As an educator I cannot accept the premise that there is nothing we can do to improve the educational situation of domestic minority students in the United States. I am not simply willing to wait for a revolution in the general society. As Apple and Weis have pointed out, there are progressive choices people can make in their own immediate circumstances while they also work for social change in the wider society. The task is not only to analyze the structural conditions by which inequity is reproduced in society but to search out every possible site in which the struggle for progressive transformation can take place.

Schools are one of the arenas in which people can work to change the existing distributions of power and knowledge in our society. When school practice is conducted according to the existing conventional wisdom, minority students—especially domestic minority students—usually do not fare well. The conventional wisdom involves assumptions that are part of the cultural hegemony of established classes in society. Hegemony refers to the ubiquitous and taken-for-granted status of a dominant culture within a culturally plural and class-stratified society such as the United States. Because of the ubiquity of the dominant culture and of the institutional arrangements that are consonant with its assumptions, it is not necessary for dominant groups to use overt means, i.e., naked force, to maintain their position of advantage. Rather as members of the society, dominant and subordinate alike, act routinely in concert with the cultural assumptions and interests of the dominant group, existing power relationships can be maintained, as it were, by an invisible hand. This is the essential element in Gramsci's notion of hegemony (Bluci-Glucksmann 1982); through influence, leadership, and by consent from the masses themselves, domination comes to appear as reasonable.[6]

Hegemonic practices are routine actions and unexamined beliefs that are consonant with the cultural system of meaning and ontology within which it makes sense to take certain actions, entirely without malevolent intent, that nonetheless systematically limit the life chances of members of stigmatized groups. Were it not for the regularity of hegemonic practices, resistance by the stigmatized would not be necessary. Were it not for the capacity of the established to regard hegemonic practices as reasonable and just, resistance could be more overt. Resistance could be informed by an explicit social analysis that unmasks the practices as oppressive. Yet currently neither the oppressors nor the oppressed face squarely the character of their situation, and resistance is often inchoate just as oppression is not deliberately intended.[7]

Hegemonic practices are not only ramified throughout the general society and in the local community outside the school, they are also alive and well inside the classroom. They permeate and frame the school experience of students who are members of stigmatized social groups. These practices are enacted by particular social actors. Domi-

nation and alienation of the oppressed does not simply happen by the anonymous workings of social structural forces. People do it. It is the result of choice (not necessarily deliberate) to cooperate with the reigning ideological definitions of what minority students are, what curriculum is, what good teaching is.

Yet if hegemonic practices are the result of human choice, they are not inevitable. Particular individuals can scrutinize the options enjoined by the conventional wisdom of practice. They can decide which aspects of that conventional wisdom to adopt and which to reject, creating learning environments that not only do not stigmatize minority students, but stimulate them to achieve.

Reconsider what Piestrup's teacher did in the reading lesson. She insisted that the children pronounce the final /t/ in the word "what," while reading the sentence, "What did Little Duck see?" This can be seen as an instance of hegemonic practice (James Collins, personal communication). What makes it so is that the teacher's exercise of a particular pedagogical option at a certain point in the lesson is consonant with a widely held theory or philosophy of reading instruction. According to one well-established view of good reading teaching, drill on isolated subskills, such as recognition and pronunciation of a final /t/, and mastery of that subskill must necessarily precede moving on to mastering the so-called higher order skills of comprehension.

According to another well-established view, the "whole language" or "language experience" approach comprehension of larger semantic units in written discourse takes precedence over drill on isolated subskills. The teacher in this example was not, we can infer, deliberately choosing to make salient in a negative way the culturally patterned pronunciation the children have learned in their homes. Rather, the teacher was acting on a strongly supported belief about good reading teaching. Yet entailed in the choice of one pedagogical strategy rather than another is the opportunity to make a culture trait negatively salient or not. If the teacher had emphasized the sense of the text, focusing on what in fact Little Duck had seen, the children's pronunciation style would not have become visible in the lesson interaction as a stigmatizing badge of racial and social class identity.

We could simply write off the reading lesson example as one in which the teacher produced contradiction and cognitive confusion by beginning one way and then going off on another instructional tack. But I think the example shows more than that, since the new option that was followed—pronunciation correction—made salient the children's home cultural style and negatively evaluated that style. Thus we would not just want to say to this teacher, "Be consistent." We would want the teacher to learn to reflect on his or her practice and say, "What are the consequences of my being consistent in following one pedagogical aim or another?" From the point of view of culturally responsive pedagogy as informed by resistence theory, the teacher

could conclude that to choose to fight and temporarily win a small battle over the pronunciation of a final consonant is to risk losing the war, by setting off a long-term process of schismogenetic cultural conflict. The threat to trust inherent in engaging in the pronunciation battle may simply not be worth it in the long run.[8]

In the cultural politics of pedagogy in the early grades one route to maintaining trust and earning the learner's assent to learn is to adapt instruction in the direction of the students' home cultural communication style. We saw this in adaptation to Hawaiian conversational turn-taking patterns, and we considered a hypothetical strategy for avoiding needless conflict over black American children's pronunciation while reading aloud.

Culturally responsive pedagogy is not the only route to establishing and maintaining trust and legitimacy between teacher and students, however. If children and their parents believe very strongly in the legitimacy of school staff and in the content and aims of a school program, as in the case of a black Muslim school (or in the case of some immigrant minority students and their parents as they encounter an arbitrary American public school), then even if the cultural style of classroom interaction is very discontinuous with that of the children's early childhood experience, they may well learn the new cultural styles without setting off a chain reaction of resistance and cultural schismogenesis. The same could hold for the models of "direct instruction" currently mooted. If instructional patterns are very clear and consistent (unlike the reading lesson about Little Duck), the teacher believes strongly in what he or she is doing, and children and parents can recognize the teacher's unambivalently authoritative style as a sincere attempt to foster minority children's learning, then the children may trust the teacher and assent to learn, even though the interaction style of instruction violates the minority community's norms regarding appropriate communication style.

To conclude, the politics of legitimacy, trust, and assent seem to be the most fundamental factors in school success. For cultural minority students, whether immigrant or domestic, the role of culture and of cultural difference varies in relation to school success. In some exceptional circumstances, because of high motivation to succeed in school, cultural difference does not seem to prevent students from persisting and achieving. A much more prevalent pattern, I have argued, is for cultural differences to make a negative difference, (1) because they contribute to miscommunication in the early grades and (2) because those initial problems of miscommunication escalate into student distrust and resistance in later grades. Moreover, it is important to note that for typical public schools (as distinct from special schools or alternative programs), it appears that in dealing with the majority of domestic minority students, school personnel cannot count on being perceived as highly legitimate, nor can they count on high motivation to

learn when they try to teach in learning environments that are culturally alien to the students. Rather, if the ordinary public school is to be perceived as legitimate, the school must earn that perception by its local minority community. This involves a profound shift in the direction of daily practice and its symbolism, away from hegemonic practice and toward transformative practice. In the absence of special effort by the school, the deep distrust of its legitimacy that increases among students as they grow older and the resources for resisting by developing oppositional identity that the school provides (in the cultural hegemony that inheres in its routine ways of doing daily business) pose serious threats to the school's perceived legitimacy. On the other hand, it appears that immigrant minority students may tend to be likely to trust the legitimacy of the school as it currently exists and to hope to benefit by participating in the American labor market.

Culturally responsive pedagogy is one kind of special effort by the school that can reduce miscommunication by teachers and students, foster trust, and prevent the genesis of conflict that moves rapidly beyond intercultural misunderstanding to bitter struggles of negative identity exchange between some students and their teachers. In the light of the preceding discussion, culturally responsive pedagogy seems most appropriate and important in the early grades. It may be especially important for domestic minority students and less important for first generation immigrant minority students. It is only one piece in a large puzzle, yet it provides a positive option for educators who wish, through critically reflective practice, to improve the chances for learning by their students and to improve their own work life as well. Culturally responsive pedagogy is not a total solution. It can, however, be seen as part of a total solution that also includes work to transform the general society within which schooling takes place.

Notes

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1. Admittedly it is also important to school success that students learn, or at least appear to comply with, what is nondeliberately taught (i.e., the "hidden curriculum"). Yet what seems to me crucial to school success is that students appear to comply with what school staff think they are trying to teach (i.e, the manifest curriculum of academic and social skills and knowledge).

2. The distinction between institutional and existential aspects of legitimacy, and the distinction and connection between the long and short term patterns by which we can see connections between general history and social order and specific, concrete history and social order, is made in a recent essay on social theory by Giddens (1984). A related notion is found in the approach to intel-

lectual history taken by Foucault (1979), and in the literary theory of Bakhtin (1981).

3. The distinction between cultural borders and boundaries was made initially by Barth (1969), and has been elaborated in terms of its implications for education by McDermott and Gospodinoff (1979) and by Erickson and Bekker (1986).

4. Piestrup's is a single study, to be sure, and some could argue that too much weight should not rest on it in the line of explanation set forth here. But the phenomenon Piestrup reports has been found more generally. The phenomenon is increasing speech style differentiation between speakers across time in situations of conflict. This has been reported in shorter and longer time spans than the single school year studied by Piestrup. Giles and Powesland (1975) showed that social class and regional dialect styles diverged across half-hour conversations in which conflict was experimentally induced. Reporting naturalistic research, Labov (1963) has shown how, across a generation, certain features of the dialect of islanders from Martha's Vineyard have become more marked. Thus the speech of the islanders has become progressively more and more distinct from that of the tourists who visit the island in the summer.

5. On the significance of the collective nature of the students' actions, see Everhart 1983:186–187.

6. Considered in this light, Gramsci looks like an anthropologist. He can be seen as presenting a cultural analysis of the plausibility of domination.

7. For further discussion, see Giroux 1983.

8. We could argue that such pronunciation battles always make bad sense in reading instruction—indeed, that reading aloud itself is unnecessary in reading lessons—but these are matters beyond the scope of this article.