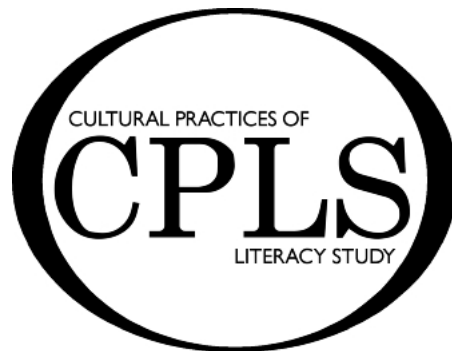# Resistance and Appropriation: Literacy Practices as Agency within Hegemonic Contexts

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Working Paper #1

Resistance and Appropriation: Literacy Practices as Agency within Hegemonic Contexts

Post-structuralist scholarship emphasizes the importance of issues of power and control in education as it simultaneously rejects totalizing, universalizing, and essentializing narratives (Ninnes & Burnett, 2003). Post-structuralism offers an important theoretical framework for researchers who view literacy as social practice by recognizing that language plays a key role in power relationships; language is both constitutive and expressive of relations of power, and individuals are subject to multiple discourses within those relationships (Bourdieu, 1991; Canagarajah, 1999; Bell & Russell, 2000; Giroux, 1989). In recognizing the multiple ways in which issues of power relate to language and literacy practice (Barton & Hamilton, 1998, 2000; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Gee, 1996, 2001; Street, 2001a, 2001b), literacy scholars have increasingly taken up aspects of post-structuralist thinking. In rejecting universalizing narratives, these frameworks challenge cultural, social, and structural determinism and offer conceptualizations of power and hegemony that allow room for individual and collective agency and resistance (Canagarajah, 1999; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to offer empirical data that supports and expands current post-structural scholarship in literacy practices by examining issues of agency within hegemonic relationships across diverse cultural contexts.

Power itself is an ambiguous construct, yet critical scholars agree that it is neither monolithic nor universal (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). Power is a network of multiple but unequal points or nodes, and it does not exist without simultaneous resistance; that is, power and resistance are co-constitutive (Foucault, 1980; Ninnes & Burnett, 2003). The construct of hegemony describes the systems of power relationships where dominating groups wield power over others. These hegemonic power structures can involve political, economic, cultural,

religious, educational, and other similar systems (Clayton, 1998; Giroux, 1992; Martin, 1998). Like the power relationships that make up these systems, hegemony is never total and complete, but rather is porous, leaving room for agency and resistance (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). In this paper, we argue that different types of hegemonic systems create room for different types of agency and resistance.

Agency is a key aspect of post-structural conceptualizations of subjectivity. That is, individuals have a range of available subject positions, and this subjectivity is fluid, dynamic, and negotiable (Canagarajah, 1999). McLaren (1994) also argues that subjects are active agents, capable of exercising deliberate actions in and on the world. While Gramscian notions of hegemony suggest that agency is partially involved in ensuring the conditions for class domination—that is, agents blindly accept hegemonic ideologies and therefore reproduce them (Martin, 1998)—others challenge the notion that the subjugated are somehow unaware of the power structures that lead to their condition (Canagarajah, 1999; Clayton, 1998; Giroux, 1989, 1992). These scholars argue that dominated actors are often aware of power relationships and are able to consciously make decisions about their actions within those relationships. These conscious actions may take a variety of shapes, including appropriation of some dominant discourses and practices, and many forms of resistance against those practices or discourses. As a phenomenon, resistance is complex, multilayered, and socially constructed, and it is deeply connected to power relationships (Foucault, 1980). Poststructural resistance theories take seriously the various contexts of power, and in doing so, they become more open-ended than reproduction theories, which scholars critique as overly deterministic (Canagarajah, 1999; Clayton, 1998; Giroux, 1989, 1992; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). With this paper, we offer empirical data to support and extend these theories. Our analysis of agentive literacy practices

illustrates the importance of context in shaping hegemonic relationships and multiple agentive responses to those power relationships.

<div align="center">The Cultural Practices of Literacy Study</div>

The data for our analysis come from a collection of case studies that fall under the aegis of the Cultural Practices of Literacy Study (CPLS). Researchers working under CPLS conducted ethnographic case studies of literacy practices in diverse communities (Purcell-Gates, in press). These studies examined the multiple ways in which members of cultural communities practiced literacy, as well as the ways in which formal schooling appeared to influence literacy practices in these communities. This analysis, then, is based on data gleaned from seven of the case studies.

The CPLS Cases

Scholars from Botswana studying in the U.S. Molosiwa (in press) studied the literacy practices of four women from Botswana studying for advanced degrees in the United States. Some of the women in this study grew up in rural villages and were the children of uneducated parents; others were the children of teachers and civil servants. All were colleagues from the University of Botswana, thus representing the "educated elite." Molosiwa's study highlighted the hegemony of English language literacy practices in Botswana.

Farmers in Puerto Rico. Situating her study within a family of farmers, Mazak (in press) described the relationships among language, literacy, and power in Puerto Rico. In Puerto Rico, language issues are closely tied to political issues, and Puerto Ricans align with political parties that are pro-independence, pro-statehood, or pro-commonwealth. The focal participants in this study—brothers—came from an educated family of farmers who were highly involved in community organization. Although this family obtained high levels of education in English, they do not consider themselves English speakers.

Urban middle school students in an alternative school for "problem kids." Gallagher (in press) studied literacy practices of four ninth-graders in an alternative middle school classroom, designed for students who had been identified as highly at risk for failure or dropping out of school. As one student explained to Gallagher, "You have to be bad or dumb to get in here." Gallagher's study focused on the unofficial and unsanctioned literacy practices that occurred in the classroom.

Chinese-American immigrants. Zhang (in press), examined the literacy practices of two Chinese-American bilingual immigrant families who chose to send their children to a Chinese enrichment school. These families, both affiliated with the state university, speak Chinese dialects at home and also speak English. The children of these immigrants either were born in the U.S. or came to this country at a young age, and they speak fluent English. Zhang's study examined the ways in which Chinese children appropriated literacy practices from both the home/community and school environments.

The "Lost Boys of Sudan" in the U.S. Perry (in press) examined the ways in which three orphaned Sudanese refugee youth used literacy. These youth had been orphaned by the 20-year civil war in the Sudan—a war which was the result of the northern, Arab-dominated government imposing the Islamic religion, Islamic law, and the Arabic language on black African, Christian southerners. The refugees lived for a decade or more in the Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya, where they received an education in English. Perry's study highlighted the community nature of literacy for the Lost Boys, as well as the ways in which language and power played out through literacy acts.

Cuban refugees in a Midwestern city. Rosolová (in press) compared the literacy practices of two Cuban refugees, a man who was an English language learner, and a woman who was

highly proficient in English. Both participants in the case study received five years of university education in Cuba and are literate in Spanish. Rosolová's study concluded that immigrant experiences with regard to English literacy practices vary and appear to be influenced heavily by family literacy practices in their native countries. Her study also demonstrated that many literacy choices centered around maintaining a sense of Cuban identity.

A young African-American girl living in an urban context. Collins (in press) described the literacy landscape of Penny, a young African-American middle school girl. Penny lived in a government-subsidized housing project in the urban center of a university town. Penny, the youngest of nine children, repeated the fourth grade, and she attended an after-school literacy tutoring program that was run by the local university. Collins' study focused on the ways in which Penny imported and exported various literacy practices between her home, community, and school contexts.

Although each of these studies represented a different sociocultural context and community, all used a framework suggested by Luke (2003) to illustrate the complexity of literacy practices within each.group. Each CPLS researcher investigated how participants had access to different discourses, and used languages, texts, discourses, and literacies in homes, communities and schools. In cases that involved multilingual contexts, researchers also examined the ways in which participants had access to different languages and used languages within literacy events, as well as the ways in which language shaped or constrained literacy practices. For full details of the methodology employed for these case studies, and fuller definitions of important constructs such as 'sociocultural community,' see Purcell-Gates (in press).

One goal of the CPLS study is to aggregate data on literacy practices across context-sensitive case studies. We began this process by compiling data from each of these studies (and more) within a meta-matrix. This matrix included demographic information about each participant, types of texts read and/or written, the language of the text, and the sociotextual domain of the text. Our definition of *sociotextual domain* integrates the concept of social domain—that is, domain as a social activity that reflects social relationships, roles, purposes/aims/goals, and social expectations—with linguistic and textual genre purposes. Thus, it captures genre factors such as purpose and text which, as we thought about our data, seem to co-define, or co-construct, the social domains at the moment of mediation by the reading and writing of the different texts. These domains are fluid, floating, and overlapping rather than mutually distinct. The domain categories used in our analysis emerged from our data. Among examples of these domains are: interpersonal communication, entertainment, community organization, information, parenting, politics, school, work, and religion. This meta-matrix then provided the basis for our analysis of literacy practices across the individual cases.

We observed that most of the cases included in the larger CPLS project involved obviously disproportionate power relationships in some form. Some of these cases involved colonial or post-colonial contexts, such as graduate students from Botswana (a postcolonial African nation) who were studying in the U.S. and farmers in Puerto Rico (a formal territory of the U.S). Other cases involved ethnic minorities who had migrated to the U.S. for various reasons, such as orphaned Sudanese refugee youth, Cubans fleeing the oppressive regime of Castro, and Chinese-American immigrants. Still other cases involved (often) minority children who were non-voluntarily participating in the institution of formal schooling, such as at-risk urban youth in an alternative middle school, a low-income African-American teenager, and

Chinese-American immigrant children attending both U.S. schools and an after-school Chinese

enrichment program. Some of the relationships in these cases, such as the cases involving

students from Botswana, farmers in Puerto Rico, families from China, and refugees from Cuba

and the Sudan represented power on a global scale. Relationships involving children from

various communities in American schools represented power on a much smaller classroom scale,

although these classroom-level power relationships certainly reflected the larger power

relationships in society.

Methodology

We first pulled out of the pool of data all of those practices which seemed "agentive" to

us, within their individual contexts. This process of identification relied upon several data

sources: (a) the meta-matrix of textual practices, described above; (b) transcripts of informant

interviews from each of the case studies; and (c) narrative descriptions provided by the

researchers within their final reports. This was an interactive process during which we clarified

our intuitive sense of what it means for a language practice to be "agentive," or to reflect agency.

Based upon this analysis, we identified two types of responses to hegemony that we defined as

agency for purposes of this analysis: (1) resistance, and (2) appropriation. Next, we listed the

types of agentive acts in the data along with their sociocultural and sociopolitical contexts,

looking for patterns. This process resulted in a patterning of agency with hegemonic context that,

we believe, complicates the notion of hegemony and, at the same time, begins to clarify it.

Results

Resistance

Our concept of resistance implies some form of rejection of the hegemonic discourse or

ideology. Other scholars have included the notion of revolution in their concept of resistance; for

example, Paolo Freire's work implies this sense of resistance-as-revolution, particularly as applied to resistance through literacy practices (Freire & Macedo, 2001). The data from our case studies did not provide instances of this particular construction of resistance. Rather, we identified two types of resistance: (a) overt resistance, and (b) covert resistance. Overt resistance occurs when actors clearly and openly reject a hegemonic structure or discourse (Clayton, 1998). These are overt acts of refusals of some type—refusals to speak or to read/write within the linguistic hegemony. Covert resistance, on the other hand, is a much more subtle form of resistance, much like the "everyday" forms of resistance described by Clayton and others (1998). Covert resistance largely passes "under the radar" of those in power. It involves language and literacy practices that are hidden from those in power.

Appropriation

Appropriation describes those acts by dominated groups where actors adopt a hegemonic practice for the agent's own purposes, rather than those purposes designated by those in power. We define appropriation as agentive for two reasons: (a) dominated groups use the hegemonic practice for their *own* purposes, rather than for the purposes intended by the powerful, and (b) the dominated group transforms the hegemonic practice itself, so that it no longer exactly matches the original practice. All of this results in a breaching of the hegemony and occurs as an active act against the hegemony. We will provide examples of each of these three types of agency as we present the ways in which hegemonic contexts appear to shape agentive acts, below.

The Patterned Nature of Agency in Response to Hegemony

We looked both within and across the seven CPLS cases in order to examine the ways in which groups used language and literacy practices as forms of agency. Our analysis revealed

interesting patterns about the use of literacy practices in response to hegemonic power, particularly in terms of patterns of overt and covert resistance.

Overt Resistance and Appropriations within Diffuse Hegemonies

Overt acts of resistance occurred in cases that shared certain characteristics. Two cases in this study exhibited large proportions of agentive acts classified as overt resistance—Chinese-American immigrants, and Cuban refugees. Three other cases also involved acts of overt resistance, including Puerto Rican farmers, Sudanese refugees, and scholars from Botswana. Two cases, alternative middle school students and the case of a young African-American girl, did not exhibit any instances of overt resistance at all.

Appropriations showed similar patterns across cases. By far, the highest percentage of agentive acts from our data fell into this category. All seven of the cases included in this analysis showed acts of appropriation by participants. The cases involving refugees from the Sudan and farmers from Puerto Rico exhibited the highest proportions of appropriation. In both of these cases, we coded approximately 70% of the agentive acts as involving appropriation. Below, we discuss examples of agentive acts from each of these cases.

Chinese-American immigrants. Chinese-American immigrants exhibited overt resistance by choosing to shop at Chinese-owned stores, as opposed to mainstream American shops, and by sending their children to Chinese enrichment programs. Although most of the participants in the study could read English, they sought out Chinese-language newspapers and read the Bible in Chinese. In addition, parents in this community enrolled their children in a Chinese enrichment program, which not only taught Chinese language and Chinese arts, but also provided math classes in English. Each of these practices implies an overt rejection of certain American practices in favor of an attempt to maintain a Chinese identity.

Cuban refugees. The Cuban case showed similar patterns in terms of ethnic, national or linguistic identity maintenance. Rosolová (in press) described how Lara made conscious choices about language and literacy, choices which reflected her desire to maintain a strong Cuban identity. Lara purposefully sought out books in Spanish to read for pleasure, despite the fact that she was fluent in English; she also preferred to read the Bible in Spanish, only reading an English Bible when none was available to her in Spanish. An example of Lara's overt resistance comes in this statement: "I refuse to read in English because I spend most of my day speaking and reading in English…When you spend all day speaking in a language that is not yours, you want to go back home and say, 'I am at home'" (Rosolová, in press). In addition, Lara forbade her children to speak "Spanglish", where Spanish and English are woven together. She insisted that her children choose either Spanish or English during a conversation, but not mix the two. Each of these choices indicates a desire to maintain an identity as a Spanish-speaking Cuban.

The cases from Puerto Rico, the Sudan, and Botswana also provided examples of overt resistance. Like the cases discussed above, acts of overt resistance in these cases implied a rejection of aspects of hegemonic power. Each of these cases also involved fairly high proportions of appropriations from the hegemonic system, and these appropriations revealed important characteristics of the hegemonic context.

Puerto Rican farmers. In this case, overt resistance took the form of purposively refusing to speak English, except within the domains of work and politics. Mazak (in press) indicated that Puerto Ricans had even stronger reasons for rejecting English than the Cubans described above (I don't think Mazak indicated this), because English is an official language in Puerto Rico; HOW ABOUT: Mazak (in press) describes the strong hegemony of English and context for resistance within Puerto Rico where English is the official language, imposed by the colonial power of the

U.S. Puerto Rican schools use English in the Spanish speaking country as the medium of instruction. One participant, Chucho, said, "They [teachers] wanted you to think in English—but I didn't think in English!" Refusing to speak English, therefore, is a very clear method of resisting the hegemony of the U.S. and English.

Language also provided the context for many appropriations in Mazak's case. Many of the appropriative acts of agency in this case involved agents acting as "brokers" in the community. For example, the brothers acted as English brokers for other farmers in the area by translating important information on pesticide containers. They also used information from the agricultural extension service to organize a community cooperative that essentially eliminated the "middle man". For this family, the business of farming provided an important impetus for appropriating hegemonic practices. The practice of acting as language brokers allowed the brothers to help their neighbors bypass "the system"; the neighboring farmers used U.S.-provided information that they otherwise would have been unable to understand, and this information helped to empower them. Another important domain of appropriative acts in this community involved politics. The family used their knowledge of English to read about Puerto Rican and world politics, often on the Internet; the farmers in this case therefore appropriated dominant political discourses in such a way as to challenge the hegemony of the United States.

Sudanese refugees. These participants also overtly resisted hegemony through rejection of language. Unlike each of the cases already described, however, they did not resist against the hegemony of a Western, English-speaking nation; rather, they directed their resistance toward the government of the Sudan. The refugees rejected the Arabic language and the Islamic religion of those in power in the Sudan. "It's [Arabic] a bad thing. It steals our language away in our minds," said one participant, Chol (Perry, in press). The Sudanese refugees saw English as a

language of liberation and empowerment, rather than as a hegemonic language. Chol indicated

that "English is important to communicate with many people around the world … so that you can

communicate with other African people." Arabic and English therefore stood in stark contrast for

these orphaned youth; Arabic stole away their native languages, but English provided them with

a voice through which to speak to the world.

This case exhibited a very high proportion of acts of appropriation, likely due to

participants' beliefs that English and literacy were empowering. In this community, participants

actively used literacy skills to research and write articles or letters to the editor (or, less often,

speeches) about their experiences as refugees and about the oppressive regime in the Sudan.

Participants eagerly read news media and participated in various Internet discussion boards about

the situation in the Sudan. Sudanese refugees did not only appropriate hegemonic discourses in

the U.S. context, but they also did this in their previous lives in refugee camps in Africa.

Participants had few opportunities to learn to read and write in Dinka or other languages native

to the Sudan, as a result of Kenyan language policies for education. One participant, Ezra,

therefore worked to translate school textbooks into Dinka in an effort to help refugees become

literate in their own language, and he also wrote a grant proposal to obtain funds to build a small

library in the refugee camp. In this case, Ezra appropriated the hegemonic discourses of Western

schooling in order to promote local language literacies.

Scholars from Botswana. Participants in this study indicated that the hegemonic context

of English literacy often conflicted with the cultural traditions of the people. "The young

generation is able to cope with such modern literacy practices but for people who were born in

the 1960s, it is not easy. We are used to being told things verbally and keep them in our

memories," said one participant (Molosiwa, in press). Acts of overt resistance in Botswana

reflect this tension between the oral tradition and the hegemony of printed English. For example, the participants from Botswana issued invitations orally, consciously spurning the written practice introduced by the British. This preference, according to informants, appears to be an act of overt resistance against the former colonial power, which introduced literacy to the country.

The tension between oral and written practices in Botswana also provided the context for appropriations. Molosiwa indicated that people in Botswana have taken up from the British the literacy practice of providing printed programs at funerals, but they use the local Setswana language instead of English. This case involves a *former* colonial power, demonstrating the fluidity of hegemony and acts of agency within it. Within this instance of appropriation, we can see the suggestion that contexts of indirect hegemonic systems may provide more opportunities for subjects to appropriate and transform literacy practices than systems where the hegemonic power structure is direct and apparent. In this case, the hegemonic system is relatively non-threatening, perhaps allowing participants to appropriate language and literacy practices for non-resistant purposes.

Resistance. These cases involving relatively high levels of overt resistance shared many characteristics. All but one case (farmers in Puerto Rico) involved immigrants to the U.S. And, in several cases, acts of overt resistance appeared to be largely about maintaining a national identity, such as Cuban or Chinese. In several of these cases, the United States and its geopolitical positioning and power provided the hegemonic context against which the participants resisted. This context is hegemonic in several aspects such as language (English), economic system (capitalism), and educational system. English is the official national language in the U.S., although many languages are spoken in this country—some, like Spanish, spoken by fairly large percentages of the population. Many states and school districts have enacted policies

to ensure that English remains the medium of instruction, even in schools where the majority of students speak a language other than English.

The educational system of this country likewise is a hegemonic system; although public education is free, it is also compulsory, and students therefore have very little say in whether or not they attend. In addition, the mainstream (largely White) middle class for the most part control education by funding public schooling through tax dollars and by supplying the majority of teachers and administrators. However, unlike the hegemonic systems from which many participants came, part of the structure of the U.S. system is about freedom of speech and expression—U.S. hegemony is powerful, but it seems to allow room for overt resistance.

Appropriation. The cases that exhibit high proportions of appropriative acts of agency, particularly the Sudanese refugees and the farmers in Puerto Rico, share common characteristics. In each case, participants live in multilingual and multicultural contexts. The practices of the Sudanese refugees and the Puerto Rican farmers are seen as responses to hegemonic contexts— the radical Islamic government of Sudan and the colonial power of the U.S. A sense of strife exists in both cases; in the Sudan, that strife is played out through warfare, genocide, and enslavement, while in Puerto Rico, the strife appears in a highly charged political situation between groups who advocate independence, statehood, or the maintenance of commonwealth status. In both of these cases, participants held a clear and open political agenda, and our data suggest that political purposes such as these may frequently drive the choice of appropriation as a response to hegemony. Many of the literacy practices observed in these cases likely would not have existed without the particular hegemonic power situation in each context. Driven by political objectives, the participants in these cases appropriated literacy practices for their own purposes—purposes which were largely against a group in power (although not necessarily the

group in power where the participants actually lived, as in the case of the Sudanese in the U.S.).

In these two cases, at least, appropriation appeared to be an alternate method of resistance.

Appropriation still differed from formal resistance, however, in that participants did not reject

the practice or discourse, but they instead transformed the practice into a new form of resistance.

Diffuse hegemonies. Based upon the similarities in these hegemonic contexts, we suggest

that these patterns represent diffuse hegemonic relationships. In *diffuse hegemonies,* the power of

the dominant group is not as great or as apparent over the dominated as it is in more direct

hegemonies. Dominated groups appear to have more "wiggle room" in diffuse hegemonic

relationships. Diffuse hegemonies make overt resistance more possible, and participants

appropriate more often from the discourses of power. This suggests that dominated groups may

feel more comfortable accepting dominant ideologies and practices in diffuse hegemonies than in

more direct ones. In this study, the contexts of Botswana, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. contexts of

Chinese-American immigrants and Cuban and Sudanese refugees represented diffuse

hegemonies.

Covert Resistance within Direct Hegemonies

In our data, cases that showed high proportions of covert resistance in contrast to other

types of agency typically were cases where the hegemonic relationship was direct and apparent.

For example, the two cases involving middle school students exhibited the most instances of

covert resistance. In these cases, the hegemonic context typically did not allow room for overt

resistance, and participants were also far less likely to appropriate practices from these contexts.

Alternative middle school students. The students in this case clearly did not enjoy school,

and a large majority of the agentive literacy practices in this classroom involved covert

resistance, practices that school authorities did not sanction (Gallagher, in press). The covertly

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resistant practices included writing and passing personal notes during lessons, reading non-school and other unsanctioned literature during class time, and failing to turn in academic assignments. In addition, one participant wrote poetry, in which she incorporated codes so that others would not be able to understand her meaning.

An African-American pre-teen. Penny's agentive literacy practices exhibited the same patterns as those of the middle-schoolers described by Gallagher. Like the other middle-schoolers discussed above, none of her practices involved overt resistance. And, similar to the other middle-schoolers, Penny's practices of covert resistance involved passing personal notes in class. She also pretended to take notes and follow along in her textbook during lessons.

Resistance. Reflection on these settings led us to speculate that classroom contexts do not allow for acts of overt resistance. Therefore, participants resort to covert acts of resistance in order to subtly challenge the authority of their teachers and of the hegemonic system of formal schooling. Those in power do not permit students to openly defy them, and pretending to take notes in class or refusing to turn in assignments provide alternate ways for these students to reject the hegemonic discourse of schooling. Interestingly, both of the researchers involved in these two cases noted that student participants had negotiable relationships with those in power—their teachers and other authoritative adults. While it was clear that the adults in each case held the power in the classroom, students in both cases could negotiate some aspects of the student-adult power relationship. Indeed, the teacher in the alternative classroom sometimes appeared to "overlook" resistant behavior, such as passing personal notes. Despite the fact that students negotiated some aspects of the relationship with authority figures, it was also obvious that the students were subjugated in the sense that students are always subjugated. These students were non-voluntary subjects (Ogbu, 1987, 1992)—required to attend school, regardless of

whether or not they want to be there. The alternative middle school particularly emphasized this non-voluntary status—these students described themselves as "bad or dumb" and attended this school as a "last chance" after being rejected by mainstream schools.

The single instance of covert resistance in the Chinese-American case study involved a student in her school context rather than in the larger community, supporting our conclusion regarding the hegemonic nature of classrooms. In this case, the student incorporated Chinese characters into an art assignment for her American school, characters that her American teacher likely could not read (Zhang, in press), but which may have held important meaning for the student in terms of her cultural and linguistic identity. In all of these cases, students were a clearly dominated, non-voluntary population who were subjected to the hegemonic structure of schooling, thus rendering their resistance covert. In some instances, students had a negotiable relationship with those in power, complicating the hegemonic power structure relationship. However, such a negotiable relationship also may reflect the fact that no permanent structure existed against which to overtly resist, thus rendering all acts of resistance as covert.

Appropriation. Although covert resistance dominated acts of agency in these cases, the participants also engaged in limited acts of appropriation. Many of the students in both of the middle school cases used the Internet and school-style research skills to stay caught up on youth culture. Participants in Gallagher's (in press) study indicated that they read popular magazines and performed Internet searches to find song lyrics and to keep up-to-date on the latest information about popular musicians. One participant, Marshon, avidly played video games. He used a variety of resources, including the Internet, to help him achieve higher levels of play in the games. Collins (in press) wrote that Penny used the library to research hip-hop music lyrics via the Internet and to download and print the lyrics for herself. Although they might be
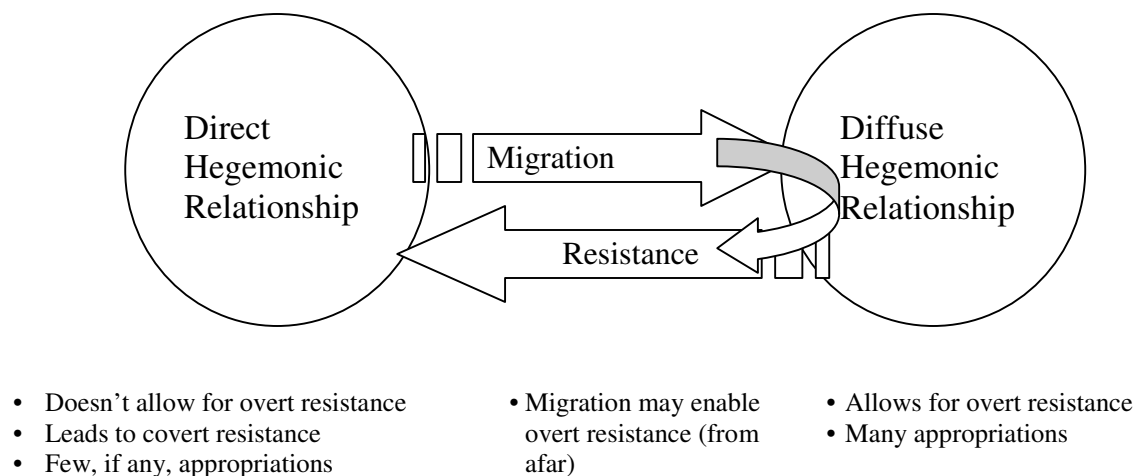
surprised to recognize it, these middle school students actually appropriated practices that they learned in school—the very setting that they so covertly resisted. However, they transformed these skills by appropriating them in order to participate in youth culture, a purpose that remains largely unacknowledged or unsanctioned by formal schooling.

Direct hegemonies. Again, the commonalities in these contexts suggest that these hegemonic relationships are "direct", rather than diffuse. In *direct hegemonies*, the powerful exert a great deal of power over the dominated. These hegemonies have a highly apparent power structure, making the powerful and the subjugated easily identifiable. Direct hegemonies may or may not be oppressive or repressive, but they typically do not allow for overt resistance. The dominated must resort to acts of covert resistance, and they appropriate relatively few hegemonic ideologies and practices. Both of the middle school cases represented direct hegemonies, as did participants' home situations in Cuba and the Sudan. The colonial situation in Botswana represented a direct hegemony before that country received independence.

<div align="center">The Relationship between Hegemon(ies) and Agency</div>

Based upon our analysis and the different patterns of actions we saw in response to hegemonic power systems, we suggest a more complex notion of hegemony in line with post-structuralist concepts of power relationships. Our data challenge Gramscian notions of hegemony as monolithic and deterministic (Clayton, 1998; Martin, 1998), and they illustrate that different types of hegemonies exist which are based upon the contexts of the systems involved. Hegemonies appear to be defined by the nature of the relationships between those in power and those who are dominated, rather than being defined solely by the political or economic structure of the context.

Our data also support post-structural theories suggesting that power and resistance occur together (Foucault, 1980; McLaren, 1989); resistance occurs in all hegemonic relationships, whether diffuse or direct. However, resistance and other forms of agency appear to take on different forms, depending on the type of hegemonic relationship involved. Resistance in particular changes shape, given the context. Agents must consider both the possibility of resisting overtly, as well as what the potential cost might be for such resistance. Diffuse hegemonies seem to provide contexts where overt resistance is possible because the potential repercussions of such actions are relatively minor. For example, many of the U.S. hegemonic contexts in this study showed participants overtly resisting language practices; in this context, English is clearly hegemonic, but the U.S. system also guarantees freedom of speech. Diffuse hegemonies likewise appear to provide contexts where agents feel more comfortable appropriating hegemonic practices. Again, this may be due to the fact that the consequences of such appropriations are relatively minor. In contrast, direct hegemonies appear to provide little (if any) room for overt resistance. Because the consequences for overt resistance are so great, agents must resist covertly. For example, in the alternative middle school, overt resistance might result in getting kicked out of the system entirely. In the native contexts of refugees from Cuba or the Sudan, overt resistance might result in political imprisonment or even death. Such high stakes appear to drive resistance underground, and they also may make participants less willing to appropriate practices or discourses from those in power.

- Doesn't allow for overt resistance
- Leads to covert resistance
- Few, if any, appropriations

- Migration may enable overt resistance (from afar)

- Allows for overt resistance
- Many appropriations

Figure 1. Direct and diffuse hegemonies, and the types of agency shown in each.

As demonstrated in Figure 1, our analysis suggests that individuals may need to leave contexts where there are direct hegemonic relationships in order to be able to openly resist those hegemonic powers. The cases of refugees from Cuba and the Sudan strongly showed this pattern. In both of these cases, participants left direct hegemonic relationships for the U.S., which has a comparatively diffuse hegemonic structure. The new, diffuse hegemonic relationships appeared to allow more room for movement, choice, and resistance. Each of these cases showed high proportions of overt resistance in the U.S., resistance which likely would not have been allowed in their native contexts. The Sudanese emigration, in particular, appeared to allow refugees to overtly critique the Sudanese government. In this case, the diffuse hegemony of the U.S. also appeared to provide tools, practices, and discourses which participants could appropriate in order to resist the direct hegemony of their home country. This may also explain the higher degree of appropriations observed in these cases; that is, individuals may find great value in appropriating

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aspects of the diffuse hegemony because these appropriations allow them to better resist the direct hegemonic relationship of their home context.

In contrast to other cases, where participants moved from one context to another by changing physical location, the Botswana case represents a change of context over time. We speculate that Botswana's independence from Britain represents a shift from a direct, colonial hegemonic structure to a more diffuse hegemonic structure. Molosiwa (in press) indicates that there is a generational shift in attitudes towards English and literacy, an attitudinal shift which may reflect a similar shift in hegemonic context.

Clearly, what is considered hegemonic is shaped by context. Hegemony cannot be considered a single entity—it is not a political system, an economic structure, a language or literacy practice. Rather, hegemony is part of an overall system that is largely defined by the relationships between those in power and those who are dominated or peripheral. In a similar vein, the hegemonic context also determines what can be considered agentive. Like hegemony, agency cannot be simply defined. What is an act of agency, and the manner in which it is shaped by dominated individuals and groups, may very well depend on the type of hegemonic relationship. Hegemony and agency, therefore, can be thought of as mutually constitutive.

Our re-examination and complication of the constructs of hegemony and agency may provide important insights for scholars and practitioners alike who recognize the role of power in language and literacy development and schooling. By recognizing that hegemony is not absolute, by recognizing that there are different types of hegemonic relationships, and that these different relationships enable and constrain agency in different ways, we may be able to move beyond the deterministic fatalism of many discussions of power and hegemony. We hope others will join us in continuing to theorize issues of hegemony and agency in ways that will allow both for more

refined empirical investigations within these constructs that, in turn, may suggest pedagogical

practices that will further the agency of students who find themselves stymied within hegemonic

relationships.

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