adhere to the emancipatory view, the task is to dismantle these exploitive, unequal and oppressive practices. Ideally groups will attain a state of collective autonomy when and only when they have overturned these social arrangements. Emancipation here means freedom for exploited groups from these debilitating practices.

Marxism represents perhaps the best known example of this position. Marx believed that the burgeoning capitalist system of his time and the relations of production that it spawned were responsible for the exploitation of men, women and children. He looked at advantage and disadvantage in terms of groups or classes of people. One group, the bourgeoisie, by virtue of their control of property and the means of production, enjoyed privileges that their counterparts, the proletariat or working class, did not. Marx felt that such a situation was unacceptable since the relationships that emerged from the production process generated feelings of alienation among the working class, and with it, undue human suffering. The solution for Marx was for the proletariat to change the system of production. The working class, he believed, would be in a position to carry out change through a revolution – peaceful or violent if need be – that would dismantle the system when capitalism reached an inevitable state of crisis. Revolution would clear the way for the new forms of cooperative and consciously-directed labour to replace the institutions of private property, the market and the state. Emancipation would finally be realized as the former working class came to control the terms of their existence in a classless order.

Marx's concept of emancipation carries a number of assumptions with it. Key among these are those that presume a particular view of the individual self or subject and the nature of domination. Poster (1995) contends that although Marx realized that individuals change in different modes of production, he nevertheless saw 'man' as a 'species being' that communism would fully actualize. In other words, he believed individuals to be 'centered' subjects. They have an enduring essence that is quite separate from the social and physical environments in which they find themselves. Unfortunately, (working class) men and women are unable to attain this preordained, rationally autonomous state. They are thwarted from doing so by a capitalist system of production that blocks their realization of this condition. In Marx's view domination then consists of

the imposition of external structures on individual subjects. These
structures prevent men and women from becoming the beings that they
could and should be. Emancipation, on the other hand, consists of
removing these unwanted and unnecessary impositions so that men and
women can be what they were meant to be. For Marx emancipatory activity
is appropriate wherever capitalist production obtains. He does not
differentiate between contexts or types of oppression since he sees
domination as flowing directly from the productive process. Advantage
and disadvantage are in the final analysis an economic matter.[2]

While Marx's ideas have had a profound influence on the world,
some of those concerned with the pursuit of social justice began to
question their use as the twentieth century approached its mid point.
This was because it had become evident that some of Marx's predictions
were not turning out as he would have hoped. For example, capitalist
states were not mired in progressively deepening crises. On the contrary,
they seemed to be more robust than ever. On the other hand, it was also
becoming apparent that communist states were not showing themselves
to be vehicles for the emancipation of the general population. Instead, in
many of these states, one form of oppression had merely replaced
another. The theoretical inadequacies of Marxism were to become even
more evident as the twenty-first century approached. The subsequent
dissolution of many communist states and the increasing complexity of
the relationships of domination and subordination eroded the legitimacy
of Marx's ideas even more. Now it was not just the working class who
appeared to be the objects of oppression. The increasingly obvious
disadvantages of women, students, prisoners, gays, racial and ethnic
minorities and other groups, threw into question Marx's economic
explanation. At the same time, Marxism seemed equally unable to
account for the ascendancy of consumption as a driving force in social
relationships (Featherstone 1991), the impact of global media on men,
women and children (Andersen 1995, Ang 1995, Morely and Robbins
1995), and the changes in the organization of production (Harvey 1989,
Clegg 1990). Key in this area, was the inability of traditional Marxists to
incorporate 'culture' into their analyses in any meaningful way.

Clearly then, a Marxist perspective is limited when it comes to dealing
with situations like the one cited at the beginning of the article. Of these
various limitations, two stand out. The first is Marx's belief that
subordination/domination is exclusively a product of the economy.
Marxism would be unable to acknowledge the racism in this case other
than as a form of oppressive that is inevitably reducible to economics. The
other shortcoming revolves around the ambiguity of action at the local
school level. Because all oppression in a Marxist view originates with global
economic structures, freedom from these structures could only come about
with a revolution that completely overhauls the system. Marxists would
contend that action at the school level to deal with this particular situation
and the conditions that give rise to it, if not in some way directly related to a
larger universal revolutionary movement, would inevitably prove to be
futile. In this view, there would be little point to educators engaging in
locally initiated resistance efforts because they would amount to little more

than piecemeal actions, and in the long run, would have little or no effect whatsoever.

The late twentieth century has brought with it responses to perceived inadequacies in Marxist approaches to advantage and disadvantage. A number of these efforts have attempted to account for changes in the world that Marx did not anticipate a century ago. But while some have tried to rework Marx's ideas, others have looked to other sources of inspiration. The result naturally is that scholars have generated different views, not merely of the nature and consequences of domination, but of human regulation generally. These various views have in turn spawned different approaches to emancipation. Indeed different kinds of political action, or the lack of it, accompany different conceptions of human regulation. Different political action, for example, would flow from a view of control as a form of *repression* as opposed to control conceived as *seduction*, or as a *production*.

Domination as repression

Habermas (1976, 1987) is perhaps the best know contemporary interpreter of Marxist thought. But like so many others in this day and age, he takes issue with many of Marx's ideas. Instead of rejecting Marx out of hand, however, he seeks to reformulate Marxism in a way which he hopes will be useful in the latter part of the twentieth century. Among other things, Habermas attempts to incorporate the cultural realm into his explanatory scheme, something that Marx had failed to do. By moving away from economic determinism, Habermas allows himself a somewhat broader view of domination. Unlike Marx, he is able to recognize and account for those groups whose disadvantage is not necessarily traceable to relations of production. In citing Habermas' work, one must nevertheless acknowledge that it has gone through various stages where views and emphases change. Despite this evolution, however, his view of domination and emancipation has remained essentially intact. While Habermas, particularly in his later works, would attempt to distance himself from their position, his perspective resembles in many ways that of Marx and Habermas' predecessors in the Frankfort School, Horkheimer and Adorno (Miller 1987). In general terms he believes that emancipatory action consists of efforts to free men and women from social arrangements that *repress* their true selves. Poster (1995) maintains that Habermas' view of the individual self or subject differs in few ways from Marx's. It remains pre-given and pre-linguistic. The movement of emancipation, on the other hand, entails efforts to remove structures of domination that have been placed on top of this subject. The lifting of these burdens allows for the release of potentials for freedom already contained by the subject.

Habermas' strategies for achieving emancipation retain a certain degree of continuity over the years, although he did place an emphasis on different aspects at various times. Even in his earlier works, though, he placed a high value on intersubjectivity and communication. In *Knowledge and Human Interests*, for example, their importance is obvious:

> Emancipation implies basically the liberation of social interaction from its institutional frame. This is only possible through the freeing of communication which in its turn allows for a public, unrestricted and power-free discussion on the appropriateness and the desirability of socio-cultural norms and principles. The dialectics of the forces of production and relations of production will have to be replaced by the more abstract dialectics of labor and interaction (Habermas 1976: 89).

In this early phase, psycho-analysis and self-reflection play a part in Habermas' emancipatory strategies. Habermas believes that combating repressive social conditions requires that men and women first be made aware of them. But, even here, intersubjectivity assumes a role, for reflection and subsequent awareness in his scheme are always achieved in conversation with another. In his later work, Habermas (1987) places a greater emphasis on the speech situation. He feels that dialogue between free and equal actors is important because it can lead to rational consensus, a precondition for the achievement of emancipation. When men and women can talk to one another in ideal speech situations, free of institutional distortions and constraints, they will be in a position to deliberate on norms which can pave the way for a state of collective autonomy.

Despite his efforts, Habermas is unable to free himself from the legacy of an essential or transcendental subject. This is due in part to his desire to provide a 'universal pragmatics' for emancipation. In other words, Habermas wants to supply a general formula that, when applied to virtually any situation, will allow men and women to achieve collective autonomy. He believes that this is possible because of humanity's innate ability to be rational. According to Miller (1987), the intersubjective communication that is supposed to be the vehicle for emancipation is nothing more than a context where the inherent attributes of subjectivity are to emerge. In the final analysis, the universal foundation for the communicative bases of social life—including ideal speech situations—rest on the enduring rational qualities of men and women. Because people are fundamentally rational, so the argument goes, they have the potential to engage in constraint-free dialogue, achieve a consensus about their state of affairs, and in doing so, rid themselves of the repressive structures that are suppressing their naturally autonomous selves (Miller 1987).

Habermas' work represents the most comprehensive attempt to fashion a contemporary basis for emancipatory politics. It does, however, fall short on a number of fronts, as critics have been quick to point out, and as a consequence, is limited in the role it can play in the case cited above. Some have singled out that Habermas' ethnocentricity. Corson (1992), for example, maintains that Habermas fails to acknowledge that many of the cultural values that he considers possibilities only in some utopian future are already present within contemporary traditional cultures such as the Koon in Australia and the Maori in New Zealand. Other critics target Habermas' key concept—the ideal speech situation. Poster (1995) for example, points out that the pervasive nature of power in contemporary life means that speech situations will never be free of constraint and inequality. Perhaps though, most criticisms have been leveled at Habermas by those who see him as an advocate of an era that has passed us by, a relic of the

Enlightenment and modernity. Critics of this persuasion attack Habermas' reliance on the (illusory) enduring qualities of reason. Miller (1987: 93), for example, contends that Habermas has been unable to substantiate any connection between language and reason in his scheme. He goes on to say that its 'abstractness, its counterfactual nature, the abyss which separates it from empirical communication, leaves it devoid of substance'. Finally Habermas' view of the social self or subject leaves much to be desired. Like reason, it needs to be seen not as a transcendental given and universally repressed by social structures, but as multiple and dispersed, something that is made and remade in the social circumstances in which it finds itself.

Thus, those looking to combat the racism inherent in the above case best look elsewhere for effective strategies. While Habermas' position does acknowledge a wider array of forms of domination than Marx, including racism, he nevertheless approaches matters from an obviously ethnocentric position. Habermas also continues to hold out the potential for emancipation, which in his view, can ideally be attained through the ideal speech situation. Attaining emancipation in the case at hand would require that various individuals freely come together on an equal footing and through dialogue come to a rational consensus about what to do about racist activities in this particular setting, and possibly elsewhere. While there is much potential in dialogue, what Habermas fails to acknowledge is that it is impossible for men, women and children to meet in ways that do not rely on unequal racist (and other) relationships. We currently live in a racist society which governs the ways in which we interact with one another, including the manner in which people make sense of their activities and the kinds of rationales they employ when talking to one another. What is said, or what can be said, between European Canadians and African Canadians, for example, in a meeting about racism, among other topics, will always be governed in some way by the history of (unequal) race relations in Canada, in North America and the rest of the World.

Other contemporary approaches move beyond discussion of Enlightenment subjectivity. Baudrillard (1981/1994, 1988, 1990, 1993), for example, attempts to take into account many of the changes that have occurred in the past few decades without relying on these particular notions. In doing so, however, he relies on a different view of human regulation. He prefers to explore these issues in terms of *seduction* rather than repression.

Domination as seduction

Like Habermas, Baudrillard began his career with attempts to reformulate Marxism in ways that would render it appropriate for contemporary times. Unlike Habermas, however, he eventually abandoned Marxism completely. From his earlier years as a Marxist of sorts to his later years, his ideas underwent considerable transformation. Throughout this time he has nevertheless retained a strong interest in communication and mediation. In fact Baudrillard's main task over the years has revolved around efforts to illuminate the process and effects of the proliferation of communication

through media. This preoccupation and the content of his analyses, have prompted some to refer to him as the 'high priest of postmodernism', a label he is reluctant even to discuss (Baudrillard 1988).

Baudrillard's initial offerings sought to extend the Marxist critique of capitalism beyond the scope of its limited conceptual apparatus. In particular, he believed that analyses of the mode of signification rather than production would yield more promising insights into a culture now dominated by signs, images and objects. In time he abandoned all connections with Marx and concentrated exclusively on deciphering the meaning structure of commodities. One of Baudrillard's key ideas is that the contemporary mass media circulate signs that are not connected to any reality outside of themselves. This hyperreality, as he refers to it, has long since severed any connection it had to the so-called real world. Nevertheless it appears more real than the real. In this sense these signs and images are all that remains of the world as we know it (Baudrillard 1981/ 1994).

Baudrillard believes that the character of human regulation has changed in fundamental ways over the past few decades. Where once power appeared to be lodged in specific classes, institutions of capitalism and the state, it now circulates with the signs and images that pervade contemporary life. According to Baudrillard the power to induce people to engage in certain practices does not reside in people, organizations or technologies, but in the current order of signs and their meanings. The capacity to generate effects, however, works in different ways than it once did. *Instead of operating through coercion and repression, this form of power seduces*. But seduction is more than a new force of production. In fact it is quite the opposite. Rather than producing, it withdraws. As Rojeck (1993) maintains, consumer culture and the imagery that accompanies it seduces the soul from us, reducing people to mere consuming machines.

Unlike Habermas, Baudrillard deals with the problem of the subject by eliminating it. In his later work he substitutes the logic of the subject with that of the object. By shifting his vantage point from the subject to the hyperreal object and its associated meanings, he acknowledges that individuals are no longer rational subjects or citizens eager to maximize their civil rights, but consumers and the prey of objects. Characteristic of his dismissal of the subject, Baudrillard rejects desire (the property of the subject), while embracing seduction (the property of the object). He contends that the contemporary illusory subject of desire provides fertile ground for seduction:

> The [imaginary] figure [of desire] does not belong to the masters, but was historically produced by the oppressors under the sign of their liberation, and has been deepened by the failure of successive revolutions. As a form, desire marks the passage from their status as objects to that of subjects, but their passage is itself only a more refined interiorized perpetuation of their servitude. Large scale seduction now begins (Baudrillard 1990: 174–175).

Observers have interpreted Baudrillard's politics in various ways. Various critics have respectively charged that his work is politically neutral, trivial and nihilistic (Rojeck 1993). Others have labeled him a fascist (Baudrillard 1993). But regardless of the position which one takes

towards his work, it is obvious that Baudrillard's politics are a world away from those of Habermas. Indeed it would seem that the modern politics of revolt are feeble in the face of dominance that operates through the seductive pacifying capacity of the sign, media image and simulation (Seidman 1994). According to Baudrillard, the space for traditional politics has disappeared, the struggle for freedom and equality, elusive. How, for example, is one to reduce the gap between the oppressed subject and its potential when there are no longer any subjects? Who are activists to target when there are no individuals responsible for generating oppressive conditions? What strategies will those committed to resisting dominant power arrangements employ in a random world where we cannot predict the future? For Baudrillard emancipation is meaningless in a world where no one is dominating, nothing is being dominated and no ground exists for a principle of liberation from domination.

It would be a mistake, however, to maintain that Baudrillard is politically neutral (Rojeck 1993). He has over the years looked to two strategies for resisting the seductive tyranny of our symbolic world. In his earlier work he saw death as the only escape from the 'code'. Poster (1988: 5) maintains that Baudrillard's 'pathetic conclusion is that only death escapes the code, only death is an act without an equivalent return, an exchange of values. Death signifies the reversibility of signs in the gift, a truly symbolic act that defies the world of simulacra, models and codes'. In his later work Baudrillard calls upon us to cultivate indifference as a means of resisting the seductive power of signs. He believes that the 'masses' have the capacity to subvert simulated reality through their silence or passivity. By failing to respond, men and women undermine the meanings associated with simulated reality. These strategies, however, have their limits, according to Baudrillard. He maintains that as much as we may try, it is impossible to detach ourselves completely from the pervasive effects of signs. The 'curved universe of simulation' inevitably incorporates and diffuses our radical politics. This is just as true with any practice as it is of his writing. He admits that there is no escape from the contemporary seduction of our symbolic world. In the end, liberation from tyranny remains but a dream.

Baudrillard has many more critics than advocates of his ideas. Perhaps the most criticized aspect of his work is his tendency to totalize his claims (Poster 1995). Reading Baudrillard one might easily get the impression that all everybody ever does is watch television, go to the movies, and visit theme parks. But while the effects of media may reach far, there are other sides to life for most people, including communicating at a face-to-face level. Baudrillard's treatment of the individual self or subject also remains unsatisfactory. Eliminating completely the subject from contemporary life goes against the grain of most common sense understandings of existence and precludes altogether the sense of any political activity. In Baudrillard's view there would be no point in members of the school community in the case cited above engaging in any activity to deal with racism since they and everyone else are prisoners of the signs and images that have overrun contemporary life. Finally, his preoccupation with seduction and absence rules out the possibility of any productive activity, a claim that Foucault (1977, 1980) as we will see in the next section, would clearly dispute. On the

other hand, Baudrillard, more so than Habermas, attempts to account for
the realities of a postmodern world. In particular he sensitizes us to the
proliferation of media images, the dissolution of enduring life patterns and
the difficulties in identifying power with groups or individuals. But like
many of his other claims, his treatment of these issues stretches the reader's
imagination to the breaking point.

At first glance Baudrillard's ideas would appear to be more useful in
understanding and dealing with the case at hand than Marx's or Habermas'
since he does acknowledge a wider array contemporary cultural forms that
do the latter two. In particular his views on the power of media images and
the process of signification would seem to hold promise for understanding
and dealing with racism in our media saturated world. Unfortunately, as I
have outlined, there is little room for political action in Baudrillard's
scheme. This is because his all-powerful world of symbols does not
acknowledge a human subject. Powerless men, women and children have
little choice but to be seduced by a mediated symbolic universe. In the case
at hand, there would be little point in engaging in anti-racist activity
because, according to Baudrillard, the future is destined to be programmed
by seductive symbols and not by individual subjects consciously and
intentionally planning to work for social justice.

Foucault (1977,1978,1980,1984a), on the other hand, represents a
position that simultaneously provides for political action and accommo-
dates the complexities of our contemporary world. In this sense his work
and the work of others mentioned below represent a more credible option
for those in schools looking for ways to assist disadvantaged groups and
individuals. In contrast to Habermas and Baudrillard, Foucault does not
reduce human regulation to either repression or seduction. Rather he sees it
as *productive* in character.

Domination as a form of production

Given the nature of his work, identifying Foucault with any previous sets of
ideas or figures is not a straightforward matter. Unlike Habermas and
Baudrillard, Foucault does not, nor ever has, owed his allegiance to Marx.
Nevertheless if there is any one person who could be said to influence
Foucault's thinking, it is Nietzsche. Indeed Foucault draws some of his key
ideas from the work of Nietzsche (see for example, Foucault 1984b). The
consequence of this lineage is that *Foucault's concepts of human
regulation, domination and political activity differ in important ways from
Habermas, the pseudo-Marxist, and Baudrillard, the former Marxist.
Despite these differences, the bulk of Foucault's work revolves around
explorations of domination and power. In particular, he has attempted over
the years to explore how power arrangements are implicated in the
formation of subjects.

Foucault's view of domination differs from both those of Habermas and
Baudrillard. Unlike Habermas, Foucault does not see domination in
universal terms. Nor does he see power as the possession of groups or
individuals: 'Power is not to be taken to be a phenomenon of one

individual's consolidated and homogeneous domination over others, or that of one group or class over others. ... power ... is not that which makes the difference between those who exclusively possess it and retain it, and those who do not have it and submit to it' (Foucault 1980: 98). An important element in its operation is power's local and 'micro' or 'capillary' nature. Foucault believes that power 'comes from below' (Foucault 1978: 94). Not one to ignore the global aspects, he nevertheless recommends ascending analyses of power, exploring its local, micro and sometimes unique circulation first. In his own work he examines how power operates at a number of particular sites, including prisons and hospitals, for example. But despite the fact that power is lodged in local practices, he believes that people do not control it in any simple sense. For Foucault (1978: 94) power is 'intentional and non-subjective'. While people may have reasons for what they do, they cannot hope to control the effects of their actions. 'People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what they do does' (Foucault, in Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982: 187). Power's diverse and pervasive character dictates that it operates in anything but a linear or uniform manner.

For Foucault, unlike Baudrillard, the subject assumes an important place in the process of domination. Foucault also differs from Habermas on this issue. Foucault does not believe that the forces of domination only carry with them constraining laws or practices that are responsible for subduing or crushing the subject. On the contrary, Foucault (1982: 212) holds that power actually constitutes or *produces* subjects or social selves:

> This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individual subjects.

What Foucault is saying here is that power operates through the promotion rather than negation of subjectivity. Instead of acting as a blocking agent, power provides the conditions that allow men and women to become subjects. Positioning and configuring individuals in social arrangements that are not necessarily of their own choosing, power invests individuals with a general sense of who they are, that is, how they see themselves and others, what they believe in, and how they approach life generally. The crucial point here is that power does not act on people from a distance, from the outside, but on the interior, so to speak, through an individual's self-intervention on social relations. In other words entrapment proceeds as we become ourselves: we are very much our own prisoners. In this, sense power not only works on us, but perhaps more importantly, through us. We are not just its target, but also its vehicle.

Foucault's subject differs in fundamental ways from Habermas'. Where Habermas relies on what he believes are the enduring transcendental qualities of an essential subject, Foucault sees a subject that displays chameleon-like qualities. In other words, Foucault's subject reflects the social circumstances in which it finds itself. Who we are, who we aspire to be, and how we look at ourselves is very much a product of the situations that present themselves to us. Foucault's (1975, 1977) work explores this

phenomenon in various institutional settings. He shows us how places like hospitals and prisons, for example, set up advantages and disadvantages as they produce individual subjects. But although institutions of this sort may be important sites for shaping social selves, they do not constitute the only sites in which this occurs. Increasingly important in our postmodern world in this regard are media and patterns of consumption associated with it. Personal identity is now more than ever associated with the increasingly diverse symbolic universe available for consumption. We become what our clothes, cars, pastimes, and houses symbolize for us and others (Feather-stone 1991). What's more, in a world where producers scramble to fill existing needs and create new ones from which to profit, men and women can assume, at least in principle, an infinite array of identities as they slip in and out of different situations and the symbolic markers that accompany them. Hall (1991: 57) maintains that these multiple identities bring with them certain advantages and disadvantages:

> All of us are composed of multiple social identities, not of one. We are all complexly constructed through different categories, of different antagonisms, and these may have the effect of locating us socially in multiple positions of marginality and subordination, but which do not operate on us in exactly the same way.

The character of domination and subordination in Hall and Foucault's world is very different from that of Habermas. In their view, domination does not take on universal or uniform proportions, but is constituted in multiple ways and assumes a variety of forms. There are two consequences that flow from this state of affairs. The first is that advantage and disadvantage need not be identified primarily with the class, race and gender axes that many scholars have emphasized over the years. What is becoming apparent over the past couple of decades is that we have become more aware of other forms of subordination whether they are tied more-or-less to institutions as in the cases of students, patients, prisoners or sinners, or cut across institutions, as in case of those who experience disadvantage on the basis of their age, physical or mental health status, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, language and so on. Complicating these relationships are the effects of contemporary consumption habits. As men and women identify (or fail to identify) with the symbolic qualities of consumer objects, they may find themselves in various positions of advantage or disadvantage. Unlike the more enduring categories of subordination, these positions may often be short-lived, disappearing in matters of days, and then reappearing at other times in altered forms. The sorts of situations that accompany these forms of life are often not predictable, and given the wide array of consumer options, are in principle infinite in their number.

The other set of consequences of the current complexities in the process of domination and subordination revolves around the more traditional categories of domination such as class, gender and race. Contrary to what Baudrillard may claim, class, gender and race continue to act as media of oppression. What is different about them today, however, is that the ways in which they work have become more complicated. Regardless of how it works, race, for example, continues to act as a major category of advantage

and disadvantage. For example, in the United States, economic gains for all segments of the African American population, except for the few college graduates, have either stagnated or reversed since the 1970s. But even these college graduates continue to experience difficulties. European American college educated males are four times as likely to get jobs as African American graduates (Lowe 1995). Through all of this, the meaning of race continues to undergo changes in a highly contested environment. According to Omni and Winant (1986), race is not a biological essence, but an unstable complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggles. These meanings are in turn given concrete expression in the specific sets of relations and historical contexts in which they are embedded.

Foucault's politics differ from those of Habermas and Baudrillard. Devising strategies that are useful in a world where power produces subjects who regulate themselves in many different and evolving situations requires a unique approach. Unlike Habermas, however, the bulk of Foucault's work does not revolve directly around intervention strategies. Rather, it focuses on exposing many of the taken for granted forms of domination humanity experiences and analysing the ways in which they work. In doing this he hopes to provide tools for marginalized people to use to counter the oppression which they experience. Thus, in contrast to Baudrillard, Foucault does have something useful to say about combating domination. His more direct comments, however, are evident not so much in his studies, but in responses to questions in interview sessions. To begin with, Foucault abandons what he believes to be illusory dreams of a society free of domination and control. Given the fundamental part power plays in the constitution of daily life, he believes that personal and social existence can never be free of constraint and regulation. Fay (1987) expresses similar concerns about the likelihood of being able to achieve a utopia where everybody is free. Like Foucault, he acknowledges the difficulty of escaping constraint – either self generated or externally imposed. He maintains that:

> Humans can never really 'control the conditions of their existence' to become 'masters of their own fate'. Despite the rhetorical appeal of such phrases, it is only about a God who is disembodied, all powerful, necessary, not *in* the universe but outside of its ground, that it makes sense to speak of autonomy. As creatures living in a cosmos which is only contingently responsive to our wills, and locked into situations not of our choice and often offering us alternatives which are abhorrent to us, the dream of being self-determining is inappropriate for embedded creatures such as we are. (Fay 1987: 197)

This does not mean that those concerned with relationships of advantage and disadvantage need not bother with political activity. But in doing so we need to balance utopian ideals with a sense of realism, as Giddens (1991) counsels. Kumar (1995) recommends a similar course. He maintains that we must not give up completely on the emancipatory promise of modernity. Following Rorty, and in contrast to Habermas' universal outlook, he acknowledges its pragmatic, culturally limited, time-bound character, an approach that obviously makes sense in world where domination takes on many different guises and surfaces in many different

contexts. In this regard Foucault (1984a: 245) maintains that instead of conceiving of emancipation in terms of the attainment of some idyllic (illusory) state, we should look at it as something ongoing, a practice or struggle against oppressive situations:

> Liberty is a *practice*. So there may, in fact, always be a certain number of projects whose aim is to modify some constraints, to loosen, or even break them, but none of these projects can, simply by its nature, assure that people will have liberty automatically, that it will be established by the project itself. The liberty of men is never assured by the institutions and laws that are intended to guarantee them. This is why almost all of these laws and institutions are quite capable of being turned around. Not because they are ambiguous, but simply because 'liberty' is what must be exercised.

Foucault sees active, ongoing *resistance* as a way of approaching and eventually modifying oppressive practices. But emancipation and resistance need not necessarily be seen as opposing concepts. Indeed all concrete efforts at emancipation presuppose not only *forms* of resistance, but the *right* to resist. What is different is the ideal to which the respective theorists would have resisters work. Because there is no magic kingdom in Foucault's world, men, women and children will always be subject to some form of domination, and as a consequence, will always be in a position to contest the distribution of advantage and disadvantage. While there is no reason to believe that political activity will not meet with success, the reality here is that success will simply provide the conditions for a new struggle. Once the previous oppressive arrangements have been overturned, people must be prepared to turn around and contest the new forms of domination which have replaced the old.

Given the particular relationship of domination and the subject, political projects ultimately have to factor the latter into their strategies. But resistance practices that are based on liberating an enduring transcendental subject will not achieve their goal, since individuals can become only what the surrounding circumstances allow them to be. Subjects will always display a multiple and dispersed character that inevitably experiences a degree of (self) constraint. The challenge here will be to not only understand the multiple and changing ways in which subjects are constituted, and as a result entrapped, but also to devise strategies that resist this entrapment. This is particularly crucial in a postmodern world where electronic communication has such a pervasive role. Poster (1995: 93), for example, maintains that political activity must somehow address the unique character of subject formation in a postmodern world.

> Instead of developing a resistant politics of privacy to counter incursions on an autonomous individual, we need to understand the forms of agency appropriate to a dispersed, multiple subject and to generate strategies of resistance appropriate to that identity formation. The issue is not that the new forms of subjectification are in themselves emancipatory but that they are the new arena of contestation. A politics that circumscribes freedom around the skin of the individual, labeling everything inside private and untouchable, badly misconceives the present-day situation of digitized, electronic communications.... The road to greater emancipation must wend its way through the subject formations of the mode of information.

Questions remain, however, as to the level of agency that Foucauldian resistance permits (Giddens 1984, Haber 1994, Henriques *et al.* 1984).

Haber, for example, wonders how subjects of power regimes can break out of the constraints of power, and what tools, if any, they will they have at their disposal that are not already co-opted by those very power regimes they are resisting. Beyond the problem of agency, however, Haber also faults Foucault on his inability to incorporate any sense of communal action into his politics. In this regard, she argues that the possibility of becoming conscious of subjugation, of articulating marginalized voices and of formulating oppositional struggles depends not on individual subjects, but on subjects-in-community and as such, on the *articulation* of community. Successful opposition requires the expression of similarity and the solidarity, however fluid, partial and temporary it may be, that flows from the realization of these similarities. In other words, it is only by virtue of our membership in some community or other that we can become empowered to resist the powers that make us who we are. In identifying ourselves as members of a range of marginalized communities we have a better chance of finding the images and vocabularies with which we can imagine, and act to achieve, a different world and different selves. Haber observes that:

> What has always seemed 'natural' can come to be seen as unnatural and thereby possible to resist, in the process of telling one's story and comparing one's experiences with others. Sometimes what one has not noticed as a pain in oneself or as an alternative to the confines of dominant discourses is seen clearly as a pain and also as a new 'language' when reflected in the experience of others. And though there are many ways in which each individual is dissimilar from the next and is oneself not a site of a single narrative, noticing the point at which are similar has strategic political purposes. (1994: 109)

Foucault's position provides more possibilities for action at the school level generally, and in the case cited above particularly, than do the previous perspectives. First of all, it recognizes multiple forms of oppression, including with respect to our particular case, racism. Secondly, Foucault's view of domination allows for the possibility of political intervention at the local level. Foucault provides this space in the way he conceptualizes power and the place he provides for the subject in this process. For Foucault power does not reside exclusively at the top, so to speak, but also in important ways, comes from below. If power also comes from below then it makes good sense for people at the local level, who are in fact 'below', to take action, since this action may inevitably have an impact locally and perhaps globally. The reason that power also originates at the local level is because it works not just on the subject from above, but also through the subject. In other words, men and women also are the vehicles of power, and as a consequence, in some measure, are also responsible for producing forms of domination. Disrupting oppressive forms of domination then also requires that the power relay through individuals be short-circuited, and this can start at the local level. This means that members of the school community cited above have good reason to can take action to combat racism. But it need not be an integral part of more global revolutionary effort: local resistance to racism which targets either local or more global arenas can have an impact. However, individuals can only do so much on their

own. If they wish to have a lasting impact they will have to join with other like-minded individuals and work together to struggle against racism and other forms of oppression both at the school level and beyond.

How then can the practice of leadership in schools assist men, women and children to resist and change those arrangements that deprive individuals and groups of certain advantages? Before moving on to this question, however, we need to locate a concept of leadership that allows for the type of communal politics referred to here.

Educational leadership for resistance

Foster's (1989) insightful piece is helpful in linking leadership and communal politics. He believes that leadership needs to be seen as a phenomenon that is always context-bound, an event which always occurs in a social community. It is less the result of 'great' individuals than the consequences of interactions and negotiations among members of communities. Foster feels that those who have been dubbed as exemplary leaders, people like Roosevelt and Churchill for example, were able to accomplish what they did not exclusively by virtue of their individual attributes, but by the fact that they were able to take advantage of what might be called a 'corridor of belief' that existed in their communities or constituencies at the time. They did not so much create new universes as enter those corridors and open the various doors. In this regard, leadership is not the exclusive property of enlightened individuals or for that matter, managers:

> Leadership ... is just not the property of enlightened individuals. The idea that leadership occurs within a community suggests that ultimately leadership resides in the community itself. To further differentiate leadership from management we could suggest that leadership is a communal relationship, that is, one that occurs in a community of believers. Leadership then is not a function of position but rather represents a conjunction of ideas where leadership is shared and transferred between followers and leaders ... leaders and followers become interchangeable. (Foster 1989: 49)

Following this logic, in school communities leadership initiatives can originate with any of their members. They are not just the prerogative of administrators. Teachers, other staff members, students, parents and members of the public have much to offer in the way of leadership initiatives and contributions. Those with power, such as administrators, trustees, and to a degree, teachers, however, have an obligation to provide space for those less powerful in the school context, such as students or parents, so that they can contribute their thoughts, words and actions. Giving people the opportunity to share their (sometimes painful) experiences with others in turn allows for the establishment of (often temporary) communities as others recognize parts of themselves in these experiences. Establishing affinities with others also permits those thus affected to establish the basis for the collective action necessary to resist oppression and the self-entrapment that accompanies it.

While leadership activities can cover a range of activities, two important functions include helping people to *understand* theirs and other's life situations and providing them with the capacity to *resist* situations that penalize certain individuals and groups (Smyth 1989b). Crucial with respect to understanding is opportunity to *search out* forms of domination and the ways in which they work through individuals. Arrangements that differentially allocate advantages, as we have seen, are not always obvious. New forms of domination and subordination are perpetually emerging and routinely changing shape, while more established forms of domination and subordination show up in various guises and in a wide range of situations. Also not entirely obvious are the roles people play in this process – as perpetrators, legitimators and victims of injustice. Important leadership activities would include providing opportunities for *all* members of the school community to gain insight into the ways in which these frequently unjust social circumstances make them who they are, and conversely, how the act of being themselves contributes to these injustices. In this regard, the more fortunate have an obligation to listen to the less fortunate when they speak and act (Drake and Ryan 1994, Ryan 1996). In this way school communities can begin to share power and in doing so, leave behind repressive school practices.

Acts of leadership should also provide members of the school community with the capacity to resist situations that generate disadvantages. Ideally, critical leadership strategies would show people the way to 'short circuit' the mechanisms through which they subordinate both themselves and others in the process of being themselves. Sound pedagogy has an important part to play here. Many of the skills that schools teach can be particularly useful, and all members of the school community can play a role in assisting others to acquire such skills. Beyond this, activities that (1) reveal potential strategies, (2) act as examples, or (3) provide opportunities for members to become involved in political action can act as valuable learning experiences for everyone. Those interested in pursuing these avenues can just as easily concentrate their efforts at local or more global levels, or combinations of both. The intent should be to illustrate just how collective action can have an effect on current circumstances. For example, critical leadership initiatives might draw attention to the ways in which both young and old alike are shaped by media images and illustrate how they can resist these processes by exercising their considerable power as consumers.

Leadership activities that provide occasions for resisting unfair practices are in principle infinite. Opportunities for acting routinely arise in all sorts of circumstances. The example cited at the beginning of the article constitutes just one of these opportunities. What happened after the initial incident was that the student victim sat down and wrote out a detailed and extremely lucid account of the events as they occurred. He then approached a staff member with the idea of somehow publicizing what had taken place. After talking with the student, the staff member approached the administration. All parties eventually decided that the best course of action would be to distribute the (anonymous) account to teachers who would be expected to read it to

their home room classes. As it turned out teachers complied, and in many classes, discussion on issues of racism ensued. The reading of the account had a substantial impact on both students and teachers. A number of students, for example, reported that many of their classmates were angry after they learned what had taken place in the chapel, and as a consequence, were anxious to take action to prevent these kinds of incidents from happening again.

Actions like these provide opportunities for all members of the school community to both understand how subordination, and in particular, racism works on and through people and how it can be resisted. Provided with a forum where they could either identify or empathize with a particular experience, many members of the school community came together to act as a community to try to understand and resist this form of oppression. Leadership in this case involved a community effort. Although it was initiated by a student, it required the cooperation of the administration, staff and eventually students to move the activities along. Those with power provided the opportunity for one less privileged to have his voice heard. In doing so they allowed the whole community to get a glimpse of how racism can emerge in a unique situation. The student's account provided a vivid description not just of what the perpetrators did and said, but of how the student victim felt at the time. These events also provided all members of the school community with opportunities to resist future racist practices.

In itself the heightened awareness that accompanied the revelations will help individuals recognize racist acts when they see them. More than this though, it strengthened the resolve of many members of the school community to review and support the school's anti-racism policies and ensure that they play a part in their enforcement. On the other hand, such a strategy may well have encouraged perpetrators and potential perpetrators to reflect on the connections between their actions and views and how they see themselves, or would prefer others to see them. Ideally, the revelations would prompt them to see their actions for what they really are, and perhaps deter them from acting in this fashion in the future. Finally, the school's actions provide a model for future action. Those who are not sure what to do about racism and other forms of injustice when they occur, can always duplicate the actions taken here. While this may constitute only one isolated and narrow example of leadership for resistance, it and other such acts, when taken together, can supply a measure of hope for those concerned with providing more opportunities for the disadvantaged among us.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 Some may object to a characterization of Foucault and Derrida as 'postmodernists', preferring instead to think of them as 'poststructuralists'. Although not objecting to the latter label, I nevertheless prefer to see these and other poststructuralists as part of a movement that has reacted critically to the modern, as I assume Habermas does.
2 Hall (1986), however, maintains that Marx described a relationship between the economy and the rest of existence that was more complicated that many subsequent critics have assumed.

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