

**The Impact of Hyper-Accountability Mandates in
a Californian and an English Classroom:
Hegemonic Discourses and
Critical Multicultural Resistance**

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February 2009

Why this Research: Background

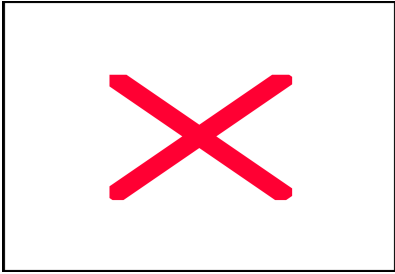
- From Reagan through Bush, evidence of renewed hegemonic agenda to standardize, corporatize, and privatize public schooling.
- This is not surprising to some people; public schooling has always served the following purposes:
 - 1) socializing students into becoming docile, patriotic citizens who would serve interest of those who benefited most from the socio-economic, “race,” and gender hierarchy (the Nation State), and
 - 2) preparing young people to fit in to the corporate, global economy (Spring, 2008).

Background Continued

- Kathy Emery & Susan O'Hanian (2004): In 1989 and again in 1995, the national Business Roundtable put its special brand on education reform, hammering home an agenda that defined reform thusly: state content and performance standards; a state-mandated test; rewards and sanctions based on test scores; school site councils composed of administrators, teachers, and parents; professional development focused on using test scores to drive instructional decisions; and phonics instruction in pre-kindergarten...But as we discover that the essence of reform is not politics, not even philosophy—but money and power.”(p. 114).
- CorpWatch estimated, in 1998 that “the ‘education industry,’ a term coined by EduVentures, an investment banking firm, is estimated to be worth between \$630 and \$680 billion in the United States.”

Privatizing Public Education

- In 2006, Gloria Ladson-Billings & William Tate wrote, “The Bush Administration and their allies are not the only policy makers supporting privatizing public education. Pauline Lipman (2003), in *High Stakes Education: Inequality, Globalization, and Urban School Reform*, describes how the Chicago public schools (CPS) have come under the increasing control of corporate and governmental interests that make educational decisions based not on what would promote educational equality but what would enable Chicago to compete internationally in the tourism and financial markets when local industries close or move away. Consequently, those in power are developing two-tier educational system that prepares the children of the professional and managerial class for higher education and children of the poor for jobs in the retail and service industry. (p. 52)

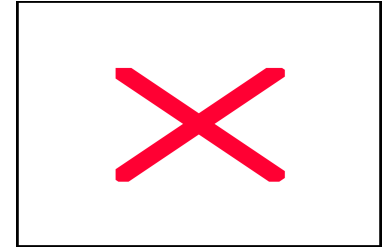


High Stakes Testing

In 2008, FairTest, the National Center for Fair and Open Testing noted:

- Researchers continue to find that high-stakes testing has damaging consequences such as decreased graduation rates, especially for low-income and minority group students. Survey results show that employers do not find test scores meaningful for evaluating job candidates.
- In January, Rice University's Linda McNeil and colleagues published "Avoidable Losses: High Stakes Accountability and the Dropout Crisis," which found that Texas's accountability system has depressed graduation rates. Most severely affected were African Americans, Hispanics, and English language learners.

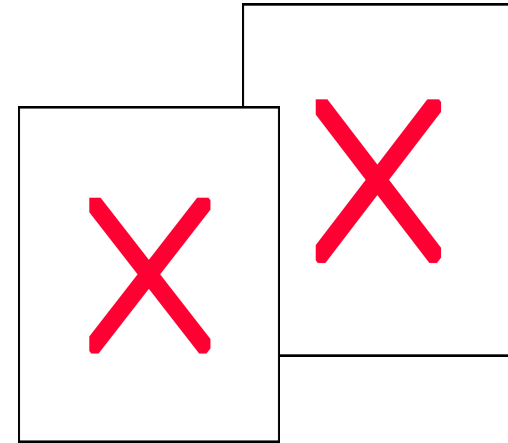
More on Testing



In 2009, FairTest wrote.

- A recent Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa poll that found “the federal government’s own National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) shows that student academic performance rose more rapidly before NCLB was adopted than after it went into effect. NCLB needs a fundamental overhaul to ensure that all students learn up to their potential.”

Why aren't more people challenging this hegemonic agenda?

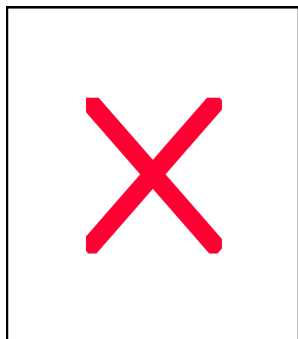


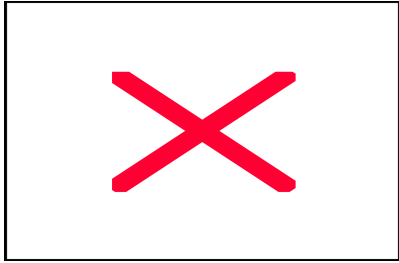
- Hegemony refers to the ideas and beliefs (ideology) that the elite and their representatives disseminate through major institutions (education, media, religion) in order to socialize/persuade/dupe citizens into believing that the social organization that serves elite interests is “normal,” “natural,” or “common sense.”

Whiteness as hegemony



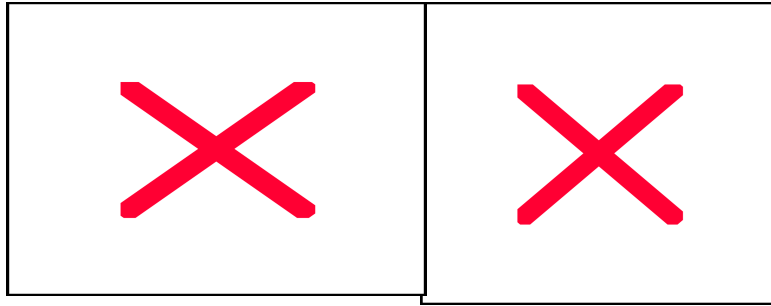
- Whiteness is a set of hegemonic practices and ways of thinking, believing and acting (cultural scripts) that function to reproduce and obscure the privilege and practices of the dominant, **disproportionately white** socio-economic elite.



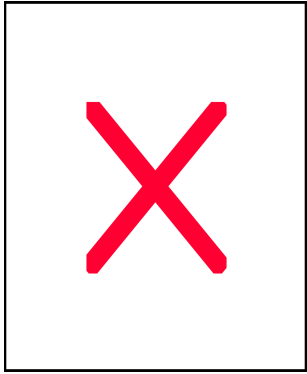


Hegemonic use of fear

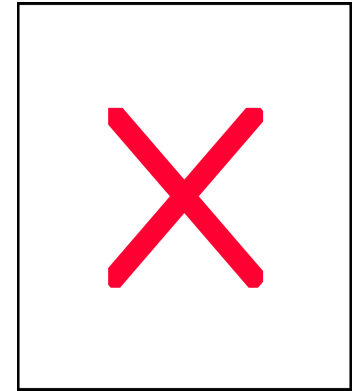
- Fear has been used, especially after 911, to silence critique of corporate governmental practices.
- Arundhati Roy, 2005: “In the United States...the blurring of this distinction between sarkar (the government) and public has penetrated far deeper into society...Among other things, it has to do with the elaborate web of paranoia generated by the US. sarkar and spun out by the corporate media and Hollywood. Ordinary people in the United States have been manipulated into imagining they are a people under siege whose sole refuge and protector is their government...As a result, the most powerful nation in the world is peopled by a terrified citizenry jumping at shadows. A people bonded to the state not by social services, or public health care, or employment guarantees, but by fear.



- So...in response to the appalling inequities associated with hegemony, represented by hyper-accountability in education, and evidenced by my own observations, and growing research, I designed a small study to test the validity and reliability of and contribute to existing research (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Mansell, 2007).

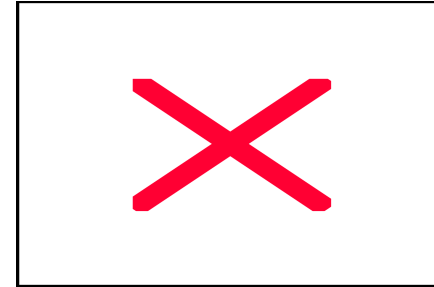


What did I want to know and why? [Research questions]

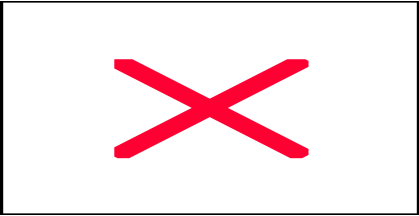


- To what extent do teachers in two ethnically diverse, working class, urban, public high schools, one in northern California, United States, and the other in South-East England, consent to the current hegemonic agenda?
- **What are these teachers saying?:** What educational, political and economic discourses are teachers expressing in response to current, corporate, governmental, hyper-accountability educational mandates?
- **What are these teachers doing?:** How are socio-economic, political, and corporate interests and educational mandates playing out in teachers' curricula and pedagogy? How is it impacting their students?

And....



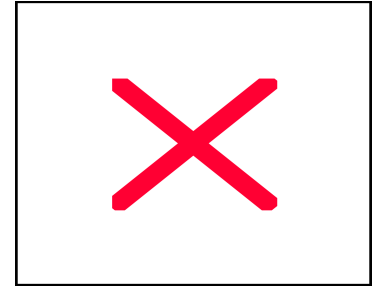
- **How can we best document the process and practice of hegemony?** How do we help some teachers address the disconnect between their declared antipathy to hyper-accountability and standardization resulting from governmental mandates like NCLB (2001), and their practice which conforms with this *practice*.
- **How are teachers challenging hegemony?:** What individual and collective counter-hegemonic, critical multicultural practices are teachers daring to engage in during an age of hyper-accountability?



Where am I coming from” (theoretically that is) CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

- Tells us we know the world through language
- Begins with culturally relevant/responsive language/generative themes/problem-posing
- Asks how culture and pedagogy produce knowledge as opposed to transmitting it within unequal power relations
- Is a theoretical tool (e.g. praxis, voice, dialogue) in the development of critical consciousness
- Sees schools as contradictory and contested sites
- Analyzes how corporatization, globalization, and socioeconomic class impact educational practice

CRITICAL MULTICULTURAL PEDAOGY



- Includes critical pedagogy but also names and challenges hegemony: racism, whiteness, and other forms of injustice and oppression
- Links the details of everyday school practice with the wider socio-economic structure and social relations
- Theorizes that we all have agency - we **can** change existing structure and develop alternative, HYBRID ways of thinking, feeling, believing and acting in the world

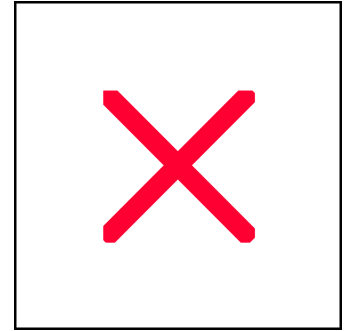
How am I analyzing my data?

- 1) I have looked for the repetition of key elements of speech—key words, pronouns, phrases—which suggest the importance of an idea, a concern, a person or a thing to the speaker.
- 2) I have looked for themes or discourse formations, explicitly declared, and embedded in the texts. For example: binary relations, passivization, and nominalization.
- 3) I have looked for the ways in which the teachers expressed awareness of and/or agency over hegemonic discourses (including the hegemony of whiteness) that shaped their practice.

How am I analyzing my data?

- I have looked for expressions of resistance both to hegemonic discourses, and to the critical interventions of alternative cultural scripts that teachers and students brought to the speech events. In the context of an epistemological, cultural world heavily informed by liberal humanism, I assumed that a loss of agency on the part of these teachers and students implied a recognition that power rested outside of themselves.
- 5) I have looked for the ways in which the teachers related socially to others - in the binarism of their language structures, in their shifts in frame, in the modalities they used, and in the fashion in which they juxtaposed and interwove discourses and categories in the speech events we constructed together.

What are some of my preliminary findings (from a critical multicultural perspective)?



- A majority of teachers, in both communities, **were** philosophically against one-size-fits-all, monocultural approaches to pedagogy and teaching to the test.
- While they did not use the language of multiculturalism, in both schools, a heroes and holidays approach to the curriculum was in force, and largely functioned to offset structural change towards a more critical, culturally relevant curriculum and pedagogy. I found that very similar assumptions governed teacher practice in the United States school. For example,
- Sanitized, U.S. national History curriculum and circumscribed rules for engaging in dialogue in class.
- Cultural fair to make Mauritian students feel welcome in the English school.

From Multicultural Education to Critical Multicultural Education

- Multicultural education developed during the 1960s and 1970s (civil rights era) to address the inequities in education.
- It promoted pedagogy and curriculum content that were relevant and responsive to students' cultures, making school meaningful to children.
- Critical multicultural education developed in the 1990s. It was a response to the “domestication” of multicultural education through hegemony.

Thanks, Raymond!

- It can be persuasively argued that all or nearly all initiatives and contributions, even when they take on manifestly alternative or oppositional forms, are in practice tied to the hegemonic: that the dominant culture, so to say, at once produces and limits its own forms of counter-culture. (Williams, 1994, p. 599)

The role of assessment in sustaining hegemonic discourses

- Very few teachers expressed awareness of how hegemony as, for example, hyper-accountability, was playing out through their every day practices in school.
- Very few of them made conscious choices to challenge the test-driven curriculum. On the contrary, they complained about it but went along with the high stakes test-driven—expressing a lack of choice.
- Discourse analysis suggested they were concealing from themselves their dissonance with respect to being complicit in teaching to the high stakes tests.

“Claire,” Head of Humanities (England)

- And I think that’s something that **REALLY** came out at the meeting that I was at last week...We were talking about the national agenda and what the changes are that could possibly be put into play, and...I said to somebody, but that’s the whole point, isn’t it? They’re basically gearing these kids up for nothing more than to go out into the economy and assume their role within the economy. And, you know, th-that’s all we need to educate them for. That’s hence why the changes in the national curriculum, whereby...the only subjects they need are English, math, science, PE, and ICT. Therefore, you’re basically saying every **OTHER** subject that doesn’t fall into those categories is a waste of time, has no relevance to a person in the real world... that’s the totally utilitarian way of looking at the world. And I said, ‘Yes, but that’s the way the government **WANT** us to look at education, and **WANT** us to teach kids.’ Because that’s what they see the purpose of education AS.
- Yet, the thing that amazes me is that **those** people probably have had the best education...that money can buy, and they wouldn’t **DREAM** of giving their **OWN** children that style of education, because obviously if you go to a private school....

Continued...

- “Claire” was the only teacher in both schools who spoke to me about how teachers had been “persuaded” to avoid talking about racism, classism or the aftermath of colonialism in her students’ lives, their own lives, and their teaching practice.
- On the cover of the 2000 edition of his book, *The Miseducation of the Negro*, Woodson is quoted as having said, “When you can control a man’s thinking, you do not have to worry about his action” (Duncan-Andrade, 2008, p.37).

Examples of how teachers embraced the hegemony of whiteness

- TB high school in England. In our first interview, “Claire,” told me that in year nine (9th grade), the “national curriculum” required students to explore the theme of social conflict, including racism. The subject matter included the struggles of African Americans.
- My initial conclusion: Students of White (Anglo-Saxon and Gaelic), Pakistani, Indian, West-Indian, and Mauritian descent would have a valuable opportunity to name and challenge British racism in a colonial and current context.

Example Continued...

- Second interview with “Claire”: The white teachers who taught the “Social Conflict” course were encouraged *not* to apply the concept of social conflict to experiences like colonialism.
- The administration felt it might incite Pakistani, Indian, West Indian, Mauritian student populations, whose parents, grandparents, family or friends had experienced this exploitative form of socio-economic organization to become disaffected with the system in which they were living and studying.
- It was safe to conduct dialogue about racism as it played out in other societies. However, the mandate with silence with respect to local and colonial narratives of power and oppression was silence.

Subjugated silence

- Subjugated silence is one of the many ways in which hegemony operates to reproduce the existing socio-economic hierarchy.
- Silence may be safe for teachers invested, however unconsciously, in dominant version of history, and their own power and privilege.
- At the same time it renders invisible student narratives that have the potential to challenge and interrupt the inequities embedded in this status quo.

Next Steps: Counter-hegemony/Critical Multicultural Resistance?

- Return to the schools, in California and England, in the spring and summer of 2009 to undertake more classroom observations and follow-up interviews with the teachers.
- Learn more about individual and collective actions that a minority of teachers told me they were taking to encourage critical multicultural, social justice practice.
- Small study raises important questions about the extent to which teachers in other educational settings are succumbing to subjugated silences in response to current governmental mandates.