

Rebel With a Cause

Cristina Domingo

1 Introduction

The emergence of student subcultures has led from daily interactions, social norms, and different personalities associated with peer groups. The most crucial stage of student development is through establishing an identity. As the modern era progresses, students have built a strong resistance to the norms and therefore it becomes more complicated for them to create a self-fulfilling role particularly in the academic setting. Student personality types along with their shared values and beliefs connect them to multifarious subculture groups. According to Whittaker (1968), 90% of students value higher education in terms of social gains. Student subcultures are often based on gender, social class, and ethnicity. In addition, subcultures are also developed from family ties and within the environment they thrive in. This has been majorly emphasized in research in higher education for many decades. Studies have shown that what students learn is measured by their interaction with different peer groups and the norms that prevail in these groups (Freedman, 1956). Understanding students operate in an equally complex social-psychological environment. Whittaker (1968) defines student subculture as the "... similarity of confrontations (problems), the shared values (or sets of understandings and agreements), and resulting coping behavior on the part of individuals" (Whittaker, 1968, p. 2). Every student who enters college is motivated by social acceptance to their peers and to the community. They have many interests in common and will eventually develop in the social system they engage in and thus, making up a variety of student subcultures.

2 Student Subcultures

In the late fifties, Clark and Trow derived a set of four student subcultures to map the student body and to grasp the polarization on campus. These four subcultures are the following: 1.) Academics are the students who are both intellectually and institutionally involved. They are associated in the world of ideas and with their college via faculty. In addition, they put a high regard in education, knowledge, and intellect in accordance to the curriculum; 2.) Collegiate are students who are resistant or indifferent to serious intellectual demands and are strongly attached to their institution through social and extracurricular aspects of college life. They are institutionally but not intellectually engaged; 3.) Nonconformists are students who have large ideas but are less attached to their college. They pursue their interests outside of the curriculum and off-campus, and view education as a search for personal meaning and individual fulfillment. Moreover, they are often critical of many aspects of their education and of present-day society. They are intellectually engaged but institutionally alienated; and 4.) Vocational are students who are neither committed to ideas nor the college. They consider their educational experiences as occupational preparation. They are more instrumentally oriented to both curriculum and the institution (Clark & Trow, 1966).

3 Nonconformist Subculture

According to Newcomb (1967), there are three subcategories of the Nonconformist subculture: The Creative Individualists, the Wild Ones, and the Political Activists. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, American progressives had convictions of

revolutionizing a cultural and political change on education (Flacks & Thomas, 2007). Their central core is that higher education should awaken and nurture students' reasoning and critical thought as citizens. Students were becoming more tolerant of difference, more acute in freedom of expression, learning to question authority, understanding the predicament of the less privileged, and opposing ideas and expressions that were offensive. One example is Hillary Clinton's involvement in political activism during her academic years at Wellesley College. She came from a conservative Republican family and while finding her stance in the society, a youth minister at her church took everyone from her class to hear a speech by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1962 (Associated Press, 2009). This left an indelible mark on his pupils and became aware of the social revolution that was taking place. Young Clinton became exposed to the wider horizons and learned the importance of social justice and human rights.

4 Subcultural Deviant Behaviors

According to a study by Newcomb (1943), students became radically progressive during their college years after their detachment from parental conservatism. These changes were germane to the students' social life in college. Subcultural deviant behaviors come in two major forms: those who confront the society and those who withdraw from society (Whittaker, 1968). Both forms are deemed as alienated groups seeking distinctive identities. The relationship between political attitudes and group affiliations were constituted by diverse social circles and these circles emphasized a juxtaposition of values and styles. Whittaker (1968) asserts that college can shape the student body in two ways: through its influence on students while they are enrolled and through the kinds of students they attract, recruit, admit, and retain. In addition, McConnell and Heist (1961) emphasized the importance of diversity of the institution and the differences among them have a great effect on student subculture. Identity is a significant factor for students because of the various experiences that it offers. Exploration of new and different roles are available in an atmosphere of both freedom and protection. As students mature before and during college, their social needs and environmental opportunities lead them to finding that specific role to achieve their identity needs (Whittaker, 1968).

Flacks & Thomas (2007) pointed out that American colleges were designed to educate the next generation of elites and the most dominant students were rich WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants) males until the late 19th century. Eventually elite colleges started to admit the 'outsiders' (i.e. non-whites, Jews, Catholics, etc.) and women started entering higher education after the Civil War. These rich WASP male students resisted the academic demands of faculty and opposed excessive control by the university. According to Horowitz (1988), the college scene during the Great Depression in the 1930s became more varied. A large wave of first-generation Jewish students entered college, and the immigrant and working-class groups were increasing in number. The Great Depression itself had a stark influence on student subcultures and the most privileged students continued to gravitate towards their social environment. It manifested a bulwark against the world of ideas and later developed a social outlook for themselves (Flacks & Thomas, 2007). The immigrant and working-class youth were interested in professional growth and were seriously attracted to the political consciousness on campus. The

cultural rebellion was a springboard for capitalism, the rise of fascism, and support for the labor movement. In addition, the 1930s generation of student outsiders helped diversify the ranks of leadership and professional classes, which made American higher education a vessel for upward mobility. By the end of the 1960s, students were more unified in their systemic beliefs, cultural practices, and conventional tastes. The prevalence of hedonism was also expressed rebelliously while adopting different forms of pleasure during their adulthood (i.e. alcohol, drugs, casual sex, etc.). These students either came from elite or less affluent families, in which demographics played an active role in the early development of Student Activists. Flacks (1971) asserted that the escalating social conflict, bureaucracy and subdued realities of its time resonated with the youth, waking up their collective consciousness and paved its way to mass action. The youth's growing interest about the future was fueled by a variety of major trends such as inflation, energy and state fiscal crises, global competitiveness, declining public budgets, and decreasing job opportunities. Such activisms were later channeled into different causes such as feminism, environmentalism, gay liberation, and ethnic identity struggles (Levine, 1980).

5 Political Activism

Student Activism in America has a rich historical past and it was not until the sixties that it received attention and pertinent studies. According to Broadhurst (2017), campuses struggled with student rebellion during the development of colonial colleges in the 17th and 18th centuries. The policies of *in loco parentis* and other school regulations were stifling, and college students often revolt resulting to violence and riots (Rudolph, 1990). In 1823, half of the Harvard senior class was expelled after participating in anti-enlistment campaigns during the Civil War (Lipset, 1968). Before 1960, Student Activism had no major impact on national policy and prior to 1900, no organized Student Activist groups evolved (Altbach & Peterson, 1971).

Early Student Activists or 'movements' set the political milieu for the unconcerned campus community. They influenced a small number of students and gave prominence to student political activity on campus. The American student movements closely followed the political trends in the society and the academic community was on a much smaller scale than the present. In the 1930s, there was a growth of the first mass student movement in higher education (Albach & Peterson, 1971). Politically active students were involved with political groups and participated in anti-war movements as well as peace strikes during the decade. The anti-war issue was the most intensifying matter during the thirties despite the Great Depression and other domestic crises that were taking place. Furthermore, the radical trend of the early thirties began the formation of new leftist organizations. The Socialist and Communist parties became active in the universities in order to promote a revolutionary movement against capitalism (Altbach & Peterson, 1971). Student groups underwent a series of disputes but involved a large number of members. When political issues prevailed, the student movement reached its failure. However, many students received a viable political education and produced a next generation of activists. During the forties, the radicals who were against the war were perplexed by the division of radical movement and foreign policy issues during the onset of World War II (Altbach & Peterson, 1971). Many American students were drafted into the armed forces and campus activism came to an end. According to Altbach & Peterson (1971), attempts to revive the student movement after the war were not successful, but the most accomplished post-war student groups were those who desired peace.

Campuses became apolitical towards the late forties and many

veterans were anxious to finish their academic work quickly. The 1950s was a period of political disaffiliation and shunning public protests. This attracted some of the veterans from the post-world war along with media fascination and bohemianism consisting of Beatniks, who are also classified under the 'beat' generation (Flacks, 1970). The right-wing student groups also became active on campuses, especially the pro-McCarthy students in the early fifties (Altbach & Peterson, 1971). This McCarthyism maintained direct contact with the anti-subversive government agencies. The student movement itself became increasingly difficult to organize due to the political climate in the country, particularly the Korean War and emergence of the Cold War. According to a study by Goldsen et al. (1953), the Korean War had low popularity on campuses. A poll indicated that 26% strongly opposed the war and 36% had strong doubts, which resulted in a reticent approach on the subject of Korean conflict (Goldsen et al., 1953). The emergence of these organizations gave rebirth to the student movement in the sixties and the end of the Korean War made political activism easier.

Students had strong intellectual concerns and interested in changing stale ideologies. Furthermore, the three main threads of student activism in the late fifties were civil liberties, peace, and civil rights. Overall, the political climate of the last two decades consisted of international faction against totalitarian expansionism namely, the Axis powers and Stalin Communism (Lipset, 1968). The threats to democracy were real and many were critical of the totalitarian tactics which dampened the majority of youth. According to Lipset (1968), the rise of monolithic Communism and the severity of the Sino-Soviet split have united the non-Communist nations to fight against the tough social conditions. Majority of the supporters of anti-Communism were young college students, professionals, intellectuals, and university faculties. After the second World War, a new generation of liberals emerged and this changed the ideological climate through a strong conviction of moral beliefs (Lipset, 1968). One of them is fighting for Negro rights in the late fifties after the approval of school desegregation. This later created a new activist movement that became a powerful advocate for equality and democracy.

6 Demand for Equality

Race was the most critical issue during this time and student organizations fought against segregation to reduce or eliminate it. The rise of Student Activism in the early sixties was driven by social change focusing on civil rights struggle and little emphasis on university-related issues (Altbach & Peterson, 1971). The pugnacious tactics of the civil rights movement were successful to eradicate discrimination and to foster economic and educational improvements. According to Lipset (1968), the growing minority of Negro students have been immersed in a predominantly white environment. Thus, the concern for black power became increasingly popular among black college students. In the early 1960s, activists reflected the student body as a whole and shifted towards a new rebellion (Keniston, 1973). These students played a major role in confronting university administrations with demands for more Negro students and faculty. According to Altbach & Peterson (1971), the racial injustices of the Negro race received the attention and sympathy from many different campuses. Lipset (1968) stated that the triumph of the Castro movement and the Cuban events have also produced a revolution as a weapon against the intolerable acts of the status quo. Moreover, the wide opposition of the Vietnam War became a dominant issue affecting Student Activism. Political protests also attracted thousands of students and despite its small percentage, it culminated as a big movement. The early sixties activism was a period of mass protests and confrontation that formed a student strike in 1970 (Flacks & Thomas, 2007). The civil rights movement has proven pivotal to the

development of Student Activism and the political organizations on campus became a symbol of hope in the midst of apathy.

According to Broadhurst (2017), the burgeoning awareness of racial identity among African Americans and its success have encouraged other minority groups to seek civil rights as well. The expansion to improve conditions for Native Americans, Asian Americans and other minority groups have created programs to improve campus climate and eliminate racism on campus (Gosse, 2005). The continuous battle for equality in several minority groups, both women and members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) community started to voice out their rights. The Black Power movement has led to the evolution of feminism (Echols, 1989). According to Echols (1989), women were expected to be domesticated and assigned to do secretarial work. Student Activists challenged the discriminatory acts in higher education, such as hiring policies and fighting to increase female enrollment (Davis, 1991). After the 1970s, traditional protests declined but students continued to be involved in social concerns and volunteerism by helping the poor, ending world hunger, and fighting for human rights (Broadhurst, 2017). The Divestment Movement also emerged in the 1980s that publicized the student protests and attacked the racial segregation that existed in South Africa (Broadhurst, 2017).

In addition, the American foreign policy continued to resonate with Student Activists in relation to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) campus recruitment and the growing consciousness of the dangers of nuclear war (Vellela, 1988). Loeb (1994) also pointed out the student protests that emerged after former president George W. Bush's announcement of sending troops at the height of the Gulf War. This wave of activism hit the American campuses and mustered a national protest. In the 1990s, Student Activism focused on issues of promoting diversity, group identity, and multiculturalism (Rhoads, 1998). Students protested for a number of causes such as increased access to education, rights to immigrants, affirmative action, improving campus climates for people of color and the LGBT community (Broadhurst, 2017).

Student Activism in the 21st century is now utilizing new forms of technology in the form of social media and other tactics such as marches, sit-ins, and street theatre (Biddix, 2010). According to Corrunker (2012), a staged sit-in called the DREAM Act 5 was held in Senator John McCain's office in 2010 by five undocumented students to stress out the importance of immigration reform. There were also feelings of exploitation among graduate students on campuses and growth of the anti-sweatshop movement (Bose, 2008). This refers to the campaigns to improve working conditions in manufacturing places driven by low wages and child labor. As underrepresented students continue to encounter hostile climates on campuses, they come together as a whole to fight for change that has existed for generations.

7 Conclusion

The powerful role of student peer groups and shared identities had an impact on the overall college and university experience. Going to college affected students' values in many ways, but these tremendous effects were connected to the social worlds that the students were embedded in (Flacks & Thomas, 2007). Their subcultural environment that was uprooted from shared social backgrounds became transformative to their attitudes and interests. Thus, student peer culture could foster personal change. Students have been quite responsive to political trends, changes in mood and advocating social change. It played a major role in revitalizing unrest and stimulating change in many countries. Student Activism is the result of social discontent manifesting a public opinion of causes and ideologies of the real world. Social

unrest causes student unrest and Student Activists are a vanguard of change. The important role of students has led to several reasons for their various political convictions and actions.

Meritocracy in higher education has become increasingly nuanced, as evaluations often consider both individual achievement and personal or social context. Therefore, the college youth in the society find themselves facing a highly competitive situation. The pressures to conform to the requirements of the educational establishment are making it difficult for them to climb the educational ladder. While these tensions affect emotional stability for many college students, they seek varying outlets as universities are becoming more competitive than before. The emphasis on youthful reformism epitomizes the American culture, shaping the opinions of the younger generation. They are the bearers of the progressive ideas that will greatly influence the future. The enduring struggle of equality will be more meaningful as the youth persists to become involved in self-expression, particularly in university life. The university has become a haven for many Student Activists who seek innovation and ideological freedom. They have a liberalizing effect on young people in areas linked to principles, racial equity, internationalism, peace, and personal beliefs. Colleges and universities are a center of influence and power, and responsible for the quality of the personal and intellectual lives of their students. The expression of youth has a long tradition throughout the history of higher education.

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