Counter-Hegemonic Teaching

Counter-Hegemonic Perspectives for Teaching
Social Studies, the Foundations, Special Education
Inclusion, Leadership, and Multiculturalism

Lee Elliott Fleischer
Brooklyn College, City University of New York

Employing post-structural, psychoanalytic and critical theory to illuminate teacher education and the current state of secondary public schooling, Lee Fleischer offers us a counter-hegemonic theory of teaching. This is a far-ranging and scholarly study of current educational practices.

Greg Seals, Associate Professor of Philosophy and Social Studies, The College of Staten Island, City University of New York:
Lee Fleischer’s Counter-Hegemonic Teaching expresses wisdom gained in career-long efforts to conscientize and radicalize the author’s own encounter with schooling as well as the schooling experiences of an amazing array of students, teachers, and colleagues. Theory and practice meld in the book as post-structural theory becomes articulated in ways that make it useable and useful for teachers generally; but social studies teachers in particular. The brilliant use of student-created political cartoons to assess understanding of and promote development of the ideas of Freire is, literally, a lesson for all of us interested in issues of social justice in education.

David D. Avdul, Professor of Education of School Leadership and Administration, former Dean of the School of Education at Pace University, New York City:
Lee Fleischer’s Counter-Hegemonic Teaching looks at the familiar in unfamiliar ways. He challenges traditional practices of hierarchical schooling with an audacity which dares to imagine leadership in schools as a phenomenon of power sharing, necessarily empowering teachers whose pedagogy must necessarily empower students. Fleischer acknowledges that a uniqueness of being human is our ability to work in concert with others; he offers teachers a glimpse into a world of educational leadership which is inclusive, equitable, caring, and authentically democratic. This book challenges educators to work in concert with each other. To engage in constructive uses of power, all aimed at creating a culture of counter-hegemonic teaching.

Karel Rose, Professor of Foundations of Education, Brooklyn College, City University of New York, Doctoral Program, CUNY Graduate Center:
The times may be just right and new spaces are opening for the counter-hegemonic struggle to thrive in a unique way. Given the political and economic failures of the early 21st century…. educators need the vision and guidance to take advantage of an unparalleled opportunity for change. Lee Fleischer is in the forefront, ahead of the pack and his timing is just perfect.
Counter-Hegemonic Teaching
TRANSGRESSIONS: CULTURAL STUDIES AND EDUCATION
Volume 47

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Scope
Cultural studies provides an analytical toolbox for both making sense of educational practice and extending the insights of educational professionals into their labors. In this context Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education provides a collection of books in the domain that specify this assertion. Crafted for an audience of teachers, teacher educators, scholars and students of cultural studies and others interested in cultural studies and pedagogy, the series documents both the possibilities of and the controversies surrounding the intersection of cultural studies and education. The editors and the authors of this series do not assume that the interaction of cultural studies and education devalues other types of knowledge and analytical forms. Rather the intersection of these knowledge disciplines offers a rejuvenating, optimistic, and positive perspective on education and educational institutions. Some might describe its contribution as democratic, emancipatory, and transformative. The editors and authors maintain that cultural studies helps free educators from sterile, monolithic analyses that have for too long undermined efforts to think of educational practices by providing other words, new languages, and fresh metaphors. Operating in an interdisciplinary cosmos, Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education is dedicated to exploring the ways cultural studies enhances the study and practice of education. With this in mind the series focuses in a non-exclusive way on popular culture as well as other dimensions of cultural studies including social theory, social justice and positionality, cultural dimensions of technological innovation, new media and media literacy, new forms of oppression emerging in an electronic hyperreality, and postcolonial global concerns. With these concerns in mind cultural studies scholars often argue that the realm of popular culture is the most powerful educational force in contemporary culture. Indeed, in the twenty-first century this pedagogical dynamic is sweeping through the entire world. Educators, they believe, must understand these emerging realities in order to gain an important voice in the pedagogical conversation.

Without an understanding of cultural pedagogy’s (education that takes place outside of formal schooling) role in the shaping of individual identity—youth identity in particular—the role educators play in the lives of their students will continue to fade. Why do so many of our students feel that life is incomprehensible and devoid of meaning? What does it mean, teachers wonder, when young people are unable to describe their moods, their affective affiliation to the society around them. Meanings provided young people by mainstream institutions often do little to help them deal with their affective complexity, their difficulty negotiating the rift between meaning and affect. School knowledge and educational expectations seem as anachronistic as a ditto machine, not that learning ways of rational thought and making sense of the world are unimportant.

But school knowledge and educational expectations often have little to offer students about making sense of the way they feel, the way their affective lives are shaped. In no way do we argue that analysis of the production of youth in an electronic mediated world demands some “touchy-feely” educational superficiality. What is needed in this context is a rigorous analysis of the interrelationship between pedagogy, popular culture, meaning making, and youth subjectivity. In an era marked by youth depression, violence, and suicide such insights become extremely important, even life saving. Pessimism about the future is the common sense of many contemporary youth with its concomitant feeling that no one can make a difference.

If affective production can be shaped to reflect these perspectives, then it can be reshaped to lay the groundwork for optimism, passionate commitment, and transformative educational and political activity. In these ways cultural studies adds a dimension to the work of education unfilled by any other sub-discipline. This is what Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education seeks to produce—literature on these issues that makes a difference. It seeks to publish studies that help those who work with young people, those individuals involved in the disciplines that study children and youth, and young people themselves improve their lives in these bizarre times.
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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This book was originally planned to be eight chapters which would include three of my published articles on counter-hegemonic teaching pertaining to special education inclusion, teaching bi-lingual students counter-hegemonically, and finally, teaching social studies through post-structural constructs. Because I was limited to a certain number of pages, regrettably, I was forced to cut all of these chapters. Perhaps, in the future, I will add them in another edition of *Counter-Hegemonic Teaching*. Originally, I thought the assignment would be easy, given that I managed to publish eight articles relevant to the topic. I thought: All I have to do is copy and paste some of these chapters onto a new word document, and that would be it!

Much to my chagrin, and I suppose this is poetic justice for those seeking to cut corners, I have eliminated almost all of my published chapters, leaving them just enough dignity to be quoted in several parts of the following five chapters, and relegated to a few explanatory footnotes. I suppose I also learned something about writing a book: you cannot be anything but honest to yourself and your readers. The work is hard and difficult, and coming from a former kid from the Bronx, New York, who would have thought I would be writing a book about a unique perspective on teaching and school practices as we know them today: hegemony.

On this note, I want to acknowledge all my Bronx school buddies. Having lived there almost a half a century ago, I learned what kids, growing up in a large city do and how they relate and aspire to be successful, or in some cases, just be.

As a kid, I had no idea what it would mean to be a college student. I thought I was destined, like my high school buddies, to drive a truck or a cab. That’s what they became. A few others became salespeople, and still others became teachers in New York City until they received tenure and retired with a pension. I know this because I recently spoke to two of them, from two separate teen age groups I was a member of at different years of my adolescence. One friend, Eddy, was a great punch ball player in the courtyard where I lived on Walton Avenue; another, Joel, taught me how to prepare for standardized or regent exams in all subjects; and still another, Steve, was a debonair and handsome kid, who attempted to educate me about dating (which I failed). I met Joel after leaving the “Steve” and “Eddy” bunch of friends because I broke my leg playing basketball in the high school gym in my sophomore year. Other than playing ball or hanging out or simply cutting school and heading for the “D” train to take me to the village in Manhattan, and other places I enjoyed cruising, school meant very little to me.

I also had – I thought then – another alternative to pursue in my life and what few and limited dreams I had. My Dad was a partner with his brothers in a furniture retail business. His brothers had sons and daughters as well. The two stores they owned – one in Washington Heights, Manhattan, another in Astoria, Queens – provided me (in competition with my cousins) with part time work from the time I was fourteen and still in junior high school. Still, whether my duties were to “shelp” or carry boxes down into the basement after shipment, set up cribs and
carriages, or sell home furnishings, I was a willing and able. I was a desirous kid who thought I could, one day, run my own business. Indeed, as it turned out through the twists and turns of my life, I did own a furniture business in Flushing, Queens, well over thirty years after I wondered about these things, and in between my two doctoral dissertation attempts.

In the aftermath of my father dying suddenly of a heart attack in 1980, my mother and I embarked on a new venture despite the fact that I was already attempting to finish my first doctoral dissertation attempt at Teachers College. After nine years of attempting this feat, I gave up and began a new furniture business during the height of Reagan’s recession. At this time, I met another important and lifelong friend, David Avdul. To this day, and since the first day of classes as a full-time doctoral student beginning in 1972, David remains a guiding light and confident in my life.

Anyway, it was not until 1998 that I finally finished my doctoral dissertation. A second and completely new attempt brought me to the footsteps of those red brick buildings in Morningside Heights near Harlem at the age of 52 (in 1996) to give it another try. Since then, and through ten years of teaching college education courses, I have had the luck and pleasure to meet many more people (and who did not necessarily play punch ball) and who helped me become a teacher-educator professor, writer, and eventually, a friend and scholar.

On first memory, two names come clearly to mind – my original sponsors of my first doctoral dissertation – Maxine Greene and Dwayne Heubner. Maxine was a dear friend to me, and despite the fact she was one of the country’s greatest women and scholars in the field of education and the arts and humanities, I warmed to her as, I’m sure, she did to me. We recently had lunch together in her apartment in the upper east side of Manhattan – I called and she said, in her customary way: “Why don’t you come over now.” Huebner, as I and other students referred to him, was more standoffish. I had been to his apartment on several days, reviewing and revising my most recent draft for a dissertation proposal – a task that took me (and Heubner) at last 30 attempts over a period of six years. By the time I got to write the body of the paper, I no longer needed the proposal and all the work preceding the final draft was not necessary. Upon meeting Ira Shor at The College of Staten Island, where I worked for one year, he informed me Heubner had delayed (perhaps, not knowing it) many others from “finishing.” However, despite his delaying me for over thirty years (I finally received my doctorate in 1998), I must acknowledge and thank Heubner for making me a committed scholar interested in the mysteries of language and power, making Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed available to me by listing this great book in his TY 4200 syllabus, along with getting me to look at myself and the many dimensions of justice and ethics when it came to clarifying what I’m about, and what schools and our world was and is still about.

Upon re-entry into Teachers College in 1996, for my second attempt to complete the doctorate, I needed more friends. David Avdul’s sponsor, Gary A. Griffin consented to be my sponsor and navigate me through perilous waters which all doctorate candidates know about. It was not coincidence that my first job as an adjunct professor, upon passing my orals in 1998, was at Pace University where
And most importantly, those hundreds of students I met and had the pleasure and honor to teach. Many have kept in contact, and as any teacher knows the greatest reward in teaching is when a former student stops by or sends an email or phone call just to say hello and thank you. For all of you, thank you for making it possible to write this book on teaching and granting me permission to publish some of your wonderful pictures on Freire.

And I want to acknowledge and thank Jane, my best friend, partner and wife, for being there for me, but also being my toughest critic and the love of my life. Without her, this book and its many stories would not be possible and merely be but flashing images of what might have been.

And last but not least, I want to acknowledge the late Joe Kincheloe for the support and encouragement he gave me to write Counter-Hegemonic Teaching. I give a special tribute to Joe in the first and last sections of the final chapter for his inspiration for me to examine more closely the work of Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed, and locate those “in-between spaces” between modernism and post-modernism, the subject and the object, and agency and structure – spaces he, too, often pondered about.

David taught and was a former dean in the school of education. During my second doctoral attempt at Teachers College, I also became friends with Professor Margaret Jo Shepherd, the founder and director of the Special Education department and an integral force in guiding me to work with special education students as the field work segment of my thesis.

While teaching at six other colleges over a ten year period, I met many other professionals and friends. I also wish to acknowledge as being a guiding force to me: Professors Greg Seals, Deborah DeSimone, and Ira Shor of the College of Staten Island; Professors Mel Rosenthal, Roger Keeran, Kevin Wolff, and Tina Wagle of Empire State College of the State University of New York; Professors Peter Taubman, Karel Rose, Priya Parmar, Sherry Giles, Haroon Kharem, Luis Reyes, Wayne Reed, and Dean Deborah Shanley of Brooklyn College of the City University of New York; Professors David Arenson, Len Testor, and Michael Uttendorfer of New York Institute of Technology; Professors Cyndi Roemer, Lois Weiner, and Althea Hall at New Jersey City University; and finally, Professors Glenn M. Hudak, Margaret Jo Shepherd, Gary A, Griffin, and Kim Reid of Teachers College, Columbia University, and David Avdul and Kathryn DeLawter of Pace University.

And most importantly, those hundreds of students I met and had the pleasure and honor to teach. Many have kept in contact, and as any teacher knows the greatest reward in teaching is when a former student stops by or sends an email or phone call just to say hello and thank you. For all of you, thank you for making it possible to write this book on teaching and granting me permission to publish some of your wonderful pictures on Freire.

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And without any further ado, I wish to acknowledge my mother, Sylvia Marion Fleischer, who insists that she named me Lee Elliott because, “it would look on a book cover as the name of an author,” and to my father, who always introduced me as “my son, the professor”.

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CHAPTER 1

CATCHING THAT HIERARCHICAL FEELING – A CHILL RUNNING UP AND DOWN MY SPINE!

In Search of the In-Between Terrain of Theorizing Hegemony

THE TIMES AND WHY WE NEED A COUNTER-HEGEMONIC THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the days after 9/11, dangerous dualities co-existed side-by-side: On the one hand, there was and still is a kind of assurance that we are free to choose any course of action – that the sky is the limit – and that we are essentially free human beings living in a free democracy brought on by a free marketplace of trade and ideas. After all, mirroring this free orientation, the Bush doctrine proclaimed the right of our nation to feel free to make pre-emptive strikes against anyone who, as he asserted, presented themselves as a threat to our national security and named his new policy as protecting our freedoms from “terrorism.” On the other hand, there is a sense that the economy, while labeled also as a “free market,” is beyond our individual or concerted free choices. As it has long been recognized, “global” markets have produced many harmful effects, including the use of exploited and slave labor, slave labor of children, and the deterioration of the environment, all of which may have and still may produce reasons for threats of terrorism or unsatisfied cries and relations of “other” peoples and nations in America and throughout the world. While our present global economy may produce “low prices” for those of us who benefit with more variety of goods and services, others who may not want to see or care to see how these goods and services are brought to us at a price of how the world lives in poverty, starves, labors below a living wage all over the world. In the meantime, we consume goods and services without any corresponding thoughts or relational knowledge of the real costs to human lives and the seeds of resentment our economy and our materialist needs are producing.

Recent “crashes” on Wall Street, threatening to destroy people’s life-savings, pensions, jobs, and homes, also have suddenly provided a rude awakening into how vulnerable the middle class and our economy are. We are asked to “bail out” the corporations and banks without knowing what this means. We are told over and over again how the “markets should take care of themselves.” How, in capitalist theory, the “fittest survives,” and in the places of the vanquished and weak, new competing forces will produce stronger entities than the previous ones. To intrude into this “freedom formula” would only upset the natural order of things, we are also told. However, with the recent stock market crash, our sense of security has been compromised. We are also reminded of how thin the “bubble of freedom,” or the American dream, really is. We see the government, suddenly, reversing its
ideology of *laissez faire* capitalism to highly regulated economy. Yet, we stubbornly cling to the old ideology: we look with askew when suggestions are made to “spread the wealth around,” implying socialism and helping those without. Yet, when the wealth is spread upward in the form of hundreds of billions of dollars to be loaned to banks and corporate CEO’s, without any accountability or transparency, few raised suspicions as the Bush administration left office. We begin to take notice of contradictions existing side-by-side – opulence and poverty, giving money to the rich, denying money to the poor. We may want to pause what we are told to believe. We may ask: why continue to believe in the free and open market place when facts to the contrary offer alternate directions, including more regulation and socialism?

In the schools, similar contradictions co-exist. Kids and their teachers meet in classrooms with the illusion of becoming educated for a free and just democratic way of life. Yet, they are presently mandated to accomplish these goals by maintaining austere and standardized forms of testing, teaching from the textbook in rote-like styles of learning. While all of this is happening, there appears to be little room or spaces for student and teacher voices and involvement. That is, real involvement in which they also are given responsibility to have power and trust to make the necessary changes of their schools as an expression and outgrowth of their powers. Instead, students and teachers are constantly told by higher ups, administrators, and politicians or those who “carry out orders,” that students must become prepared to compete in the new world marketplace; that they should learn such knowledge as a necessity, reinforced by testing and classroom management, all along believing in a system which administrators are given the responsibility to implement scripted curricula and modes of learning. While not new in the last century throughout America, students know they must excel on these tests in order to get a piece of the American dream as well as compete against other students in foreign markets. We have produced a highly competitive, individualistic, and kill-or-be-killed cadre of students who as future adults are not so much becoming prepared to be good citizens as they are becoming prepared to become future competitive wage earners, avid consumers, and solider-patriots willing to die for a way of life which is presently approaching an ideological and identity crisis.

In the meanwhile, teachers are also being informed by another “crash,” by those higher-ups who choose not to hear from them. Their administrator superiors and the state through national legislation are claiming that those of us who are “falling behind” must adapt to these circumstances in at least two ways: Students are failing to compete with comparable test scores of students in other countries; and teachers are failing to close the achievement gap here at home based on race and income differences. With the passage of No Child Left Behind, a seemingly magnanimous piece of national school legislation, with bipartisan approval in the wake of 9/11, those students who are “in need” should be given a chance to succeed in schools by “quality instruction.” This need to provide quality instruction, however, is overshadowed by the pressing need for test results. Teacher quality is thereby closely linked to student test score results.

With a sense of urgency, an inordinate amount of testing has come about by the federal government under the Bush administration, complementing local and state
tests, feverishly seeking continuous and accumulative and annual progress. With this regimen of testing, however, the presence of constructive and progressive teaching is becoming more and more diminished, more so than we have seen since the days of the 1950s and earlier. A new discourse has become dominant in this process in which a majority of the time teaching and learning in schools has become more and more based on rote-learning, test-prepping, and mechanical-like responses in the classroom discussions. There is no time for other subjects, more conversational and controversial. There is no time for exposing young people to problems related to thinking critically as future citizens in a democracy. The implication is: there is nothing inherently wrong with America, except that we must catch up and compete.

WHY THE BOOK – REALLY WHY?

Here I am, completing a book dedicated to those who wish to change the hierarchical structures of school authority and administration, curriculum and teaching. These aspects of school teachings have crushed me, and teachers and students and even teacher educators, who work with me and introduce teachers to teaching. After ten years as a teacher educator, and many years before this stage of my life as a high school teacher, we couldn’t do what we wanted to do as professionals in our work in schools. Many teachers and teacher-educators have had their hopes dashed or quit, others pressed on only to find themselves surrendering to the machine that characterizes schools.

I reflect on the last ten years of my teaching experience. It was no “cake walk.” I have done other things with my life. In 1967, I received my master’s degree in history, and wanted to be deferred from fighting in Viet-Nam. Then, without anticipating it, I entered a forty year journey which, as it turned out, led me to fight for justice and equal treatment for all in schools. Two or three impediments always got in my way. I was a person who questioned (and still question) why public schools are such alienating and compulsory places. From their role as sorters, testing everything a kid may know or should know to be loyal and unquestioning citizens and workers, to inculcating in them (and their teachers) a sense of being committed to the hierarchy, schools and the dominant institutions of our society are hardly criticized anymore, at least, not their hegemonic position which makes their practices acceptable and natural. I also wanted to understand why so much one-sided, memory-based, non-constructive testing must be mandated; and worst, how and why tests score results must be linked to teacher performance, retention, and promotion, and termination. Nowhere is there an adequate accounting for teaching students who are poor, disabled, newly arrived immigrants and who are new to speaking English as their primary language; nor is there any attention given to those students who are different and presently suffering because they are stifled due to the lack of space they need to define their own realities, albeit within some parameters of the school and teacher authority as a constructive and democratic institution, which is sorely missing in today’s schools, aside from a few experiments permitted in charter schools by those few renegade or “rogue”
teachers who are siphoned off or released from “normal” duties of the regular school place.

After this nation has suffered with such poor management from the Bush presidency and his administration, on down, through the economy, the schools, and other institutions (including the family, community associations, and the workplace) there are few popular mass movements demanding a democratic re-structuring of its institutions in our so-called democratic state, irrespective talk of national health care, better or “reformed” educational structures, and more released time for single parents. The role of education remains compulsory, its governance structures remain hierarchical and top-down administrative, and the voices of its peoples remain muted and easy targets for manipulation, via the media, the dominant cultures and discourses, and how the masses are so easily exploited, manipulated, and divided from taking further actions in organizing themselves as a public.

In this milieu, I have struggled to find a language to describe these horrendous conditions which are so hegemonic. We hardly talk about them critically anymore, or take counter-hegemonic actions, excepting those few voices and “heroes” standing up against the machine, being told to proctor a standardized exam or create a charter school whereby those who attend and teach can “do their own thing.” There are signs of hope emerging. A new administration committed to “change” is taking power in Washington, and is committed to stopping the “bubble type” of standardized exam practices and connective teaching pedagogies. A moment in history may be at hand.

In the meantime, as a teacher educator, I continue to struggle on yet another front: my age. Completing my thirty year long journey and “finishing” my dissertation, I have come up against a new oppression: ageism. At 65, after teaching ten years as a professor of education, in every job interview, the same questions emerge: “Why have you been teaching in six schools for ten years? Have you recently been teaching in the public schools full time? What do you “know” of the present day problems teachers and students confront?”

These are good questions, except for the fact that they are not legitimate. I, as a teacher educator, have always been in my students classrooms (when they are teachers) or field sites (when they are taking initial foundation courses). Moreover, as Jonathan Kozol (2005) recently noted, there is emerging a new kind of educational positivism, a “presentism,” as he refers to it, which, like its correlated models of positivistic empiricism, insists that “seeing is believing.” Give these folks numbers, statistical formulae, multiple choice or survey questions, and rubrics to fit their data into, and they are comfortable. Talk about your story, and up emerges “red flags” warning them of “bias” or “subjective factors.” What do they do with the data? They don’t theorize, imagine or dream; they deduct and draw hypotheses, sometimes, more often, draw steadfast conclusions based on the assumption or claim that the scientific research “works” and is “practical,” notwithstanding its wide range for error.

As a political element, No Child Left Behind, which mandates that research must be “non-ideological” and “neutral,” there is hardly anywhere to go, notwithstanding the old stand-by of qualitative research and portfolio assessment practices not
encouraged or warmly received by the Bush administration for the last eight years. In addition to being a radical and 65, I have also encountered a narrow view of what scientific really means, and how schools and society can undertake new research practices. As discovered in the works of Joe Kincheloe, we can discern and account for “complex meaning systems (2003),” systems which include semiological and post-structuralist meanings and research practices, which this book, Counter-Hegemonic Teaching, will attempt to offer.

What I therefore want to show is how all of us, myself included, contribute to a hegemony of keeping everything quietly status quo. This is not a new feature of schools. To my knowledge, it has been happening for over forty years or longer (Becker, 1961; Callahan, 1960; Adorno, 1944; Waller, 1932). At 65 (gaining my doctorate at 55), I have suffered, like many, through the Bush years, and, sadly, through the coward-like and bureaucratic behaviors of some of us, about which, my colleagues would not like to share or comment. I also witnessed a reluctance to discuss issues that harm children and denude teachers of skill and courage, and found the fifth pillar of hegemony (which I will not discuss in this volume to the extent it deserves) of this archaic practice: tenure. School teachers and teacher educators are apt to protect themselves (CYA: Cover Your Ass) rather than join with colleagues or aid those colleagues who do speak out. Or, worse, they’ll look away while one of more of their colleagues is being intimidated by one or more of the “five pillars of hegemony.”

What I am talking about here, for the most part, are those crude practices of standardized testing in places like New York City where the Department and Board of Education will apply standardized testing to kindergarten students by the tens of thousands. I also speak of supportive classroom management techniques, and from these procedures and practices, tracking or providing questionable inclusion practices and the mistreatment of special education and ESL students. Overlapping these practices are entrenched administrative hierarchies who either turn a deaf ear to appeals complaining about such practices, or abet in frustrating teacher appeals and grievances. As a former student of mine, a thirty year teacher in Brooklyn, remarked, “Teachers can never grieve against an administrator or principal since the first step of the new grievance procedure is to get the OK from them!”

The odd thing about those who defend tenure as a way to protect their academic freedom is that it’s hardly ever practiced. As I have suffered the blacklist for speaking out for civil rights of teachers and student rights since the 1970s, I have also experienced the trials and tribulations of becoming blacklisted in Long Island schools. More recently, another similar barrier has beset me: after going through dozens of applications and interviews, I have seen it in the faces of search committees, their stupefied looks upon hearing that I was over sixty and worse, not recently in a classroom. That is, as an applicant to teach or educate or become a professor of education, more concern was expressed not about my recent ten years of teacher educator experience, but about my experience full time in the classroom. How does one do both?

In other years, when I had much classroom experience and lived out my life in the “trenches,” as I observe today in my students’ classrooms and field sites very little if any “real” changes have occurred. Traditional education, in the name of
back to basics, austere classroom management, plus more and more testing, along
with “tough love” and other such practices, it has been my position, both denies the
creativity of student and teacher and continues to be the rule, overt or covert, of the
school day. Despite these persistent practices, there is less and less resistance,
dissent, disagreement, or questioning. There is no call for change, much less
change to the hegemonic bases on which they continue to stifle practices of the
school institution. The only discourse one hears these days is to tighten discipline,
raise student test scores and measure their results and effects on student
achievement and teacher accountability. In this melee real freedom of speech, or
speaking out on behalf of those who suffer under such a regime, goes unnoticed or
is severely censored, suppressed and demonized. Minority students and their
parents are convinced by the machine that it is the teachers who are at fault; that
with better “training,” teachers accompanied with scripted and packaged curricula
will improve and perform their activities better. But what has happened?

As a rule, because the school system machine reports results of student test
scores in reading and writing and math as almost always “increasing” (usually by 1
or 2 or a fraction of one percent), they forget to add how these assessments affect
school progress or the quality of life in the schools or, at what cost to human
misery and harm they are achieved. What they also omit is the qualification that
test score results or quantitative numbers is but one of the many criteria which can
be used but, any other proposition is rarely articulated. Qualitative indicators,
based on student and teacher interviews, can be accepted by stories they recount
and feelings attributed to being constantly tested and “prepped” as objects of a
testing regime. At the same time, students and teachers are denied submitting their
own data about how they feel about their creative selves. Identities are stifled and
students are denied opportunities to produce exciting discussions, and being taught
in unabridged and non-compromising ways and reducing or eliminating subject-
matters such as art, music, dance, social studies, and literature, has further affected
by how their discussions can be informed by critical issues and formulating critical
perspectives. These perspectives are removed or denied entrance into the curriculum
because so much “test-prepping” must be confined to math, reading, and science –
which may affect them and their school community adversely by denying them
multi-cultural and global perspectives.

The concept of “discussion,” or worse, “dialogue,” has become a “dirty word”
which inhibits kids struggling to achieve the “American dream.” It has been
replaced by memorizing and preparing for weekly standardized exam exercises.
There are many articles recently published in newspapers how, for example,
parents in New Delhi, India, will have their young children “bussed” to schools
over forty miles away; or how in Korea, there are special dormitories and test prep
centers established to increase student test scores so they may be accepted in the
elite schools rather than ordinary colleges, thereby assuring their futures and
connecting and moving them onto well-to-do professionals jobs. We, here, in the
United States, also are guided by the same ideological ideas concerning success,
albeit we don’t call it “ruthless,” “competitiveness,” and “inhumane.” Still, such a
heavy emphasis is put on achievement through testing that success at memorization
is perceived by poor and middle class families as a way to achieve the American Dream.

Such practices often serve to deny more diverse settings of learning, or as Gary Orfield (2001) and Jonathan Kozol (2005) have reported for decades, schools are becoming “re-segregated” and thereupon, the chances for minority students (people of color) to become educated with their majority peers (white people) lessens. To Orfield, de-segregated schools produce a higher degree of success in terms of those who graduate high school, go on to college, and interact better with their majority peers in real world conditions. Because there is an inordinate emphasis put on test results (made public on websites), the test averages of student test score results (along with property values) have had, perhaps, inadvertently, produced for those who want to compete with their more wealthier peers for good jobs and a better standard of living, a competitiveness which has produced “push-outs.” These push-out or drop outs, in turn, have, ironically, left more students behind than ahead with *No Child Left Behind*, and, at the same time, since the Reagan years after *A Nation at Risk Conference* (1983), produced a trend in which schools have become more and more re-segregated (rather than de-segregated). This means, to Orfield, re-segregated schools produce less chance for advancement if one is a member of a minority group.

Recently, as a college professor, and after reading many of the works of Jonathan Kozol and Gary Orfield, I asked my predominantly African-American and Caribbean students in a foundation class why integration has failed since the momentous Supreme Court decision of *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954). I also asked them why they think this country has regressed to a condition defended by previous nineteenth century Supreme Court decision, *Plessy vs. Ferguson* (1896), whereby the courts ruled as legal racial segregation providing that the conditions of separation would be “separate but equal.” My students and I realized that with the Brown decision there was sparked a national civil rights movement toward integration but because of distractions as foreign economic competitiveness schools during the Reagan administration there may had been a tendency to move toward a standardized testing policy in order to compete with other countries in which their students were scoring very high in math and science compared to the results of student test scores in the United States. Ironically, as my students began to “map” the correlations between emphasis put on testing and the concomitant re-segregation of schools, they began to realize that, perhaps, emphasis on increasing test scores results, may have, inadvertently, re-segregated what were integrated schools, pushing out minority and poor test takers from the “average,” and, at the same time, producing conditions (as reported by Orfield) which may have undermined minority and majority students from achieving in a better school, or racially integrated school environment in which diversity has a salutary effect on their learning and mobility.

When the class and I realized the results mandated testing had on a national level, driven harder by more recent legislation of the Bush legislation and *No Child Left Behind*, many of my students, felt duped and became angry – often at me and their classmates. They refused to believe that the present government would have lied to them; or worse, that their fellow peoples – from the same neighborhood,
race, class, and ethnic groups, were destined to be channeled into dead end jobs which punctured their idealism and belief in the American Dream. Despite the de-facto conditions of discrimination which existed in the Plessy case, and how this fact was pointed out in the Warren court which overruled Plessy in the Brown case, my students insisted on re-echoing the dictates of the Supreme Court of 1896 which decided in favor of racial discrimination, provided “equal resources” would be made available. Thus, my students argued that if resources in schools in poor and racially black neighborhoods would be made available, equal to the wealthier white schools, people of color would benefit as opposed to bussing their children across town. This reaction came, despite the fact that they also read articles in which nations as India and South Korea practiced bussing with an end toward securing a better education for their children. Moreover, when I revealed other articles about how Japanese schools and children were resisting the overemphasis on standardization of curricula, testing, and school discipline or classroom management, koika, as Japanese students labeled their acts of resistance, my students chose to ignore these new developments. In addition, other articles revealed how Japan as the model of an excellent educational system is souring, causing many Chinese students to decrease their visits and studies in their schools and colleges.

Why such resistance to integration and bussing on the part of my students? The only thing I can conjecture was attributed to the power of ideology via hegemony and its discourses; specifically, what the American dream offers to people – particularly those who have recently immigrated here, the poor and middle classes struggling for upward mobility and seeking “success” or an identity in which one can achieve respect and wealth or have others look up to them if the promise of such a Dream was fulfilled. Was this the reason why my students resisted integrated and bussed schools? Could it be, as a white instructor, I was perceived by my students as “already made it,” and by standing up to such an ideology – which poked holes into the ideology of the American dream and, inadvertently, questioning and putting into disrepute the same dream or hopes my students were pinning their hopes on? Further, talking about hegemony, even on the level of higher education in a preparatory education class for undergraduates, may have been a dangerous pursuit. Needless to say, many – not all – of my students put up an opposition which questioned my questions. Today I do not know if I will ever teach in the higher education again. That is: will I or will I not be able to talk about the hegemonic conditions of schools and society and the world we live in? Alas, then, I have come to my main reason for writing this book.

This book then was written with some degree of hesitancy and uncertainty. Actually, it was not supposed to be a book until I met three forces in my life: the necessity to survive as a professor – publish or perish; the fact that much younger professors were competing against me – even though I have attained the publication of nine chapters and articles, and finally, my meeting critical theorists as Joe Kincheloe and Shirley Steinberg who not only were responsible for publishing me (and 500 other professors) and other struggling professors and students, but further, encouraged me to write my story to the world. One of my former instructors at TC, Columbia University, Maxine Greene said to me after I
sought to return to “finish” my dissertation – since my first attempt in the 1970s: “Why bother to finish…write a book.” I realized, upon her saying these words that the institution was not ready for me in the 1990s, and it certainly was not ready in the 1970s – my first years attempting to “finish” my original dissertation. I recalled how I languished for almost ten years under the sponsorship of a well-known scholar who, apparently, wanted me to get it “clear.” I surmised then, but no longer think about if my original title (see below) was clear or not. I now know it was clear, then and now. What was unclear was the political atmosphere of the university I attended along other factors no one would dare say or disclose to me at the time. It’s like saying: “Hey, Bud, you don’t question these things here, now and forever!”

In 1996, as I sought to get re-admitted into the doctoral program at Teachers College to begin my second doctorate attempt, and after already spending ten years in the first doctoral attempt, and spending ten more years in my own business, I knew, approaching the doors of this institution, invested with so much time devoted to writing papers, tuition, and hard work, in a wintry day in December of 1995, that I probably would never finish. This day, however, I met one of my co-sponsors, who appeared shocked after not seeing me for fifteen years. She indicated that finishing the dissertation would be difficult. I knew I wanted to finish my original dissertation, and I anticipated it would also be critically reviewed. Given its title, “Hierarchical Structures of Authority Manipulating Classroom Discourse,” I have retained fragments in this book, and when I could, disguised other elements imported into the second dissertation. I sought to keep my focus on a basic insight I never completed in my last attempted chapter in the early 1980s, which was never completed: how signification, in the form of hierarchical chains and subject-positions embedded in discourse, “positions” student and teacher toward self and joint defeating actions. I also wanted to show how, in changing these chains of positions, student and teacher may posit themselves as agents of change in creating new power relations in which they can take or negotiate hierarchical and administrative powers for the governance and leadership of their schools and teaching curricula.

Having been influenced by the writings of Paulo Freire, and specifically, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, along with other readings that penetrated the domain of what I would call a “post-structuralist” approach to teaching and education (Appel, 1996; Peters, 1996; Poppkewitz & Brennan, 1996; Young, 1981), I knew then and as I know now that I was probably twenty years ahead of the literature in the late 1970s. I pissed people off by being connected to a neo- or post-Marxist perspective. Upon my reentry into Teachers College, then, I reflected on what was becoming more and more a suffocating world of teaching and education which mostly focused on standardization of competencies in schools and teacher education programs. Goals 2000 negotiated with Democrats and Republicans (as was No Child Left Behind in 2002) became a bipartisan project mandating a new regiment of testing with little discussion regarding how schools could be framed in terms of critical concepts of oppression, suffering, or the mutual perspectives
constructed by students and teachers seeking relief and redress rather than labels as “disruptive teacher” and “student discipline problem” in such conditions. Only recently, upon hearing about a few “teach-led” charter schools did I begin to feel a basis for hope and relief, albeit always cautious that such “reforms” often become or serve as escape values for more fundamental changes.

I recalled how hard I worked since the early 1970s at Teachers College working on my doctoral thesis proposal. My sponsor made me revise my proposal at least thirty times, and when I submitted it for an oral defense in early 1976, I knew not one word would be used in the main body of chapters to follow! Still, my sponsor opened me to the world of a different kind of literature I had never seen before. At first the writings of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) revealed how social reality is constructed. Then, the writings of Jurgen Habermas and the Frankfurt School, revealed a world possible based on relations and responses of questioning and norm building in mutually consented communication and communities. And finally, after attempting to read Michel Foucault and other postmodern theorists as articulated in Screen Magazine, the work of Paulo Freire hit home: the feeling of being oppressed I felt always in schools since I started in elementary, middle, and high schools in Washington Heights and the Bronx in New York City. Till this day, as I write this book, this feeling continues to return to me, and I would venture a guess, to many others who have been there and know how being stuck in an alienating and cold place called schools – whether a student, teacher, or college teacher educator. I name this feeling as a hierarchical chill crawling up and down my spine. Later in this book, along with identifying the “pillars of hegemony” in Chapter 2, I will identify this feeling as a hegemonic subject-position that grips us from, as Zizek would put it, the Real, or place of the unconsciousness that shoots through the consciousness and for those who would wish and desire to change what is a compromising and suffocating place, a place called schools.

Starting in the Fall of 1972, I spent full time study and writing my thesis to the Spring of 1982, along with two full days a week of “subbing” in the New York City schools. After my father’s sudden death due to a massive heart attack in late 1980, I decided to enter his business and continue a family tradition that none of my siblings wanted. I found it necessary, since dad’s business lease had only a few months left before expiring, to start a new furniture business which, unlike my father’s business, because of a shift of location, required weekly newspaper ads, and later, television advertising to attract people to come to my desolate location and offset my expenses.

THE FURNITURE STORE, THE THESIS, AND RETURNING TO TEACHERS COLLEGE FOR A DAY

The new location of the “store” was a “dead location” or one in which few people walked by. In advertising, as in the writing of my first thesis, the notion of constructing a new language system emerged in my thinking. Indeed, by 1985, I had invented the “2 for 1 sale” that aired on mainline television commercials all over the country and weekly ads in the Daily News. Anyone who knows about
advertising and running a business can imagine the overhead of conducting business with advertising as a single location, in which I earmarked millions of dollars each year compared to the “good” location of the “Mom and Pop” store dad and his brothers began in Washington Heights during the 1920s. Like many storeowners of small businesses they could not grasp the concept of advertising or how the media grabs one’s attention and instills a need or desire to buy an item or product or service. This understanding, no doubt, was already instilled in me studying language and ideology throughout the 1970s and my abortive attempt to “finish” my first doctorate.

Still, the desire to catch the hierarchical forms and feelings of oppression returned to me. After my furniture business ended in the early 1990s, I decided to work with my brother in the window treatment business. As a result of paying a shop-at-home call on Claremont Avenue, one block west of Broadway, I noticed through the windows of a prospective customer, roofs of buildings which were green as a result of being oxidizing over the years. These were the roof tops of Columbia University. Having spent many hours with classmates after class in the Westside Bar during the 1970s and constantly perusing many bookstores on Broadway, staring outward onto the street of Columbia’s green roofs, the feeling of discovering how teachers are oppressed returned to me. And then it hit me: I must return to Teachers College to complete my dissertation. A few years later, I mustered enough courage to walk into the buildings. In the halls I walked, the halls I knew too well, I caught the familiar smell of Maxine Greene’s perfume, and I knew I was about to undertake a new journey, entering the doctoral program in early 1996.

On meeting Maxine Greene, however, something else happened. As she said to me earlier, “Go write a book!...You don’t need a doctorate.” What she really wanted to say or said between the lines, in a hoarse voice (from years of smoking), was that the political climate at Teachers College would not accept what I was about, nor what I wanted to write about. Still, with a stroke of luck, outside of Maxine’s office, a professor overheard me. Afterwards, he approached me as I was about to leave disappointed, and recommended that I see a young professor on the floor above. Upon approaching his office in the old department I had majored in and made weekly visits to see my sponsor, I discovered in this young professor a light of hope. This professor was also influenced heavily by Dwayne Huebner, my first sponsor. He also knew him indirectly through his sponsor at the University of Wisconsin, the well known critical theorist, Michael Apple – also a Huebner student. After a chat with him, he asked me to join his two seminars that summer and he also became my first advising professor.

Because the professor was not tenured, he could not have a major voice in my development beyond my qualification paper. Other tenured professors, as Maxine Greene, who was an adjunct at the time, insisted that “I needed a tenure professor to get me through.” Once again this suggested to me I would not be able to write my dissertation. Still, by another coincidence that same summer, my original academic advisor returned to TC after almost two decades of absence, having held three deanships in colleges across the country. A surprise meeting with him produced another break. His name was Dr. Gary A. Griffin and, upon knocking on his door, hunched over unpacking his books onto shelves, he squinted his eyes and said to
me after I introduced myself, without a pause, recalling what happened to me almost twenty years earlier: “I should have spoken to Dwayne. I should have. I knew. I should have.”

Like Maxine Greene, Gary Griffin I knew for many years, specifically those years I was held back from finishing my dissertation because my dissertation sponsor equivocated about the “clarity” of my thesis. Thus, I was constantly told to redo and revise, it seemed, forever. Another coincidence, a former hire of Gary’s in the early 1980s, whose name I shall not reveal, but was a very powerful professor in the department at the time, critiqued my original title for the dissertation I proposed in the 1970s. Not daring to resist her, I took her recommendation to change the study critical of hierarchies to a study which would gather qualitative data on special education students in New York City, stories about their lives pertaining to their desires to be included or remain in their special education tracks. The same professor almost kicked me out of class because I asked too many questions (a few, really) and she panned my qualification paper, the basis of my thesis proposal and dissertation. Gary came to the rescue with one short wave of the hand, saying, “Let me handle this.” It was Gary, a co-founder of NCREST, a famous consulting network for over 800 restructuring school districts, who would help me. The other founder, Ann Lieberman, and the professor I critiqued twenty years earlier in a free speaking student newsletter (see Chapter 2 for the essence of this article) would also come to my assistance, if necessary. Strange twists do politics make.

Like myself, Gary, too, was undergoing difficult times. He returned to Teachers College after being terminated by a person whom he hired, and now sought a perch at the college. He was in his mid-sixties like myself today. And, it was through Gary that I met my friend David Avdul in 1972. Gary co-taught the course with two other professors, Dwayne Huebner and Arthur Foshay, the former became my first sponsor, while Gary became David’s sponsor. I was not alone in getting help from Gary, he was very helpful in assisting many other students. Still, at a meeting with Gary and the unnamed powerful professor, it was decided that the problem of my “new” dissertation would not be a philosophical issue (“we don’t do those kinds of research here anymore”). She advised that I do a qualitative study with special education students in the New York City public high schools. And so, I did.17

I had chosen Huebner, not Griffin (as my friend David had) as my sponsor in the 1970s, because he impressed me as a very radical person capable of helping me discover what hegemonizes students and teachers in school systems. I did not see Gary Griffin as aligned with my philosophy, albeit he was a very fine human being, nor could he be of any help, I incorrectly assumed at the time. Knowing Gary as more pragmatic than philosophical, after the grueling episode of my last full time high school job in which I got fired because I was sympathetic with student causes and discussions, in particular on civil rights and liberties and anti war sentiments, I sought to discover through philosophical research the foundations of hegemony and hierarchy. But, in my first and second tenure as a doctoral student at Teachers College the authorities let me know in many subtle and unsubtle ways, this was not to be.
MY EXPERIENCES AS A TEACHER: FROM THE BRONX TO LONG ISLAND AND BACK TO THE CITY

Living on Long Island with my parents throughout the 1960s, and receiving my BA and MA in history at local colleges, I never could have anticipated the world of controversy and conflict I would endure as a social studies teacher in 1967. As I reflect on my initial teaching experiences, three memories come to mind: (1) My learning experiences as student, from elementary to secondary school, (2) the experiences I had as a teacher on Long Island and as a substitute in the New York City school system, and (3) what has happened to me over the last ten years, teaching as a professor of education, a teacher-educator, in subject areas of the foundations, social studies, special education-inclusion, and critical literacy and critical theories of media and language.

As an elementary school student I was very outspoken, talkative and inquisitive. I recall saying to my kindergarten teacher: “What a big ass you have!” No doubt my ability to be more tactful managed to improve over the years at elementary school but not my talkativeness or my tendency to interrupt other students and the teachers as they talked. I always felt I had something else to contribute to the discussion and felt a burning desire to talk and say something in addition to what was being said. Having moved from Washington Heights to the Bronx in the middle of 4th grade, something happened to me without my full awareness: I became tracked in “slow” classes. Whether this tracking was done because of my test scores (I only recall a test named the Iowa test) or whether it came about because of my record as a student in grades 1 through 3, I do not know. All I know

In the meantime, my new attempt to present a philosophical proposal to the dissertation committee course of the Curriculum and Teaching Department was met with laughter and polite scorn. Imagine my shock upon hearing how “we don’t allow philosophical dissertations to be done here anymore,” in the first and largest institution for teacher professionalism and preparation in the world, in a place where John Dewey and George Counts taught for many years from the 1920s to the 1950s! Gary and others counseled me to do a study with “real” students. At this time, I was taking a course about the “Politics of Labeling in Special Education,” co-taught by two professors, one whom was the chair and founder of the Special Education Department, Margaret Jo Shepherd. During the course, professor Shepherd asked me to attend a presentation by one of her teachers who brought with her many of her “special ed” students. I observed the same students the following Spring. In May of 1997 I decided some of the students of Shephard’s class would be the population that would constitute my “field work,” even though I have never taken a course in special education, nor had any interest in these kinds of students. I could not have been more wrong in my initial assessment. By deriving my material data from these students based on their experiences and stories as African-American and Hispanic students in the New York City high school system, I was able to unite my perspective with their experiences in a dissertation that was finally accepted in 1998, with distinction, and titled: “Living in Contradiction: Stories of Special Education Students.”
is that I was placed in classes in 4-11, 5-11, 6-12, 7-12, 8-11, and finally 9-11, one 
year before entering high school. This was significant because each grade had up to 
13 classes per grade, 1 being the smartest or fastest, 11-13 being the slowest.

I did not understand this tracking until a special event emerged one day in fifth 
grade while talking to one of my classmates too much. Caught in the act, an act 
that was considered “disrespectful to the rights of others” on my report card, one 
day before a class trip to the Hayden Planetarium in New York, the teacher 
punished me. Instead of joining the class trip, I was to be detained in the 5th grade 
class across the hall. I reported to this class while my regular class enjoyed their 
trip. I sat in the back of the room for the entire day in class 5-1, and to my 
astonishment, realized I had been tracked into a slower class for many years. I 
listened to their kind of talk without realizing I was doing a discourse analysis. I 
compared the 5-1 talk I heard to what I heard routinely and realized how much 
more refined and eloquent these students were compared to my classmates in 5-11. 
Talk as a discourse also included how students carried themselves by their use of 
language, the way they walked and related to each other and their teacher.

Since the experience of sitting in the back of a smarter class, I realized how 
hierarchies worked and intruded themselves into discourse. Admittedly, I didn’t 
realize how “slow” I was until, when playing stoop ball with some of my “Eddy 
buddies” in the Bronx, I said: “would you please teach me how to play?” Met with 
incredulous stares, I added: “I meant, would you please taught me?” This time, my 
request was met with laughter that insinuated I was stupid. Finally, I tried again, 
saying: “Oh, would you please teach me the game?” I didn’t learn proper grammar 
that day, as much as how cruel young kids can be to each other.

The students whom I played with were very smart and placed in classes with 
lower numbers at a very young age. I never forgot how detrimental and harmful 
labeling can be. These experiences became benchmarks for guiding me to teach 
students once I became a teacher. Most of my published articles in special 
education and its inclusion speak to these concerns. While there was no “special 
education” tracking in my schools in the 1950’s, my elementary and secondary 
schooling experiences in the Bronx revealed a hidden track system excluding 
different or foreign students. I began to notice “new” students from different lands 
enrolling. This was a time when Puerto Rican families began to emigrate to 
Nuevo York and their children began to appear in schools. In addition, by middle school, I 
became aware of a gay student in my eighth grade class. Alex did not “come out” 
and declare this fact. I recall the subtle stares and remarks of my classmates, but 
nothing overtly violent or cruel – at least, I was not aware of it. Still, the difference 
of sexual orientation, race and ethnicity was clear to me at this time, though I was 
also aware of my classmates’ reactions and stares. I held my judgment in reserve 
for the moment.

In high school I had neglected to study hard probably because I was “hanging 
around” with the wrong group of kids. Not accepted by the “smart kids” in my 
building because of grammatical deficiencies in my speech, but able to play ball 
better, I chose to stay with “tougher kids,” the “Steve buddies,” future soda 
truckers, who were by no means academically prone. Things changed, however, 
when in the 10th grade I broke my leg and received home tutoring. Upon reentry
into high school I met new friends in class. They were more conscientious about study habits. Still wanting to play ball and meet girls, I did both when every Friday night I would meet with my new friends – the “Joel buddies” – to study for the regents exam via regent review books. Each study session was followed by one of their “socials,” which included their younger sisters and friends.

I realized from this experience – way before reading Dewey – how meeting the social needs of students while being attuned to their cognitive abilities would and should be of equal importance. Because I came to realize too late how important academic study and course grade averages were, I attempted to get into a community college by the time I graduated high school. At this time, however, my family had decided to “buy a home” in the suburbs and I found myself, suddenly, transported to a neighborhood without hang-outs on the street corners, candy stores, and “bopping” or singing rock and roll in the echo-chambers of the subways of New York City. I recalled how often I simply refused to go to high school as I would have to walk three blocks from home and transverse the Grand Concourse to get to the school. Interceding on my way to school, I would pass the IND subway station. More times than not, I opted to “cut” school and walk through the streets of the city all day. I think much of what informs my teaching today was learned on these walking excursions in the late fifties and sixties in downtown Manhattan. I often recounted these stories to my students in urban and suburban colleges to the amazement and delight of my students.

The same students in my current education classes just as quickly changed their amazed facial expressions when they heard I graduated high school with a low 72.3 average, and did no better in college with a 2.3 GPA. Not wanting to look slow or stupid to them, I try to explain, exposing my vulnerabilities, that those special education students I worked with on my dissertation had similar problems – low averages, poor family support, being teased by fellow students. When I mention that my study was on special education students their airs of intellectual superiority soften and understanding begins to emerge. Still, I know the question that lingers in their minds is: What is this guy doing as my education professor? I believe, however, by the second week their perception changes as we get down to deep analytical exchanges. I will review and analyze in subsequent chapters of this book how college students and I go about first with exchanges of critical dialogue, and then, further breaching the limits of critical dialogue, delve into counter-hegemonic teaching and theorizing.

In much the same way, as I reflect on my teaching experiences as a social studies high school teacher in the late sixties and seventies, I recall classrooms filled with excitement, controversial issue debates, colorful bulletin boards of the students’ work adoring the peripheral walls of their recent projects, and classroom barriers – student and teacher roles – that were often breached by class trips into the neighborhoods. On the issue of de-facto discrimination in home sales to people of color in my all white suburban high school, I asked the students to take surveys asking real estate agents why they practiced negotiations which excluded sale to people of color. Or, why the Viet-Nam War raged on despite the fact that college and high school student demonstrations swept the nation and reports leaked out revealing how the Johnson-Nixon administrations misrepresented the war’s
CHAPTER 1

beginnings and its reasons for continuation. Till this day, I wonder how these events produced in me the need to see through contradictions as forces that get between the classroom and teaching act.

After all, this was the sixties, and I perceived my role as a facilitator and participant of the most controversial and current issues of the day – including civil right marches, women rights, student rights, gay rights, and anti-war demonstrations. I often refer to these times as “social studies heaven,” despite the massive polarizations dividing the country. In my first high school I also became an activist, chairing a student club referred to as S.O.C. (Students Organized for Change).

Helping my professional development in these years, I was lucky enough to meet the head of my department as well as my mentor and evaluator, Ray Sobel. He was very pro-Union (UFT as opposed to NEA), pro-civil rights, pro-New Social Studies Curricula, and anti-war. More importantly, he had just completed a book with a professor from Queens College/CUNY about providing materials for teaching controversial issues entitled: *From Left to Right.* This book contained several case studies and issues which ran along a right to left political spectrum. I was delighted to be chosen by him to present a lesson on “Inductive and Critical Thinking Approach to Teaching,” which he had observed me doing in my class. I was only in my second year of teaching and twenty fours years old. The presentation dealt with optical illusions and the existence of the fact, and I got social studies teachers in attendance from both the junior high schools and the high school in the school district to partake in a few simulated teaching activities. Little did I know what a hornet’s nest of trouble this act would stir up by the older, more conservative and tenured faculty.

Nevertheless, I knew in this environment I would grow professionally, supplemented by taking a few courses at TC between 1967–1969. Unanticipated troubles began in my third and forth years of teaching, however. I was “traded” away to another school because of a cut-back and re-districting of my high school’s community lines, and was interviewed and received in my second social studies position in a high school known for more conservative leanings on Long Island. I had read articles in *Newsday* about how the Klu Klux Klan and the National Renaissance Party was active in local politics, along with their pressing for, and granting of, the dismissal of a library employee because she was Hispanic! Their adherents were calling for the termination of public school employees who happen to be “liberal” or “left leaning.” The community also had a very active American Legion who staunchly supported the war in Viet Nam.

I took note of this fact because some of these students were not like those at the previous job. The students in my first school were mostly “A” or academic students – students destined to become “white collar” managers and professionals. In my second high school, the students appeared as vocational students, destined to become blue collar workers like their parents – auto mechanics and electricians for the boys; cosmeticians and secretaries for the girls. These high school students were tracked on the “G” line or general education. Despite the tracking in this high school, a high school which boasted over 6000 students at the time, the largest in Long Island, I was given the assignment to teach students – A and G students –
integrated into a 12th year social studies government course which emphasized a comparison between the United States and the Soviet Union.

As with all my classes, this class enjoyed a high degree of participation. In the high school newspaper (The Paper Lion, 1970), students wrote: “Fleischer Teaches Government by Games.” By organizing the students into small groups, we began to discuss major issues comparing both societies and governments in ways which adhered to Edwin Fenton’s “new curricula” emphasizing critical analysis and cross comparisons of cultures of both forms of government. I captured the students’ attention and imagination by having them participate in a game called Kohlkoz or how a Soviet agricultural collective farm works. Some of the “G” students hooked us up from group to group and classroom to classroom with an electrical board that flashed red, yellow, and green lights. The red lights were signals that indicated it was time to stop producing so much for the collective operated for Gosplan located in Moscow, while the yellow light indicated that there would be a change in plans, a slow down, and the green light indicated resumption of production for Gosplan. Each collective signaled when they reached their Gosplan quotas, to continue to produce food for individually owned small farms located on the fringe of the collective, or Kohlkoz farm.

Though I and the other students did not attend seriously enough to the fact that one student always came to class wearing an all black suit with a bible in hand, I received a call one day from a school administrator who told me that the parent of this student was very upset about my government teaching. The parent claimed I put too much positive light on USA-USSR relations. I was more than willing to talk to the parent. However, a few days later, I received a letter circulated by the teacher’s union, warning that non-tenure teachers were being asked to terminate their employment, with no reasons given. The following week, I received a request from the principal, along with school psychologists, the chair of my department and others in attendance, to come and meet them.

As I walked into the conference room of the principal, I could not fathom why I was being called in with so many administrators and school psychologists present. I was immediately informed that I should submit my resignation. Having only excellent written evaluations, and looking at the administrator who wrote them, I asked why. Shocked by my act of resistance, the principal stood up and yelled at the top of his lungs: “When we hired you we wanted a fresh breath of air….Not a hurricane!” I asked for clarification, which was met with a list of items considered “inappropriate,” namely, teaching USA-USSR relations as a game, talking about censorship and discussing an article written by Allen Ginsberg, an advocate for free speech.

When I responded that I learned of the simulation game as played by the State Department in cooperation from The Rand Corporation, the principal continued to name other infractions. A few months earlier, I had clipped out an article by the famous poet Allen Ginsberg. In the article there was a list of words sorted by a series of columns. Isolated themselves, the words meant nothing, but if one wanted to string them together – one word from column A, another word from column B, another word from Column C, and so forth, one could easily construct a sentence that was off color, lewd, or “dirty.” After explaining to the principal this was an
exercise to demonstrate how censorship was culturally defined in the “mind of the beholder,” he concluded that the exercise was “dirty.”

After I walked out of the hour long meeting, I intended to submit my resignation letter at the end of the day, but first I wanted to speak to the president of the teachers union. As it turned out, I was not given that opportunity. In the middle of my 8th period class, another teacher poked his head in and asked me to step out. I did, in front of all my students. The teacher, an emissary from the principal, told me to leave the building and never to return! No other teacher came forth to offer a moment of solace or guidance, whether tenured or non-tenured. I knew then as I know now that when no collectivity amongst professionals exists, individualized fear establishes itself. There is a fear of getting involved or, what I will refer to later in the book as a unified self or self-fullness. I walked down the school halls that afternoon, and through their windowed doors, many of my colleagues just turned away. This was the longest walk of my life.

I stood alone about to be blacklisted. I tried to gain employment for months on Long Island, and initially did very well. Then, suddenly, upon learning from a prospective principal, who had checked my references, that my previous boss rendered a “bad” reference. This principal advised me to give up teaching, “go get a factory job!” For the remaining thirty seven years, receiving my doctorate finally in 1998, I made it a point to collect enough references from both colleagues and administrators. Still, I did not feel free of the stigma of being blacklisted or labeled in a way that prohibited me from continuing my profession. Still, I continue to this day, to fight and become, once again, employed. And, still lingering are the thoughts: am I being denied full employment because of my age or politics or both? 22

I appealed my case to the American Civil Liberties Union in 1971. The director at the time, William F. Kunstler (the attorney who defended the Chicago 8 of the famous anti-war demonstration of the Democratic National Convention of 1968), told me I had “no case.” As a non-tenured teacher I had no rights. The following year, I went to law school for a semester, dropped out, and began the following Fall of 1972 to become a full time doctoral student at TC. Simultaneous to taking courses and subbing weekly at a local junior and high school in New York City, I struggled to write a proposal that would speak of my predicament and those of many others who, at that point in time, had not been heard from then and I dare say, since.

Teaching in New York City as a substitute teacher allowed me more freedom than my previous Long Island teaching experiences. While I was spotted for some of my unconventional practices – having kids play games as Group Therapy, asking them to define the group dynamics and norms in the classroom, and role play how these dynamics play out in the larger society in terms of domestic and foreign affairs and issues, I felt closer to the students and teachers of the city than those of the suburbs. Still, as my teaching experiences fed into a conceptualization of language and power, I began to think about how I could take this teaching knowledge and apply it to existing critical literature, discussion groups and seminars. Under these circumstances I re-entered TC as a full time student, and met Dwayne Huebner and Maxine Greene. Here, at TC, I tried to develop my thinking processes as I presented my first proposal to complete my doctoral dissertation, but
failed to have it materialize – though I reached the last chapter – as my father suddenly died in 1980.

WHAT MUST BE DONE NOW! MY ROLE AS TEACHER-EDUCATOR

As a teacher, educator-professor for the last ten years, I teach many courses in a variety of ways. Mainly, I try to model for my pre-service and in-service teachers the magic of being creative, and at the same time controversial enough to stir students’ imaginations. At a recent course I taught on social studies methods, I did something I haven’t tried since the first day of high school teaching. After observing the students argue about what constitutes a “fact” versus an interpretation, I asked the students to take a piece of paper and observe. The next second I flung my desk on its side producing a loud thud. The students were taken aback and shocked as they looked at me. I answered them with a question: “Now with your pen and paper describe what I did.” After reading their responses a few minutes later, with comic relief, the students realized what I was trying to do. In subsequent chapters I will explain how a filter or grid is sedimented into our consciousness as many layers downward – consciousness to unconsciousness – and linked inter-subjectively, through discursive formations of intersecting chains of signal givers and subject-positions, and how we can see through the genesis of consciousness as linked to the unconsciousness and each other and the more distanced horizons of society and the world. In this regard, I also try to show how the modernist notion of consciousness is displaced as merely one sutured subject-positions (of many others) passing through discursive and unconscious formations of chains of power and identity.

As Howard Zinn (2006), the famous American historian maintains of educators, teachers and professors, reflecting on his own teaching practice: “It is fascinating to make new knowledge, but only if that fascination does not become an end in itself.” Rather, he continues, “the idea is to use this new knowledge to activate people and the social and others toward emancipatory ends.” In the same way, I have sought as a teacher educator for the last ten years to take insights and breakthroughs with my students to a level of social and political action. Often I have volunteered to offer my services to several causes and activate conferences, demonstrations and in one case, start up a charter school for democratic leadership. In the latter case, teachers, students and parents share in running their own school of “at risk” students. At other times, I have underwritten full day conferences, committed to justice, equality, democracy and peace, with an emphasis on fear, post 9/11, creating an opposition to fear-mongering which we are constantly bombarbed with in the news media, ads and in movies. In 2004, I sponsored a conference for several parent groups to come together to fight Mayor Bloomberg’s effort to leave back poor and minority students in the 3rd grade by anticipating over 15,000 students would attend summer school before they were to take a standardized test. At Brooklyn College I sponsored a website and student club referred to as Educators Speaking Out (www.educatorspeakout.com), serving as a sounding board for teachers to come together throughout the tri-state area of New York in order to critique and oppose existing school practices that were regressive, hegemonic and hierarchical.
 Throughout *Counter-Hegemonic Teaching*, I will illustrate how my teaching experiences from elementary student to college professor feed into my present practices as a teacher educator in a variety of contexts and subject-matters. In particular, issues related to the foundations, leadership, social studies, media literacies and language use, and special education inclusion will be articulated within short case studies. I have spent over forty years thinking about this book’s content, and after its publication, will continue to think about adding more dimensions to its sequel, *Counter-Hegemonic Teaching II.* I ask for your comments, questions, and responses so that I may further develop professionally, and so that we may develop democratic forms of education here and abroad. For the most part, I will be looking for new forms of oppression, as they will certainly appear in this post 9/11 age of fear, terrorism and war, as fear is constantly pumped into the public consciousness. Hopefully, we’ll break out of the non-participatory malaise of subject-positions. I will never forget those who came forth to help me despite personal costs and embarrassment to themselves. I seek those of you who will come forth – not merely for me or you – but for the students and children and parents by whom we are entrusted, and to resist those many harmful dimensions and hierarchical systems of teaching and school administration. Some of these systems may not, at first glance, be noticeable, since they are accepted without question, and are what I call, “hegemonic.” Others, with the use of some tools, case studies and strategies offered in *Counter-Hegemonic Teaching*, may become familiar as we become creative and develop books and organizations of our own. Either way, we can begin to mount a movement which breaks the chains of oppressive, hegemonic forces that keep a hierarchical grip on our consciousness and concerted actions.

A FEW WORDS FOR THOSE CRITICAL THEORISTS WHO SEE POST-STRUCTURALISM AS NEO-LIBERAL

Many critics of schooling are leery of postmodern and post-structural approaches and have articulated their oppositions to such analyses by referring to them as “neo-liberal.” They claim that neo-liberal changes in schools and society are attending only to the surface issues as opposed to more basic problems pertaining to institutionalized racism, classism and sexism. To these critics, neo-liberal educators make it appear as if issues related to class, race and gender are over or will be over soon and all that is needed are minor repairs and reforms. For example, Michael Apple, Peter McLaren and Donaldo Macedo have expressed reservations about how some changes in schools may give the impression that the problem of authority and power, and who wields it, are to be considered equally as important as “subject-positions” or the sense of identity people attending schools may have of themselves. They argue, to the contrary, that what needs to be studied is not so much the micro aspects of schooling, as much as the macro or “wider” aspects of schools and society, and how they are occluded and severed by post-modernists, or the “postie” orientation, from their structural roots and power as class, race and gender.
In these critiques, it is presumed that all post-structuralist critiques of schooling and society are neo-liberal if they originate or are premised on the use post-structuralist concepts (i.e. signifying chains, subject-positions, discursive formations), and therefore, they cannot or do not attend to the wider forces (i.e. class, race, gender) at work within society’s institutions, affecting schools. Halsey and Powell (1977) and others made a similar critique, but rather, urging critical theorists to use concepts which address both micro-macro dimensions to their advantage and keep at bay binary logics. Not all were antipathetic toward post-structural or semiological views, however. In 1983, Henry Giroux took note in his *Theory and Resistance in Education: A Pedagogy for the Opposition*, citing Louis Althusser, pointing toward advancing Althusser’s notion of interpellation (and how one is called or “hailed” into a subject-position to obey authority) and how such mechanisms of reproduction and ideology can be expanded, i.e. not only interpellate but inscribe in one’s subjectivity a structured sets of positions with outlets to express their resistance. Giroux cites Althusser, (1971) and reveals schools as an ideological institution which turn out workers as automatons replicating capitalist values, habits, assumptions and dispositions because they are “so quiet” during this reproduction process. Giroux, Althusser and others of the traditional Marxist ilk may not have completely attended to the potential of resistances in schools. In a similar way, Giroux further criticizes such studies as Samuel Bowles and Hebert Gintis’s *Schooling in Capitalist America* (1976), insisting that people and workers are not dupes; they can resist despite the odds against them, ideological, real or a combination of both. To Giroux, what is key is to find those spaces that may exist in repressive and hegemonic school conditions. In this regard, Giroux points to the need for more exploration into the spheres of signification and semiotics, or how ideological and hegemonic positions of the subject may become resisted and transformed via subject-positions and other signifying constructs.

As Peter McLaren and others in *Marxism against Postmodernism in Educational Theory* (2002) clearly indicate, this “post-structural” direction is presently labeled as “neo-liberal.” The present study on *Counter-Hegemonic Teaching*, however, takes issue with some of these, perhaps, premature closures of a particular Marxist position. While agreeing with their critiques of neo-liberalism, I seek to widen the critique to include people already in schools and under other oppressive and hegemonic conditions within the school system which holds out potential spaces in discourse and signifying discursive formations. In this way, the potential of finding those spaces or the existence of resistant groups and individuals in hegemony does not completely foreclose their struggles, and further, the extent to which anti-hierarchical and hegemonic chains of signification – which serve as spaces on which to inscribe resistance and counter-hegemonic discourses and organizations – lies and can be potentially useful in serving liberated teaching when school oppression and hegemony are intermixed in discourse.

Thus, the present study disagrees with McLaren, Apple, and Macedo on their recent critiques of post-structuralism as neo-liberal. Supported by Ernesto Laclau and Chantel Mouffe’s study of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Toward A Radical Democratic Politics* (1985) in which “new social movements” are forming all the
time and offer an alternative to the strict classist interpretations and applications of Marxism seeking change and revolution to the present modes of capitalist production in schooling. *Counter-Hegemonic Teaching* accepts the position that class is not the only position of power and relation – albeit a powerful structural position – to take when viewing society and schools as parts of a whole in an expressive totality. As Laclau and Mouffe argue, class can be complemented with gender, race and authority power subject-positions, relations, and their associated equivalent and differential chains of meanings and words (Laclau, 1993, 2007; Thomassen, 2005).

I argue a “critical” position is exceeded by a “counter-hegemonic” position. This means that the notion of subject-positions and signifying chains which operate to both constitute and complement traditional radical class critiques by including those already inscribed or interpellated in its oppressive school systems, which can, when complemented with an additional component such as post-structuralist constructs or tools for mapping, reverse the process by inscribing and interpolating their interpellated subject-positions along the “surfaces of inscription” articulated by Laclau (1990, 1993, 2007). When this happens (discussed in detail in Chapter 4) new agente dimensions may be revealed offering new complexities of subject-positions and chains of signifiers, including “textured and thick” surfaces on which inscriptions are over-inscribed, de-inscribed and re-inscribed (Laclau, 1990, 1993, 2007).

One may see in the work of Ann Marie Smith (1996) and her review of Ernesto Laclau and Chantel Mouffe’s *Hegemony and a Socialist Democratic Strategy* (1985), how the complex interactions between power relations and identities interact to produce consistent as well as contradictory subject-positions and modes of articulation. She, like Laclau and Mouffe, (1985) examine hegemony as not necessarily embedded, not only as a sutured series of subject-positions but, further, examines the “surfaces” on which these positions are articulated and changed in discourse, how they circulate amongst signifiers and speakers, leaving marks or re-surfaced surfaces, “tendentially,” (Thomassen, 2001) in the inscription process for actors to make a profound difference. Thus, surfaces of class overlaying surfaces or layers of class, which, in turn, are overlaid both by traces of gender, ethnicity, age, and sexuality make for a complex of hegemony and also spaces for change and counter-hegemony. The process becomes more complex when we see these traces and overlays of inscription as containing intersections and crossings of chains of signifiers from various discursive formations and groups, representing subject-positions as constituted by metonymic chains of signifiers – fleeting glimpses – linking parts to the whole of the realities in which speakers and people make up in complex configurations of discourse, articulated to and through each other.

Smith, Laclau, and Thomassen, then, take a different position from the above critics as do McLaren, Apple, and Macedo. To Smith, one lives out their life in subject-positions linked to structural positions which are more or less “thrown into.” One’s perception of the world (the real) is already colored by the imaginary and the symbolic. To Smith, and her predecessors, Michel Pechoux (1982), and his mentor Jacques Lacan, (1977) the notion of Althusser’s interpellation has already been revised as a series of complex modes of inscription on surfaces of subject-
positions and their constituting (and interacting and intersecting) chains of signifiers; once inscribed into a subject-position, one already has an arsenal of tools widening the dimension of being ideologized in language. Acting as a signifying sieve, as they sense both oppressive and counter-oppressive subject-positions along differential alignments of dominant and dominated, hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discursive formations, people get linked in complex acts of signification and discourse.\textsuperscript{30}

To Smith, there are many overlapping and intersecting dynamics and spaces occurring \textit{between} race, class and gender which traditional Marxist “critiques” may overlook. These spaces may serve for a basis of counter-hegemonic and anti-oppressive states of identifications, symbolizations and discourses. Further, Smith sees race, gender and class as power relations and differentials, not as segmented or isolated from one another, serving as “reflections” or epiphenomena above an economic base. She sees through her concept of subject-positions, a more complex and nuanced picture of how power and language interact, affecting the lives of those in oppressive and hegemonic conditions of institutional society and schools.

It is from Smith and others, as will be discussed in Chapter 4, that a different position is offered to examine and re-visit Freire in a way that does not marginalize post-structural analyses. Indeed, one way to explore Freire again may be through a post-structuralist extension of his main concepts: reflection, action, dialogue, problem-posing, critical praxis, etc.

I believe this re-visit needs to be done because Freire and his contemporaries needs to extend, specifically, his major work, \textit{Pedagogy of the Oppressed}, in order to continue to serve the cause of countering hegemony\textsuperscript{31} and to ignite liberating, democratic causes of pedagogy and schooling in this country and other so-called ‘advanced’ industrialized nations in postmodern times. By utilizing a post-structural framework, one that is most appropriate for analyzing hegemony today, as Laclau (1985, 1993, 2007) and others have argued, an emphasis on how language and power interconnect on the level of signification or by signifiers and their corresponding chains and links, can be constructed representing chains of race, gender, class, and most importantly and often omitted, \textit{chains of administrative school authority and hierarchy} which encompass school practices such as testing, classroom management, administrative and hierarchical practices, and how these procedures and policies continue to divide or diffuse potential student and teacher solidarity for control of their schools governance by democratic means.

Thus, this book will probe deeper into the notion of how subjects are positioned, and how in this probe, there may exist spaces within which counter-hegemonic critiques of complex arrangements of power, language and subjectivity can be acted on by students and teachers who, in their present antagonistic relations may see through their oppression, and see how they oppress each other and see each other as oppressors. Breaking out of these hegemonic states, creating a more critical dialogue and questioning is not only necessary for the use of language and identity categories; it also “maps out” how such complex power differentials in schools intersect and interact with each other, short circuiting broader coalitions and solidarities from forming into mass movements for democracy in schools and throughout society. Igniting in themselves new subject-positions of agency,
identity and solidarity in their present power relationships, students and teachers may discover how hierarchical relations of power are constituted by hierarchical chains of signifiers and subject-positions, and thereby provide all involved with a more complex reading as to why they themselves continue to miss the reason they should maintain such hegemonic relationships, as they unwittingly do.

I seek to explore more dimensions of school oppressions, to “catch those hierarchical feelings of oppression that slide up and down my spine” and which keeps us silent and complicit in our talk. If you feel the same, Counter-Hegemonic Teaching is an open invitation to join the beginnings of a new teacher-student-parent mass-based movement or to link up with other movements. For example, a Freire blog-network held at McGill University under the sponsorship of Joe Kincheloe and Shirley Steinberg is yet another place to begin. Until that day comes, I can be reached at lfleis3960@aol.com

WHY DO I WRITE THIS BOOK AS A PROFESSIONAL TEACHER EDUCATOR AND TEACHER?

As a critic of schools and their lack of democratic rules, procedures, and processes over some forty years, I continue to have faith in higher education and the public schools, subject to many changes, specifically, those that make schools a more democratic, creative, autonomous, professional, loving, and awe inspiring places to be. Through these years, I have had to compromise, negotiate, and fight for a better future, and I have experienced many setbacks. Nevertheless, I’ve been inspired by many of my students (who are teacher-ed students and teachers), as well as fellow instructors in teacher education courses. The courageous stories and struggles they often shared with me have repeatedly renewed my belief that a better world and education system is, indeed, possible. Over the years, however, I’ve also received comments from students that were, quite frankly, alarming in their complicity and disdain for schools and for students. It is comments like these that have compelled me to write this book:

– I like the new mandated testing and close administrative supervision; when they ‘sweep’ the floors checking to see if the students are studying for the test .... Students are so carefully supervised by administrators, that they are afraid to fail. As a result, my life is much easier now: students no longer are discipline problems. I like to see the students sweat.” – Graduate education student in the middle of her second year of teaching middle school in math.

– “We will go over the con’s of standardized testing, and then, I will help you be a better proctor for the exams.” – Adjunct Instructor of graduate education course in a MAT program I evaluated.

– Everybody knows what your school administrator says is “bullshit” – but you need to follow what they say. Adjunct instructor of graduate education course.

– “I don’t care what is happening to children all over the world – if it doesn’t affect me, why bother to learn about them.” – Graduate education student.

– My classes are mixed with ‘inclusion kids,’ but I can still pick out those who are and those who aren’t.” – 9th grade teacher and graduate Ed student.
My ed professor asked about homophobia and gay rights being taught in public schools. When a student said he thought it was a sin, the professor moved on to another topic.

I hate the tenured and older teachers. They ought to be removed for laziness and incompetence…. Of course, I want to get tenure – it will give me job security.” – Graduate education student.

I can’t talk about racism or the war in the classroom, because parents will complain and I’ll be called down to the principal’s office the next day.” – Graduate student and supervisor of social studies in an elementary school.

“I’m afraid to show articles on sexism and sexual education. Parents and the administrator will make me a “sacrificial lamb and I will get fired!” – Graduate student and teacher of 7th grade social studies teacher.

I tell my students who is in charge in the first days of the class. Even if it means slapping them in the head to wake them up!” “I learned this from the teacher I helped as an aide.” – Undergraduate student and also teacher aide in elementary school.

Kids are like sponges – just tell them what to absorb.” – 9th grade teacher

I’m always afraid to speak – I’m afraid of saying the wrong thing.” – 8th grade teacher and graduate student.

New teachers are like “fresh meat” to students – you can’t trust them and smile. We need classroom management techniques, and to know how to refer them to the correct authorities – that’s all you need to know.” – Education student in her first undergraduate course.

In addition to the obvious problems inherent in the comments above, I have often thought that there were some overarching problems that needed to be identified to ameliorate the cynicism and bitterness so often found in the teaching experience. A practical and theoretical framework of “reading” teaching as occurring within a system not always sympathetic to critical thinking and critical literacy appears to be missing. This means identifying where changes in the system are necessary to transform educational experiences from hierarchical and administrative to democratic and emancipatory goals and practices; specifically, those oriented toward social justice, equality, and collective agency amongst the major participants – students and teachers (in the case of pre-secondary students, their parents or guardians).

As Joe Kincheloe (2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2005, 2007, 2008), along with other school critics (Apple, 1979, 1982, 1983, 1996; Freire, 2002) Giroux, 1980, 1981, 1983, 1991; Shor, 1986, 1990) have insisted over decades in their many works, students and teachers must be able to “read power” and its complex relationships in the authoritarian circumstances inscribed in their schools. Schools, in turn, re-inscribe student and teacher inscriptions on overlapping and intruding influences by “outside” pressures applied community-wide, state-wide, nation-wide, and world-wide. These power inscriptions occur in often invisible or murky ways; they are usually forces which make us perform actions we would not be identified with. For example, how we are pitted against others of different races, classes, genders, abilities, ages, sexual orientations and ethnicities as different, and how we are marginalized on binary chains of identifications and associations.
In addition to these complex networks of power, there are other concerns; namely, how power works not as a force of circumstance one can see, resist and immediately be reflective of; but how power manifests itself as a force of hegemony which, at its most intense moment, gives one the impression that there are no problems to be concerned about or, more fatalistically, when one catches a glimpse of the problem, that everything is pre-destined to occur.

Between no problems, and the fleeting appearances of problems, there are intermediating forces at work in hegemony – often ignored by those who would prefer not to bother to include a post-structuralist understanding of this issue. Specifically, I posit a problem of hegemony as a problem of discourse, psychoanalysis and linguistics. Within this framework, counter-hegemony and its spaces may be located, read, mapped out and even produced.

While a more detailed discussion grounding a counter-framework will occur in Chapter 4, after case studies and this chapter framing of the problem, we can begin to offer a broader framework of “post-hegemonic” directions. This framework will attempt to show, as one takes a subject-position and inscribes on its surfaces one’s feelings, thoughts, writings and desires, also how one’s inscriptions are mediated by dominant, sedimented inscriptions constituting the “habitus” or dispositions of school life and role assignments. In this mix or space of mediation of forces, there may lie open spaces in which two or more discussants may construct and carve out a common ground, thereby allowing a basis for counter or relatively autonomous discursive communities to emerge (Laclau, 2007; Smith, 1996; Thomassen, 2005). These hegemonic forces accompany hierarchical institutions (schools, corporations, government, churches, media) and become infiltrated by schools and classrooms as “points of antagonism” between student and teacher in moments where they are attracted to various hierarchical cultures from within and outside schools. At the moment of “articulation,” as spelled out by Laclau and Mouffe (1985) and later Laclau (1990, 2007) and his contemporaries, (Smith, 1996; Thomassen, 2005; Critchley & O. Marchant, 2004) in speech as chained equivalence and difference in a discursive field, further segmented into ensembles of discourse or discursive formations, (i.e. race, class, gender, authority, ability, ethnicity, etc.) as inherent signifying functions inciting circulation and the crossing over of chains of signifiers and subject positions, their surfaces for inscription reveal metonymic and metaphoric chains of signifiers (Coward & Ellis, 1977; Z. Kovecses, 2006). Students and teachers are drawn into a web not only in which others “win their consent,” but which allows them to fight against these forces in counter-hegemonic and (sometimes co-opted) forms of resistance.

In these in-between terrains for speaking, feeling and sensing discourse and its elements, both student and teacher may construct new questions penetrating these “points of antagonism” in their discourses and seek out “points of connection.” Also, in these spaces, student and teacher may begin to build bridges between what separates them and their own discursive communities, which may be counter-hegemonic or may revert back to another form, a co-opted form of hegemonic discourse. Student and teacher (and teacher-educator) can penetrate these intervening spaces of mis-recognition of who they are and whom they act for, by piercing those identifications which see themselves as what they could be when
CATCHING THAT HIERARCHICAL FEELING

connecting with likeminded people. This moment, however, may ignore those intervening forces which may invade, distort or create illusions that they are alone, free to choose, or otherwise omnipotent, as if living alone on a deserted island, far from those threatening forces – those hierarchical and administrative chains existing in schools and penetrating classroom relationships. One only has to recall what happens when an administrator, without fore notice, suddenly enters a classroom. Almost instantly, student and teacher come to each others’ aid as the administrator undermines or attempts to bolster the teacher’s authority. These and other unnamed forces demand a counter-hegemonic perspective to understand the various contradictions students and teachers live through on a daily basis, as they attempt to resolve some of these pressures in creative and courageous ways while maintaining themselves as potential critics of their surroundings and relationships (Ayers, 1998).36

THE SENSE OF PESSIMISM IN PRE- “POST-STRUCTURALIST” THEORIZING CLASSROOMS

There is a sense of pessimism that teachers in their practice at their jobs, and students I have taught for the last ten years, taking required courses for teacher certification or school district requirements, have a feeling in which there is little or nothing they can do to resist, question, change and take power in authoritarian school environments – at least, without suffering grave consequences. Yet, as we have seen throughout history, as Foucault (1977, 1980) to Homi Bhabha (1989), and, Bhabha in Baker, Diawara, and Lindeborg (1996) call it, lying between the autocratic or monarchical power and the people is an unpredictable territory of “third spaces” in which people may galvanize enough courage to resist and break hegemonic chains of fear. Foucault defines power (1977, 1980), not only as a force to respond obsequiously, but further, as a force to seize and, by doing so, produce more power in moments of discourse through the most “tiny tissues” of hierarchical authority (Foucault, 2006).

As Kincheloe (2005)37 partially accounts for power and discourse – the former regulating discourse in terms of deciding who has the right to talk, what they should say, and who should address or remain silent – there is also a concern pointed to by Foucault (1977) accounting for those “most insignificant spaces of the hierarchy” which are revealed in discourse as spaces in which power is never completely consolidated or made monarchical. To Foucault (1980), and later Laclau (with Mouffe,1985, 1990, 2007) there are always contingent spaces in which those under power may produce, negotiate, organize, and seize power. Counter-Hegemonic Teaching is therefore written with the intent that there are interstices and interventions in which student and teacher may act in individual and collective forms of agencies.38 This is made possible by acts of courage and collectivity, from the bottom-up and side-ways, as students and teachers begin to relate differently to each other in administrative and hierarchical authority relations. This may happen, as Maxine Greene tells us (1978; in Sadovnik, Cookson, & Semel, 2006) in moments of “awakeness” one may begin to act together with others for a
common cause (a collective end-in-view) over and against those assigned to administrative hierarchical positions they are constrained into.

In such acts of awareness, students, teachers, and teacher educators may act together, in small groups in order to band together in resisting the onslaught of hegemonic scripted curricula and teaching methods and mandated national legislation of high stake testing, which makes their schools into “testing factories” and their relationships into alienated, sterile, and unprofessional and de-skilled experiences. In effect, they can de-validate top-down student-teacher relations (as called for by Freire), along with those justifications for maintaining testing and the accountability craze overtaking the country under the Bush administration and No Child Left Behind (2002). What they need to see, as Dewey often advised us, are alternatives, different ends-in-view, or hear contrary views.

While there have been, and continues to be a huge number of articles and research condemning “high stake” testing as punitive and harmful to young people (Woods, et al., 2004), very little attention has been paid to how students and teachers (and in some circumstances, administrators and parents) can resist such top-down legislation, mandates, and accompanied practices. Thus, practices as “teaching for the test” remain a dominant practice and norm of school curricula, making the subject-matter very narrow and flat, bereft of discussions that may otherwise enrich (rather than dumb-down) the curricula. This may change, however, with the infusion of post-structural constructs adding or complementing the critical pedagogy debate.

WHAT CAN POST-STRUCTURALISM ADD TO THE CRITICAL PEDAGOGY DEBATE?


Post-structuralism and its emphasis on language as discourse and its effects on both the Marxist problem-positing and liberating forces from the capitalist hold as its dominates work and other societal forces, including schools, continued to this day to await further theorization on all fronts (Carlson, 2004, Carspicken, 1996; Heldke & O’Connor, 2004).

The debate has intensified as some advocates of critical pedagogy from modernist strands force us to re-examine the contributions of post-structuralism
vis-à-vis critical pedagogy. This debate also forces us to re-examine the contributions of those who offer unique perspectives critical of hegemonic holds in which, by various degrees, capitalism invades the so-called “relative autonomy” of today’s public schools, responsible for the reproduction of capitalism and schooling (Althusser, 1971; Apple (1988); Aronowitz, 1974; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Giroux, 1983).

With the earlier post-structuralist work of Jacques Lacan (1977) and Michel Pechueux (1982) and their intersections of psychoanalysis, linguistics, discourse theory and semiotics – see, for example, Macdonnell (1986), along with the post-Marxist work of Ernesto Laclau (with Chantal Mouffe, 1985; Laclau, 1993, 2007) and his emphasis on equivalent and differential chains of empty floating and master signifiers and their construction of “tendential” (Laclau, 2005; Thomassen, 2005) subject-positions weaving into and through the fabric of schools and society, critical pedagogy, and those who critique post-structuralism, cannot move forward or, worst, can stymie movement toward a “post-hegemonic” phase. The more recent post-post-structuralist work of Slovenj Zizek (1989), as complementing the recent work of Laclau (2007), reveals how signifiers and signification may penetrate unconsciousness and its discursive states in revealing the Real or “kernel of the real,” which, somehow, bypasses the symbolic and imaginary states of consciousness. Zizek’s (1989) emphasis, taken from the earlier works of Lacan (1977) and Pechueux (1982), involves forms of intra- and trans-discourses which penetrates through the symbolic and imaginary circulating signifiers, known to him as objets petit a, as they weave in and through words, linked to meanings fermented by other words and meanings, and which are linked to other circulating signifiers in their chains, further linked to their subject-positions and their respective discursive formations.

Zizek, as a literary and popular culture critic, weaves these fragments of signification and discourse into what he calls desires, pleasures, and fantasies, travelling through “quilting points” or sinthomes which, to Zizek, are the “flexible joints” connecting parts of the whole to each other. In a form of metonymic experiences, we are faced with a knot of real and repressed subject-positions of the unconsciousness. These desires or repressed fantasies – exhibited in pleasure, joy – jouissance – and sometimes in horror – cross into and through linguistic and non-linguistic, the imaginary and symbolic, and into expressions of the real or what one would describe from the “gut” or the feelings of cold sweat and fear. How clarifying these experiences which penetrate subject-position surfaces when caught in contradictory roles related to race, class, gender, authority, remains a problem to be further theorized and debated into the future of both schools and society as well as formulating new bases for re-examining the debate between modernists and postmodernists and how they intersect critical pedagogues and theorizing.

Think of the bulleted quote cited earlier in this chapter, in which a young teacher expresses pleasure and relief because her students are being watched closely by administrators sweeping the halls. As she observes her students “sweating” (also see Figure 8 in Chapter 3) in preparation for tests, she appears to be grateful to what she calls a “less fearful” environment. I have observed while
visiting many of my teachers, their pleasure in the misery of fellow teachers, upon hearing that they cannot control their classes or are dismissed because they are too sympathetic to the students. In one case a teacher was dismissed because she wanted to connect with students by offering them time to listen to their I-Pods.

While it is not the main concern of this book to further examine this debate and its ramifications for a “post-hegemonic” mode of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic teaching, I seek new directions for future research and practice, calling for more case studies and collective actions amongst students, teachers, and teacher educators, the latter displacing the role of the school administrator. Recently, there have been calls for such re-considerations made by other, well-known critical pedagogues in the field (Giroux in McLaren and Kincheloe (2007); Giroux and Kincheloe, 2008; Giroux, 2007, 2008, Kincheloe, 2004, 2005, Steinberg in McLaren and Kincheloe, 2007) affecting both public schools and higher education institutions in their teacher education programs. I will also address this later in Chapter 5.

As will be argued throughout this book, however, the basis or what may ignite counter-hegemonic modes of theorizing and teaching lies in students, teachers, and teacher-educators drawing maps for illustrating how hegemony, specifically, domination, oppression, and alienation imposes itself throughout their identifies, relations, and voices or, in post-structural terms, their subject-positions, chains of signifiers, and discursive formations. These terms break with the confines of modernist theorizing, which presupposes consciousness or subjects which already have unified, essentialized, and originary states of subjectivity, and who posit actors as meaning making entities in which they move unilaterally and individually toward the object in which they infuse or inject – from the cone of light or stream of consciousness (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Husserl, 1962; Schutz, 1970), through intentional acts, reaching out and into objects, noema or meaning combining with the thing-in-itself noesis or what Husserl and other “intender” phenomenologists refer to as linking together the thing in a noema-noesis nexus.

I find an irony in this modernist position of noema-noesis linkage between subject and object, which Freire, despite his adoption of consciousness based on a Husserlian reading, has, contradictorily, not noticed up to his untimely death. That is, while he opposed “depositing” lecture-like pedagogies into the heads of students, he and many of his modernist contemporaries prescribed a kind of unified notion of consciousness which stands over the object world and people and, in Husserlian terms (Russell, 2007), the subject reaches towards objects of their intentional consciousness, and in so doing, infuse meaning into the world “out there.” While Freire was opposed to the “banking concept” of teaching, he and his contemporaries have only recently called attention to the concept of “signifiers” (Freire, 2007). Many of us remain torn between the heterogeneous worldview of post-structuralism, which postulates a de-centered, dispersed, and divided self – a subject of lack and desire (Foucault, 1977; Lacan, 1977; Laclau, 1977, with Mouffé, 1985; Pecheux, 1982; Zizek, 1989) versus a more certain and organized world of self-dom, predictability, and modernism.
Because Freire has adopted a Husserlian perspective to consciousness in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 2002, pp. 82–83), he cannot reconcile how words speak through us – in and through our unconsciousness – shooting through us, out into the open public spaces with others, often in moments of connecting with others in solidarity and agential actions. As Lacan asserts: the unconsciousness is structured like a language” – or there are dimensions in our unconsciousness which express words through us, unintentionally, and yet with full import of reflection and seriousness (i.e. unconscious thoughts). Or, as Berger and Luckmann have been theorizing—albeit inadequately – how when we engage in close proximity to one another, there is an “inter-subjective closeness” which permits us to speak as we think and know the other better than our selves. These notions defy modernist, consistent, essentialized, unified, and coherent notions of subjectivity and consciousness, much less can be the basis for counter-hegemonic teaching and theorizing.

Because much attention has already been attended to the modernist contributions – i.e. The Frankfurt School – and other more recent works on critical pedagogy, for example, in the works accomplished by Joe Kincheloe (1993, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c and 2005) and others (Apple, 1983, 1990; Giroux, 2007, 2008; Carlson, 2004, Wink, 2005), further attention on critical pedagogy ought to examine the potentials of the post-structuralist dimensions (rather than marginalizing them) and how hegemony can be identified, analyzed, and named in both teaching practices and teacher education theories.

**DEVELOPING A NEW LANGUAGE FOR POST-HEGEMONIC AND COUNTER-HEGEMONIC TEACHING**

Another reason I felt the need to write this book was to provide an additional language for critical pedagogy or a perspective – pushing the envelope, sort of speaking – drawn from prior critical perspectives (Apple. 1979; Giroux, 1981, 1980; 1983), and to place into context various struggles for hegemony, including race, gender, and class as overlaid by an additional power relation, hierarchical and administrative authority. I seek to identify this level because it has been for too long ignored, and at the same time, it serves as the nuclei of other levels of power and their contradictions. A counter-hegemonic level cannot be reached unless (in addition to exceeding binary relations of the classes, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and abilities) student and teacher have a real stake in the running of their schools, acting against administrative and hierarchical authority.

While there are a few experiments whereby teachers along with students and parents run their own schools, specifically, charter schools and alternate schools within traditional schools, these same schools have attempted to jettison rules and practices which have been normally accepted as necessary for the support of school bureaucracies by school administrators and union leaders. It would be of no surprise to anyone why innovation leading toward less bureaucracy and more democracy would be met with resistance. When we apply a post-structural analysis to school organizations and expose how hierarchical norms of identity, community-making, and relations lead to more alienation than less, change must come or be sought after. How else can we prepare the next generation of citizens to be active
participants in a democratic state and world to come as opposed to remaining in the current isolated, individualistic, and non-cooperative school and classroom organizational and societal environments?

To accomplish this goal and practice, school and societal norms must be changed in which, speaking post-structurally, subjects will have to inscribe, de-inscribe, and re-inscribe on the surfaces of their subject-positions they find themselves addressing new commitments and values toward social justice, equality, diversity, and democracy in schools and its governing organizations. To reach the plateau of counter-hegemonic struggles also requires penetration of the authority structures which govern the work, curricula, and relationships between students and teacher and community members of their schools. We also cannot ignore the macro forces at work – the state and federal legislation, the intrusion of corporation curricula, media, technology, and other influences affecting what teaching is, and when knowledge becomes “constructed,” between teachers and their students, and how teacher-educators must construct perspectives capable of confronting hegemony on a multiplicity of fronts and forces.

MAP-MAKING: START TO STRATEGIZE COUNTER-HEGEMONICALLY

Specifically, Counter-Hegemonic Teaching seeks to identify a force field of discourse in which student and teacher may act as cartographers or make “maps” and images as starting points toward strategizing how and what they want to learn, and the tools appropriate for such learning. In this way, while learning various subject-matters, students and teachers may relate and ground future counter-forces against those “points of antagonism” by discussing how there may lie an in-between territory or “points of connection” – no doubt suffocated by present hierarchical and administrative discursive formations and chains of signifiers and subject-positions (including but not exclusively race, class, poverty, race, gender, authority, etc.) – which undermine their relations as well as prevents them from coalescing into discursive communities of counter-hegemonic theorizers. In this context, however, “agency” or, as Kincheloe (2004a, p. 2) defines the term, a “person’s ability to shape and control their own lives, freeing self from the oppression of power,” come close to what we are driving at here, except for the fact that both terms, “self” and “power,” remain outside of a post-structuralist frame of theorizing. That is to say, once students, teachers, and teacher educators begin to speak up without fear of administrative reprisals or racist, sexist, and classist remarks, and speak out into the world of schools, society, and the world in order to make a difference, to the extent this does not happen, is the extent things may not change.

Unfortunately, in recent years, words as “democracy,” “freedom,” “diversity,” and even “justice” have become co-opted in perspectives or paradigms that do little to encourage students and teachers to take a stand or to speak out in meaningful and collective ways. New forms of discourse must be imagined. Many in the field of education believe there is little that can be done, whether as an individual or in small groups of individuals. They remain cynical. Refusing to accept their cynicism as a basis of their own self defeat, I write this book in the hope that it will
CATCHING THAT HIERARCHICAL FEELING

inspire those who wait for change to come. I want to show them that another way of thinking, and a way for them to connect with others to take counter-hegemonic actions, is possible.

Recently, in teaching a course titled “Innovations of Urban Education” in a small college in New Jersey, that claimed to be “urban” and carry out “reflective” teaching practices, I realized and articulated to my graduate students that the course’s title was meaningless. To insist on “innovation,” we needed fundamental changes from the bottom up in the policies currently dominating schools throughout the country and its emphasis on accountability and testing. Until those changes occurred, it would be meaningless to talk about innovations. With sincerity, my students agreed, pointing to the futility of innovating an institution that was basically backward or “retro.” Until a radical change occurs, allowing one to “teach” as autonomous professionals, my students remained stalwart or suspicious of talk of change. In the meantime, they confided to me: “We are lying low.” I wondered, are they really “lying low” in silence, isolated from one another, or are they acting as accomplices to their own hegemony and domination?

“LYING LOW” AND HIERARCHICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY

This book provides a theoretical framework and suggestions for intervening strategies. In this regard, it is critical to reflect on the discursive practice of “lying low.”

My history as a teacher and professional teacher educator evolved slowly in professional and collegial relationships. It has been, by and large, an uphill struggle. But, as Kincheloe (2005) often told me and many others in his forty-five plus books and even more prolific number of articles, schools may have done more harm than good given their positivistic and narrow approach to learning – “alienated cognition” – curriculum making, standardized testing, and other forces illustrative of the top-down mind-set, which flow in a linear way so that others at the bottom do not ask enough questions. Some questions, as: “Why has, what has become, become that way (2007)?” may never get asked. Perhaps this important question, setting the school enterprise into historical, political, social, economic and other contexts does not fully examine the ideological foundations of our selves, society, and schools. That is, all of us are raised in a society that indoctrinates us to believe how wonderful schools are, how free we are, and how the “American Dream” is attainable, and therefore, maintaining us in unchangeable positions.

We all have been raised on the notion of how our economy, the free marketplace, is the source of all solutions to problems despite some of the problems we are currently experiencing, i.e., the recent Wall Street crash and bailouts. We can extend this thinking to schools, romanticizing our favorite teachers and how they made a difference in our lives, “one child at a time.” Or, put another way, we can suspend our individualistic outlook and focus on how few individuals have succeeded, when we examine wealth-poverty differentials, continuation of racial segregation in education and housing, and hidden codes which discriminate against women, gays, and immigrants. We may also want to focus on why we attribute to those who fail, a lack of initiative, intelligence, and
hard work. Schools, historically, have been the transmitter of a story that lends credence toward “making it,” in a supposedly free and democratic society with a “free and open” market place of ideas. This narrative may become questioned (Kozol, 2005), however. We keep hearing that with good grades and credentials, we all will be able to make it and become successful. That if one does not succeed, it is of no fault of the school or society; rather, it is the fault of the individual who has not tried hard enough, or is too lazy to learn, and finally, in the case of the poor, minority, immigrant, and ESL student, does not have the right parents or supportive home environment.

Of course this is the ideology or story in which we have been positioned to believe as truth and fact. But, is this always so? There are, as this book insists, hegemonic reasons why what happens to those who mean well, and are well educated, and “play by the rules of the game,” and do not “cut corners,” devise creative methods to survive. This book is written with the complete knowledge that many will attack its content by virtue of exposing a system that has far exceeded its goals by the harmful effects it showers on our children and teaching staff. Rewards are offered and granted to the few token individuals. Thus, I seek a dialogue with those people who have “fell between the cracks,” or if only they would stay long enough to respond to questions and analyses of their own, would otherwise condemn this book as just “another left wing radical book on education!”

START BUILDING SPACES FOR SCHOOL DEMOCRACY!

To build a place or space for critical dialogue and discussion about how school and classroom activity are linked together not only with macro forces or micro forces, but by those “in between” forces bridging both, those resisting and negotiating with the school’s administrative hierarchy for more fundamental democratic changes of teacher professionalism and student and family rights. So-called necessary administrative brokers, and the brokers themselves, for the most part, act as agents of oppressive school conditions or police stifling life out of student and teacher relations. This is not to argue for anarchy; there must be someone at the helm to count milk containers and pay remittances of bills related to materials and other sundries. Rather, this argues that the very feeling of ownership must be grounded on real power by those who have skin in the game, those who have a real stake in owning the schools where they work and think. True, at present, the huge monies given openly or indirectly by the state, large corporations, and individuals may have an effect on who owns who. What can never be owned are the many informal cultures and relationships people form under the most oppressive of circumstances, in gulags or concentration camps, not withstanding that in these desperate situations, complicity also thrives.

The intricate network of resistance and reproduction in overly oppressive conditions usually goes unnoticed, and many of its important links in which people are chained to others in oppression fade from sight because we do not want to imagine alternate possibilities. People simply do not want to try on a new lens or framework from which to view, describe, and eventually map out and analyze their various interactions in oppressive schools and society. The macro interactions of
authority, class, gender, race, etc. and other “power relations,” specifically, admin-
istrative hierarchical relations, tend to cover over more intermediate spaces and
immediate links between and amongst people – students, teachers, administrators,
parents, aides – as they struggle for power, identity, and meaning in their school
places.

Thus, the question must be asked: What is hegemony in schools and society and
the world? Does hegemony take on different forms in different places or are they
transcendent to these influences? Once again, I refer to Kincheloe (2004b), who
defines hegemony as: “the process by which dominant groups seek to impose their
belief structures on individuals for the purpose of solidifying their power over
them.” Thus, Kincheloe, concludes, “hegemony seeks to win the consent of the
governed to their own subjugation without the use of coercion or force (p. 15).”

RE-DEFINING HEGEMONY POST-STRUCTURALLY:
DIALOGUE AS DISCURSIVE MAPPING

The remaining sections of this chapter will thusly redefine hegemony as including
its possible counter-hegemonic elements, including how, in post-structural terms,
the macro and micro are linked together onto a terrain of meso or in-between
chains of signifiers, subject-positions, and surfaces on which those caught in
hegemony may, nevertheless, inscribe, de-inscribe, and re-inscribe on these
surfaces of their subject-positions new spaces or revise old spaces in which to wage
counter-hegemonic struggles in the schools, classrooms and communities. This
inscriptive process is accomplished by a process of articulation in discourse
position in vast field of other discursive positions. These discursive processes also
include a notion of consciousness as a discursive construct constituted by many
forms, including whole and consistent modernist states of subjectivity as well as
the subject or consciousness as borne and active in language as a signifier or
dispersed as many signifiers. In the discursive realm, there may also lie more
spaces for other forms of consciousness as derived in discourse through processes
linking the unconsciousness to consciousness via intra-, inter-, and trans discourses
in acts of identification (Hennessey, 1993; Pechuex, 1982; P. Smith, 1989;
Strickland, 2005; Weedon, 1997).

This process of articulation, to be further discussed in Chapter 4, occurs
“tendentially” (Thomassen, 2005). Various members of a discursive formation
inscribe upon their own and each other’s surfaces subject-positions or inscriptions,
codes, images, feelings, thoughts, texts, rituals and more what they intend, partially
intend, and desire and demand. What accrues along these surfaces are diverse
spaces or partial spaces and, as the dictionary defines articulation, the construction
of “flexible joints” which hold the parts of the whole together in relation to each
other and the whole. This means, depending how a discursive formation interacts
with other discursive formations or constituent parts of its own, how when
inscribing or being inscribed in their subject-positions – including interacting with
past inscriptions, as well as with present inscriptions – often opposite and
contradictory – they inscribe and are inscribed by the same and different discursive
formations they are simultaneously members. Hence, the notion of “tendential” comes into play as a process in which there may be a mixed or sharing of various marks of opposing positions in aligning, overlapping, and differential degrees.48

Also, there is a need to explore how chains of signifiers, which carve out subject-positions (Coward and Ellis, 1977, pp. 3, 8) link one discursive formation to another in complex and interacting, intersecting, and overlapping chains forming the surfaces of subject-positions on which they are further inscribed and revised. It is incumbent for those seeking a post-structuralist mode of theorizing counter-hegemonic teaching to see those “flexible joints” which hold together, tighten and loosen their holds as meanings and messages, and how the surfaces of subject-positions get inscribed and over-inscribed or how communication between students, teachers, and teacher educators emerge as complex discursive formations, one overlapping and unevenly aligned and imbricated to one another. In these configurations, much will depend on how links in chains as metonymic or metaphoric, during signifier activities, produce images or senses of thought which are not merely low level or adventitious fleeting thoughts, not to be taken seriously. Rather, in the case of metonyms or metonymic signifiers whose words and images are articulated from dissatisfied and angry students, which weave their feelings in and through labels. Educators too easily dismiss such behaviors as “disruptive” or “disciplinary problems.”

In these weaved knots of meanings and feelings, student and teacher may map out, upon loosening them, what their dissatisfaction is grounded on and why they, as in Freire’s book (2002), the oppressed oppress themselves and each other in deference to and for the benefit of the oppressor. Mapping out the journey of hierarchical and metonymic signifiers, as they carve out subject-positions and the surfaces on which student and teacher may inscribe their problems and predicaments, exposes a network of parts replicating to the whole or contexts within contexts, chains within chains. They are linked together by a variety of hierarchical and hegemonic signifiers and subject-positions in accordance to one’s class, race, gender, and authoritarian positions, to the complex ways they sort out these structural positions, by how they construct and re-construct their subject-positions and re-align these chains of signifiers or meanings which come, surprisingly, by the use of simple words, gestures, images, feelings and desires articulated.

Thus, a person or student, teacher or teacher educator who interacts with each other from a variety of power relations and discursive communities – i.e. a black women student who is gay, unemployed, and a feminist but whose family originates from the Caribbean working class, but who emigrated to America for more opportunity, may interact very differently with a person who is also a women, white, from the middle class, sympathetic towards feminism, and whose husband owns a local factory in which the first women works.49

This book is therefore written to reveal how the privileged and their offspring, the inheritors of a privileged future, not only get reproduced in discourses of the classroom, but further, how this is not a pure and untrammeled territory, unblemished by the struggles of those without such privileges and powers. That is, I seek to expose how and why we are stopped or frozen into positions which hegemonize us or, conversely, put us into subject-positions of ambivalence or possible hesitancy
leading to new solidarities and movements. Why, for example, would some of us turn our heads away in silence, when a fellow worker was arbitrarily dismissed with no reason or due process? Or, why some of us are too afraid to speak out and up? To speak out and up in schools requires more than courage. Educators and students require a supportive framework by which to name, frame, strategize, and finally organize their resistances and negotiations in order to facilitate them to break out of the insidious and self-defeating practices of “lying low.” In effect, we need a tool kit, as Gee (1993) maintains, in which hegemonic discourses and their associated chains of signifiers, subject-positions and surfaces, can be mapped out and accounted for in new qualitative strategies of research and action.

The question this book must raise, therefore, is: What is counter-hegemonic teaching? And, does this force position hegemonic forces and activities in today’s schools and teaching practices? Taking a cautionary note on the subject: How do we lay out a vision and a map of counter-hegemony but, at the same time, attend to those other forces, often dominant, overbearing, and intimidating to teachers and students? How can we attempt to find spaces for articulating a counter-hegemonic perspective without being folded into the co-option of administrative discourses, codes, and systems? How can we differentiate between an appearance of democracy in word or label and what such rubrics may hide in terms of latent and real struggles and resistances? Is there a medium or middle space to understand the hegemonic processes as they occur in language as a discourse?

In an effort to reveal how “in-between” spaces in struggle may become displaced, replaced, and transformed, we must look beyond the post-structuralist dimensions of words, language and discourse. We must cross over and peer into the splits or binarisms which have characterized modernist thinking and which post-structuralist and post-post-structuralism seeks to revise in terms of which segments of social reality and schools become parts of the discursive, parts of the symbolic, and parts of the real dimensions of language. On these points, which I will take up in Chapter 4, I will now turn attention toward making maps to reveal how hegemony folds into counter-hegemonic teaching processes in language as a discourse emerges.

WHAT IS COUNTER-HEGEMONIC TEACHING? NEEDED A REFLECTION IN THE ACTION METHODOLOGY

When anyone asks me the question: “what is counter-hegemonic teaching,” I always reply by keeping an eye on the reflection-action splits or binarisms characteristic modernist thinking. Ultimately, I come to the notion of reflection in the action, and I hope I have answered the question. Of course, this response is not adequate to a complex and critical post-structuralist interpretation. I then move forward, and question such a reflection as an act in itself which may occur before, during, and after actions of teaching. I point to a kind of reflection that occurs in the action or, just as I took notice earlier in this chapter, how Berger and Luckmann’s understanding of construction of reality is not necessarily occurring in a linear sequence in which reflection or action come before and after each other, but on a plane they under-theorized, but nevertheless, attributed to those
constructions which may be borne in reflection or reflection in the action as opposed to before or after the action.

I attempt to illustrate a few examples of everyday occurrences to make my point about reflection as occurring in the action: What are those moments, I ask, when you leave a room, and, suddenly, you know you forgot something? While you cannot yet articulate what this experience is but, somehow, you know what is happening (I left something behind) and a moment or feeling comes to you (I forgot something). What that something is, and as you question this feeling-thought, is, you cannot know for sure, but you know something is missing.

And what about those moments in which, as you are talking to another, there are those moments in which you no longer have to pause and think and then act to speak or speak to act. All you have to do is keep talking as you think and think as you are talking. Are these moments, somehow, tied to talking and thinking, a reflection linked in action as being with another? That is, in the interaction or inter-subjectivity with the other, at a point of closeness, as Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue, you sense something. I then add, at this point of closeness, chains of signifiers trigger memory (a subject-position I have arrived on), and then, when another chain of signifiers (what is this something missing?) become articulated by another chain, which suddenly intervenes, and posits me onto another subject-position, as I (or my memory) is suddenly constructed into yet another and new subject-position. Hence, I suddenly recall what I have just forgot and which broke my previous “chain of thought,” a moment before. Aren’t these moments in which you know you are thinking clearly and critically, and yet, do not have to pause before talking, or pause after thinking? Why and how do these processes occur?

Such questions and subsequent conversations inevitably end up into other conversations critical of teaching, curriculum, and testing practices. For instance, I recall another conversation in which whether or not one should teach evolution or creationism or both in schools? One usually mentions science in the traditional or positivist sense in which one cannot link beliefs and values to facts. The conversation may go and eventually acknowledge science (or math) as objective and religion a “softer” human or social science. At this moment, I recall sitting with friend, my old friend, David, in many seminars we took together at Teachers College over thirty five years ago. Reading many of Huebner’s articles, we reflected on a newspaper editorial about teaching evolution or creationism. Critiquing this dualism between natural science and the human/social sciences, and seeing the distinctness of both fields along with their accompanying rationalities and methods of research, I maintained that such scientists are not real or “true” scientists.

As Huebner would hint to us when we were students, it is not so much about taking a narrow view on methodology which counts. Much more is involved in establishing the parameters of a “real” science or math. Indeed, I have asked myself, how do we know what we are seeing or experiencing is a real or a true event? While the dominant paradigm of natural science (the one that is dominant in current educational research then and today) has a definite answer to this question in terms of applying tests to measure what can be seen as true or probable; or, what is observer-able (i.e. learning outcomes using neutral and unbiased instruments in
order to make reliable and valid assessments and predictions), I question these procedures of research methods and teaching today as the only available methods of research and theorizing to educators.

Needed, I argue, are other instruments, more sensitive and able to pick up what is not completely observer-able or measureable (Bogden and Bilkin, 1992; Carspeaken, 1996; Durham & Kellner, 2006), as well as how to collect and analyze new data, grounded on not necessarily statistical analysis but post-structuralist “stories” of “mapping.” This data comes about when one senses in the field of their research, through post-structuralist constructs that what is missing are those aspects or dimensions which are complex and contradictory. I also feel that other constructs as truth, validity, confidence, and trustworthiness – as well as criteria from so-called qualitative researchers may be transcended, as divides between quantitative and qualitative research methodologies – is simply not enough to account for complex, contradictory, and quasi-intentional acts.

Rather than being caught by the horns of a methodological dilemma, I began to think of what is real and what is imaginary in both dimensions. And, with the help of reading Jacques Lacan, I began to imagine an intervening terrain, the symbolic, and within its borders, how power and power relations become further constituted and constructed in discursive formations of race, class, gender, and authority as a hierarchical structure. In this process, I decided to add or complement school authority as a power relation and power signifier chain, to the “holy trinity” of race, class, and gender relations specific to administrative school hierarchies because so much of what is done in schools – with its overlapping testing, classroom management, and supervision by administrators (along with ability classifications, inclusion, and threats of censorship and administrative reprisals) – occurs in and through these traditional power relations. Moreover, omitting administrative and hierarchical chains of signifiers and discursive formations (or their invasion onto student and teacher constructed chains of signifiers, subject-positions, and discursive formations), would truncate too large a piece of the puzzle in assessing and finding/producing spaces for new discursive formations relevant to establishing social justice, equality, and more democracy in schools and teaching.

The above writers provide perspectives which widen views of the world and people’s relations to its power structures beyond modernist divisions as designated in traditional treatments of class, race, and gender as classical Marxists tend to posit them, and adding the element of overlapping and intersecting subject-positions in which experiences are imagined, symbolized, and felt. Post-structuralists do not ignore these “mixed” power effects of power relations. Rather, they envision the complex journey through which power passes through a complex of discursive formations, linked up to each other via respective chains of signifiers, subject-positions, and surfaces of inscription as they interpolate one another. They see themselves and the others “through” ideas posited by traditional Marxists who consider categories as class and the economy as mutually exclusive from categories as culture, ideology, history, and feelings. To post-structuralists more is involved in a subject-position; they are the places whereby one gets stirred, incited, and mobilized into action and the basis for people and movements to galvanize into mass movements (as opposed to waiting for the “right moment” in which the
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“vanguard” of the masses take charge as hierarchical leaders). Post-structuralists, thereby avoid rooting the subject or consciousness as a metaphysical entity in which ideas are borne and are contained in one’s heads or as epiphenomena rising above the economic base of production, segregating the base from its superstructures.

While more contemporary post-structuralists seek to find ways to complement, rather than compete with, various strands of post-Marxism, post-colonialism, feminism, popular cultures, cultural politics, media studies, literary criticism, linguistics, and psychoanalytical treatments of society and schools, they nevertheless seek to transform the hegemonic divides between traditional critical pedagogy and more recent renditions of “post-hegemonic” phases of critical pedagogy in giving impetus to those “new movements” which support counter-hegemonic movements and discourses in schools and societies, here and around the world.

This book seeks to establish a framework in which present day students and teachers can posit as problematic post-structurally, by using the seminal works of Freire which to date may, inadvertently by its modernist roots, block or discourage student-teacher-teacher educator solidarities and their potential counter-hegemonic activities. Presently, the separation and contradiction of student and teacher remain fixed in a hegemony which divides and deters collectivities between students and teachers from forming and thereby beginning to act as agents for building democratic and professionally autonomous schools of education and classroom practices.

Whether in-service courses in public schools or those courses in schools of education in charge of certifying and preparing teachers, teachers will need to discover how they can be more collectivizing with students and parents, as opposed to individualistic in formulating new concepts and strategies for counter-hegemonic teacher practices. This means tough questions must be asked. Why should administrative hierarchies continue, or classroom management practices, and the onerous regimen of testing continue and which does not, as we have been following the news, “close the achievement gap” of poor, minority, and dissenting groups of students, teachers, and teacher educators? And, as we shall see in the next chapter, testing actually encourages students to drop out or be pushed out in order for schools to maintain increased or improved test score averages, and to which principals and teachers feel necessary because their jobs depend on such increases to define their competences or “qualifications.” Therefore, testing and closely linked to classroom management and administrator or supervision and surveillance, are not only unnecessary schools practices, but often, harmful in supporting discriminating practices against those whose survival depend on student test score outcomes (Meier, 1999; Ohanian, 1997) and whose tenure as a student may be ended by a few failing tests at very young ages. If you are a member of one or all of these groups, this book is intended for you as one of its primary audiences.

WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM THIS BOOK?

This book is for all who want to know more about education. Specifically, its purposes and how it is affected by huge and complex administrative systems. This
book examines how education is affected by supervisory systems, world globalization practices and markets, massive innovations of technology, science and media, and world events further mediating student and teacher in a massive and complex discursive formation, and whether or not they are an intrusion or of help in the formation of student and teacher identities, relations, and knowledge-making. Moreover, this book intends to reveal how teachers and their students may form “new” social and power relations with each other when hegemonic forces seek to discourage and destroy such spaces required for respect of their definitions, actions, and powers.

This book is also for those who can deliver messages of teacher education programs, as in the case of those teacher educators and professors of education who may be silent or non-involved in maintaining or resisting regulated practices as determined by hierarchicalized administrators and deans, accreditation agencies linked to the state, tenure and exploitative labor-adjunct arrangements, and more. In the case of public schools, this book reveals how teaching may be supervised and evaluated without the pressures of the current “testing craze” as linked to student outcomes of standardized test scores without regard to student’s context (poverty, disabled, immigrant ESL, etc.). It also addresses how teacher educator practices are further linked to this limited classroom management focus by websites such as www.ratemyprofessor.com which, I believe, have been devised to pit students and teachers against one another, liberals against conservatives, instead of having them join together to overcome those hierarchical and administrative systems of regulation which mutually victimize both.

Finally, this book offers those involved in schooling with an alternate view and perspective, of the existing regimen of controls in schools which hegemonize students and teachers into thinking that their school environment and its hierarchical divisions are inevitable and sufficient to conduct business as usual. That is, student and teacher can begin to ask a basic question: to what degree are schools or college education courses an extension of their creative and cooperative thinking and acting; or, conversely, to what degree are they an extension of the hierarchical forces functioning to hegemonize them? Once this question is asked, answered, and shared, those who feel dissatisfied may begin to act in concert in counter-hegemonic blocs, unions, grass-root and fusion group (Sartre, 1960) arrangements in order to expose and break apart the illusions which operate toward making them into standardized and regulated automatons and extensions of an unquestioning school administrative system and hierarchy, which, in turn, makes them extensions of an uncaring and insensitive public, state, economy, culture, and school. On this note, I ask the reader to think of how Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed addresses the above concerns, albeit written in a different time and place. This will be further discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 which are dedicated to re-examining the foundations of critical pedagogy and Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed.
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OUTLINE OF REMAINING CHAPTERS

To accomplish the goals outlined above, Counter-Hegemonic Teaching will study and analyze hegemony, further pushing the envelope of critical pedagogy. Toward this end, Chapter 2 will set the context of administrative systems of hierarchical control and authority in schools with various case studies, student presentations, and snippets. I refer to these forms of administrative controls and systems as administrative hierarchies, classroom management techniques and procedures, testing, and an online website used by education students called www.ratemyprofessor.com as “Pillars of Hegemony.”

In Chapter 3, I examine an activity I have done with education students for the last eight years. After reading Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed, the students meet in small groups, and illustrate on transparency paper with color pens, their reactions to Freire’s methods, philosophy, and visions. The exercise reveals deep levels of information emanating from their expressions and, in the case of analyzing and extending Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed – in terms of his modernist presuppositions. The student’s drawings provide indicators of how and what changes may be appropriate in extending Pedagogy of the Oppressed. I will reveal some of their feelings and images, as expressed through their drawings, cross referenced with themes of the presentations and case studies discussed in Chapters 2.

Chapter 4 is intended to provide a theoretical context in which new issues and problems of hegemony may be analyzed in their advanced and complex forms and how counter-hegemonic theorizing and teaching may be achieved. This chapter will also reflect on the findings of the previous three chapters.

And, Chapter 5 will summarize the implications of doing counter-hegemonic teaching and post-structural theorizing, along with reflecting critically on the assumptions of Freire, by re-mapping the terrain of critical pedagogy and what Counter-Hegemonic Teaching may offer to advance the field of critical pedagogy into a “post-hegemonic state.”